  
 *America’s*   
IRISH NATIONALISTS

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| --- | --- | --- |
| John Goff | John Devoy | Dr. William Carroll |

Photos Courtesy: Library of Congress (Left & Center) and Ken Carroll (Right)

The Voyage of the Catalpa and   
the Rise of the Clan-na-Gael   
  
By   
Michael Ruddy

## Dedication:

A picture containing tree, outdoor, grass, standing

Description automatically generated

Ana María (1954-2008)

## Acknowledgments

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Whatever value this work might have owes much to these kind colleagues and others of whom my dwindling memory has failed to remind me. If I have left someone out it is inadvertent, for no study of history is done that does not owe its existence to the historical research of those who went before. The errors still lurking in the document are, of course, my responsibility alone.

## Preface

My grandmother, Annie McNulty, visited us when I was in the seventh grade. One of the family stories she told was that her father, Bernard McNulty, was a hedgerow[[2]](#footnote-3) schoolteacher in Ireland and was a member of the Fenian Brotherhood, an Irish American nationalist society. When I was older and contemplated Bernard’s Fenian connection, it seemed odd to me that a farmer trying to provide for a large family in the untamed wilderness of Minnesota in the 1850s would be actively involved in the cause of Irish nationalism. Long after Grandma Annie’s death I began to look for source documents that might corroborate her belief in Bernard’s Fenian activity. I began reading all the extant material I could locate, hoping to gain an insight into what part my great-grandfather might have played in the Fenian organization.

During fifteen years of research, at an early point I was led astray by an unsourced entry in a genealogical book that stated “Bernard McNulty (died 1892), friend of John Boyle O’Reilly, was the founder of the first branch of the Fenian Brotherhood in the USA;” this man later proved to be a different Bernard McNulty.[[3]](#footnote-4) No document encountered during my research into the history of the Fenian Brotherhood mentions my grandfather. If a Fenian, Bernard was probably a just a member of a local Fenian Circle in Wabasha, Minnesota.

The focus of my research into great-grandfather’s supposed role in the Fenian Movement gradually broadened to encompass a study of 19th Century Irish American nationalism. The history of Fenianism is often presented by modern nationalists as a continuum from the medieval Irish King, Brian Ború, to Eamon De Valera who was a leader after the establishment of the Republic of Ireland. This approach tends to minimize conflicts and create non-existing connections between the many groups that have advocated an armed revolution to free Ireland. This book focuses on the Clan-na-Gael and its replacement of the Fenian Brotherhood as leader of American Irish Nationalism between 1866 and 1876, a subject receiving scant coverage in modern discussions of Fenianism.

The Clan na Gael, a term in Gaelic signifying “Irish Race,” is an Irish nationalist society founded in the United States in 1867 which rapidly came into direct conflict with the Fenian Brotherhood as both strived to control the direction of Irish nationalism, including the large amounts of money being collected to free Ireland from English rule. Research into the history of Irish nationalist activity in the 19th century is obligated to include the Clan-na-Gael which eclipsed the Fenian Brotherhood as the standard bearer of Irish American nationalism.

I searched in vain for published works detailing the role the Clan-na-Gael had played in dismemberment of Fenian Brotherhood. To date, no in-depth look into the early history of the Clan-na-Gael organization has been written, an organization that still to this day is the voice of Irish nationalism. A key event precipitating the demise of the Senate Wing faction of the Fenian Brotherhood organization was the “Irish National Congress” held in Cincinnati on August 24, 1870.[[4]](#footnote-5) Within three years of the Congress, the collapse of the Senate Wing was complete. The Clan-na-Gael, unable to obtain the constitutional changes necessary at the Congress to incorporate the Senate Wing into its organization, gradually absorbed many remnants of Senate Wing clubs (called Circles) during the period from 1870 to 1876. In 1877, after the successful rescue of six Irish Republican Brotherhood military prisoners from a jail in Western Australia, the Clan-na-Gael became the de facto spokesman for Irish nationalism in America. This book presents a detailed history of the Clan-na-Gael’s rise to power, a critical key to understanding the role of Irish nationalism in America.

The factors recounted here, leading up to the infiltration and takeover of the Senate faction by the Clan-na-Gael Association in the years between 1867 and 1873, are reconstructed from period newspaper accounts combined with primary sources, principally from the recollections and archived documents of the participants, especially the John Devoy Papers in the National Library of Ireland Archives, hereinafter referred to as Devoy Papers. Additional sources are: The O’Donovan Rossa Fenian Archives at the Catholic University of America at Washington, D.C.; “AO48I, Fenian Brotherhood Papers, 1869-1922” at the Missouri Historical Society, St Louis, Missouri; and the “Francis B. Gallagher Collection of Fenian Brotherhood Records” at the Philadelphia Archdiocesan Historical Research Center.

This book presents a history of the Clan-na-Gael’s drive to wrest the leadership of physical-force Irish nationalism away from the Fenian Brotherhood. Primary sources are used as a basis to discuss the internal struggles that went on within the Clan-na-Gael during execution of the complex prisoner rescue expedition. The voyage of the Clan-na-Gael rescue ship, *Catalpa*, including a whale hunt in the North Atlantic to pay for the mission, the rescue attempt in Australia, and the mutiny on the return voyage to New York City, are reconstructed from the ship’s logbook along with Captain Anthony’s book, *Catalpa* *Expedition*, and the Devoy Papers located in the National Archives in Ireland.

In 1871, shortly after the arrival of the Fenian Exiles from England, an acrimonious fight developed for control of the Clan-na-Gael Executive Body between the newly arrived exile, John Devoy, and the long-time Senate Fenian and Clan-na-Gael New York District Chairman, John Goff.

Born in 1848 in County Wexford to a protestant family. Goff arrived in New York at the age of seventeen, converted to Catholicism and joined the Irish nationalist movement. The epic battle between these two fiery-tempered Irishmen is discussed below in detail.

In undertaking the last section of this book covering the history of the Clan-na-Gael from the organization’s Chicago convention of 1881 forward, I have relied heavily on two major sources: The primary source is John Devoy himself: the “Story of the Clan-na-Gael” and “The Catalpa Story,” two long-running articles published in the *Gaelic American,* a New York newspaper edited by Devoy;Devoy’s *Recollections of an Irish Rebel*; Devoy’s collection of letters and documents as published in *Devoy’s Postbag*, Volumes I and II, edited by Desmond Ryan and William O’Brien; and the Devoy Papers at the National Library of Ireland. The secondary source is the seminal work done by Owen McGee in his meticulously researched and footnoted book *The IRB: History of the IRB from the Land War to Sinn Féin.*[[5]](#footnote-6) Although McGee tells the story of the IRB from an Ireland-centric perspective, he did significant research into the history of the Clan-na-Gael in America in order to present an accurate presentation of the interrelationship of these two entities. Today, although divided into factions and with membership diminished, the modern Clan-na-Gael is still found on the radar screens the FBI In the United States and MI6, the English foreign intelligence service.

The Clan-na-Gael had a significant role in the history of Irish American nationalism, the lack of historical research into the origins of the organization is surprising.I have accumulated enough material to tell the story. The need clearly exists. This book is the result. It will be left up to the reader to judge if that task was justly met.

## Introduction

Many of the emigrants fleeing the great Irish famine from 1848 onward considered themselves exiled. For purposes of clarity, it is necessary to differentiate between Irish immigrants who may, or may not, have been nationalists, and Irish nationalists who were officially exiled or who fled under arrest warrant. The Irish American press of that era capitalized the word “Exile” to denote men who were liable to arrest if they returned to British territory, a practice that is continued in this book. As many of the exiled IRB prisoners who landed in America that I was able to authenticate are listed in an appendix under the name of the ship, where known, that brought them.

The Fenian Brotherhood was founded by Irish nationalists in New York in 1858. Membership rolls grew with many members joining the all-Irish militias that formed in the military atmosphere of pre-bellum America. As the American Civil War wound down and Irish American soldiers began to return home, Fenian recruiting activity increased. A split occurred in the organization during a period when large amounts of money were flowing into the treasury for an expedition to Ireland. The Fenian Brotherhood ended divided into two feuding factions: the “O’Mahony Wing” (later called the “Savage Wing”) and the “Senate Wing.”

The O’Mahony Wing strategy required that weapons and equipment be accumulated for an uprising on Irish soil. These weapons, along with volunteer Irish American Fenian soldiers, would be shipped to Ireland when the affiliated Irish Revolutionary Brotherhood—the IRB—signaled it was ready to rise up in arms.

The Senate Wing strategy, on the other hand, held that, if a Fenian military outpost were to be established in Canada, the United States government would recognize the Fenian Brotherhood as a belligerent in control of its own territory and the United States would then annex the Canadian territories, igniting a war between England and the United States. The Senate Wing argued that sending arms and men to Ireland was not a viable strategy. The Senate Wing assured its adherents that the United States would assist the Irish nationalists establish an independent Irish nation.

A prominent figure in the growth of the Fenian Brotherhood volunteer military was John O’Neill, whose Civil War military experience as an officer in combat insured his rapid rise within the organization. John O’Neill was born in Drumgallon, County Monaghan, Ireland March 8, 1834, and immigrated to New Jersey in 1848.[[6]](#footnote-7) He joined the Union Cavalry during the Civil War and rose to the rank of captain. He joined the Fenian Brotherhood in Nashville, Tennessee and participated the Fenian Pittsburg Convention in February 1866. O’Neill was a delegate from the Nashville, Tennessee Fenian Circle to the Pittsburg Senate Wing Convention where he was made a colonel in the Fenian Army and sent back to Tennessee to recruit soldiers for a Canadian invasion. In 1866, O’Neill led one flank of a two-pronged Fenian Senate Wing attack into Canada attempting to establish a foothold on Canadian soil. O’Neill’s troops succeeded in defeating a Canadian Army brigade near the small town of Ridgeway in Canada. The Fenians did not meet their objective of establishing a military presence in Canada. O’Neill and his troops were forced to retreat into U.S. territory when the U.S. Army intervened, cutting off supplies and reinforcements.[[7]](#footnote-8) O’Neill’s military success at Ridgeway propelled him into the Presidency of the Senate Wing and command of the Senate Wing military.

After being promoted as a Fenian General, John O’Neill and a group of dissidents tried unsuccessfully to get a reluctant Senate Wing Council to approve a second invasion of Canada. The Senate Wing Constitution required that the Senate Wing Council had to approve any military operation. In practice, however, the command structure of the Fenian Military, including control of all military supplies, reported directly to O’Neill. In May of 1870, O’Neill bolted the Senate Wing and launched a hastily organized unsuccessful attack across the Canadian border.

In the interim between the 1866 invasion and the O’Neill 1870 attack, Canadian military intelligence gathering had improved. The ferocity of Canadian gunfire that met O’Neill’s men as they crossed the border provoked a rapid Fenian retreat into United States’ territory where they were quickly rounded up by the U.S. Army and sent home. O’Neill and his subordinate officers were arrested by U.S. Marshals. O’Neill ended up with a prison term rather than the hoped-for Irish Republic.

At this point, Irish American nationalism seemed destined to dissolve back into the shadowy obscurity from which it had emerged twelve years earlier. The divided entities of the Fenian Brotherhood were at a crossroads. The militarily defeated Senate Wing was now in disarray. The Savage Wing had become bloated and militarily inactive. Seizing the opportunity thus presented, a small, but rapidly growing, loose affiliation of secret clubs called the Clan-na-Gael Association,[[8]](#footnote-9) moved to take control of the Senate Wing.

Clan-na-Gael history has been covered by Michael Funchion’s *Chicago’s Irish Nationalists 1881-1890,*[[9]](#footnote-10) and Owen McGee’s *The Irish Republican Brotherhood from the Land League to Sinn Féin*, but the crucial formative years are missing, and that gap is the subject of this book. The focus is on the first fourteen years of the Clan-na-Gael’s existence: a seven-year formational period (1867-1874) followed by a seven-year period of power consolidation (1874-1881).

In August, 1870, after the failed Canadian Invasion, with O’Neill now in jail, a group of Senate Wing leaders, many of whom held concurrent membership in the Clan-na-Gael, took control of the Senate Wing at a congress in Cincinnati that was called to pick up the pieces of the failed incursion into Canada, called derisively by the *New York Times* “The Three Days’ War.”[[10]](#footnote-11) An attempt was made by the Senate Wing Directory to change the constitution of the Senate Wing into an oath-bound secret society; but the move failed. The failure to pass such a clause insured that the oath-bound Clan-na-Gael would remain a separate entity. With merger not an option, the Clan-na-Gael stepped up its efforts to actively recruit those individual members or any nationalist club that would swear allegiance to the Clan-na-Gael and obey its secrecy requirements.

A major event in January of 1871 transformed Irish-America’s nationalist landscape. British authorities released most of the IRB leaders that had been incarcerated from 1865 to 1867 during various crackdowns on revolutionary nationalist activity in Ireland. These prisoners were released on condition that they live outside British Imperial territory until their sentences were complete. Most of these men chose to live out their sentences in the United States. Upon the arrival in New York of the ship *Cuba*, the first of two ships contracted by the British to deliver the exiled IRB leaders to America, the Exiles were besieged by various political organizations, each hoping to have them join their version of Irish nationalism.[[11]](#footnote-12)

It was not long after the released prisoners arrived in America that these Exiled leaders were found in the hierarchy of the Clan-na-Gael, as well as occupying positions of authority in the surviving Savage Wing of the Fenian Brotherhood. When added to the appointment of these Exiles as directors of a newly formed Irish Confederation, the entity that had evolved out of the old Senate Wing, it can be fairly stated that Exiles had positions of influence in all militant Irish nationalist organizations. The Exiles were determined to refocus Irish American nationalism away from Canadian invasions and back to an Ireland-centric military strategy.

The Clan-na-Gael embarked on a mission, the success of which was a watershed event for Irish nationalism. It proved for the first time that a well-planned and well-executed attack on British interests could succeed. The mission was proposed by the Exile, John Devoy, who, before his exile, was involved in the escape of James Stephens the IRB leader from prison in 1865 and was jailed for recruiting Irishmen serving in the British Military for the IRB.[[12]](#footnote-13) Devoy pleaded with the delegates attending the 1874 annual Clan-na-Gael Convention to send an expedition to rescue a group of IRB military-prisoners held by the British in a jail in Fremantle in Southwest Australia. Devoy’s proposal captivated most of the delegates at the convention. Devoy was elected Chairman of the Executive Body[[13]](#footnote-14) that governed the Clan-na-Gael and, in addition, was made chairman of the Australian Prisoner Rescue Committee (APRC).

The Clan-na-Gael became a better organized and more active revolutionary structure under John Devoy. Clan-na-Gael operations have kept England’s various counter-insurgency bureaus busy from 1876 up to the present day. The organization played a significant role in the establishment of an Irish Republic in Southern Ireland in 1923. The Clan-na-Gael supplied active support to the IRA during “The Troubles” in Northern Ireland in the 1960s and 1990s.

One must always read John Devoy as someone who wrote with a varied assemblage of axes ready to grind and an almost myopic fixation on the removal of English influence from Ireland’s governance. That said, after reading his writings in the original script and having done due diligence in checking alternate sources where they exist, I have concluded that Devoy can be relied upon to present a surprisingly balanced account of events wherein he was many times the principal actor. There are a few exceptions where a personal grudge turned his “facts” into innuendo and some areas outside of his own personal knowledge where he made errors in recalling details or relied on others for his information.

# PART I

# Irish American Nationalism

### A Bolt from the Blue [[14]](#footnote-15)

Sailing back and forth in international waters near Fremantle, Western Australia, the three-masted whaling bark, *Catalpa*, seemed to be searching for something lost overboard.

The captain, absent ashore, had left First Mate Samuel P. Smith in command of the vessel. Smith peered out across the blue-green water until finally, at 2:00 PM, he spotted an overcrowded whaleboat plowing through the swells. The oars of five rowers dipped in unison, drew, rose, and dipped again in hurried cadence.[[15]](#footnote-16)

Glancing shoreward, Smith saw the reason for the frantic pace: A Fremantle Water Police cutter, her sails fully set with three or four men working “at the sweeps,” was on a direct course to intercept the whaleboat before she could reach the *Catalpa*.[[16]](#footnote-17) Smith shouted out orders to the crew, who jumped to their posts and the two-hundred-ton *Catalpa* swung to a bearing that would place her between the two small boats.

In the whaleboat, the *Catalpa* captain, George S. Anthony, sat aft in the pilot position as he steered toward his whaling ship, all the while urging the rowers to pull faster.

As the whaleboat closed in on the *Catalpa*, Captain Anthony shouted up to Smith, “Hoist the ensign!”

Smith relayed the order, and the halyards were pulled, sending a large American flag, already bent,[[17]](#footnote-18) unfurling aft atop the mizzenmast. Mate Smith then rounded the weatherside toward the whaleboat. Antoine Silva, the forward rower, fixed the fore tackle to the whaleboat.[[18]](#footnote-19) Six escaped prisoners, four accomplices, and five exhausted oarsmen scrambled up the grip-ropes and onto the main deck. Anthony, finding himself suddenly alone, fixed the aft tackle and signaled to the men above to hoist up the whaleboat.[[19]](#footnote-20) After the crewmen of the *Catalpa* had pulled the whaleboat up to the davits, Captain Anthony stepped over the railing onto the weather deck and resumed command of the vessel.

The whaleboat crew, glad the ordeal was over, sprawled on the deck, gasping for breath. Weak from their ordeal and their frantic climb up the grip-ropes, the prisoners still managed to shout and wave triumphantly to the policemen in the cutter and to congratulate one another on their newfound freedom.

John Joseph Breslin, born in 1836 in County Drogheda, a veteran of an earlier prisoner rescue in Dublin, stood fully six feet tall, had proved steady and cool under stress. He had been Devoy’s choice to be the man in charge of the land-based rescue party. Breslin could feel proud of himself as he mock-saluted Coxswain Mills of the Water Police cutter. Breslin had just pulled off a spectacular rescue where everything had gone exactly to plan. The freed prisoners were now secure on an American whaling bark in international waters and not a single life had been lost during the dangerous escape.

Coxswain Mills, having lost the race, gave a good-natured salute to Anthony, and set sail for Fremantle.[[20]](#footnote-21) Captain Anthony, however, knew they were not yet safe. He ordered First Mate Smith to set course for deep water.

Chartered to hunt for whales in the Atlantic, flying American colors and manned by a seasoned whaling crew of mostly Malay natives, the *Catalpa* had sailed from New Bedford, Massachusetts on April 29, 1875. Registered in New Bedford, the *Catalpa*’s registered owner was an Irish foundry owner named James Reynolds. James Reynolds was also a member of the executive board controlling the network of militant Irish nationalist clubs, headquartered in New York, called the Clan-na-Gael. The six rescued military prisoners were members of the Irish Republican Brotherhood, or IRB, a clandestine revolutionary organization formed in Ireland in 1858 to free the island from British rule. These prisoners were enlisted soldiers in the British Army when they joined the IRB. They were captured and tried in court. After being found guilty of treason against the British Crown in 1867 they were sentenced to death. The sentence was commuted to life imprisonment, and they were transported to Australia to serve life sentences with no hope of parole.

The leader of the land-side rescue party, John Breslin and his assistants, Thomas Desmond and Thomas Brennan, were also members of the Clan-na-Gael organization. Another man in the rescue party, John King, was a member of the Australian branch of the IRB. Already aboard the *Catalpa* was Denis Duggan, the ship’s carpenter, also a member of the Clan-na-Gael.

The British Parliament in London was in session on May 22, 1876 as the *Catalpa* sailed on course to America with the freed prisoners on board. Unaware of the deed now done, Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli answered pleas from Irish Members of Parliament for the release of the military-prisoners in Australia “in his most imperial and superior mood” stating there would be no amnesty.[[21]](#footnote-22)

It would take almost two months before news of the escape reached England and the rest of the world. That delay was caused by a break in the Darwin to Java transatlantic cable. The first report of the military prisoners’ escape was mentioned in the *London Times* on June 6, 1876, and confirmed three days later by the government in the House of Commons on June 9.[[22]](#footnote-23) Put to a direct question as to when the government first knew, Disraeli replied, “The first intimation that Her Majesty’s government received of the escape of those prisoners from Western Australia was on the fifth of June.”[[23]](#footnote-24)

The Fremantle prisoners’ escape was a major blow to British prestige and left the British government stunned. British Foreign Ministry officials began to search for where they might affix the blame.

Cheering crowds surged into the streets in Ireland and burned in effigy British Prime Minister Disraeli.[[24]](#footnote-25) The world-wide Irish diaspora, along with the *Catalpa*’s passengers,[[25]](#footnote-26) celebrated “in high delight at the trick that had been played on the British Government.” Newspapers in England, Australia, Ireland, and the United States gave the rescue front-page headlines. American citizens, most of whom knew little or nothing about Irish nationalism, took no small pride in the “Yankee” part of the rescue.

The new Chairman of the Executive Body of the Clan-na-Gael and driving force behind the rescue, Exile John Devoy, proudly pointed out, “It fell on the British like a bolt from the blue.”[[26]](#footnote-27)

Outraged by obvious American enjoyment of Her Majesty’s discomfiture, the *London Times* wrote “. . . that any Americans who have a sense of national self-respect should exult in the success of such a paltry trick for evasion of justice is beyond an Englishman’s comprehension.”[[27]](#footnote-28)

The rescue brought new life to Irish nationalism as Devoy knew it would. The *Catalpa* rescue was the propelling event that powered a rapid growth of the Clan-na-Gael. However, all was not harmonious inside the secret meeting halls of the Clan-na-Gael. As the rescue plan progressed, the organization found itself split by an internal struggle for control of the Executive Body that determined the organization’s goals and operations.

The conflict at home manifested itself in an event that occurred aboard the *Catalpa* not mentioned in newspaper accounts of the voyage: The freed prisoners and the rescuers mutinied against Captain George Anthony and the land-side rescue leader John Breslin.[[28]](#footnote-29) The Clan-na-Gael, for obvious reasons, chose to deal with this mutiny behind closed doors.

When the *Catalpa* originally sailed out of New Bedford, the American authorities were blissfully unaware that the *Catalpa*’s principal owner was a secret Irish American nationalist society. Interestingly after news of the rescue became public, no U.S. government agency was ever approached on behalf of the British government to apprehend Captain Anthony and the conspiratorial *Catalpa* passengers and extradite them to England. The *London Times* initially expected that the British government would act:

When the whaler comes into an American port and lands her passengers, the British authorities, it seems, might have very good ground for interference, and it is difficult to see how the United States could avoid giving up the prisoners and punishing the vessel, and, if they can be found, those engaged in the rescue.[[29]](#footnote-30)

The lack of any American or British legal action against the conspirators and the escapees can be traced to an unrelated event. An 1870 treaty existed between Britain and the United States that ensured the extradition of criminals between the two countries became routine. But, in 1875, an Anglo-American squabble developed when a United States citizen extradited from England for one crime was then charged, upon his arrival in New York, with a different crime. British response to this incident created a chain reaction that benefited the *Catalpa* crew, the rescue team, and the prisoners. On Tuesday, June 20, 1876, the *Catalpa* and her cargo of rescued prisoners were making good time en route to America. As the vessel headed away from the African coastline into the South Atlantic, Captain Anthony decided that tomorrow he would have the crew repair the upper foretopsail. Six time zones away, having made a routine request for extradition of a man named Winslow wanted on a criminal warrant, the United States authorities were informed that Britain now required a signed document of assurance that Winslow would be charged only with the crime noted on the extradition document. President Ulysses S. Grant perceived the British request to be an insult to the honor of the United States. While Anthony prepared to repair the foretopsail on that June day, the United States Congress received a message from President Grant declaring that the extradition treaty with Britain was annulled. Whether the United States would have honored a request to return the escaped IRB prisoners is debatable, but President Grant’s action eliminated the possibility of any official request by the British for extradition of the prisoners or their rescuers.[[30]](#footnote-31)

When the Chancellor of the Exchequer was asked in a debate in the House of Commons what action would be taken by the government in respect to the Fenian escapees he replied:

It has not been deemed expedient to take any action in the matter referred to, beyond making a strict inquiry into it, and a revision of the local arrangements under which the escape of the convicts occurred.[[31]](#footnote-32)

Although at the time the rescue was attributed by the general population to the Fenian Brotherhood, the leaders of the various rival Irish American nationalist organizations knew that it was a Clan-na-Gael operation. The Clan-na-Gael’s first action on the stage of international politics was a resounding success.

### Fertile Soil for Irish Plots

How did it come about that the United States was the base of operations for the *Catalpa* rescue mission instead of Ireland? An obvious reason is that vigilant British authorities in Ireland, holding port authority at all Irish ports, with an established network of anti-nationalist informers, would most likely have encountered and foiled any rescue operation of the magnitude of the *Catalpa* expedition. Another reason was that, during the Canadian incursions, Irish American nationalists had developed a bit of an expertise in the art of filibustering from U.S. soil.

What also deserves closer investigation is that, as Irish nationalists openly prepared and executed multiple filibustering operations from American soil against British targets, there existed a rather benevolent indifference on the part of the United States government until any operation was actually in progress. The reticence of the United States to interfere in overt Irish nationalist plans for militant anti-British activity went beyond the right to free speech protected by the Bill of Rights. The Fenian Brotherhood and later the Clan-na-Gael were able to form and arm filibustering operations. The root cause of the tolerance displayed by the United States lay in what politicians perceived as the “Irish vote,” as well as the anti-British environment created in the Northern Union States by Britain’s tacit support of the Southern Confederacy at the outbreak of the Civil War.

Irish nationalist influence had played its part in American politics and foreign policy decisions since the American Revolution. Immigrants of Irish extraction have been arriving on the shores of America since the landing of the *Mayflower* in 1620 at Plymouth Rock.[[32]](#footnote-33) The circumstances of Irish immigration during the colonial period shed light on why colonial Irish immigrants viewed English rule of the colonies from a different perspective than did their often-better-off immigrant English compatriots. Historians have tended to overlook the magnitude of Irish immigration into the Colonies before the revolution—partly because England and Ireland at the time were considered one entity and partly for want of serious historical research.

One exception, however, is the work of historian Michael Joseph O’Brien (1870-1960) who wrote extensively on the importance of Irish immigration during the Colonial period.[[33]](#footnote-34) O’Brien postulated a significant Irish immigrant contribution to the early growth of the Colonies, using period sources to back up his argument.

O’Brien, referring to “*Nuport-Newes*,” [Newport News, Virginia] points out that Governor Francis Wyatt reported to the London Company in 1622 that he had “great hope if the Irish plantation prosper [in the Virginia Colony] that from Ireland great multitudes of people will be like to come hither.”[[34]](#footnote-35) To keep this labor force subservient, Virginia promulgated a law in 1653 whereby non-indentured Irish servants entering the Colony would be indentured six years if they were above sixteen years old or until they were twenty-four years old if they were under sixteen. This law was repealed in 1659 when it was found that the long period of indenture was retarding the influx of Irish immigrants.

British Parliamentary documents show that agents from New England were given permission in 1643 to collect money to transport to British America “divers poor children driven out of Ireland” presumably displaced by the Cromwell Plantation. These children, most orphaned, were destined to be brought to the New World and sold as indentured servants.[[35]](#footnote-36)

O’Brien cites John P. Prendergast for a description of how some agents collected men and women to be transported to the colonies as indentured servants from 1650 to 1654:

Captain John Vernon was employed by the Commissioners for Ireland into England, and contracted in their behalf with Mr. Sellick and Mr. Leader, under his hand, bearing the date of 14th of September, 1653, to supply them with two hundred and fifty women of the Irish nation above twelve years, and under the age of forty-five, also three hundred men above twelve years of age and under fifty, to be found in the country within twenty miles of Cork, Youghal, and Kinsale, Waterford, and Wexford, to transport them into New England. [Sellick and Leader’s contact in Ireland, Lord Broghill] . . . suggested the required number of men and women might be had from among the wanderers and persons who had no means to get their livelihood in the county of Cork alone. Accordingly, on the 23rd of October, 1653, he was empowered to search for them and arrest them, and to deliver them to Messrs. Sellick and Leader, who were to be at all the charge of conducting them to the water side, and maintaining them from the time they received them; and no person, being once apprehended was to be released but by special order in writing under the hand of Lord Broghill.[[36]](#footnote-37)

The process of apprehending the homeless outlined above seems to guarantee abuse. O’Brien points out stories of poor families being robbed of sons and daughters recounted by immigrants in colonial documents. The persons collected by Sellick were transported on the ship *Goodfellow* to be sold in the colonies as indentured servants. Colonial sources show the arrival of Sellick’s ship during January of 1654 into Marblehead, and later into Boston, Massachusetts and that these Irish servants were brought ashore.[[37]](#footnote-38)

Massachusetts became concerned that an excessive number of Irishmen were being relocated to the colony. On October 29, 1654, a penalty of £50 was levied by the General Court of the Massachusetts Bay Colony on each Irishman entering the colony “on account of their hostility to the English nation.”[[38]](#footnote-39) Based on the shortage of labor and continuous Irish immigration into the colony, O’Brien doubts this law was ever enforced.[[39]](#footnote-40)

O’Brien cites instances of runaway Irish servants, who upon being caught and taken to court, told of being hauled out of their Irish beds in the middle of the night and shipped to America. It is certainly reasonable to suppose that men and women captured in this manner, once they completed their indenture and became part of their community, would support anti-British agitation when given the opportunity.

Conversely, it has been suggested by some British observers that the American Revolution of 1776 “was really an ‘Irish’ or ‘Scots-Irish’ uprising.”[[40]](#footnote-41) But such a theory is a gross over-simplification of a very complex event. According to Nicholas Canny in *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, the Irish only made up about 8% of those who emigrated out of the British Isles from 1600 to 1699, or some 30,000 Irish immigrants. From 1700 to the American Revolution, the Irish made up 43% of those who immigrated, amounting to another 115,000 Irish immigrants.[[41]](#footnote-42) These numbers are about half those used to show the Irish component in the colonial population by another historian, R.F. Foster, Oxford professor of Irish History, as we shall see below. The difference is that Canny is using emigration numbers and Foster is relying on calculations of “Irish stock,” or immigrants and their descendants. Most Irishmen who immigrated before the Revolution were Scots-Irish from Ulster, many of whom settled in Pennsylvania. At least one historian states the Ulster Scots-Irish immigrants played a key role in Pennsylvania’s part in the American Revolution.[[42]](#footnote-43)

That an Irish 10% of the population convinced an unwilling English 90% of the population to revolt against the Crown can be discounted out of hand. But it is reasonable to surmise that the intense anti-British feeling among Irish colonists reinforced the increasing anti-British sentiment among English colonists, and that both groups acted in concert as they took to the battlefield to redress their grievances against the British Crown. Irish immigrants could speak with authority of what the result would be if British America came to be ruled in a like manner to British Ireland*—*the very thing King George III and Parliament appeared to be moving toward in Massachusetts with the passing of a series of “Intolerable Acts” in 1774. The exact weight to give any cross-pollination of Irish and English anti-British feelings is not known; but what is known is that, once the Revolution began, men of Irish origin fought together with men of English origin, united in their desire to end British rule in the Colonies.

The Irish, like all men, and perhaps more than most, are what the ancient philosopher, Aristotle, termed “political creatures.” As early as 1769 an incident that occurred in New York City is related where the “Irish vote” was found in play. During an election campaign speech, a candidate’s spokesman stated:

…that the Irish were poor beggars and that they had come over here upon a bunch of straws. The whole body of Irishmen immediately joined and appeared with straws in their hats.

Responding to what may be the first example of a political straw poll, a broadside was printed and circulated by the candidate’s election committee disassociating itself from the statement.[[43]](#footnote-44) The Irish colonists used the power that rests in a voting bloc to modify political discourse. As Irish immigration to America increased, this ability to influence the political process increased commensurately.

R.F. Foster tells us that up to 350,000 Irishmen were living in America during the colonial period, with about 250,000 of these being “Scots-Irish” from Ulster.[[44]](#footnote-45) According to John Horn in *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, “. . . seventy percent of all British settlers who arrived in America between 1700 and 1780 were from Ireland and Scotland.”[[45]](#footnote-46) By 1770, we may reasonably assume that Irish descendants, combined with Irish immigrant arrivals, totaled 350,000 persons of Irish origin.[[46]](#footnote-47) Men and women of Irish stock, therefore, composed about 10-12% of the colonial population at the time of the Revolution. O’Brien calculated that 3000 Irish immigrants or their descendants, fought in the Continental Army.[[47]](#footnote-48) When the figure of 3000 Irish militiamen is compared to the generally accepted figure of 30,000 militiamen who made up the Continental Army, O’Brien and Foster both arrive at approximately the same Irish component in both military enlistment and the overall population.

Not statistically significant but nevertheless important, history notes that one of the six men killed by British troops during the “Boston Massacre” was an Irish immigrant leatherworker named Patrick Carr. On his death-bed, Carr told a doctor of his surprise at the reluctance of the British troops stationed in America to open fire in the face of mob provocation and he contrasted it to the quick trigger-fingers of British troops quelling riots that he had witnessed firsthand in Ireland.[[48]](#footnote-49)

Nationalist urges arose in the Ulster-Scots Presbyterian communities in Ireland after the success of the American Revolution created by the inequality of opportunity in Ireland for any faith other than members of the Church of England’s Irish branch. The Presbyterians found cause with the ever-present discontented Roman Catholic population suffering under British Penal Laws that restricted Catholics from voting or owning land. Influenced by the French revolution, these nationalists, who called themselves United Irishmen, revolted against British rule in 1798.

The revolt was short-lived and ended in a defeat of the United Irishmen.One result of the defeat was the Act of Dissolution of the Irish Parliament in 1800 passed by the English Parliament. This was followed by the Act of Union that united England and Ireland under one government. These events drove more Irish nationalists to America, injecting fresh enthusiasm into American political elements that urged a strong anti-British foreign policy.[[49]](#footnote-50)

The American Revolution created an environment tolerant of anti-British attitudes that lasted well into the 19th century. In the latter part of the 18th century, Irish nationalists charged with treason in Ireland could choose exile in a country “not at war” with England. America was naturally the refuge of choice.[[50]](#footnote-51) Repression of discontent in Ireland maintained a steady flow of disgruntled Irishmen into the United States in the decades that led up to the 1848 potato famine in Ireland.

Viewing the desperate condition in which many immigrants arrived in America and wishing to aid their countrymen, concerned Irish Americans formed voluntary societies to aid the Irish in their transition to their American surroundings. These societies sprang up principally in urban areas where Irish American emigrants were concentrated. Irish American organizations were also founded with political objectives espousing constitutional change in Ireland or, in some cases, a call for military insurrection.[[51]](#footnote-52) These voluntary organizations were able to amass significant amounts of money obtained from attracting dues-paying members; sometimes these funds were funneled to Home Rule advocates in Ireland.[[52]](#footnote-53) The term Home Rule is juxtaposed in this book to the term Physical Force Nationalism. Historian Marta Ramón makes the distinction between these terms clear:

Irish nationalist politics during the first half of the 1860s was dominated by the confrontation between the revolutionary and the constitutional [Home Rule] approaches to Irish independence, a conflict based on differing attitudes to physical force. While the Fenians stood for revolutionary purity and the idea of the republic, and despised constitutional politics as a useless and dangerous diversion from the ‘true path’, moderate nationalists were content to pursue self-government within the limits of the British constitution….[[53]](#footnote-54)

Irish nationalists who arrived in America prior to 1845 participated in American politics primarily through support of political candidates who stood for a pro-French, anti-British foreign policy:

In 1793 many Irish immigrants had joined the Democratic societies that sprang up to express solidarity with revolutionary France and to combat what were regarded as aristocratic, monarchical and pro-British tendencies in America.[[54]](#footnote-55)

The relatively small number of Irish nationalist activists in any given location before 1845 provided a natural limit on Irish nationalist influence in American politics. Despite this small base, an emerging Irish voice sought to counter any attempt at friendly relations with Britain. Irish Americans entered political life during the presidential campaign of 1800 on the side of the pro-French candidate, Thomas Jefferson. The defeat of the Federalists by Jefferson can, at least in some part, be attributed to the “increasingly sophisticated Irish political machines that were emerging in Philadelphia and New York.”[[55]](#footnote-56)

The War of 1812 against the British was vigorously supported by the Jeffersonian Anti-Federalists and by most Irishmen, and it further strengthened American anti-British sentiment, but by far the most important factor in the rise of Irish influence in American politics came with the 1848 potato famine and the massive immigration that followed. A million and a half Irish immigrants arrived in American ports over a ten-year period, providing a new voting bloc to be courted by American politicians. The peasantry caught up in this exodus held a common belief that “the Almighty, indeed, sent the potato blight, but the English created the famine.”[[56]](#footnote-57) The British government did little to alter this negative belief. Responding to the suggestion that the British government buy out the Irish landlords and provide land for Irish tenant farmers, one Member of Parliament suggested that “[Treasury money] could be far more usefully employed in providing for the emigration of a million Irishmen.”[[57]](#footnote-58)

Prime Minister Palmerston pronounced the Irish exodus beneficial: “. . . [I]t is well known that such emigration is beneficial to the emigrants, and advantageous to those who remain behind.”[[58]](#footnote-59)

Certainly not all Members of Parliament favored reduction of the Irish peasant population as a policy, but it is not difficult to imagine that evicted peasants crowded aboard ships sailing to America were firm in their belief that the British government was the cause of their misery. The English at first acted to supply famine relief on the premise that the people “must not, *under any circumstances*, be permitted to starve,” but, as the reality of the cost of feeding more and more starving Irish sank in, the British government began to hesitate under the possibility “Irish poverty would be the ruin of Britain.” Food shortages, created by attempts to curtail spending converted an excellent chance to furnish proof of the benefits of the Ireland-England Union into a callousness bordering on duplicity, thereby furnishing fresh fodder for the growth of militant Irish nationalism.[[59]](#footnote-60)Many immigrants considered themselves exiles who felt they had not left of their own accord. On the contrary, they were convinced they were forced to flee their native land by a foreign power. Upon their arrival in America “. . . a politically active Irish diaspora emerged.”[[60]](#footnote-61) Immigrants landed in America ready to support any organization that offered a plan to free Ireland in the hope that they might be able to return to the land of their birth.

The spread of Irish nationalism to America outside the reach of British law was to become a serious distraction for the British Empire. Campaigning for the Liberal party in 1868, soon-to-be Prime Minister William Ewart Gladstone saw diaspora nationalism as the root cause of the Irish “problem” and the resulting negative effect it produced on Anglo-American relations:

The people of America wish to stand well with us, but we discharge upon their shores every year perhaps 100,000, perhaps more, of men into whose breasts we ourselves have instilled a deep hatred of ourselves; and these men, finding themselves in a country abounding in resources and in power, and carrying with them the passionate recollections with which they have set out from their native shores, naturally seek to turn the energies of America into channels hostile to us: And what is our miserable policy? To say that these feelings are of American growth! It is flying, gentlemen, in the face of facts*—*it is closing our eyes against the noon day. The passions are passions born and fostered in Ireland, and they are the unhappy children of our misrule …[[61]](#footnote-62)

Philosopher and Member of Parliament John Stuart Mill stated in concrete terms why any solution that did not resolve “landlordism” was bound to fail, ensuring that Irish nationalism would not go away:

The Irish are no longer reduced to tak[ing] anything they can get. They have acquired the sense of being supported by prosperous multitudes of their countrymen on the opposite side of the Atlantic. These it is who will furnish the leaders, the pecuniary resources, the skill, the military discipline, and a great part of the effective force in any future Irish rebellion: And it is the interest of these auxiliaries to refuse to listen to any form of compromise, since no share of its benefits would be for them, while they would lose the dream of a place in the world's eye as chiefs of an independent republic. With these for leaders, and a people like the Irish, always ready to trust implicitly those whom they think hearty in their cause, no accommodation is henceforth possible which does not give the Irish peasant all that he could gain by a revolution*—*permanent possession of the land, subject to fixed burthens.

Let our statesmen be assured that now, when the long deferred day of Fenianism has come, nothing which is not accepted by the Irish tenantry as a permanent solution of the land difficulty, will prevent Fenianism, or something equivalent to it, from being the standing torment of the English government and people.[[62]](#footnote-63)

Notwithstanding Mill’s exaggerated characterization of prosperous multitudes of Irishmen in America, with growing membership rolls, Irish American nationalist organizations began sending monetary aid to like-minded societies in Ireland. The infusion of cash to support Home Rule agitation began to have a negative effect on the stability of British authority in Ireland.

Two years after his Dublin speech in a letter to Queen Victoria, Prime Minister Gladstone reiterated his earlier warnings concerning increasingly belligerent diaspora nationalists:

[British rule in Ireland] is in my opinion, so long as it continues, an intolerable disgrace, and a danger so absolutely transcending all others, that I call it the only real danger of the noble empire of the Queen.[[63]](#footnote-64)

Obviously, Irish nationalists were not privy to this message, but Gladstone’s analysis mirrored the conclusion they had already reached, as they strove to ensure that Gladstone’s perceived “danger” became a reality.

Contrary to whatever expectations they may have held as they boarded the ships, Irish immigrants found that life in the ghettos of America promised a future almost as bleak as that they had left behind.[[64]](#footnote-65) At some point, isolated in a distant land, the immigrant’s perceptions begin to lose touch with the changes that may be occurring in their native country.

This is particularly pertinent to the case of exiles whose personal experiences of war and injustice prior to their departure, and their commitment to continue the struggle while abroad, had them frozen in time.[[65]](#footnote-66)

As they settled into scrabbling for their daily bread, the immigrants became abstracted from the realities of political life back in Ireland. They became convinced that an Irish utopia would miraculously appear in Ireland if only she could free herself from British rule. With various schemes to free Ireland, nationalist organizations promised to restore Ireland to a mythical Gaelic Garden of Eden. Independence was just around the corner and, once achieved, the Irish would be able to return and once again take up their idyllic pastoral life.[[66]](#footnote-67) Bolstered by overt United States hostility toward Britain because of British Anti-Federal government bias during the American Civil War, most of these plans were based on the premise that the United States government would join with the Irish against Britain in the event of an Irish insurrection. It was proposed by some nationalists that, if Irish soldiers could establish a base of operations inside Canada, the United States government would recognize such a *fait accompli* with “the rights of a belligerent in control of its own territory,” as the British had done in the case of the Confederacy.

The Democratic Party machines in the urban areas were quick to see the value of a pro-Ireland plank in their platform and set up a process to naturalize the droves of immigrants disembarking almost daily at ports along the Eastern seaboard converting them into voting citizens they could then herd to polling places on Election Day.

### America’s Irish Nationalists

Most exiled nationalists arriving on America’s shores gravitated toward Irish diaspora communities in Philadelphia, Boston, or New York. These communities had roots that went back to colonial times. Exiles were able to rely on their nationalist credentials in familiar cultural surroundings to find employment and once again take up the cause of Irish freedom. An accumulated knowledge of the cultural and political mores in the United States found in these communities assisted the newcomers to adapt rapidly to their new socio-political environment. The Exiles’ ability to manipulate the press and game the United States’ political system became evident during the 1860s and 1870s when Irish nationalist schemes to free Ireland, at least in England’s eyes, obtained the collusion of the United States government.[[67]](#footnote-68)

Irish Nationalism’s historical roots date from the late 1840s when political unrest was fomented by Daniel O'Connell. O’Connell, called “the Liberator,” was a superlative orator who drew large crowds during his campaign to bring Home Rule to Ireland. Home Rule, sometimes called a Repeal movement, called for the reestablishment of the Irish Parliament that had been removed by England’s Act of Union in 1800. Unrest generated by O’Connell calling for “monster rallies” across Ireland was further augmented by England’s ineffective response to the starvation caused by the potato famine of the 1840s. Throughout his life Daniel O’Connell demanded his followers operate within English law as applied in Ireland. He forbade any discussion within his movement of the use of arms to achieve Home Rule, abiding by his motto that “no political change is worth a drop of human blood.”[[68]](#footnote-69)

In January of 1847, some of the Home Rule nationalists came to believe that physical force was a legitimate alternative if legal agitation did not bring Home Rule and they broke away from O’Connell’s constitutional process. These men, derisively labeled “Young Ireland” by O’Connell, established a network known as the Irish Confederation.[[69]](#footnote-70) The Irish Confederation was composed of a guiding body that managed public reading clubs all over Ireland where the writings of prominent nationalist authors were made accessible to the general populace. As an adjunct to the reading clubs, the society provided an umbrella behind which nationalist activists could meet and plan in secret to “stand up for their rights” and, as citizen soldiers, arm themselves in the model of the “Irish Volunteer” militiamen of 1798.[[70]](#footnote-71)

The success of these reading rooms and the nationalist activity they engendered created a dark foreboding in the offices of the British bureaucrats who ran the Irish government at Dublin Castle, the seat of British rule in Ireland. These administrators saw in the spread of nationalist propaganda the possibility that the turmoil experienced in February of 1848 in France during the establishment of the Second Republic might be repeated on Irish soil. Moving to thwart such a possibility, Parliament suspended *habeas corpus*, permitting British authorities to arrest and hold leaders of the Irish Confederation without showing cause. The swift action of the authorities caught the Irish Confederation nationalists with no plan of action.[[71]](#footnote-72) In July of 1848 the Irish Confederation leaders, facing arrest, opted at the last moment to fight, and launched a poorly-organized rebellion known as the “Young Ireland Rising.” A few scattered outbreaks were squelched easily by the police, and the leaders were either arrested, went underground, or fled the country.

Prior to 1848, the year of the famine, Irish American nationalist societies were small clubs, many tied to Daniel O’Connell’s Repeal of Union campaign in Ireland. These small clubs and societies in America were relatively unnoticed even by Irish Americans. Those of these clubs that recruited new members from among the flood of arriving immigrants experienced a rapid period of growth. As the Irish-born population swelled, perceptive American politicians believed that the votes of naturalized Irish immigrants could be manipulated to determine success or failure of their candidates.[[72]](#footnote-73)

The “Irish vote” came to be pivotal during the election process, especially in large Eastern Seaboard cities. Irish organizations were quick to grasp the reciprocal possibility that they could influence American politics by promising to deliver the Irish vote. Many immigrants spoke English and had grown up in a political environment in Ireland that had similarities to that which they found in the United States. Irish American Ward Bosses and political organizers rose to important positions in big city machine politics. Researchers are still trying to demonstrate that this ephemeral Irish voting block was ever monolithic or malleable other than generally voting Democratic. Whatever the reality was, the political strategy of that era required politicians to capture the Irish vote. A politician claiming to control an Irish voting bloc had to keep up with the rapid cultural changes that were taking place within all Irish urban communities in the 1800s if he were to make his pitch sound plausible. Any politician from 1848 on, who hoped to rouse the Irish vote, had to wave the banner of Irish independence.[[73]](#footnote-74)

The already-assimilated descendants of the Colonial Irish generally did not view themselves as exiled. The Famine Irish, on the other hand, saw their new homeland from a perspective unique to that of other immigrant nationalities and their Colonial Irish cousins. The famine immigrants believed that they had been deliberately driven out of their ancestral homes and forced into exile by a foreign overlord who coveted their land. Grateful to their adopted country for its hospitality, they strived to be good citizens who obeyed the laws, but many also believed that they belonged indivisibly to a unique entity*—*the Irish race, in Gaelic “*clann na nGaedheal*.” Famine Irish immigrants and their second-generation offspring, with a variety of motivations, looked backward wistfully to that imagined lost Utopia to which they could return if Ireland were to become an independent nation.

The clannishness of Irish immigrants was abetted in many instances, passively or actively, by the Roman Catholic Church in America, a church growing larger and more powerful day by day as a result of the immigrant inflow.[[74]](#footnote-75) By creating centers of Catholic activity, the Catholic Church tended to foster concentrations of Irish culture and insulate the Irish from the larger surrounding Protestant community.[[75]](#footnote-76) Many second-generation Irish wanted to break away from this heritage, craving acceptance into that larger community, but were thwarted by the prevailing negative view of Irish immigrants held by the nativist population. A common belief in the Irish community was that the condescending treatment they received from their American neighbors was somehow a result of an unfavorable comparison of the Irish “nation” still under British rule, with the vibrant American nation where the citizens had thrown off the British yoke. “We are slaves in the United States, and . . . the reason is plain: We haven’t an Irish nation. England has defrauded us.”[[76]](#footnote-77) Delegates at a Fenian Brotherhood Congress passed a resolution in 1865 to codify the unity of the Irish diaspora:

Irish Nationality Indestructibility*—*Right to Independence: Resolved, that we declare the said Irish people to constitute one of the distinct nationalities on the earth, and as such justly entitled to all the rights of self-government.[[77]](#footnote-78)

Under that concept no matter where in the world Irishmen resided, they were still citizens of an Irish nation.[[78]](#footnote-79) The Irish nation simply needed a revolution to create the reality. The Irish, the nationalists proclaimed, had the same right to independence from British rule as the Colonial Americans did in 1775. The Irish immigrants embraced the validity of the political system of the United States. That affirmation presupposed reciprocal support by American public opinion, including the condemnation of British rule in Ireland and non-interference by the United States government in Irish-America’s pursuit of an independent Irish nation.

Historian Brian Jenkins, professor of history at Bishop’s University, Sherbrooke, and author of *Fenians and Anglo-American Relations During Reconstruction*, theorizes that famine immigration brought with it a feeling of guilt for leaving the homeland at the time of her greatest travail.[[79]](#footnote-80) This guilt led to a perceived duty to free Ireland. Such guilt may have played a more significant role than even Jenkins hypothesized.

After returning from the funeral of the Irish patriot, Terrance McManus, in Dublin in 1861, Captain Michael Smith, a Fenian funeral delegate from San Francisco, informed a meeting of the “Friends of Ireland” of that duty in a speech in Philadelphia:

Irishmen at home are bound hand and foot. You are here free”—loud cheers— “and you have at your disposal all the means necessary for their deliverances. Loud cheers.[[80]](#footnote-81)

That oratorical guilt, perhaps mixed with a desire for vengeance, contributed to the rise of diaspora nationalism providing members for those societies advocating that physical force be used in the struggle for Irish self-determination. Irish nationalism contained elements of racial and cultural pride and promised to free Ireland within the immigrant’s lifetime. Perhaps the life of a second-class citizen in an Irish ghetto in America was made somewhat more tolerable by this proclaimed bond of national unity*—*but it also placed upon these immigrants the burden of insuring the rebirth of the Irish nation.

The Irish famine kept the passenger ship docks of New York and other Eastern Seaboard cities clogged with immigrants, exponentially increasing a ready-made subscriber base for any newspaper which could provide news of the homeland and of the growing Irish diaspora community. *The* *Irish-American* newspaper founded in New York in 1849 filled this void and rapidly became the spokesman for anti-British, pro-independence Irishmen.

Born in Dublin in 1828, John Savage was one of the first Exiles to land in America who had fought in the 1848 Young Ireland Rising. Savage landed in New York in the fall of 1848.[[81]](#footnote-82)

Other Exiles followed, gravitating into the American nationalist clubs that maintained communication with men in Ireland who founded a secret, oath-bound revolutionary society that Marta Ramón names “The ‘49 Conspiracy.” Included in this group of men were James Fintan Lalor, a County Laois nationalist and founder of a secret oath-bound club in Dublin that later became one of the first cells of the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB); Philip Grey, who, along with John Savage, attacked a police barracks during the 1848 Rising (Grey replaced Lalor in 1849 as the club leader in Dublin); John O’Leary, born in Tipperary in 1830, a nationalist author and later IRB financial manager; and Thomas Clarke Luby, born in Dublin in 1822, who fought in the 1848 Rising and was later appointed editor of the *Irish People,* a newspaper published by the IRB. Luby was captured in a British raid on the newspaper and jailed in 1865. Luby was among the IRB members, also including John Devoy, who were Exiled by the British to America in 1871.[[82]](#footnote-83)

Michael Doheny, self-exiled “felon” after the 1848 Young Ireland Rising, promoted the idea whereby Irish militias would train within the American militia system. Doheny arrived in New York from Paris in January of 1849. He recounted his adventures that finally resulted in his escape from Ireland into exile in a book titled *The* *Felon’s Track*.

Thomas Francis Meagher, who arrived in 1852, was an exiled leader of the 1848 Young Ireland Rising, but was only a lukewarm Fenian. He became a dashing Brigadier General who commanded the “Irish Brigade” in the Union Army during the Civil War. John Mitchel, exiled in 1848 for his call to arms against British rule in Ireland, arrived in 1853. Both these men had escaped from British confinement in Australia.

John O’Mahony, born in 1816 in County Limerick, was a landed aristocrat and the leader of a band of rebels during the 1848 Young Ireland Rising. Arriving from exile in Paris in 1853, O’Mahony was to become the first president of the Fenian Brotherhood.

These men formed part of the core group of “physical-force” nationalists who initiated what would become the Fenian movement in the United States and Ireland.[[83]](#footnote-84)

One Fenian, Michael Phelan was born in Kilkenny, Ireland in 1816 and arrived in America at the age of four and, therefore, was not a participant in the 1848 Young Ireland rising.[[84]](#footnote-85) Phelan was brought up in New York City where he prepared the way for the Exiles of 1848.

The February 1848 revolution in France was taken by the Irish American community in New York as a harbinger of other revolutions to come. The members held a meeting at the Astor Hotel in New York to discuss how to bring about such a change in Ireland. One of the speakers, Michael T. O’Connor, a noted orator of the time, and an Irish expatriate, proclaimed this was the time for Ireland to fight for her freedom. Michael Phelan challenged him on that, asking him: “Can you fight as well as you have spoken?” Phelan pointed out that a brigade was being formed under the title the “Irish Republican Union.” Mr. O’Connor heartily approved the movement and thereupon signed up to join the brigade. Mr. Phelan was next. Among others signing up were John G. Fay and James F Markey.[[85]](#footnote-86)

The Irish Republican Union (IRU) initially constituted a society of Irishmen drilling and training outside the state militia system, but Phelan and other nationalist leaders saw the advantage of enrolling these men into the state militias. The IRU was re-formed into properly manned and officered companies and then enrolled into the New York State militia system. Integration of the Irish militia companies into a state militia required that the IRU’s stated objective of freeing Ireland had to remain a secret. To maintain nationalist focus, the Irish militia members founded a separate club called “Silent Friends.” Many of the men in the new militia units belonged to the Silent Friends. Militias in New York State were commanded by officers appointed by state officials. It is probable that most New York militia commanders were not Irishmen and were unaware of the existence of the Silent Friends and its Irish nationalist goals.

Michael Doheny, mentioned above, who arrived in New York City shortly after the Astor meeting, immediately joined one of the militias and rose to the rank of colonel. Like Phelan, Doheny immediately saw the American militia system as the perfect platform for training and assembling a force of Irish soldiers.[[86]](#footnote-87) Doheny began trying to clear the many obstacles in the way of forming an all-Irish regiment within the New York militia system. Doheny faced growing resistance on the part of the public to all-Irish units and it was important to his cause not to overtly proclaim that all-Irish militia companies were being formed to support a rebellion in Ireland.

Doheny’s carefully chosen words defined the Irish militiaman’s perspective in *The* *Irish-American* a New York newspaper that discussed Irish American issues and provided news from Ireland:

. . . [B]efore another year, I have no doubt there will be in these States 50,000 armed Irishmen, disciplined to defend the honor of their adopted country. Should God so ordain that her first contest would be with England, how they would bless His name for affording them one day of vengeance.[[87]](#footnote-88)

Traveling the public-speaking circuit in the 1850s was one way to enhance your take-home pay. Doheny, an excellent orator, spoke at various Irish American gatherings expounding on Ireland’s right to be free. Thomas Francis Meagher and John Mitchel, after landing in New York, set off on their own lecture circuit tours to speak for the cause of Irish freedom. Their speeches in Irish American communities helped to fill the militia rolls.

The advent of the Crimean War in 1853 seemed to fulfill the “England’s misfortune” requirement in Irish nationalism’s axiom, “England’s misfortune is Ireland’s opportunity.” *The* *Irish-American* published entire speeches of Meagher and Mitchel as they crisscrossed America, promoting Irish independence. Long lists of Crimean War casualties, which included many Irish names, began to be published daily, implying the British were fighting a war that spilled the blood of duped Irish recruits. Editorials and correspondence began to call for Irishmen to arm for the coming battle with England. After the Crimean War began, donations increased to organizations founded to provide funding for the various strategies proposed to take advantage of England’s Crimean “misfortune.”

In April of 1854, a society was launched that effectively merged the IRU and the Silent Friends. The new organization was called the Irishmen’s Universal Civil and Military Republican Union.[[88]](#footnote-89) The new organization incorporated a critical change to the method for financing all-Irish militias. Before the change, the IRU had been financed by collecting dues directly from the members enrolled in military training. A significant achievement of the “Civil and Military” merger was that it provided a conduit for collecting civilian financial contributions to the military organization. The new organization would now collect dues from those men who were not willing or able to join in active training but were happy to contribute to a fund to support military action in Ireland. The enlistment of Irishmen nationwide into the Fenian Brotherhood in 1865, can, in no small part, be traced to back to this new strategy. The New York clubs merged or were absorbed into the Irishmen’s Universal Civil and Military Republican Union in 1854.[[89]](#footnote-90)

The enrollment of Irishmen as soldiers led to an increasing number of predominately Irish military squadrons within the United States’ militia system. All-Irish militia companies were soon found drilling and marching in holiday parades in cities that had Irish American communities. Wild claims were circulated about the number of militia-trained troops that were ready to sail in the event of an insurrection.

In 1854, Michael Doheny founded the Emmet Monument Association (EMA), a secret society of Irishmen from the various New York militias who were ready to fight for Ireland. Doheny assured his credulous emissary to Ireland, Joseph Denieffe, also an Exile of 1848, that in September of 1855, 30,000 armed Irishmen intended to sail to Ireland and liberate the island. Doheny asked that Denieffe relay this information to as many nationalists as he could locate upon his arrival. Denieffe states in his memoirs, *A Personal Narrative of the Irish Revolutionary Brotherhood*, that he accepted the task and sailed off to Ireland “with a cheerful heart” to report the good news to whomsoever would listen. The troops, of course, did not arrive, prompting Denieffe to add a somber addendum: “Oh, what a charming period is youth, when nothing seems impossible.”[[90]](#footnote-91) The 30,000 soldiers in 1855 were a figment of Doheny’s imagination, but, as will be seen, the seeds of such an army had been sown.

Another society existed in New York founded in support of Daniel O’Connell’s Repeal movement, called the “Friends of Ireland.” Many members were non-Irish native-born Americans who wished to show support for Irish self-determination. However, the fiery anti-British rhetoric of some the Irish nationalists was disconcerting to these Americans. Warnings were given to exuberant Irish nationalists by Robert Tyler, president of the Friends of Ireland and son of the former U.S. President, John Tyler. Robert Tyler reminded the nationalists that arming troops on U.S. soil to invade a foreign nation would violate the U.S. Constitution.[[91]](#footnote-92)

The old split now occurred in America between Home Rule and physical-force nationalism and, under the direction of New York’s Roman Catholic Archbishop John Hughes, the Friends of Ireland refused to allow the Young Ireland Exiles, Doheny, Meagher, and other strident nationalists, to take part in their ceremonies.

Among native-born Americans the nationalist’s anti-British rhetoric, combined with the flood of Roman Catholic immigrants, brought about the rise of an anti-Catholic, anti-immigrant “Know Nothing Party.” Know Nothing Party rhetoric encouraged mobs that attacked Irish ghettos and burned Catholic churches. Not wanting to antagonize public support for their cause, the nationalists mellowed their tone and insisted that, although the organization would do all in its power to bring about an Irish Republic, they were American citizens first and would always operate inside the constraints of the laws of their new homeland. With the commencement of the American Civil War, Union states’ reaction against militant Irish nationalism diminished in the wake of a British Pro-Confederate policy. Irish nationalist militia recruits were now being assured that the U. S. Constitution would not be violated if Irish American soldiers sailed to Ireland and, upon landing, were supplied with weapons to fight the British.

In ten short years, physical-force Irish nationalism went from small groups of conspirators plotting in backrooms in New York City, to large conventions where delegates met yearly, representing thousands of subscribers to the cause of Irish independence. At the outbreak of the American Civil War, early robust Irish American enlistment into Union regiments coupled with the British pro-South policy inclined public reaction in the North to a more positive perception of Irish nationalism. Irish nationalists took advantage of the change.

. . . Irish Americans began to engage in significant efforts to drive a wedge into the British-American alliance . . ., an effort further emboldened by the sympathy that the textile-manufacturing British elite showed for the cotton-growers of the secessionist South during the Civil War.[[92]](#footnote-93)

### Irish Exiles

The history of Irish American nationalism cannot be understood without looking at the practice of offering nationalists and malcontents arrested in Ireland “exile to a country not at war with England.” A process that was pursued, sometimes directly and other times inadvertently, by the British Empire in its effort to combat periodic Irish unrest fomented by the nationalists.

Exiled Irish nationalists proved the main catalyst, when combined with massive Irish immigration, from which many Irish American nationalist organizations sprang. The unintended result of concentrating exiled nationalists in America was the birth and rapid growth, out of the reach of British authority, of “physical force” organizations that began to urge and, in some cases openly plan for, the military overthrow of British rule in Ireland.[[93]](#footnote-94)

Militant nationalist activity rose exponentially as the result of two important upheavals in Ireland that sent large numbers of Irish nationalists into exile in the United States during the latter part of the 19th century.

The first event was the failed uprising of 1848 called “Young Ireland.” The rapid defeat of a few scattered bands of pike-brandishing Irish peasants, followed by the arrest of the leaders, sent many participants fleeing to America to avoid incarceration. These Exiles were later joined by others who managed to escape their confinement or who were subsequently released from British prisons. The prominent exiled leaders of 1848 who fled to the United States were John Mitchel, Thomas Francis Meagher, Michael Doheny, Joseph Denieffe, John Savage, Richard O’Gorman, Michael Cavanagh, and John O’Mahony.[[94]](#footnote-95) Young Ireland Exiles constituted the core element of Irish diaspora nationalism in America prior to the arrival in 1871 of a new group of released Exiles as recounted below.

In 1858 the EMA, an Irish American nationalist organization, later named the Fenian Brotherhood, sent envoys to Ireland to establish a linkage to Ireland’s nationalist community. As a result of their efforts, nationalists in Ireland were contacted and a similar organization called the Irish Revolutionary Brotherhood—the IRB—was formed. These two societies agreed to operate in concert. By 1865 the nationalist threat to Ireland’s political stability was sufficient to cause the British Parliament to suspend *habeas corpus* and move against the IRB. Wholesale arrests of IRB members lasted from 1865 through 1867. Prolonged prison terms and evidence of mistreatment of the nationalists by British jailers created constant political agitation for amnesty in Ireland, England, and the United States. Many who secured early release or who were not captured boarded ships to America.

The second important Exile-producing event happened in 1871 after the crescendo of demands for amnesty finally forced the authorities to release most IRB prisoners. Most prisoners were released on the condition that they not set foot on British or Irish soil until their original sentences expired.[[95]](#footnote-96) Fourteen hard-core IRB leaders were released and sent to New York in January 1871. Also released were IRB prisoners that had been transported from 1865 to 1868 into exile to serve their prison sentences in Australia. Of the men who were released in Australia from 1869 to 1870, some were allowed to return to Ireland, some stayed in Australia, and the rest elected to immigrate to America.[[96]](#footnote-97) The ever-growing flow of nationalists arriving in the United States led quite naturally to increased anti-British activity. With few exceptions, these Exiles maintained contact with each other, joined nationalist organizations, and resumed the struggle for Ireland’s freedom.[[97]](#footnote-98) As mentioned in the Introduction, the Exiles gravitated into the hierarchy of both the Fenian Brotherhood and the Clan-na-Gael. Exiles can be found in prominent leadership positions in most Irish American nationalist organizations up through the 1990s.

# PART II

# Full of Sound and Fury

### The Irish Connection

Ireland’s drive to eliminate British rule during the 1800s embodied the two main philosophies defined by the methods their adherents believed should be used to achieve self-government for Ireland. They are “Home Rule” and “physical-force nationalism.”

Home Rulers believed that repeal or modification of the Act of Union that had abolished the Irish Parliament in 1800 could be accomplished through legal agitation combined with action by members of the British Parliament elected from Ireland. Home Rule was the basis of various political parties, most prominent of which were Daniel O’Connell’s Repeal Association and, later, Charles Stewart Parnell’s Parliamentary Party, both these parties hoped that agitation and electing sympathetic MPs could bring pressure to bear on Parliament to enact laws that would reestablish the Irish Parliament in Dublin.

Physical-force nationalists believed that relying on Home Rule agitation and formal legislative action was a worthless endeavor and that Parliament, as it was constituted, would never allow Home Rule in Ireland. The physical-force strategy called for revolution and the establishment of an Irish Republic based on the United States model. The Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB) was an organization founded in Ireland which avowed to carry out that revolution.

The Fenian Brotherhood in America evolved after a period of infighting among various nationalist societies in New York. The Emmet Monument Association (EMA) founded by John O’Mahony and Michael Doheny was “launched in March 1855, [as] the successor to the Irishmen's Civil and Military Republican Union” which had split apart as a result of internal quarreling among the leaders.[[98]](#footnote-99) In February of 1856, the EMA officially disbanded, again mostly as a result of internal feuding but also because the end of the Crimean War had freed up British forces which, if needed, could be used to crush any Irish revolt*—*a fact that made any insurrection unlikely. However, the EMA still existed in a thirteen-member committee that had been appointed to revive the group at the next favorable opportunity.

At the same time, in Ireland, James Stephens, nicknamed the “Hawk,” a veteran of the Young Ireland rising of 1848, was touring the countryside giving lectures to nationalist clubs and renewing old nationalist acquaintances.[[99]](#footnote-100) Michael Doheny and John O’Mahony, since their escape from Ireland, maintained communication from New York City with Stephens.[[100]](#footnote-101) Members of the EMA committee got together at the end of 1857 and decided to approach Stephens to find out if he would agree to prepare Ireland for a rebellion in concert with their Irish American organization.[[101]](#footnote-102) They dispatched a committee representative, Owen Considine, to contact Stephens. Stephens was found traveling Ireland as “Mr. Shook”[[102]](#footnote-103) exhorting nationalists to keep their pikes sharpened. He agreed to join the Irish Americans on condition that he be a “virtual dictator” of their organization.[[103]](#footnote-104) Stephens as the supreme leader was not what the group in New York had had in mind, but, with no viable alternative, they reluctantly agreed to his terms.

In 1858, members of the EMA Committee formed a loose organization which gradually grew into a nation-wide network of clubs called “Circles.” Abetted by the pre-bellum military environment in America, many members of these Circles were enrolled in state militia companies. At some point John O’Mahony joined the group and was appointed as president or “Head Centre.” O’Mahony named this organization the “Fenian Brotherhood.”[[104]](#footnote-105)

James Stephens did his part in Ireland by founding the Irish Revolutionary Brotherhood (IRB) on St. Patrick’s Day, March 17, 1858. The IRB then began recruiting Irishmen for the coming rebellion.[[105]](#footnote-106) James Fintan Lalor, a County Laois nationalist, died at age 42 in December of 1849. Members of Lalor’s secret oath-bound group in Dublin made up the nucleus of that first IRB club founded by James Stephens. Philip Grey then extended Lalor’s organization in Ireland in 1848. This group of secret clubs was in communication with various New York Irish American nationalist clubs..

The rapid rise of the Fenian Brotherhood in America to an estimated 40,000 members[[106]](#footnote-107) was in direct proportion to the organization’s ability to convince potential members that they had a workable plan to free Ireland and the wherewithal to get it done. While visiting Fenian “Circles” in the United States on a fund-raising tour in 1864, Stephens filled membership subscription lists and the Fenian treasury by promising with a flourish, “war or dissolution in 1865.”[[107]](#footnote-108) Aroused Fenians pledged men, money, and arms to support the underground army that was awaiting Stephens’ signal. Stephens’ pronouncement, considered premature by O’Mahony, put tremendous pressure on the Fenian Brotherhood to do something to justify all the money that was being collected. Grandiose plans to liberate Ireland were detailed in open meetings and in interviews in the American press with Fenian leaders. The United States government, more interested in the Irish vote than British opinion, did nothing to curtail all the frenetic activity. But it was more than just the Irish vote that lay behind the government’s inaction.

### A Nadir in British-American Relations

British-American relations deteriorated rapidly during the Civil War. Britain, while ostensibly remaining neutral, followed a policy distinctly favoring the Confederate States. She was glad to see her economic rival in serious trouble. Upon the outbreak of hostilities, Lincoln announced a blockade of Southern ports and Queen Victoria responded with a proclamation of neutrality which by law gave the Confederate government “the rights of a belligerent in control of its own territory.”[[108]](#footnote-109) British expectation was that the Union would not be able to maintain a credible blockade of Southern ports.[[109]](#footnote-110) International law did not recognize a verbal blockade, it required a blockade maintained by force that prevented penetration of foreign ships.[[110]](#footnote-111) The Union blockade was largely ineffectual during 1861 and British ships were able to dock at Southern ports with relative ease.[[111]](#footnote-112) The British merchant marine continued bringing manufactured goods to the Confederate States and trading for cotton in order to supply British clothing factories, albeit with a risk of capture and prosecution if caught while crossing the porous Union blockade.

British collaboration with the Confederate States soon escalated beyond blockade running. President Lincoln and his Secretary of State, William S. Seward, began to contemplate a military response when, despite numerous warnings, the British government failed to stop Laird, the Birkenhead shipbuilder, from manufacturing and selling warships to the Confederacy. On May 30, 1862, a vessel listed as “290” and later named *Enrica*, slipped her moorings from Moelfra Roads near Liverpool. The *Enrica* was then christened the CSS *Alabama* and sailed to the island of Terceira in the Azores where she was outfitted with armament.[[112]](#footnote-113) The *Alabama* immediately began sinking Union ships in the Atlantic. The *Alabama* sank, burned, or captured sixty-nine Union merchant vessels before the USS *Kearsarge* finally sank her in a sea battle on June 19, 1864, outside the French harbor of Cherbourg.

English courts ruled that such vessels could be built and sold under neutrality laws if they did not have armament when they left port. With the law now in the shipbuilder’s favor, two more warships designated for sale to the Confederacy moved toward completion. United States Ambassador Charles Francis Adams sent a blunt note to Lord Russell, British Secretary for Foreign Affairs, warning that if the ship-building continued “. . . [I]t would be superfluous in me to point out to your Lordship that this is War.”[[113]](#footnote-114) This paused the British and, with the vision before them of a million and a half veteran American soldiers under arms along an essentially unguarded Canadian border, the British government quietly purchased the two vessels for the Royal Navy and thereby prevented their departure for “neutral ports.”[[114]](#footnote-115)

Britain was now a *bête noir* across most sectors of society in the Union states. Possibilities that Britain and France would recognize the Confederacy as a separate nation hung like a dark cloud over Washington during the entire war.[[115]](#footnote-116) After the war, Secretary of State Seward, referring to the anxiety created by the potential for official recognition of the Confederacy, told Sir Frederick Bruce, Britain’s Foreign Minister in Washington, “. . . in such a case, I myself and every American would have become a Fenian.”[[116]](#footnote-117)

Britain withdrew its recognition of Confederate “belligerency rights” after the war, but only after counseling with France and modifying the withdrawal with loopholes designed to allow Confederate ships a chance to escape United States’ repossession. One modification to the withdrawal of belligerent rights “would allow vessels-of-war of insurgents or pirates to enter or leave British Ports, whether for disarmament or otherwise.” The British government went on to say such a vessel, after divesting itself of armament, could “assume the flag of any nation recognized by her Majesty’s Government.” This effectively permitted Confederate ships and crews to retain ownership of their vessels instead of turning them over the United States Government.

Secretary Seward was not happy. He responded by informing Britain’s Foreign Minister that “the customary courtesies are not to be paid by our vessels to those of the British navy.”[[117]](#footnote-118) The actions of the British reinforced the common view held in Washington that British policy had been anti-Union. Sir Frederick Bruce cautioned Lord Clarendon, successor to Lord Russell, not to expect that simply settling claims for the damages caused by the CSS *Alabama* would remove the threat that United States might use the “belligerent rights” option in the future:

When I say a settlement of the *Alabama* case w’d [would] not allay the feeling here against us, I do not wish to say it w’d do no good at all. No doubt it w’d facilitate the observance of neutrality, if we were at War. But it w’d not secure us against great readiness to acknowledge as belligerents, any insurrection in Ireland or else-where.[[118]](#footnote-119)

The anti-British hostility publicly manifested in Anglo-American relations as the war ended encouraged the Fenians, who ratcheted up their bellicose rhetoric. The real capability of the Fenian military, especially after the Fenians split into two factions, was an enigma to both the British and the American governments. Bruce complained to Lord Clarendon:

As yet, we have no success in getting any authentic information as to the amount of resources at the command of the rival associations of O’Mahony and Sweeney.[[119]](#footnote-120)

Arms shipments were noted heading toward the Canadian border. To get a clearer picture of Fenian strength, Bruce employed a spy to infiltrate the Fenian leadership. Britain increased pressure on Bruce to urge the United States to curtail Fenian activity.[[120]](#footnote-121)

Bruce in Washington and Governor Lord Charles Monck of British North America received responses they considered totally inadequate to urgent requests that the United States take immediate action against the Fenian Brotherhood. Meanwhile, both wings of the Fenian Brotherhood continued stockpiling arms, collecting money, and recruiting young men into all-Irish state militias.[[121]](#footnote-122)

Untrammeled by British law, a “virtually established” Irish nation rose up in America.[[122]](#footnote-123) Fenian soldiers, drilling with surplus rifles boasted to newspaper reporters that they were about to free Ireland. Britain’s pro-emigration Irish policy of the famine years had backfired. “England, finding Ireland a domestic anxiety, had turned her into an international danger.”[[123]](#footnote-124) Minister Bruce continued to urge Secretary Seward that something ­­­­­be done. But these protests fell silently onto ambassadorial carpets. Seward would change the subject and discuss the Queen’s Neutrality Proclamation and English-built raiders sinking Union vessels.[[124]](#footnote-125) The result was always a diplomatic impasse and a blind eye cast by the United States government on the increasing activity of the Irish nationalists. The unsavory Fenian hot potato was quickly passed back to whom, in Seward and Johnson’s view, were its rightful owners on February 22, 1866, when Seward conveyed the United States government’s position to United States Minister Charles Adams in Britain. Irishmen came to the United States, according to Seward,

. . . [I]nfluenced altogether by feelings, sentiments and views which they cherish as Irishmen, notwithstanding their change of domicile, place of residence or citizenship. In a few words the Fenianagitation is a British and not an American movement . . ..[[125]](#footnote-126)

Minister Bruce reasoned that continuing to make public protests against Fenian activity would just lead to further deterioration in Anglo-American relations and he decided to back off his rhetoric.[[126]](#footnote-127) Eschewing the more confrontational policy advocated by Her Majesty’s government, Bruce began a policy of friendly, behind-the-scenes prodding and once committed, he stuck to his guns. April 17, 1866, just two days before the first Fenian invasion of Canada, Bruce declared to Lord Clarendon “Upon my head be the responsibility of following this course.”[[127]](#footnote-128)

Usually uncomfortable having to show any deference to an “Irish voice” in domestic politics, the United States government now found that the voice of militant Irish-America was providing convenient pressure on Britain. Viewed as just retribution for her pro-South stance, the “Fenian threat” provided Washington with leverage in pursuit of the *Alabama* claims.[[128]](#footnote-129) The United States military and civilian authorities stoked the fire by openly selling surplus Civil War armament to the Fenians while lamenting to Bruce there was nothing they could do because no laws were being broken.[[129]](#footnote-130)

As the Civil War ended, Britain became increasingly concerned that the United States would invade Canada. Queen Victoria wrote pessimistically about the outcome of such an event in her journal, noting “. . . the impossibility of our being able to hold Canada. . . .”[[130]](#footnote-131) The Queen was not alone in seeing such a threat.Lord Lyons, British envoy to the United States had warned Lord Russell in 1861:

It must be remembered too that if the war with the South lasts any considerable time, the United States may find themselves at the close of it with a numerous, and probably not inefficient army, ready and eager for an invasion of British North America.[[131]](#footnote-132)

The United States federal government, characterized by British Prime Minister Palmerston to Queen Victoria as “not guided by reasonable men,” was suspected by the British government of encouraging the Fenians in order to provide a pretext for annexation of Canada.[[132]](#footnote-133) In 1865, Minister Bruce confronted Secretary Seward, pointing out that, while on duty with the United States Army, Brevet U.S. Army Colonel Thomas Sweeny was taking part in Fenian meetings as Fenian Major General Sweeny of the Irish Republican Army and also functioning as the Fenian Secretary of War.

It seems to me that [Sweeny] ought to be called to choose between the North American and the Irish Republic. The effect of him acting as Secretary of War is to confirm the Fenian dupes in the belief that the government of the United States favours the movement.[[133]](#footnote-134)

Just exactly who were the “dupes” at that point was hard to determine.On December 29, 1865, because of Bruce’s complaints, the United States Army did indeed dismiss Sweeny for being away from his post. But when Sweeny applied for reinstatement, President Johnson ordered Secretary of War Stanton to revoke the dismissal. Sweeny was fully reinstated on April 18, 1867. In July of 1867 Sweeny was once again before a court-martial for, among other things, drunk and disorderly conduct during a St. Patrick’s Day celebration but he escaped with a relatively innocuous docking of six months’ pay. In May 1870, Sweeny was able to retire from the army as a full Brigadier General.[[134]](#footnote-135) The formal retirement of Brigadier General Sweeny, the leader of the Senate Wing’s 1866 Canadian invasion, during overt preparations for O’Neill’s attack two weeks later on Canada is an interesting “coincidence” to contemplate. Whether Sweeny’s retirement at full pension was coincident or premeditated, once again, the Irish vote proved more potent than British opinion.

Prior to the 1866 invasion, it was obvious to Bruce that the United States government was not going to act against Fenian Brotherhood activity in America until an overt act took place. “I think this gov’t is on the alert about Fenians, and I feel sure no active pressure would make them more so.”[[135]](#footnote-136) Meanwhile, action seemed to be called for somewhere and the British government shifted its focus to the IRB, the Fenian’s sister organization in Ireland, as that organization geared up for the coming battle.

### The IRB Caged but the Hawk Escapes

The end of the Civil War freed up many Irish American veterans who were members of the Fenian Brotherhood. More than a hundred of these men were sent on trips to Ireland to assist the great insurrection that Stephens had promised.[[136]](#footnote-137) Documents seized by the British authorities showed that these Irish-born veterans intended to use their experience to train and lead IRB military units.[[137]](#footnote-138) The IRB stepped up its recruitment of British soldiers of Irish birth stationed in England and Ireland. Britain concluded that the Fenians and the IRB might possess the wherewithal to provoke an insurrection.

British authorities in Ireland made a preemptive strike on September 15, 1865. The office of the IRB newspaper, *The Irish People*, was raided by the Dublin police, who seized the principal IRB leaders and put them in jail. James Stephens, the IRB supreme leader, escaped the first dragnet but two months later, on November 11, 1865, he was finally arrested.[[138]](#footnote-139)

Then, an amazing thing happened. Having quashed the IRB revolt and captured the IRB leader, Britain then took her eyes off the prize. On November 24, 1865, less than two weeks after his capture, James Stephens opened his cell door in Richmond prison, strode through a labyrinth of passages out into the prison yard, climbed over two prison walls, and disappeared into a fog-shrouded Irish night never to be captured again.[[139]](#footnote-140) In addition to an empty cell, Stephens left behind a lot of questions. Despite a thorough investigation by Her Majesty’s government, the officers of Dublin Castle[[140]](#footnote-141) and Richmond prison were unable to produce anyone responsible for the escape, leaving those questions unanswered. Instead of bursting the IRB bubble, British authorities provided conclusive proof of IRB ingenuity.

Only years later did it become known that John Joseph Breslin, a prison hospital worker, had made copies of Stephens’ cell key and had guided Stephens to an awaiting IRB escape party led by John Devoy, which included Michael Cody, Denis Duggan, Martin Hogan, and several others.[[141]](#footnote-142) At the time, although it was thought to be an inside job, no hint as to the identity of Stephens’ accomplices ever surfaced.

John Breslin sailed to America several months later. Denis Duggan was captured and, after his release, immigrated to become a carriage-maker in New York. Michael Cody was captured by the authorities along with other Fenians, including John Boyle O’Reilly and, along with other assorted felons, they were shipped to Western Australia on January 9, 1867 to serve their time in a prison located in the town of Fremantle.[[142]](#footnote-143) Three months later, John Devoy was captured and brought up on charges of recruiting Irish soldiers in the British Army for the IRB and was sentenced to fifteen years’ penal servitude.[[143]](#footnote-144) We shall see that eleven years later John Breslin, Michael Cody, Denis Duggan, Martin Hogan, John Boyle O’Reilly and John Devoy would once again reunite as participants in the *Catalpa* rescue.

### The 1866 Fenian Invasions of Canada

Marta Ramón in her study of James Stephens summed up the chaos in the IRB after the closingof the Irish People and the arrests of the leaders:

Wishing to keep strict control of all the threads of his organization, [Stephens] had neglected to establish a proper command structure and had not determined the procedures to elect a substitute. Stephens’ closest collaborators . . . had been arrested and the Centres had been left leaderless and disoriented. [[144]](#footnote-145)

The scene of action then shifted back to the United States where John O’Mahony and his lieutenants struggled to cope with the arrest and imprisonment of the IRB leaders in Ireland. With no structure in Ireland, the insurrection that had been promised was put on hold. The monetary resources that had been collected by the Fenians for a now-postponed insurrection became the source of an internal struggle. Modern Irish nationalist and an ex-British prisoner himself, Irish playwright Brendan Behan once commented that the first order of business for any Irish nationalist organization is “the split.” The Fenians proved no exception as the organization began to unravel. Some members of the hierarchy began to show impatience with O’Mahony’s plodding pace and his seeming lack of any concrete strategy for the anticipated Irish rebellion.

A Fenian Congress in Philadelphia called to order in October 1865 presented the so-called “men of action” with an opportunity to limit John O’Mahony’s control over the structure of the organization. The men of action wanted to develop an alternative to landing troops on the shores of what they perceived was an unprepared Ireland.

Led by Fenian Senator William R. Roberts, the men of action seized the moment. Roberts told the assembly that the size and readiness of the IRB organization in Ireland had been exaggerated and that Stephen’s plan for the uprising was impractical. Roberts convinced the delegates to support a change in the leadership structure.[[145]](#footnote-146) Changes to the constitution were introduced and carried in Philadelphia that forced John O’Mahony to subordinate himself to “democratic” principles. The new structure contributed to organizational chaos in the Fenian Brotherhood. Even though an open democratic forum is not the best venue for conspiring to overthrow an established government, the Fenian Brotherhood, undaunted, recreated their organization modeled on the American democracy. They established a Senate represented by an elected council, a House represented by the delegates sent by the Circles to the annual Fenian Congress and a President represented by O’Mahony.

These changes removed restraints from the many diverse viewpoints that existed within the Brotherhood and gave this diversity an opportunity to debate. With the treasury full and the weapons acquired, the membership demanded their leaders take them into battle. The men of action believed that they had a much better chance to achieve freedom for Ireland by invading and holding part of Canada. An established military foothold in Canada would provoke the United States into a war with the British or, at the least, would provide a base of operations against British interests. John O’Mahony remained resolute against any precipitate use of the Fenian military other than a landing in Ireland and he emphasized the need to wait for the IRB in Ireland to reform itself.

The structure created in Philadelphia opened the way for a split within the Fenian Brotherhood. Ostensibly created as a counterbalance to O’Mahony’s powers, the new Senate council, composed of the men of action, began to chart a new course for the organization. Now called “President” instead of Head Centre, O’Mahony’s decision-making ability was circumscribed, and his actions required Senate Council approval. Despite O’Mahony’s objections, the invasion of Canada was officially adopted as a military option.[[146]](#footnote-147) In a letter written to James Stephens on December 9, 1865, John O’Mahony describes the opposition the two of them were facing: “The traitors are all about throwing us both over-board and giving up Ireland for Canada.”[[147]](#footnote-148)

Fenian Senator William Roberts and the men of action had the bit in their teeth. The Roberts faction, now called the Senate Wing, shifted Fenian focus toward a Canadian invasion. The naïve concept that Irish immigrants living in Canada and a hypothetically alienated French-Canadian populace would unite and join in the fight against the English in British North America was sold to the membership. Their premise was not based on any legitimate analysis of the Irish-Canadian or French-Canadian cultures*—*cultures significantly different from the Irish American culture—but merely as a way of convincing themselves that any Canadian invasion was destined to succeed.[[148]](#footnote-149) A couple of months before the invasion, on March 22, 1866, attendees at a meeting of French annexationists, men who were in favor of the United States annexing Canada, came out vehemently against any Fenian invasion. Such an invasion, said the annexationists, would force French Canadians to take up arms against any invaders of their farms and villages, an event that was guaranteed to alienate the French-Canadians who were, to that point, sympathetic with the Fenian goal of Irish independence.[[149]](#footnote-150)

O’Mahony and his followers struck back and called a Fenian Congress of their own in New York. The members who still favored O’Mahony’s insurrection in Ireland strategy were christened the “O’Mahony Wing,” causing wags to comment that the Fenian movement had become “all wings and no body.”[[150]](#footnote-151) Both factions attempted to gain control of the Fenian treasury, and both were under heavy pressure to act to justify the large amounts of money collected during the so-called “final call” for an insurrection, now made impossible by the arrests in Ireland. To regain the money siphoned off by the Senate Wing for the Canadian invasion, O’Mahony issued Irish bonds without the now-required Senate approval. The Senate took this as a direct challenge to their authority and removed O’Mahony from office.

Although defrocked by Roberts and the Senate Wing, O’Mahony still exercised influence over a significant number of Fenian Circles, mostly concentrated in the New York City area. The split was now official, and O’Mahony called for a Fenian Congress to meet in New York on January 3, 1866, where he proceeded to scrap the changes made in Philadelphia and restored himself as Head Centre of the Fenian Brotherhood.[[151]](#footnote-152) No Senate Wing “men of action” attended this meeting except for Fenian Secretary of War, Thomas Sweeny. Sweeny was invited by the Congress to speak, and he made a plea for unity; his effort was rebuffed.[[152]](#footnote-153)

The Senate Wing then called all delegates to a Pittsburgh Congress February 19, 1866, where William Roberts, James Gibbons, and Thomas Sweeny showcased their version of the Fenian Brotherhood. The Pittsburg Congress was the prelude to an invasion of Canada. With a fight on the horizon, men flocked to the Senate Wing banner. Sweeny’s military department had been given $50,000 by the Philadelphia congress to prepare for the Canadian invasion, and the Pittsburgh Congress ceremoniously approved General Sweeny’s invasion plan.[[153]](#footnote-154)

To counter the groundswell of defections to the Senate Wing, O’Mahony called a military meeting in New York for February 28, 1866, and used his newspaper, *The Irish People*, to announce that imminent movement could also be expected from his organization.[[154]](#footnote-155) With all the Fenian wing-flapping and saber-rattling it was not surprising that Fenian soldiers picked up their guns and headed toward Canada.

Which Wing moved first, however, was a big surprise.

On April 5, 1866, Fenians soldiers loyal to the O’Mahony Wing set off for Eastport, Maine. In a complete reversal of his policy, O’Mahony ordered the Fenian troops still loyal to his authority to invade Canada.[[155]](#footnote-156) Urged on by Fenian Treasurer Bernard Doran Killian, O’Mahony planned to upstage the Senate Wing. Soldiers began assembling at Eastport in preparation for an attack on Campobello, a small island belonging to New Brunswick. Once a foothold was established on the island, they would be recognized by the United States government, Killian’s theory went, and that would give Fenians a base of operations against British shipping and a negotiating chip for Home Rule in Ireland.

Aware of the impending merger of the Fenian soldiers with a large Fenian arms shipment sailing into Eastport Harbor, British Foreign Minister Sir Frederick Bruce sent an urgent note to Secretary Seward requesting that those two elements not be allowed to connect. A telegram received by Navy Secretary Gideon Welles from Commander Cooper of the USS *Winooski* confirmed that the Fenian ship had just arrived in Eastport. The Bruce note was passed around at a cabinet meeting in Washington D C. Naval Secretary Welles enjoyed the discomfiture of his fellow cabinet members who were well aware they ought to do something to stop the invasion but were not willing to upset the Fenians and jeopardize the Irish vote. An amused Welles writes in his diary:

I observe that these men are very chary about disturbing the Fenians, and I do not care to travel out of the line of duty to relieve them. I therefore sent word that I was content to leave the subject with Cooper till to-morrow, when General Meade would doubtless be at Eastport; if not, the civil authorities were there, with whom the Navy would cooperate, or whom they could assist.[[156]](#footnote-157)

Unfortunately for the Fenians, when U.S. Army Major General George Gordon Meade appeared in Eastport, he showed none of the reticence exhibited by the Washington politicians. The arms shipment, located aboard the Fenian schooner *E H Pray*, was immediately impounded. Without arms and cartridges, the whole affair collapsed, accomplishing little more than exposing Fenian incompetence.[[157]](#footnote-158) In violation of his support for Ireland policy, O’Mahony had thrown away his credibility and thousands of dollars from the Fenian treasury on what the Senate Wing sneeringly referred to as the “Eastport Fizzle.”[[158]](#footnote-159)

Fenian Brotherhood founder and president, John O’Mahony, was now in disgrace. His Irish counterpart, James Stephens, who had come to America in response to a request made by O’Mahony prior to the invasion, booked in at the Metropolitan Hotel in New York and it was there that O’Mahony handed Stephens his resignation. In an open letter to O’Mahony, James Stephens accepted the resignation adding, “. . . but, while accepting it, I still rely on your hearty cooperation, as I now rely on every true man of our race.”

Bernard Killian, the instigator of the Campobello action, was immediately sacked from his position as treasurer of the Fenian Brotherhood. Stephens allowed O’Mahony to remain within the organization. O’Mahony presented himself with Stephens at a newspaper interview after his resignation, where he was described by a New York Herald reporter as “worn and dejected, quite crestfallen, but withal resigned to his fate.”[[159]](#footnote-160)

The Senate Wing counted on the largest share of the subscription funds because most Circles had signed on to the Senate Wing faction after their demotion of O’Mahony. On the first of June 1866, just two months after the Campobello fiasco, the Senate Wing mustered the troops once again and the Fenians charged across the Canadian border exhausting what remained of the subscription funds in their treasury.[[160]](#footnote-161)

General Sweeny’s plan called for troops to cross the border in three different locations. In the only positive event of the three probes into Canada, Fenian Colonel John O’Neill routed several British regiments at the Canadian town of Ridgeway across the border from Buffalo, for which action he was made a Fenian Brigadier General.[[161]](#footnote-162) General Meade once again directed the U.S. Army to step in at all points and stop the movement of supplies, troops, and armament across the border. A pattern was emerging in the response of the United States government to the Fenian invasions: anti-Canadian actions by the gullible Fenians were allowed to begin unhampered by the authorities, then, pointedly after the fact, the U.S. Army would step in to cut off shipments of arms and men to the invading forces and then begin rounding up the participants.

Later, President Andrew Johnson protested he had given the Fenians five days to make their raid before he closed off the border. According to Henri Le Caron, adjutant to O’Neill and a British informer in the Fenian ranks, Le Caron attended a meeting at the White House with Fenian General John O’Neill where President Johnson lamented:

General, your people unfairly blame me a good deal for the part I took in stopping your first movement. Now I want you to understand that my sympathies are entirely with you, and anything which lies in my power I am willing to do to assist you. But you must remember that I gave you five full days before issuing any proclamation stopping you. What, in God’s name, more did you want? If you could not get there in five days, by God, you could never get there; and then, as President, I was compelled to enforce our Neutrality Laws, or be denounced on every side.[[162]](#footnote-163)

Meanwhile, the United States took pains to point out to the not-quite-as-gullible British that they had acted promptly to stop any breach of neutrality.

The failure of either Fenian Wing to achieve their professed objectives led to a drop in membership and a loss of financial support. The Fenians spent their accumulated military supplies leaving no funds to support what remained of the IRB back in Ireland, now left to fend for itself.

One can imagine Sir Frederick Bruce in Washington feeling totally vindicated by the conservative approach he had taken in dealing with Washington. The United States government’s obvious reluctance to alienate the Irish vote, and (what Britain must have suspected) followed by U.S. enjoyment of the spectacle of Her Majesty’s colonial officers frantically moving battalions hither and thither at each twitch of a Fenian tail-feather. When the chips were down, just as Bruce predicted, the American government acted to preserve the neutrality laws and put an end to the invasions. Just in case the British Foreign office had not fully grasped the wisdom of his policies, Bruce did the math for them:

You’ll see that I have avoided any insinuation that this government by its reticence, led to the raid. Such a line of argument would be objectionable two ways; it would encourage Seward’s and the president’s opponents, and it would give a certain moral justification for a more active interference on behalf of the prisoners [the Fenians captured and held in Canada]. Seward would say: *—*as you accuse us of having assisted these people, and of being virtually the cause of their present predicament, you cannot be surprised if we consider ourselves as responsible for their treatment.

Bruce concludes with an overly optimistic view of the Fenian demise:

Stephens is now denouncing Sweeney [sic] and Roberts as traitors to Ireland, and talking of O’Mahony as a fool. [Stephens] is attacked as a British spy—and Irishmen who have returned from Ireland designate the Fenian conspiracy there as a farce.[[163]](#footnote-164)

### Irish “Yankees” Usurp IRB Command: 1866-68

The Canadian raids drained the coffers of both wings and removed, at least until the funds could be recouped, the capacity of either branch of the Fenian Brotherhood to send aid to Ireland for military action in 1866.

When the police in Dublin jailed the IRB leaders and closed the *Irish People* newspaper in September of 1865, enough evidence was accumulated to indicate that the IRB organization had a larger membership and was more widely spread across Ireland and England than the British authorities had originally estimated. Dublin Castle could now make a case that the IRB posed a legitimate threat to political stability in Ireland. Based on this new assessment, on February 17, 1866, Parliament passed an act to suspend *habeas corpus* for six months, thus allowing the police to arrest and hold, without evidence of illegal activity, anyone whom they suspected of belonging to the IRB. By July, over seven hundred Fenians had been arrested, of which over three hundred were still incarcerated. In July, Parliament extended the act that had suspended *habeas corpus*.[[164]](#footnote-165) For every Fenian held in jail, an “incalculable number” fled to America or Britain, or simply left the movement.[[165]](#footnote-166)

Once again IRB Chief James Stephens promised that the Irish would take the field, this time in the autumn of 1866. Stephens arrived in America to drum up subscriptions to replenish the Savage Wing treasury emptied by the Campobello raid. In mid-December of 1866, as far as the more strident Fenian military men were concerned, when Stephens broke his promise and proposed an indefinite postponement of military action it was the last straw. Stephens was deposed by a clique of impatient and action-ready officers of the military branch of the Savage Wing. John McCafferty, one of these officers, pulled a pistol but was stopped by the others present from assassinating Stephens on the spot.[[166]](#footnote-167) American Civil War veteran Thomas Joseph Kelly [[167]](#footnote-168) was then appointed to replace James Stephens as IRB chief. McCafferty and Kelly immediately set off for Ireland.

In January of 1867 in London, where they were safe from *habeas corpus*, an ad hoc IRB Directory, which included John McCafferty, sent out a contingent of men to attempt to obtain weapons from the arsenal at Chester, England. Informers tipped the military and the arriving IRB men, finding the arsenal too well-guarded, gave up the mission. In the aftermath, John McCafferty and many others were arrested. Several other similar, unsuccessful skirmishes occurred in Ireland in conjunction with the planned Chester attack. The ad hoc Directory disappeared with the arrest of McCafferty and the others. But another Directory with somewhat better credentials was in the wings to take its place.The IRB had established a directory of four men representing the Irish provinces of Ulster, Leinster, Muenster, and Connaught.[[168]](#footnote-169) Kelly and his associates joined this group, and the Directory began planning for a rising in March. A rising did take place, but conflicting orders limited any military action to uncoordinated skirmishes with local police in various parts of Ireland. Any Fenian actions were quickly quelled and arrests were made or the participants simply disappeared.

The Fenian Brotherhood’s navy that had been promised by the Savage Wing to aid the rising by landing weapons and Irish American troops in Ireland, consisted of one dilapidated ship, the *Jackmel Packet*, given to the Fenians by U.S. customs when no one claimed its impounded cargo as it sat at anchor in the harbor in New York. The Fenians loaded the ship with 5000 stands of arms and renamed her *Erin’s Hope. Erin’s Hope* arrived off the coast of Ireland in April 1867, unfortunately too late for the rising. After several days attempting to connect with the IRB, the ship finally disembarked thirty men, with all but three being immediately arrested. The men left aboard *Erin’s Hope* saw the futility of their mission and sailed back to the United States.[[169]](#footnote-170)

The hundred Irish American Civil War veterans that had been sent by the Savage Wing to Ireland to help the IRB began arriving in the autumn of 1865. The number of Irish American soldiers in Ireland peaked in 1867. According to police documents, these men were easy to spot and arrest or to put under watch by the police. Wearing square-toed shoes, sporting an “insulting . . . demeanor,” imbued with a “filibustering spirit” and walking with a “Yankee swagger” summarized the police description of the Irish Americans. Unfortunately for the police, most of the Irish Americans were smart enough not to carry arms or documents which might allow for their conviction if arrested. An additional constraint on arresting the Irish American Fenians was that many were American citizens. Although the British did not recognize the American naturalization process of British or Irish citizens, they “hesitated to spark an international debate of the issue by holding the men in custody.”[[170]](#footnote-171) The nationalist *Nation* newspaper informed its readers that walking in a “swaggering manner” was “henceforth reserved exclusively for British officers and the Irish Constabulary.”[[171]](#footnote-172)

But not all Irish Americans escaped arrest. In addition to the arrest of McCafferty, IRB boss Thomas J. Kelly and his assistant, Timothy Deasy, were taken into custody in London on September 11, 1867. Seven days later, although warned of a possibility of a rescue, a transport van with a small guard of inexplicably unarmed policemen transporting Kelly and Deasy was overpowered by an armed IRB team in Manchester, England. The prisoners were freed and fled back to the United States, but a guard inside the van was killed during the rescue. Of some fifty or more IRB members arrested for complicity in the escape operation, three men, William Philip Allen, Michael Larkin, and Michael O’Brien were tried and executed. Christened the “Manchester Martyrs,” the three men instantly became heroes in Ireland and in Irish communities throughout the world. The executions created a widespread sympathy that, up until then, had not existed for the Fenian cause. Irish nationalists remembered the executions with yearly marches to a local cemetery followed by mock burials. Each succeeding year these funerals drew larger attendance, and the Manchester Martyrs evolved into a symbol of dissatisfaction with British rule in Ireland and a call for amnesty for the IRB prisoners.

Another, not as successful, Fenian attempt at a rescue occurred in November 1867 after the Civil War veteran and IRB officer, Ricard O’Sullivan Burke, was arrested and jailed for his part in planning the Manchester rescue. He was held in custody at London’s Clerkenwell Detention Center. The IRB decided to free Burke by setting a large barrel of explosives near a wall of the prison where Burke was supposed to be exercising. The prison wall, against which the barrel of powder was located, reflected the blast into some nearby tenement houses. The explosion created massive damage, killed three innocent people, and wounded dozens of others. This botched episode resulted in negative worldwide publicity and turned many a hitherto sympathetic Englishman against the Irish cause.

The lack of success of the Fenian rising followed by the wholesale arrests of IRB members by the British authorities frustrated the Irish American Fenians now disillusioned by the inability of the IRB organization to support any attempt to free Ireland.

A letter at the end of 1867 to the New York Fenian newspaper, *Irish People*, suggested that Fenians ought to reevaluate the popular Fenian view of two chivalric armies meeting in open battle.This letter prophesied a shift toward destructive acts against nonmilitary targets that occurred some fifteen years later when Irish American nationalists took part in acts of random destruction in England:

Let us meet despotism by subtlety. The enemy has prisons, arsenals, shipping. Are these not as human beings for destruction? . . . What moral code should govern our action in our strife with England? [[172]](#footnote-173)

The Clerkenwell fiasco had left Irish nationalists defending the indefensible, by condoning what would in the future be judged as terrorism.

# Part III

# The Brief Candle Snuffed

### Senate Wing Flaps

The failure of the Senate Wing Canadian invasion in June 1866 under Fenian Secretary of War Thomas Sweeny was due, at least in some part, to the fact that President Andrew Johnson, after hesitating three days, finally issued a guarantee of Canadian border neutrality, and ordered the U.S. Army to intervene and round up the Fenians. Unless one believed that the U.S. government determined its policies by flitting from one strategy to another, the government’s military actions that stopped the Senate Wing invasion into Canada in June should have been a foregone conclusion to all but the most gullible Fenian leaders. In April the O’Mahony Wing Fenians were prevented from crossing into Canada. There was no logical reason to suppose that the Senate Wing Fenian invasion would not receive the same response.

The ill-thought-out promise of support from disaffected French Canadians and Irish-Canadian immigrants never materialized. Invading Canada was the *raison d’etre* of the Senate Wing. It seemed reasonable to expect that the Senate Wing would now rejoin the O’Mahony Wing and a reunited Fenian Brotherhood would then return to the original support-for-Ireland strategy.

But that did not happen. The Senate Wing leadership under William R. Roberts and James Gibbons maintained their Canadian invasion strategy was still valid as they toured the Senate Fenian Circles to announce the restocking of their military supplies in anticipation of another invasion. Weighing on the Senate Wing decision to plan another Canadian invasion was the reality that, after the hopelessly unsuccessful 1867 rising in Ireland, it was futile to attempt another Irish-based rising without an organized and armed IRB military, the advent of which would be, if at all, well into the future. Patience was not a virtue among the men of action.

The Senate Wing, from 1866 to 1870, regardless of its slowly dissipating membership, was still considered a force to be reckoned with by the Canadian government, which kept a wary eye on Senate activity. The greatest part of Senate Wing members followed the leadership of Roberts and Gibbons, gradually accepting the illusion that the U.S. government would not interfere with the next invasion. Fenian senators insured the members that fear of losing the Irish vote would prevent the U.S. government from enforcing the neutrality act again. A curious editorial in the *New York Herald* newspaper published August 18, 1866, supported this theory, proclaiming the United States would most likely not interfere.[[173]](#footnote-174)

The *Herald*’s stance was out of step with almost every other major national newspaper, and it is hard to imagine that anyone but the most credulous Senate Wing leaders thought that planning another invasion into Canada was anything other than a desperate act to preserve subscriptions. Whatever the leadership’s beliefs were, the Senate Wing’s newspaper voice, the Irish American, continued its menacing proclamations against Canada as the Senate military council pushed forward its plans to rebuild weapon supplies.[[174]](#footnote-175)

Just before the post-invasion Senate Fenian Congress to be held in New York, the U.S. Attorney General issued a *Nolle prosequi,* which released all Fenians held in Vermont, including Fenian Colonel John O’Neill, bolstering the Fenian perception of the U.S. government’s sympathy for the Fenians.[[175]](#footnote-176) The Senate Wing Congress was held September 4 in Troy, New York where the delegates reaffirmed support for the plan to restock weapons and prepare for the next attack on Canada. The delegates re-elected William R. Roberts to president of the Senate Wing, and James Gibbons, President of the Senate Council. Roberts appointed now Fenian General John O’Neill as Inspector General of the Fenian Army.[[176]](#footnote-177)

Another event, which also bolstered Senate rhetoric that the United States government now had a pro-Fenian policy, occurred in October, when the United States government returned the arms confiscated after the invasions.[[177]](#footnote-178) The return was authorized by President Andrew Johnson to redeem himself in the eyes of Irish-America prior to the November elections. The arms were returned, but with the caveat that they must not be used to violate border neutrality.[[178]](#footnote-179) In spite of that specific restriction, the return of the arms was presented to the membership as proof that the United States would not interfere in the event of another invasion. Ignoring that caveat, many members became convinced by President Johnson’s return of the weapons that the *New York Herald* had been correct. The return of the weapons certainly encouraged Fenian Military General John O’Neill, still dreaming of commanding a Fenian army once again in a glorious defeat of the British.

With their positions secure, the leaders of both Fenian Brotherhood Wings seemed content to maintain a permanent split. But a constant clamor from the membership of both wings called for unity from the moment of the 1865 split. The ordinary members had difficulty understanding why the leaders of the two wings could not reconcile their differences. Delegates from both wings voted resolutions for unity at every annual meeting. In a nod toward this pressure, the leaders of both sides were obliged to proclaim officially that they were always working diligently to reunite the Brotherhood. But neither of the entrenched hierarchies was in favor of unity, and frequent public personal denunciations of one another in the newspapers insured any rapprochement would be an exercise in futility. After all, any merger implied the loss of fifty percent of the leadership positions.

The O’Mahony Wing, called the Savage Wing after August 22, 1867, under its new president, John Savage, considered itself the “aggrieved” party of the 1865 split and, therefore, was under less pressure to initiate a unity move. After any move initiated by the Senate Wing, the Savage Wing ritually affirmed a desire for reconciliation prior to encountering some always-present reason for rejection. A significant factor working against any merger was the difference in organizational structure between the two Wings. In 1866 after the official split of the Fenians, the O’Mahony Wing had repudiated the constitutional revisions made at the 1865 Philadelphia congress leaving O’Mahony, and later Savage, with near dictatorial executive authority with only an advisory council to consult on matters of policy.

The Senate Wing leaders, on the other hand, had to be much more responsive to their delegations by reason of the democratic structure written into the Senate Wing Constitution. The Senate Council members, who elected their own president, had to approve any executive action proposed by the Senate Wing president, elected by the delegates in congress.Most reunification initiatives foundered on executive authority issues. The Savage Wing required, as a precondition to any unification negotiations, first, that the Savage Wing president would remain as chief executive over any temporary Directory created to effect a merger; second, that the Savage Wing constitution should remain intact until after the merger occurred and the first congress was held, at which point it would theoretically be possible to revise the constitution by amendment. Under that scenario, the Savage Wing would enter any unified congress with their president holding absolute authority over any proceedings that might initiate constitutional reform.

The preconditions insured that the Senate Wing would appear as if they had returned hat-in-hand back into the Savage Wing. For their part, the Senate Wing’s proposals always contained a unification process that emphasized a merger between two equal organizations and a clause that stipulated that no member holding a position of authority in the old organizations would be in the Directory of the new organization. This last requirement implied the removal of Savage Wing men from their salaried employment and therefore guaranteed that any Senate Wing proposal would be rejected, although always for a concocted excuse more palatable to the membership.

### The Rise of General John O’Neill

At the closing of the Fenian Congress in Troy, New York, on September 9, 1866, Fenian General John O’Neill was appointed Inspector General of the Fenian Army. O’Neill was elected Head Centre of the recently formed Ridgeway Circle of the Fenian Brotherhood in Nashville, Tennessee in December.[[179]](#footnote-180)

O’Neill was well known in Irish-America as the hero who had commanded the Fenian Army that defeated the British at Ridgeway, Canada in the only real battle fought by the Fenian soldiers. O’Neill began traveling the country in 1867, addressing Senate Wing Fenian Circles. O’Neill advocated the rebuilding of Senate Wing military supplies for the next Canadian invasion.[[180]](#footnote-181) The Senate Council, although becoming wary of O’Neill’s power, encouraged O’Neill’s militant rhetoric as it was contributing to an increase in subscriptions.

Dissident members, including some who were apparently members of the emerging Clan-na-Gael Association, made a move that foreshadowed a serious increase in Senate Wing infighting. In March 1867, *The* *Irish-American* announced that a new newspaper, the *Irish Republic*, was being launched in Chicago by a group of Fenian Senators. Listed on the board of directors were P.W. Dunne, Michael Scanlon, Nicholas Crickard, David Bell, James W. Fitzgerald, William Fleming, Daniel O’Sullivan, and John D. Tully.[[181]](#footnote-182)

The *Irish Republic* initially echoed the Senate Wing line and was treated neutrally by *The Irish-American*, which was edited and owned by Fenian Senator Patrick J. Meehan. In August of 1867, philosophical differences between the two newspapers surfaced when the *Irish Republic* proposed that the Senate Wing should convert to an oath-bound secret organization. *The* *Irish- American*, at the time still tolerant of *Irish Republic* editorials, published a mildly critical editorial stating that, although the secret oath-bound strategy advocated by the *Irish Republic* was a bad idea, it should fully be discussed in the next congress.[[182]](#footnote-183) One year later, in March of 1868, we find the *Irish Republic* under direct attack from *The* *Irish-American* for abandoning Senate Wing principles and advocating immediate unity of the two Fenian Wings.[[183]](#footnote-184) The *Irish Republic*, meanwhile, continued its crusade for oath-bound secrecy as the only viable structure for Irish revolutionary nationalism. Both positions, secrecy and unification under a dictatorial structure, were vigorously opposed by the Senate Council under direction of Council President James Gibbons and military chief General John O’Neill.

Support for the Senate Wing position that the United States would not interfere in the event of another invasion was encouraged when *The* *Irish-American* published a purported letter from US Secretary of State William Seward calling British rule in Ireland “a scandal and disgrace” and proposing United States mediation between Britain and Ireland. The letter went on to suggest the United States would be happy to help oversee an Irish plebiscite to determine “the mode in which Ireland would desire in future to be governed.”[[184]](#footnote-185) It doesn’t take much imagination to understand the speed with which Seward’s suggestion was rebuffed by the British government.

After the failure of Thomas J Kelly’s IRB rising in Ireland and England in February 1867, the Senate Wing began to look at the possibility of usurping the IRB connection to the Savage Wing. William R. Roberts was sent by the Senate Wing to France in June to attempt to reach an agreement with the IRB in return for recognizing the Senate Wing as the true representative of Irish nationalism in America. Roberts proposed that two attacks be launched simultaneously. The Fenians would attack Canada at the same time the IRB would initiate a rising in Ireland.

The IRB members present at the meeting in France agreed to set up a Supreme Council over all IRB districts in Ireland and England to coordinate with the Senate Wing. Roberts reported this agreement in Chicago in August at a ceremony celebrating the success of his trip.[[185]](#footnote-186) Roberts’ visit was followed by Thomas J Kelly’s arrest in September in London, mentioned earlier. Unfortunately for Roberts and the Senate Wing, although the IRB duly constituted a Supreme Council in April 1868, one of the Supreme Council’s first acts was to repudiate Roberts’ agreement and affirm that the IRB would “resist all Irish American interference in their affairs.”[[186]](#footnote-187)

Despite having theoretically eliminated the purpose for which it was formed, the Supreme Council was accepted by the IRB membership as an efficient method to organize nationalist activity in Ireland and England. The Supreme Council, thus constituted, remained from that point forward the central executive of the IRB. The Savage Wing continued to proclaim it was the true representative of the IRB in the United States.[[187]](#footnote-188) The IRB had become decentralized and such claims were made to project a unity that did not exist between the Fenians and the IRB in the early 1870s. The IRB, finding a lack of funds for arms importation was causing subscriptions to dry up, again turned to Irish-America in 1875, but their feelers were sent out to the Clan-na-Gael.[[188]](#footnote-189) The IRB remained unconnected with Fenian Irish-America until 1876 when, as will be seen later, the Clan-na-Gael proposed a Directory with the authority to coordinate IRB and Irish American activities.

In July 1867, Senate Council President Gibbons issued a call for a Senate Wing Congress to be held on September 3, in Cleveland.At that congress William Roberts was reelected President of the Senate Wing, James Gibbons was reelected President of the Senate Council and General John O’Neill, already the Inspector General of the Fenian Army, was made a Senator and appointed to the Senate’s governing Council. O’Neill’s rising importance became apparent three months later when Roberts resigned his position to go into American politics and O’Neill was elected to take his place as President of the Senate Wing.[[189]](#footnote-190) The Senate Wing and the Army were now united under one commander with the Senate Council still, in theory, the governing body.

O’Neill’s obvious popularity among the Fenian rank and file apparently imbued him with the belief he would be able to overwhelm any opposition from Senate Council conservatives to his plan for an immediate Canadian invasion. He began in earnest to raise the membership’s hopes for action as he barnstormed the Senate Wing Circles where he repeatedly used the phrase “imminent movement” to characterize his invasion plans. In May 1869, O’Neill began consolidating his power and restructuring the Fenian Army.[[190]](#footnote-191) Fenian General Michael Kerwin was appointed Fenian Secretary of War.[[191]](#footnote-192)

O’Neill’s increasingly strident rhetoric alarmed Senate Wing conservatives who had no desire to participate in an invasion of Canada unless total success could be assured. Gibbons was now convinced that O’Neill was fully capable of launching an invasion without Senate Council approval. Senate Council President James Gibbons sent out a circular on July 25, 1868, wherein he voiced his concerns about O’Neill and the military arm of the Senate Wing. Although somewhat hidden in Gibbon’s convoluted language, there was a warning included against unilateral action by O’Neill and the Fenian military. After stating the civilian structure of the Senate Wing was ready for a fight, Gibbons went on to say the military structure was going to be placed “on a similar footing,” thereby making it clear that the Senate Council did not yet consider the military was ready to invade Canada. To make sure that he was correctly understood, Gibbons stressed “caution against those who would induce you to do the work of the enemy, by clamoring for a premature movement.”

The memo went on to list a set of two resolutions. The first indicated that the Senate pledged that “. . . as soon as the necessary means are placed in their hands an army shall be marched into the enemy’s country, under the Green Flag of Ireland, and Military operations shall not be delayed a single day.” The second pledged that the Executive Committee [Senate Council] and the [Senate] President would call a Congress of the Fenian Senate Wing once a date had been set for military action and the committee would select Senators to “aid into effect the spirit of this resolution.”[[192]](#footnote-193) Although the circular duplicated O’Neill’s warlike rhetoric, these resolutions were in fact a clear warning to O’Neill that he, as Senate Wing President and in his position of military commander, was still subordinate to the Senate Council. Also stated unambiguously was the requirement that a meeting of the Congress of the Senate Wing must precede any move toward Canada.

In addition to O’Neill’s conflict with the Senate Council, the Senate Wing had another problem to face. In 1868 the fledgling nationalist organization known as the Clan-na-Gael began actively recruiting members of the Senate Wing, a fact that provoked O’Neill to issue eighteen-page circular warning members against joining “secret sworn organizations.” The circular also charged the *Irish Republic* with fomenting Senate Wing disunion. As mentioned above, Michael Scanlon, P.W. Dunne, J.W. Fitzgerald, Dr. David Bell, and other senators founded The *Irish Republic* in Chicago in 1867. From the tone of The *Irish Republic* editorials and the circumstances of its founding one is led to speculate that these Fenian senators, at the time of the newspaper’s founding, were in collusion with, or already members of, a group advocating oath-bound secrecy that by 1868 had affiliated themselves with the emerging Clan-na-Gael Association. Influence of this group provides a plausible explanation for the *Irish Republic*’s strident campaign to convert the Senate into a secret, oath-bound society as well as its demand for an immediate unification of the two Fenian Wings.[[193]](#footnote-194)

It was in response to this threat that O’Neill issued his circular warning that Fenians were being recruited and “independent Circles” were being formed. What O’Neill is labeling “independent Circles” were the Clan-na-Gael Camps.[[194]](#footnote-195) O’Neill mentions The *Irish Republic* proposals for the Senate Wing Fenians to become “a secret sworn organization” and then warns the Fenian membership:

Men who form what they call “Independent Circles,” are not in communication with us, and are not Fenians…. I would particularly caution you against agents who are going around the country forming “secret oath-bound organizations.[[195]](#footnote-196)

In the summer of 1868, frustrated with lack of any movement by the Senate Wing to patch up the split with the Savage Wing, the *Irish Republic* began calling on all circles to stop sending funds to Senate Wing Headquarters until a union with the Savage Wing was achieved and in the meantime to convert to secret oath-bound circles.[[196]](#footnote-197) Knowing that unification of the Senate and Savage Wings was unlikely to take place, the Fenian Senate instructed its members to abide by the constitution and the resolutions which called for rebuilding the military structure and continue to submit their dues to headquarters. The *Irish Republic* came out in May against any invasion of Canada. At this point the *Irish Republic* and *The Irish-American* reflected the two different sides of the deepening split occurring in the Senate Wing organization.

Active collection of military supplies and funds for a military venture appear from Senate correspondence to be designed to focus the rank and file, who were hoping for a new military move, on the possibility of imminent action. James Gibbons, the president of the Senate Council, was walking a thin line. He knew that subscription money needed to keep the organization viable could only be obtained by promising action and that, in turn, played into O’Neill’s hands in his drive to force the Senate to approve an immediate invasion.

Irish nationalism seemed to be losing its bearings. At one point in July, 1869 the impulse for action was so great that a splinter group led by Colonel John Whitehead Byron, commander of the 4th IRA Fenian Militia in New York, signed up to go to the aid of revolutionaries fighting against their Spanish overlords in Cuba.[[197]](#footnote-198) Colonel Byron, Lt. Colonel T. O’Leary, General Jack Gleeson, General Spear, and others were mentioned as being Fenians involved in the filibustering expedition to Cuba, an endeavor egged on by the *New York Herald,* which proclaimed that “implied privileges” were given to ships manifested as not bound to Cuba directly and would be allowed to leave American ports with men and arms.

*The Irish-American* considered the Cuba venture a loss of focus and that Irishmen fighting for Cuba were “vicarious” patriots fighting without Fenian Brotherhood approval. The article went on to say that Spear and Gleason did not belong to the Fenian organization. Byron and O’Leary, however, did belong to the Fenian Brotherhood and held senior positions in O’Neill’s Fenian Military. Byron was “dismissed” and O’Leary was “suspended” by the Fenian Military for their part in the affair.[[198]](#footnote-199)

Senators James W. Fitzgerald and P. W. Dunne, from Cincinnati and Chicago, continued their push to convert the Senate Wing into a secret revolutionary brotherhood, while Senate Council President James Gibbons and *The Irish-American* Editor Senator Patrick J. Meehan resisted and advocated maintaining an open organization. But O’Neill, by demanding an immediate invasion of Canada, was, little by little, pushing Gibbons and Meehan to seek an accommodation with the group advocating oath-bound secrecy including Fitzgerald and Dunne.

By mid-1869, the lack of sufficient funds to operate the Senate Wing became a pressing issue and during June and July the Senate dismissed all paid organizers and reduced the headquarters’ staff. A circular to the membership detailed the reasons for the reductions and made a call for $10 per member to be contributed to a Special War Fund which could only be spent by the Military Committee of the Senate. Four resolutions were part of the circular, including one which indicated somewhat obliquely that the IRB was to be involved in the decision-making process:[[199]](#footnote-200)

Resolved: That in accordance with the plans of action and the policy DETERMINED ON IN THE SENATE IN SECRET SESSION, the President and Executive Committee are hereby instructed to take immediate steps to insure the united and harmonious action of the Irish people upon that policy, both in American and Ireland, and wherever our people are to be found throughout the dominion of England; and that all details in reference to those matters be referred to the President and Executive Committee until the next meeting of the Senate.[[200]](#footnote-201)

The tenor of the circular demonstrates the tug of war going on in the Senate Wing. O’Neill, in his position as commander-in-chief, had the authority to call out the military for an invasion; however, he risked Senate Council disapproval and losing his position as president of the Senate Wing if he did so. Gibbons knew that if the Senate military stores were under O’Neill’s command, the Senate Council could do little more than reiterate that O’Neill was bound by the constitution to have Senate Council approval before any invasion could be launched.

Dunne and Fitzgerald and some of their followers were also involved in a breach of the Senate constitutional law in another area. Theoretically, Irish nationalists were not supposed to use their influence in the Irish American community as a stepping-stone to involvement in American politics; however, in Chicago on July 5, 1869, Fenian Senators J.W. Fitzgerald, A.L. Morrison, Richard McCloud, along with Timothy Hanley, and Michael Boland, all of whom were then, or shortly would be, affiliated with the Clan-na-Gael, organized an Irish Republican Convention in an apparent political move to counter the Republican Party belief that the Irish vote would always be Democratic. Fitzgerald was elected president of the convention.[[201]](#footnote-202) The Clan-na-Gael tended to be middle class in the makeup of its membership and less inclined than the Fenian Brotherhood Wings to include uneducated men from the working classes into the organization. The Republican Convention was orchestrated to court Republican Party support for the Irish cause by Cincinnati Judge James W. Fitzgerald and other Fenian Senators with Republican Party affiliation who fit the more upper middle-class Clan-na-Gael demographic.

*The* *Irish-American*, always a supporter of Democratic candidates, criticized this breach of nationalist etiquette by alleging that the convention was a monumental waste of time.[[202]](#footnote-203)

The convention concluded and issued a proclamation of solidarity with the Irish people and their struggle, and at the same time affirmed their support for the Republican Party platform. Apparently *The* *Irish-American* was correct in its judgment as no more was ever heard from this group.

The incessant drumbeat for conversion of the Senate Wing into a secret society and the demands for nationalist unity in concert with the IRB, point to the Clan-na-Gael’s increasing attempt to influence the direction of Senate Wing policy.

O’Neill as president of the Senate Wing and chairman of the Fenian Military Council had it pointed out to him by the organization’s treasurer in early 1869 that expenditures in the Senate treasury exceeded receipts.[[203]](#footnote-204) As mentioned earlier, O’Neill’s answer was to attempt to collect additional funds from the members by continuing to promise imminent movement.

During the month of November, O’Neill began touring weapons caches along the Canadian border. He was joined on this tour by his confidants, Fenian Adjutant General Henri Le Caron and Fenian Colonel William Clingen, neither of whom had O’Neill’s best interests at heart.[[204]](#footnote-205) Unknown to O’Neill, Le Caron was a spy for the British who reported every move O’Neill made to the Canadians, while Colonel Clingen was closely affiliated with the conservative Senate Council with the task assigned him to keep members F.B. Gallagher and James Gibbons up to date on O’Neill’s activities.

No one at any point questioned O’Neill’s devotion to the cause of Ireland’s freedom. The same could not be said for his devotion to the Senate’s constitution.[[205]](#footnote-206) A public premonition of an impending clash surfaced with an odd announcement January 29, 1870, in *The* *Irish-American* that stated that General John O’Neill called for a Fenian Senate Congress to be held on April 19 in New York and this congress was to be preceded by a military congress. This announcement seemed to nullify an earlier order issued from O’Neill’s office as President of the Senate, scheduling a congress in Chicago for April 10.

O’Neill wanted to attack Canada before any Senate Congress took place and rightly presumed that the authorities would not suspect any military move would occur before a Senate congress had taken place.[[206]](#footnote-207) The other reason to schedule a New York congress was that at any congress scheduled in Chicago, O’Neill would have much less influence. On February 5, Gibbons called for a meeting of the Senate Council in New York for February 22 to flush out O’Neill’s designs and discuss O’Neill’s overt break with Senate Wing decorum by calling for a Senate Congress in New York instead of Chicago without Senate Council approval. Gibbons in a letter to his friend and fellow senator, F.B. Gallagher, treasurer of the Buffalo Senate Circle, defined the impending collision:

F.B. Gallagher, My dear friend,

Knowing you have rec’d the call for a meeting of the Senate, I deem it necessary to remind you of its importance ruin disaster and disgrace is in our path we have fallen on dangerous ground if there is not a full senate and cool and wise councils prevail, all is lost and our memory will be cursed at home and abroad. I have no fear with the proper course pursued; I have received a letter from the Gen’l that will astonish you, my calling of the Senate unmasked him he stands revealed I have answered the letter I also have his and my answer in print to the circles if the Senate approve my letter is a historical document that will consign him to \_\_\_\_ in all time Let me in the name of all you hold dear in the cause of Ireland urge on you the necessity of your being present

Yours as ever, James Gibbons[[207]](#footnote-208)

O’Neill responded by letter to Gibbons’ call for the meeting of the Senate Council, indicating that he knew what was coming and he “was prepared for the ordeal.” O’Neill finished his letter to Gibbons with a declaration of independence:

With respect to the other work the Senate may be required to perform, I have nothing to say. The past meetings of that body speak emphatically enough. You, my dear friend, are the last link that binds me to that body; if it be broken, there is a final severance of official relations betwixt us twain.[[208]](#footnote-209)

The February Senate Council meeting in New York was held with bitter charges circulating on both sides and lasted late into the evening of February 28. The Senate Council left no doubt that O’Neill would not receive Senate Wing approval for the invasion at the Chicago Congress. O’Neill, as Gibbons had predicted, was flushed out into the open and the Senate Council ruled once again that no attack on Canada should be made until approval of the Senate Council was obtained.

Late in the evening, while O’Neill was waiting in another part of the building for the results of the Senate Council’s deliberations, the Senate Council reversed O’Neill’s appointment of Dr. James Keenan as Secretary of Civil Affairs and ruled that Keenan be dismissed from his post. The Council determined in debate that Keenan was simply an “obnoxious partisan” of O’Neill’s policies.[[209]](#footnote-210)

Keenan, who was in the room adjacent to the meeting, heard the attack on him led by Senator Patrick J Meehan, editor of *The* *Irish-American*.[[210]](#footnote-211) The meeting adjourned a little before 11:00 PM and, as P.J. Meehan left the Senate headquarters building and headed down the street, Keenan ran up behind him and shot him in the back of the head. Meehan hovered at death’s door for several days; but, against all odds, he recovered.

The Meehan assassination attempt created a moment of temporary rapprochement between O’Neill and the Senators, and Gibbons took advantage of the interlude to post a joint message that cancelled the congress O’Neill had scheduled for April 18 in New York City and rescheduled it for April 11 in Chicago.[[211]](#footnote-212) This brief period of agreement passed quickly into history when O’Neill broke with the Senate Wing by refusing to attend the April 11 congress in Chicago and reinstating his own congress in New York. The internal fighting between O’Neill and the Senate Executive Council was now public. O’Neill now knew he could not count on approval from the Senate delegates for any “imminent movement” on Canada.

In his book, Le Caron claimed that O’Neill did not attend the April 11 Chicago congress because he was afraid to face the consequences of his expenditures of Fenian money on personal items. That risk certainly might have weighed on O’Neill’s decision not to attend but, even if true, it cannot have been the controlling factor. Much more likely is that O’Neill did not want to receive an official rejection of his planned invasion resulting in a much smaller turnout of soldiers than if the decision could be held off. There was also the probability that O’Neill might be officially deposed and someone else appointed to command the Fenian military.[[212]](#footnote-213) By avoiding the congress, O’Neill created enough confusion over his status to retain command of the military.

O’Neill assembled the Fenian military officers together on April 16 in Troy, New York, and informed them that he had ordered a mobilization to attack Canada. Several of the officers present, including Fenian Colonel William Clingen, a Senate Wing moderate, protested that they were not ready for such a venture.[[213]](#footnote-214) As mentioned above, Colonel Clingen was confidant of Francis B. Gallagher, the treasurer of the Senate’s Buffalo, N.Y. Fenian District. Gallagher was a moderate Senator and close friend of Gibbons. At the war strategy meeting in Troy, Colonel Clingen informed O’Neill and the other officers present that the military structure needed time to prepare for combat.[[214]](#footnote-215) The staff officers present at the meeting, except for O’Neill, agreed to postpone the mobilization. If one believes Colonel Clingen, an angry O’Neill then demanded that the recalcitrant officers face the men called up in New York City and explain why the raid was postponed.[[215]](#footnote-216)Clingen kept Gallagher informed of O’Neill’s actions as these events transpired in Troy.

Meanwhile *The* *Irish-American* came out against O’Neill and closed its denunciation of the planned attack on Canada with the publication of an article from the *Washington Evening Post* dated April 25, 1870, wherein it was pointed out that the United States government authorities were aware of O’Neill’s plans and that Secretary of State Hamilton Fish assured all involved that “all attempts to violate the Neutrality laws will be promptly met, and the parties engaged will be punished.”[[216]](#footnote-217)

On April 10, the Senate Wing held its congress in Chicago with 250 delegates in attendance.[[217]](#footnote-218) As O’Neill expected, the constitution of the Senate Wing was changed to eliminate his position as President and in its stead appointed an Executive Council of nine members to guide the organization. A delegation of three members was sent to New York to meet with the O’Neill faction.

O’Neill denounced the Senate Wing as “imposters” and the Senate meeting in Chicago as a “do-nothing congress” which had no legal right to abolish his position.[[218]](#footnote-219) Then O’Neill, despite his previous agreement not to do so, held his own congress three days after the Troy military council, on April 19, in New York. The one hundred seventy-eight delegates attending rejected an appeal made by the Senate Wing Council to reunite the two groups.[[219]](#footnote-220)

The Fenian Brotherhood had now sprouted a third Wing. Having committed himself to an invasion, O’Neill severed ties to the Senate Wing and, with a characteristic Fenian dismissal of reality, baptized his new faction the “United Fenian Brotherhood.”[[220]](#footnote-221) O’Neill may not have been able to control the Senate, but, as the commander of the Fenian military, he controlled the Senate Wing’s military organization and all the weapon supplies. Once again, he promised the members of his newly formed organization imminent movement. The mobilization of the Fenian army that had been suspended by the Troy military council was once again set in motion.[[221]](#footnote-222)

James W. Fitzgerald, the powerful Fenian Senator from Cincinnati, seems to have had an epiphany in May 1870. The *Cincinnati Enquirer* on April 22 stated that Fenian Major General Fitzgerald was about to lead the Cincinnati Fenians into battle. On May 6, the *Cincinnati Enquirer* published an announcement that “Parties who desire to make a pleasant summer excursion in Canada are requested to call upon General Fitzgerald.”[[222]](#footnote-223) The *Cincinnati Gazette* reported that men were assembling for battle at the armory but at the end of the article was a paragraph that cast some doubt about Fitzgerald’s commitment to the coming battle:

James W. Fitzgerald, who has returned from a visit to Louisville, reports that the number of Fenians who have gone from the city to the fight on the border is ridiculously small.[[223]](#footnote-224)

On May 23, Senator Fitzgerald publicly pronounced the invasion to be “hair-brained and premature” and the invasion to be the work of “hot-brained madcaps” not of the Fenian Brotherhood.[[224]](#footnote-225)

O’Neill’s military entourage arrived in Cincinnati to collect men and arms but were officially denied access to the Senate Wing armory and its store of weapons.[[225]](#footnote-226) O’Neill’s senior commander General Owen Starr demanded the Fenian armory be opened and weapons released, or he would take them by force.

Fitzgerald, who controlled access to the armory, posted guards to prevent the weapons from being taken. A secret meeting was held on May 24 at night in the armory between Starr and Fitzgerald and their respective adherents, as reported by the *Cincinnati Enquirer*. The result of the meeting was that Fitzgerald convinced the Cincinnati Fenians not to join the invasion. The *Cincinnati Enquirer* summed up the result of the meeting: “General Starr, Major O’Keefe, and ‘Colonel’ Trusman left last night in the direction of St Albans, with three privates, who could pay their own way.”[[226]](#footnote-227) Apparently these three men were the extent of O’Neill’s Cincinnati military levy.

The next day O’Neill launched his raid into Canada. The war council at Troy proved correct in its assessment of the lack of Fenian military preparedness for war.The Canadian government arranged troops at the expected point of attack. The Canadians felt that it was more beneficial to have their militia hidden “to give the raiders a lesson which will not be easily forgotten” than rely passively on United States government intervention.[[227]](#footnote-228) As a result the Fenians were surprised by the concentrated fire they received as they crossed the border and immediately beat a hurried retreat onto United States soil, thereby bringing this badly executed operation to a merciful end. On the first day of the operation, a United States Marshal arrested O’Neill, who was then hustled off to the rear in full view of his soldiers. The *Irish World* immediately dubbed the event “O’Neill’s Folly.”[[228]](#footnote-229)

In a circular entitled “Report of John O’Neill” published by him shortly after the failure, O’Neill alleged that the Fenians had only had three days to get across the border and establish a foothold before the United States government would act. This three-day grace period is not discussed in any other documents and O’Neill was arrested on the first day. It is possible that O’Neill based the three days on the conversation he had had with President Johnson back in 1866 after Ridgeway. O’Neill blamed the failure on the bad luck of his arrest, lack of support from the Senate Council, and the failure of the Fenian Brotherhood to muster thousands of troops. None of these factors should have come as a surprise.

Upon his appointment to the Senate Council, O’Neill had demanded an immediate invasion. He knew that every year that went by the Fenian Civil War veterans, upon whom O’Neill and the Senate relied to be the core of any invasion force, were getting married, settling into farming, or drifting into other occupations making it difficult for them to break away for such an adventure.[[229]](#footnote-230)It may be that O’Neill was fully aware that the invasion of 1870 had little or no chance of success and would be disrupted by the government, but decided to go ahead to vindicate his rhetoric, hoping he would be seen by the nationalist community as the lone defender of Irish independence.

After his arrest, O’Neill, from his Vermont prison cell, ordered his units to hold onto their arms and not return them to the Senate Wing military. If he had been successful, the Senate Wing would have lost what remained of its war material to the Savage Wing. As will be seen below, after the failed invasion, O’Neill’s “United Fenian Brotherhood” joined the Savage Wing organization. O’Neill’s order to hold the arms was thwarted when William Egan, vice president of O’Neill’s faction, voluntarily returned the remaining war material to the Senate Wing.[[230]](#footnote-231)

### The Short Life of the United Irishmen

The failed Canadian invasions in 1866 and 1870 increased the number of those Senate Wing members who believed that the Fenian Brotherhood with its open forum was not a viable structure from which to support a rebellion in Ireland. Many believed that the changes made at the 1865 Philadelphia Congress to democratize the Fenian Brotherhood were a mistake and that plotting and insurrection could only be accomplished by a secret society with everyone bound under oath to follow the agenda set by their leaders. Democratization had only led to factionalism. Many Senate Wing members already belonged to such a secret organization—the Clan-na-Gael, also called the United Brotherhood. Devoy indicates that all the Scanlon brothers, influential nationalists from Chicago, belonged to the Clan-na-Gael as well as the Senate Wing.[[231]](#footnote-232)Jerome Collins, the founder of the Clan-na-Gael, stated clearly the case against open conventions as a strategy for revolutionary activity: “A debating society will never free Ireland.”[[232]](#footnote-233)

O’Neill’s usurpation of the Fenian Military in 1870 led to new calls for unity. The “Old Man” of Fenianism, James Gibbons, highly respected by all factions, issued a circular that called for delegates from all Irish American nationalist organizations to meet at an “Irish National Congress” with the objective of Irish American nationalist unity.[[233]](#footnote-234) This congress was to be held in Cincinnati at the end of August 1870. The choice of Cincinnati is significant to the tone of the congress because the “Queen City” was the site where the Cincinnati Fenians elected not to join or supply arms to O’Neill. It was also the site of Clan-na-Gael Camp D10, led by Senior Guardian George Sweeny, who was also a member of the Senate Wing and James W. Fitzgerald, the man who led the revolt against O’Neill’s officers. Therefore, picking Cincinnati would be viewed as a direct challenge to O’Neill.

The first action of the Irish National Congress was to elect James W. Fitzgerald as Directory president—another clear signal that O’Neill was not going to play any part in the reunification process.[[234]](#footnote-235) P.W. Dunne of Illinois was elected to serve with Fitzgerald as vice president, also a Senate Fenian and a member of the Clan-na-Gael. It was resolved by the congress that this new organization would be called the United Irishmen.[[235]](#footnote-236) It is interesting to note that when James W. Fitzgerald explained to the delegates what the change from Senate Wing to United Irishmen meant, he indicated that the United Irishmen would cooperate with the “United Brotherhood in Ireland.”[[236]](#footnote-237) There was no organization named “United Brotherhood” in Ireland. Fitzgerald may be indicating cooperation with the Clan-na-Gael thereby implying an IRB connection, something that was not possible after the failure to push through the “Third Resolution,” as explained below.

The name “Senate Wing” officially went out of existence. Although the reports from the congress implied that there were many organizations involved in the movement toward unity, only three groups were mentioned as potentially holding power on a new proposed unified Fenian Brotherhood Executive Directory: three members of the newly formed United Irishmen; three members of the Savage Wing; and one member of the Irish National Brotherhood.[[237]](#footnote-238)

Appearing out of nowhere, the Irish National Brotherhood (INB) issued a press release in St Louis announcing its existence just prior to the Cincinnati congress on August 24.[[238]](#footnote-239) A list of members on the Central Council of the INB appeared in the release. No document has come to light overtly stating that the St Louis-based INB represented the Clan-na-Gael, but it is certainly logical to assume that this was the case. The INB listed Daniel O’Madigan as its president. O’Madigan was a member of the Senate Wing who, in 1866, was elected Senate Wing Head Centre for Missouri.[[239]](#footnote-240) O’Madigan, in addition to his position as Head Centre and his INB duties, was president (Senior Guardian) of the Clan-na-Gael St Louis Camp D14 at the time and was a member of the Clan-na-Gael Literary Club of St. Louis, a front-name club founded by the St Louis Clan-na-Gael. The other St Louis member, John Griffin, was vice president (Junior Guardian) of St Louis Camp D14. Griffin was later a Clan-na-Gael delegate from St. Louis to the 1877 Clan-na-Gael Convention in Cleveland. Another Clan-na-Gael member on the INB council was T. R. Bannerman, the secretary of Camp D33 of Delaware, and who served as secretary of the Clan-na-Gael Executive Body in 1874. Also listed is George Sweeny, who was Senior Guardian for Cincinnati Camp D10 at this time.[[240]](#footnote-241) The only man in the St Louis INB notice not found in the Clan-na-Gael notebook, located in the Devoy Papers was Michael Russell.

The structure and Directory stipulated in the St Louis INB article indicated an organization and not just a single club. By forming the St Louis INB organization, the Clan-na-Gael was able to take part in the Cincinnati congress without violating the Clan-na-Gael constitutional requirement that all activity was secret, and no member’s name might be divulged. The INB structure outlined in the St Louis press release was identical to that of the Clan-na-Gael: ruled by a central council [Executive Body], no paid positions, and retention of funds by local branches. This organization was most likely set up to provide a cover for the Clan-na-Gael to assume control of whatever organization might be formed at the Cincinnati congress. Another INB club formed in Bennington, Vermont on August 1, 1870, so it can be surmised that other Clan-na-Gael camps formed INB organizations in case the Cincinnati Congress membership accepted oath-bound secrecy.[[241]](#footnote-242)

On December 11, several months after the Cincinnati Irish National Congress had adjourned, another club calling itself the INB appeared in Buffalo, New York and announced it was taking over the Senate Wing armaments stored there. It is not known if the Buffalo group was affiliated to the one in St. Louis.[[242]](#footnote-243) The Buffalo INB club was probably a reorganization of a Buffalo Senate Circle into either an Irish Confederation or Clan-na-Gael Camp.[[243]](#footnote-244)

The INB as an official arm of the Clan-na-Gael had the task of ensuring the organization was represented on the proposed unified Directory and would hold the swing vote in case of an impasse between representatives of the Senate Wing and the Savage Wing. The Clan-na-Gael connection explains why the newly invented INB was allowed so prominent a role at the Cincinnati congress.[[244]](#footnote-245)

Several other men later shown to be Clan-na-Gael leaders were elected to the hierarchy at the United Irishmen congress: John Goff, later the New York City District Chairman of the Clan-na-Gael; William J. Nicholson, the Secretary of the Clan-na-Gael from Troy, New York; and John McCarthy, the Treasurer of the Clan-na-Gael from New York City. Other delegates known to be in the Clan-na-Gael at the time of the Cincinnati congress were Lt. Colonel Timothy Hanley of New York, Michael Boland of Louisville, Thomas Sheedy and George W. Sweeny of Cincinnati, and P. W. Dunne of Peoria.[[245]](#footnote-246)

James W. Fitzgerald was included in John O’Neill’s anti-Clan-na-Gael diatribe discussed below; however, actual proof of James W. Fitzgerald’s Clan-na-Gael membership in 1870 has yet to be uncovered. My conclusion based on research of available documents indicates that by his actions and statements, Fitzgerald was either a Clan-na-Gael member or sympathizer for converting the Fenians to a secret, oath-bound society up to the eve of the 1870 O’Neill invasion and at that point joined the Clan-na-Gael. After the Senate Chicago Congress of April 1870 deposed O’Neill, Fitzgerald, at the point of joining O’Neill’s invasion force, made a trip to Louisville where he became convinced by what he found there that the raid would be a failure. Therefore, to maintain his political standing in the Irish American community, or due to his frustration with O’Neill’s apparent lack of planning, or both, he sealed the Fenian armory and broke with O’Neill’s faction after his return to Cincinnati. Fitzgerald’s participation in the Irish National Congress in Cincinnati in September shows him working as president of a Directory made up of mostly Clan-na-Gael leaders.[[246]](#footnote-247)

The convocation of the Irish National Congress was either an outright act of collusion between the leaders of the Senate Wing and the Clan-na-Gael, or the two groups operated in concert without questioning each other’s motives. Four of the six men chosen on the all-important Credentials Committee were active in the Clan-na-Gael at that time: John W. Goff of New York City, William James Nicholson of Troy, New York; Thomas Sheedy of Cincinnati and Michael Boland of Louisville, Kentucky. This committee was charged vetting the credentials of the delegates sent to participate at the congress. The organization chart published for the proposed “New York District 6” of the United Irishmen consisted of all Clan-na-Gael men: Supervisor, Timothy Hanley; Secretary, John W. Goff; Treasurer, John McCarthy.

Actual proof, other than members from the Clan-na-Gael being the leaders of the INB, has not been found, but the Clan-na-Gael becomes the only “physical-force” Irish-nationalist society, secret or otherwise, having sufficient membership and influence to merit the attention received from all parties in 1870. The Savage Wing specifically singled out the INB as being irrelevant to any unification and rejected “en toto” any representation by the group on the to-be-formed executive of the unified body.[[247]](#footnote-248)

Perhaps the surest sign the Clan-na-Gael as the INB was attempting to control the congress from behind the scenes is found in a resolution presented by the “Committee on Union” made up of delegates from each state. A close look at the proceedings finds that the Committee on Union presented a resolution as follows: “Third*—*That it [The United Irishmen] shall act in concert with the Irish National Brotherhood.” The full assembly amended this resolution to read: “Third*—*This organization shall co-operate with the Irish Revolutionary Brotherhood [IRB] of Ireland.”[[248]](#footnote-249) Apparently, the Clan-na-Gael was well enough represented in the hierarchy to present a resolution for unity with the Clan-na-Gael, but not strong enough in the rank and file to carry it. The amended statement changed the focus to the IRB in Ireland and went on to state that there would not be another Canadian adventure unless the IRB sanctioned the action*—*not a likely prospect.The congress brought the Senate faction to the same position that the O’Mahony Wing had held all along. Logic dictated that since both organizations now held the same agenda a merger of the two factions should now be feasible.

The first act of the United Irishmen was to send a delegation to the Savage Wing Congress that was being held at the same time in New York City. The United Irishmen delegation was told that, for unification of both groups, they must make the Savage Wing charter their charter, *without* changes. The Savage Wing also demanded that the proposed unified society be called the Fenian Brotherhood. The Savage Wing refused to accept any stipulation that the new executive council not include anyone who had held a high position in either of the to-be-unified organizations. The United Irishmen delegation, for their part, maintained that this clause was an essential move to free the new executive of old animosities.

The Savage Wing also demanded that the headquarters of the unified organization be in New York City far from the Senate Wing strongholds of Chicago and Philadelphia. The final demand was that a Savage Wing representative must become President of the Executive. The effect of the Savage Wing position was to require the United Irishmen to simply rejoin the Savage Wing as the price of unification. The Savage Wing also pushed for the inclusion of O’Neill’s new rump group, the United Fenian Brotherhood, on the proposed executive.

It was obvious to the United Irishmen delegation that the talks were going nowhere, and they broke off negotiations, citing the Savage Wing refusal to accept the exclusion of men presently holding positions of power as the cause for the failure.On September 7, two days after the unsuccessful attempt of the United Irishmen to find common ground, O’Neill signed a pact with the Savage Wing which made it official that O’Neill and his United Fenian Brotherhood followers had joined the Savage Wing. In return O’Neill, probably still dreaming of Canadian adventures, received a position in the ruling hierarchy of the Savage Wing.[[249]](#footnote-250)

John O’Neill accurately perceived the Clan-na-Gael influence within the United Irishmen and was convinced that this influence was a serious threat to the salaried positions of the Savage Wing leadership in the event of any movement toward unification. From his prison cell in Windsor, Vermont, O’Neill denounced the collusion of the Clan-na-Gael and the United Irishmen. Referring to James W. Fitzgerald, Daniel O’Madigan, Michael Boland, and P. W. Dunne, O’Neill first sarcastically asks, “Who would dare to doubt but that they represented everything Irish on the American continent worth speaking of . . .?”[[250]](#footnote-251) then he goes on to state these men were in a conspiracy to deliver the Fenian Brotherhood over to a “secret sworn organization” and warned his readers that members of that organization should not be allowed to be members of the Fenian Brotherhood.[[251]](#footnote-252) O’Neill then goes on to implicate the Clan-na-Gael in a plot:

Of course the Constitution of the United Irishmen says nothing about the other Constitution, which is only for the initiated. Those who [are] deemed worthy can enter the Camp without becoming United Irishmen. The United Irishmen, [except for] certain contingencies, will receive no opposition from the Camp, but will be [encouraged and] kept as a feeder for it. Its members imagine that they are perfectly free to do and say what they please; but let them undertake to do anything of importance, which has not been first sanctioned by the Camp, and they will soon find out how much liberty they have.[[252]](#footnote-253)

O’Neill’s choice of the word Camp pointed to the Clan-na-Gael equivalent of the Fenian designation “Circle” for local clubs was underlined in each instance in his proclamation. In using the word Camp, O’Neill made it clear that the Clan-na-Gael had infiltrated the United Irishmen organization. O’Neill’s new position on the Savage Wing council should be viewed as stiffening the will of the Savage Wing to resist any future unification overtures.

### John Devoy Discovers America

John Devoy was born in Greenhills near the town of Kill, County Kildare, Ireland on September 3, 1842.[[253]](#footnote-254) His father became a member of the Irish Confederation, a physical-force organization in 1847. The elder Devoy moved his family to Dublin in 1849 where young John Devoy grew up and went to school. John Devoy joined the IRB in 1861, emulating his father’s rebellious nature.[[254]](#footnote-255) Later that year, he decided he needed military experience and on May 2 he joined the French Foreign legion and was sent to Algiers.[[255]](#footnote-256) He resigned and returned to Dublin less than one year later March 5, 1862.[[256]](#footnote-257)

Upon John Devoy’s return, James Stephens appointed Devoy IRB Centre for Naas a small town southwest of Dublin.[[257]](#footnote-258) Devoy apparently did well, for when William Roantree, the man assigned the task of enlisting Irishmen serving in the British Army into the IRB, was captured in Dublin on October 26, 1865, Stephens appointed Devoy as “Chief Organizer of the British troops. Be very prudent now. You owe me this, to justify the appointment of so young a man to so responsible a post.”[[258]](#footnote-259)

Shortly thereafter informers exposed the IRB recruiting campaign to the British. The Dublin police initiated a series of raids on known nationalist hangouts. The police arrested Devoy during a raid on an IRB meeting at Pilsworth’s pub on the evening of February 22, 1866. Arrested with Devoy was Denis Duggan, an IRB member from the London Irish Volunteers, who had come over from England to fight after the closing of the Irish People. Devoy pleaded guilty to the recruiting charges and ended up in prison along with Duggan and the rest.[[259]](#footnote-260)

Another Fenian recruiter arrested in Dublin at that time was John Boyle O’Reilly, a member of the elite British Tenth Hussars cavalry, who worked for Devoy. Convicted and sent to Fremantle Prison in Western Australia, O’Reilly served only a short time before escaping into the bush. O’Reilly spent some anxious days with no food or water, but with the help of some friends who bribed the captain of the *Gazelle*, an American whaling ship. Thus, O’Reilly began a journey that ultimately led to America and freedom. O’Reilly’s escape provided a perfect model, as will be shown, for the 1876 Clan-na-Gael prisoner rescue mission to Australia.

Devoy spent five years in various English prisons until, as part of an amnesty, he and most of his fellow IRB political prisoners were set free on condition they leave British territory and finish their sentence terms in exile.[[260]](#footnote-261) Most chose America and sailed to New York. As part of the same amnesty the British authorities also freed most of the IRB political prisoners held in Western Australia. Not included in the Australian amnesty were the military prisoners—men who had been on active duty in the British Army when arrested for IRB activities. They were classified as traitors to the British crown. The Queen refused to grant them amnesty and they were assured they would spend the rest of their lives in the Fremantle, Australia prison.

January 18, 1871, the ship *Cuba* docked in New York harbor with five Exiles on board: John Devoy, Jeremiah O’Donovan Rossa, Harry Mulleda, Charles Underwood O’Connell, and John McClure.[[261]](#footnote-262)

“Painful and disgraceful scenes” introduced the Exiles to the boisterous world of Irish American politics.[[262]](#footnote-263) A near riot took place among several competing reception committees from various Irish nationalist organizations, along with Irish Americans with American political party affiliations. Small boats surrounded the *Cuba* and on all sides there was shouting and shoving. Each group tried to convince the Exiles that they represented the “Irish American people” and that the Exiles should go ashore in their boat. This episode convinced the Exiles that Irish nationalism in America was in disarray and entangled in American politics.[[263]](#footnote-264) The disgusted Exiles composed an open letter “To the Gentlemen of the Several Deputations for Receiving the Irish Exiles”[[264]](#footnote-265) that wisely refrained from choosing sides. They remained on the *Cuba* until noon the next day when they were taken ashore in a small Cunard boat to the company dock, and thence to Sweeney’s Hotel.[[265]](#footnote-266)

John Devoy and John Boyle O’Reilly’s paths now crossed again. O’Reilly and a group of prominent Boston Irishmen wrote to the Exiles offering refreshingly nonpolitical greetings and a donation of money from “no permanent organization, rather representing the Irish sentiment in general of Boston and vicinity. . ..” and reminded the Exiles of the military prisoners still in British jails. The Exiles thanked O’Reilly and the Boston committee for “practical proof” of their sincerity, adding, “We hope your reference to the military prisoners may be taken as assurance that you will aid in an effort to procure for them the freedom which we enjoy.”They requested O’Reilly and his friends to cooperate in the establishment of a “grand national organization, on a basis broad enough to admit all honest Irishmen who believe that Ireland has a right to self-government.”[[266]](#footnote-267)

The Exiles were anxious to get to work and only two weeks later, February 8, they held a meeting at Sweeney’s Hotel calling for unity among Irish American nationalists. The Exiles’ “call for unity” had a familiar ring to skeptical Irish Americans and the response was lukewarm. Devoy sent a personal letter to O’Reilly seeking help in swaying opinion to heed their call for unity. O’Reilly, less than enthusiastic about such grand schemes, answered back with a lengthy letter wherein promised:

I will do as you say about writing to the whole body: but to you privately, as a friend, let me say, what may not be spread on a newspaper*.*

O’Reilly then emphasized the great responsibility the Exiles had as representatives of the Irish cause. He warned Devoy that the Exiles had not spent enough time in the United States to discriminate among the various Irish American nationalist factions and what they stood for. They should not squander away the good will they had earned as a result of their suffering in prison for Ireland’s cause by taking precipitous action. The first task, O’Reilly advised Devoy, was to settle down and take up careers:

Firstly, you have only met since your arrival, the rabid element—the men who would throw up their caps today—and forget you tonight. These men do not represent the vast mass of our people here. They do not represent the vast millions of respectable Irishmen who have grown sick of “Fenianism” (did I tell you how I hate that word?) and its boasting dishonesty. . .. Go into business, old man, don’t lose one day about it: and if you think my advice worth taking, don’t join any organization for at least three months.[[267]](#footnote-268)

Sound advice, but Devoy and the other Exiles were anxious to take up the gauntlet after five years in prisonand ignored O’Reilly’s advice. Their unity movement received a boost from the leaders of the United Irishmen which turned the entire organization and its funds over to the Exiles.

Looking at the abdication of the United Irishmen leadership in favor of the Exiles, we must question: Why didn’t the United Irishmen simply merge with the Clan-na-Gael and unite the two entities into one large organization? It seems a logical step, but if the democratically elected Directory had turned the membership rolls over to an oath-bound secret society in violation of its constitution, the result would have been viewed as another Fenian humbug with a consequent loss of a large portion of the rank-and-file members. The inability of the Clan-na-Gael to get its unity plank approved in Cincinnati indicated that most of the rank-and-file members were not interested in an oath-bound secret society. It is probable that the Roman Catholic Church, whose prelates, with few exceptions, forbade any Catholic from belonging to any society requiring a sworn oath, also played a role in squelching such a merger. By giving up their leadership roles to the Exiles, whose credentials were not in question, the United Irishmen Directory remained intact, and that mitigated any constitutional conflict by maintaining the organization as it had been set up in Cincinnati. Unfortunately, as will be seen, that structure would not survive.

### General John O’Neill’s Last Hurrah[[268]](#footnote-269)

After the ignominious failure of his 1870 Canadian raid, freshly installed on the Savage Wing Council, General John O’Neill was looking for redemption. That opportunity was not long in coming. W. B. O’Donoghue, a colorful Irish intriguer among the rebellious French-Indian “Metis” in the Manitoba Territory of Canada, proposed to O’Neill that the Fenians could attack Fort Garry in Manitoba.[[269]](#footnote-270) O’Neill, seeing another chance for military action, sponsored this plan before the Fenian Council.[[270]](#footnote-271) According to O’Donoghue, the Metis were ready to rise up and join the Fenians. The Savage Wing Fenian council, weary of Canadian adventures in general, and O’Neill in particular, was having none of it. O’Neill did extract a commitment from the organization that it would not disclose nor criticize the plan in the press. In addition, the council agreed to help by supplying O’Neill with arms for his filibustering team. O’Neill resigned from the Fenian Brotherhood then set out on his own launching the final “Fenian” raid into Canada on October 5, 1871.[[271]](#footnote-272) The British spy, Fenian Adjutant General Henri Le Caron, a member of the Fenian Military Council, issued 400 stands of Fenian arms and ammunition to O’Neill and then dutifully informed Canadian Dominion Police Commissioner, Gilbert McMicken, what was under way.[[272]](#footnote-273)

O’Neill’s project exhibited a bit of the surreal. The first oddity is that the “invasion” took place on United States soil. According to General Winfield Scott, it had been determined in 1870 by the United States Corps of Engineers that the international border was too far south and a new survey was made resulting in a new survey line two miles to the north of its original location, placing a Hudson Bay trading post and a Canadian custom house in the Dakota Territory of the United States.[[273]](#footnote-274) O’Neill, unaware of this, enlisted a force of perhaps forty men and attacked and occupied the Hudson Bay trading post and the deserted custom house. Both structures, originally in Canada, were now one mile inside United States Territory. U.S. Army Captain Lloyd Wheaton, at the nearby U.S. Army post at Fort Pembina was aware of the survey and, upon being notified, was able to respond immediately without having to wait for diplomatic maneuvering.

All but ten of O’Neill’s men escaped into the woods without pursuit. The remaining ten men, and the expedition leaders, O’Neill, John J. Donnelly, and Thomas Curley, were surrounded and arrested. At the same time the raid was in progress and unknown to O’Neill and his band, Canadian Police Commissioner McMicken had enlisted the Metis leader Louis Riel to oppose the Fenians. As a result, the other instigator of the raid, W. B. O’Donoghue, was captured in Canada by Louis Riel’s Metis and turned over to Captain Wheaton. The men who were captured with O’Neill were simply released by the United States authorities as dupes. O’Neill and the three other arrested leaders were brought before U.S. Immigration Commissioner James S. Foster of the Dakota Territory, who promptly released all of them on technicalities.

O’Neill made a quasi-plausible claim that they were not raiders but a colonization party. That, the fact that O’Neill did not resist Wheaton’s forces and the general annexationist sentiment prevalent in the Dakota Territory, probably weighed heavily in Foster’s decision.[[274]](#footnote-275) The U.S. Attorney for the Dakota Territory, Warren Cowles, whose heart was not in trying the case, attempted to explain his reticence to Attorney General George Williams in Washington D.C. In a letter noting a laundry list of jurisdictional pitfalls and mentioning the lack of sufficient jurymen among the “railroad men and adventurers” of a caliber that might bring a conviction that would justify the effort and expense of a trial.

Williams then contacted Secretary of State Hamilton Fish and presented Cowles’ case for advice. Fish insisted that the men be tried for violation of United States’ neutrality laws. Based on this response, Cowles was forced to act, and Dakota Territory indictments were finally secured, and warrants issued. O’Neill was re-arrested on the same charges in St. Paul, Minnesota; but, continuing the farcical process, the Minnesota attorney general released O’Neill on “lack of evidence” with the result that no trial was ever held.[[275]](#footnote-276)

Shortly after O’Neill’s capture, Captain Wheaton wrote a report to his commander, General Philip Sheridan, that fifty British soldiers had rushed in to occupy the Hudson Bay post and the Dominion custom house. General Sheridan resented this British Army response after the U.S. Army had stopped another “Fenian invasion” and he forwarded Wheaton’s report to Secretary of War William Belnap, who urged Hamilton Fish to demand the British withdraw from the area. “[Fish], however, refused to press the British for a withdrawal, claiming that it was well known that the boundary was unsettled and that it was extremely premature to call the occupation of the custom house ‘willful trespass.’”[[276]](#footnote-277)

This was the final chapter of General John O’Neill’s military career. Although the three Fenian Brotherhood invasions of Canada appear to be more reminiscent of the Kilkenny Cats[[277]](#footnote-278) than a serious attempt to free Ireland, the failure of the raids to spark a war with Great Britain might have been due more to lack of execution than concept. The raids occurred at a time when many American newspapers filled with the annexationist sentiment that existed in the western territories. At the same time the Federal government, still irked by Britain’s blasé attitude toward *Alabama* Claims reparations, mulled over annexation of Canada as a possible outcome to British intransigence. The result of a successful, established Fenian base could easily have resulted in a migration of Irish Americans and American farmers colonizing Manitoba creating another annexationist pressure on Washington.

When we imagine U.S. citizens in Canada alongside the Irish Fenians, perhaps bolstered by French “Metis” support, all disputing the British claim to control of the area, it is not unreasonable to think the actions of the United States government might have been pulled to the side of the annexationists.

### The Irish Confederation*—*Unity as a four-letter word

After the Cincinnati congress the new United Irishmen constitution provided for non-paid executive positions, a step closer to the Clan-na-Gael position. As a result of the Cincinnati congress, the Clan-na-Gael had acquired some control over the United Irishmen organization since many Clan-na-Gael men had United Irishmen leadership positions. As recounted earlier, any merger contemplated between the Clan-na-Gael and the United Irishmen would founder on the Clan-na-Gael secret oath-bound membership pledge. After the unification talks held with the Savage Wing during the Cincinnati Congress broke down, the United Irishmen went on to constitute itself without Savage Wing participation.

The arrival of the Exiles in 1871 had provided another possibility for unification of Irish nationalism. The various moves and declarations made in 1871 by the Savage Wing, the United Irishmen and, later, the Irish Confederation, were attempts by each to become the major player in Irish American nationalism. The active role taken by the Clan-na-Gael in the formation of the United Irishmen created two distinct, but interlocked organizations. Devoy strongly believed in the use of a “ginger group”[[278]](#footnote-279) that would secretly direct an organization from the inside.The behind-the-scenes activity of the Clan-na-Gael at the formation congress of the United Irishmen foreshadowed similar Directory-stacking moves that Clan-na-Gael made during the 1880s to control the political direction of the Irish American Land League and other nationalist organizations.

The basis of Devoy’s “ginger group” strategy was laid out in 1871 in a document “Notes on Organization” by John Devoy[[279]](#footnote-280) which defined the structure that Irish American Nationalism should take, written February 7, 1871:

I think that an organization having for its object the liberation of Ireland should be so constituted that all the different sections of the Irish people might be included in it. I think that all the organizations at present existing should be ignored. None of them represent more than a small section of the Irish people in America, and therefore have no claim to be called national organizations.

I think there should be a public organization having for its object the [saving?] of money for the purpose [of] aiding the national movement in Ireland, and giving whatever other assistance might be found necessary. I believe it is also necessary to have a secret organization with the sole object of effecting a revolution in Ireland. The real revolutionary work could be done in this, so that it would not be at all necessary to have the public one very advanced in its principles; in fact, I believe that its programme should be so arranged as to allow of any change that circumstances might require. It should be distinctly understood that all members of the public organization are allowed to hold whatever opinions they choose, or to belong to any other organization, provided they agree in the one idea that Ireland has a right to self-government.[[280]](#footnote-281)

After six months of futile efforts to either effect a merger with the Savage Wing or lure a significant number of Savage Wing Circles into their organization, the fortuitous arrival of the Exiles from England in January 1871 provided the United Irishmen Directory a chance to change the dynamics of the unification effort. After some behind-the-scenes work between the United Irishmen and the Exiles, on February 15 the Exiles met as a formal committee producing an official call to unite:

Resolved: That we assume immediately the control of the various Irish organizations in America which have offered to place themselves under our guidance . . ..[[281]](#footnote-282)

On February 18, the United Irishmen Directory announced to their membership that they were turning the organization and its finances over to a new Directory formed by the Exiles.[[282]](#footnote-283) The Exiles were thereby presented with a ready-made structure for a new attempt at unification of Irish American nationalism. With the Exiles now in charge of what was left of the Senate Wing, the hope was that the Savage Wing would also accept the exiles leadership and all factions would merge into one organization.

The Savage Wing was not impressed, and public anti-Exile rhetoric appeared almost immediately. At a meeting on March 22, 1871, President John Savage attacked the Exiles as interlopers attempting to take over the funds of the Fenian Brotherhood.[[283]](#footnote-284)

For John Devoy and his fellow Exiles, a great organization espousing Irish self-rule joining all nationalists together no matter their version of Irish freedom was easier to imagine than it was to bring into reality. Wrapping themselves in the structure of the United Irishmen, the Exiles renamed their organization the “Irish Confederation,” a name bringing echoes of the Young Ireland clubs of 1848.Despite the impeccable nationalist credentials of the Exiles’ governing junta, and an energetic recruiting campaign, no groundswell of enthusiasm penetrated the swirling green mists inside of which the various Irish American nationalist factions fought and operated.

Without Savage Wing participation, a true unification of nationalists was not possible. Many smaller independent societies and drifting circles left over from all the infighting preferred to sit on the sidelines and not alter their diverse agendas for the greater good until a real juncture of all factions occurred.

The Savage Wing was less interested in unification and more concerned with accomplishing the things necessary to hold onto their membership, that is to say: their subscription base. In December, the Savage Wing did accede to the establishment, in cooperation with the Irish Confederation, of a jointly staffed “Allied Council” composed of two Savage Wing members: William G. Halpin, and George Cahill, and two Exile members: Jeremiah O’Donovan Rossa, and Thomas Clarke Luby, with a fifth member to be named by these four. The new council was supposed to ensure twenty-five percent of all collected funds from both organizations went to the IRB.

William G. Halpin was the elected Secretary of the Allied Council; but, although he attended Savage Wing council meetings, he refused to take part in deliberations of the Irish Confederation council, as had been agreed to by both organizations. In mid-February 1872, having gotten whatever ducks it still possessed in a row, the Irish Confederation held its first national convention with the outcome “considered highly satisfactory.”[[284]](#footnote-285)

The Irish Confederation, within six months of the formation of the Allied Council, dissolved their participation with the Savage Wing “from which no important practical benefits had since resulted.”[[285]](#footnote-286) Having subscription receipts go anywhere but into their general treasury was not something the Savage Wing leadership was going to let happen. The Allied Council was still-born. The Savage Wing, once again, pretending to want unity, insured it did not occur.

The Savage Wing’s agenda was England-baiting and holding itself ready to resurrect a Fenian army in the remote chance the British Empire became embroiled in a foreign war*—*and, of course, maintaining its hierarchy with paid jobs. Meanwhile, back in Ireland the IRB, cut off from its source of funds, became a non-issue for American Fenianism. An impasse had been reached that doomed to failure any attempt toward the unification of Irish nationalism. It is natural that the constant infighting would drive many of the more serious Irish physical force nationalists into the Clan-na-Gael as the old Senate Wing floundered from United Irishmen to Irish Confederation and, finally, into oblivion.

There are important indicators that the Exiles did not control the Clan-na-Gael, even though the Exiles held leadership positions in that organization. There was a need, even if the leaders of both groups were favorable to unification, to obtain acquiescence of the rank-and-file members to any merger. The Cincinnati Congress had shown this was not an easy task. Notes taken during the minutes of a meeting of the Irish Confederation Directory, on July 27, 1871, include a resolution to approach the Clan-na-Gael Association “to unite with the Confederation on the basis of sending arms to Ireland, and that the two organizations should operate in concert in America.”

The problem faced by the Irish Confederation leaders as they trod about on theeggshells of merger etiquette while attempting to negotiate a pathway to unity among the various organizations is visible in the handwritten minutes referenced above where the word “unite” is crossed out and “co-operate” written in. In the same minutes, a person was to be designated to “confer with the UIB [United Irish Brotherhood] on the necessity of united action.” Again, the word “united” is crossed out and replaced this time with “harmonious.”[[286]](#footnote-287) These manuscript changes signify that the Exiles did not have a mandate in any of these groups and their unity drive required a smokescreen to avoid offending the ultra-sensitive feelings of the various nationalist ruling leadership, who were, by now, paranoid when it came to any suggestion implying a unification proposal.

Perhaps frustration at Irish factionalism explains why John Devoy might take part in an odd junction of Irish, German, and French members of a Central Committee meeting of the International Workingmen’s Association (IWA) held on December 13, 1871 at the Tenth Ward Hotel. The IWA supported Irish freedom (but not nationalism) and invited the Irish nationalists to become members.[[287]](#footnote-288)A reporter from the *New York Herald* sent out to cover the event reports on the event, referring to himself in the third person:

He entered a dingy, dirty room of about thirty by fifteen feet, on the second floor. He found there about a dozen men of weird aspect seated around a table, at the heel of which sat a dim-eyed young gentleman who, by the aid of a shiny pair of spectacles, was reading aloud the names written on some piece of paper which he drew one by one from a hat. They were ballots, and the represented the chosen candidates for the offices of chairman, secretary, and treasurer of the body assembled. The spectacled young gentleman turned out to be Mr. John Devoy, one of the recently arrived ex-Fenian exiles, and at the present Chief Secretary of the “Irish Confederation.” Near him sat one or two other persons who were formerly more or less connected with the Fenian movement.[[288]](#footnote-289)

This meeting of the Central Committee of the IWA had been convened for the purpose of planning participation in a funeral procession for three German “martyrs.” Devoy, secretary of Section 7 of the IWA in New York, and W. J. Nicholson, secretary of Section 24 in Jersey City, were there representing their Sections.[[289]](#footnote-290) One can only surmise that these Clan-na-Gael men were attempting to add another venue that supported Irish freedom by aligning themselves with the IWA.[[290]](#footnote-291) The *New York Herald* reporter went on to indicate that the group at the table consisted of Friedrich Sorge, as chairman, John Devoy, just elected secretary, along with W. J. Nicholson and several Germans just elected as a Credentials Committee. These men had convened earlier than the time published for the meeting given in the newspaper and had usurped control of the meeting, intending to leave out a French element that showed up after the vote had been taken.

“[I]n one minute the room was converted into a first-class pandemonium,” during which Sorge leapt up and declared the meeting adjourned.The *New York Herald* reporter then interviewed a disgusted Irishman, “rather an intelligent fellow” who said that the real problem was not the French and Germans, who, although they hated one another, did not start the row, but rather “a queer-looking specification of humanity” from section 12 who was advocating free love.[[291]](#footnote-292)

After Sorge disbanded the meeting the French, German and Irishmen men re-assembled in a new meeting hall, apparently without the free love advocate, and agreed to attend a funeral for the German martyrs. It’s unclear exactly what Devoy and his Fenian companions were hoping to obtain from the IWA but French republicans “meditating the burning up of the principal cities of England” would certainly have struck a resonant chord with the Irish members.[[292]](#footnote-293) Nothing seemed to come out of the IWA venture as far as Clan-na-Gael involvement. Apparently Devoy remained as a member of the IWA Section 7 at least through June.[[293]](#footnote-294) One can imagine Devoy, once he became a member of the Clan-na-Gael, and with his duties in the Irish Confederation, was dealing with enough disunity and chaos without adding IWA duties and dropped out.

On September 22, James Stephens, the deposed IRB chief, landed in the United States as a representative of a European liquor merchant, and immediately reemerged from obscurity as a possible reunification candidate for Irish American nationalist organizations. Any return of Stephens was anathema to both the Clan-na-Gael and to the Irish Confederation. And just to emphasize that point, a prominent Irish Confederation Club, the “General Sheridan” of New York City, in a resolution printed in the *New York Times*, warned their leadership that they would withdraw immediately from the organization if James Stephens was allowed onto the executive council.[[294]](#footnote-295) Stephens spent some time in the United States and then returned to private business in France.

The drive to free Ireland with an Irish American army still captivated audiences and brought in enough subscriptions to maintain the Savage Wing faction into the mid-1880s, but never again was the Fenian Brotherhood able to return to the robust subscription lists, military enlistment rosters, and weapon supply levels that it had achieved before the invasions of 1866 and 1870.

The Irish Confederation as a separate nationalist organization did not do well. The Circles of the old Senate Wing, called the United Irishmen after O’Neill’s failed invasion, renamed the Irish Confederation upon arrival of the Exiles, despite structural modifications and name changes from 1870 to 1872, formally disbanded. The Irish Confederation as a venue for unification, once unity was found to be impossible, really had no purpose other than opposition to the Savage Wing.

John Devoy had not achieved his goal of establishing two mutually supporting organizations, one secret and one public. After two years of diminishing enthusiasm, unable to unite the various nationalist parties, the Exiles in the Irish Confederation realized they had accomplished little more than form another faction. The Irish Confederation dissolved itself in the spring of 1873.[[295]](#footnote-296) Jeremiah O’Donovan Rossa summed up the Exile’s frustration: “We found the ‘union’ sought by each faction was adhesion to itself.”[[296]](#footnote-297) The Clan-na-Gael accepted offers from various Irish Confederation Clubs to become Clan-na-Gael Camps and continued to increase its membership.[[297]](#footnote-298)

One is given to wonder whether John Devoy went back and reread, with a new perspective, John Boyle O’Reilly’s warning against premature commitment to any nationalist faction.

In one area, however, Devoy took O’Reilly’s advice, when, in May 1871, he secured a position at Wallace and Schomaker Sugar Refiners on Pearl Street in New York.[[298]](#footnote-299) Devoy was also able, probably with the help of Jerome Collins, science editor, or James J O’Kelly, reporter, both friends of Devoy employed by the *New York Herald*, to find work as a reporter on the newspaper. The earnings he received provided him the wherewithal to continue his quest as he now focused his attention on the Clan-na-Gael.

# PART IV

# The Rise of the Clan-na-Gael

### Behind Closed Doors

The British spy Henri Le Caron had incorrect information on the origins of the Clan-na-Gael. Le Caron was admitted into the Clan-na-Gael hierarchy as a protégé of Alex Sullivan in 1878. The Clan-na-Gael split in the mid-1880s, and Le Caron was involved only in the Irish National Brotherhood (INB) faction run by Sullivan, Feeley, and Boland. Le Caron’s history of John Devoy’s faction is superficial. Inaccuracies in Le Caron’s reports misled his handlers in England who, in turn, produced an erroneous history of the organization. Le Caron’s muddled view persists into modern accounts that use Le Caron’s testimony during the *London Times* Commission trial or Le Caron’s book as their source. Le Caron’s version is important, however. His information, stripped to what can be ascertained as his first-hand knowledge, allows us to gain an insight into the growth of the Clan-na-Gael through assimilation of the Confederation Clubs.

Le Caron states that he belonged to a group called “The Knights of the Inner Circle” in Braidwood, Illinois which was affiliated “in the latter part of 1869” with the disgruntled Brian Boru Circle in New York City and states, incorrectly, that P.R. Walsh, which should be P.K. Walsh, of Cleveland was the father of the Clan-na-Gael movement.[[299]](#footnote-300) P.K. Walsh was an important early member but not the founder. The Brian Boru Circle was a Fenian Senate Wing Circle in New York and remained so through the name changes from “United Irishmen” and later “Irish Confederation” then, finally, by Le Caron’s testimony, became a Clan-na-Gael Camp. The Irish Confederation disintegrated in 1873. If Le Caron is right about the Knights of the Inner Circle’s Clan-na-Gael affiliation, then the club would probably have become a Clan-na-Gael Camp in 1878.[[300]](#footnote-301)

John Devoy, in his series, “The History of the Clan-na-Gael” in the *Gaelic American* (1924), states that Jerome James Collins was the Clan-na-Gael’s founder. Jerome Collins was born October 17, 1841 in Cork City, County Cork.[[301]](#footnote-302) His father, Mark Collins, ran a salt and lime works in Cork. Jerome Collins studied civil engineering and worked for a time doing contract work in London. He also worked for an iron construction firm at London’s Pentonville Prison where his access to the prison buildings allowed him to pinpoint the cell locations of the Fenian prisoners held there.Although not a member of the IRB, Collins and some other nationalists decided to rescue the Fenians. Loose talk by one of Collins’ colleagues allowed the British authorities to connect Collins to the plot and he was forced to flee to America in 1866.[[302]](#footnote-303) Upon arrival in New York, he joined the Fenian Brotherhood and became a captain in Company B of the New York 69th Regiment, a refuge for Fenian veterans of the Civil War.[[303]](#footnote-304) Collins found his first employment with the Union and Pacific Railroad. In 1867-1868, he had the job of director of a project to reclaim marshlands near Newark, New Jersey. He was appointed Street Commissioner for Hudson City, N.J. in 1869. He became Science Editor on the *New York Herald* in 1875.[[304]](#footnote-305)Collins was still employed by the *New York Herald* when he joined a U.S. Navy Artic Pole expedition aboard the ship *Jeannette*, which was crushed by arctic ice when it was frozen in place in Siberia in October of 1881. Collins and several members of the crew set up a camp, but all starved to death during the Russian winter. In 1884 Collins’ body was recovered and brought to New York where, on February 23, 1884, a funeral mass was held at St Patrick’s Cathedral in New York.[[305]](#footnote-306) Collins body was then sent to Ireland where, on March 9, 1884, Collins was buried at a heavily attended ceremony in the graveyard at Curraghkippane, County Cork.[[306]](#footnote-307)

The founding of the Clan-na-Gael took place in 1867 on Hester Street in New York City at James Sheedy’s house,[[307]](#footnote-308) according to Devoy’s History of the Clan-na-Gael. Collins, while working as supervising engineer in charge of draining the New Jersey Salt Meadows, took advantage of the opportunity this position offered and hired men to work for him from both Fenian Brotherhood factions. On the anniversary of Wolfe Tone’s birthday, June 20, 1867, Collins and some others formally organized a group from both factions of the Fenian Brotherhood into the Napper Tandy Club. Napper Tandy later became the first “Camp” designated “D1” of the Clan-na-Gael Association. Based on James Sheedy’s knowledge of the induction protocols of the Masonic Order, a complex ritual system was put in place for inductees. True to James Collins’ belief that “a debating society will never free Ireland,” Napper Tandy was formed as an oath-bound secret society. The Napper Tandy affiliation to the Clan-na-Gael is publicly mentioned in the *New York Herald*,May 1872.[[308]](#footnote-309)One can imagine that the mind of an engineer would give Collins a more fact-based, action-oriented approach to getting things done. The antics of the feuding wings of the Fenian Brotherhood must have frustrated him. Collins proposed that the Napper Tandy Club be used as a neutral location where participants from all sides of the Fenian feud could meet and discuss the future of Irish nationalism and plan actions against the British. Napper Tandy Club members included men like Senate Wing leader William R. Roberts and Fenian Brotherhood president John O’Mahony.[[309]](#footnote-310) Also joining Napper Tandy were the two Fenians who were freed during the “smashing of the van” in Manchester in 1867, Colonel Thomas J. Kelly and Timothy Deasy. Deasy, who had served in the 9th Massachusetts Volunteers during the Civil War, then formed his own Clan-na-Gael Camp in Lawrence, Massachusetts, probably Camp D19.[[310]](#footnote-311)Other like-minded Camps formed, mostly in urban centers, and began to affiliate with Collins’ group. It is probable that breakaway Fenian Circles also joined the Association.

Ever the schemer, when Collins became aware that Queen Victoria’s son, Prince Arthur, was to visit New York, he concocted a plan to kidnap Prince Arthur off a boat on the Hudson River. A pleasure cruise on board the SS *Minnebock* that took place on February 3, 1870, was apparently the target of this enterprise.[[311]](#footnote-312) The object was to use the prince as a hostage to obtain the release of all Fenian prisoners. Collins and a few Camp members joined him in this escapade. Collin’s band set off in small boats down the Hudson River; but, perhaps just as well for all involved, the plan misfired and, as John Devoy later described it, the would-be kidnappers “missed [capturing Prince Arthur] by an unforeseen accident.”[[312]](#footnote-313)

Several months earlier, sources at Fenian Headquarters had been quoted in an article in the *New York Times* as predicting that the Fenians were planning an abduction of Prince Arthur and such boasting must have prompted measures against such an act by United States authorities.[[313]](#footnote-314) The cryptic “unforeseen accident,” mentioned by Devoy, might have been a sudden dose of reality coming over Collins and his group upon seeing Prince Arthur aboard the SS *Minnebock* surrounded by U.S. Army and Navy officers and “quite a number” of guests.

Although Collins’ kidnap plot was not successful, the members felt they had shown that Irishmen of all factions could work together when circumstances called for it. They decided to plan and execute similar actions in the future.[[314]](#footnote-315)

Despite Napper Tandy’s promising inclusive membership, the new organization was unable to succeed in its object of uniting the fighting Fenian Wings. The Clan-na-Gael gradually became an entity unto itself, collecting funds, stockpiling arms and seeking linkage to the IRB in Ireland.[[315]](#footnote-316) Based on the fact that the Cleveland gathering of 1877 was called “the eighth annual convention” the Clan-na-Gael must have held its first convention in 1869. Given John Devoy’s stature as an ex-IRB leader it is probable that the Clan-na-Gael invited him and the other Exiles to join in 1871 upon their arrival in America.

“Clan-na-Gael Association” was the name used in public for the organization. That name was adopted at the suggestion of Sam Cavanagh. Cavanagh was born in Dublin on July 10, 1843 and joined the IRB as a teenager and marched in the Dublin parade honoring Terrence Bellew McManus in 1861. Only a “beggarly handful” of rifles existed in the hands of the IRB and, therefore, the IRB employed Cavanagh and several others making pike handles.Sam Cavanagh, Michael Cody, John Devoy, and a couple of other men lived over a stable on Dorset Street in Dublin where the pike handles were formed out of wooden slats. The bed the men slept in was a pile of pike-handle shavings with a cloth thrown over it. In February 1866 a man named George Clarke showed up to the stable looking for work, but Clarke was told they had no room for more men. Clarke, upset and vindictive, went immediately to the police and informed them of the pike-making operation on Dorset Street. The police responded within a half hour and closed the operation down, although the men escaped. Two days later, Sam Cavanagh shot Clarke dead on the banks of the Royal canal.[[316]](#footnote-317) The police found out it was Cavanagh and put out a warrant for his arrest. After several weeks of hiding out, Cavanagh fled to America in 1866, where he joined the Fenian brotherhood. Sam Cavanagh was a good friend of Jerome Collins and a charter member of the Napper Tandy Club. Cavanagh submitted the name “Clan-na-Gael” which was adopted for its first annual picnic at Jones Woods in the summer of 1870. By this time, the Clan-na-Gael was actively recruiting members and had branches springing up around the country. Sam Cavanagh was involved in Clan-na-Gael activities up until the day he died, December 28, 1906, in New York City.[[317]](#footnote-318)

The Clan-na-Gael clubs, called Camps by the members, chose delegates and attended clandestine yearly conventions under their internally used designation “United Brotherhood.” Rumors of a new web of nationalist clubs starting up across the United States must at some point have reached the British government; however, British agents would have been put to the test to quantify any threats posed, given that allegiances frequently shifted among the nationalist clubs. Sir Robert Anderson oversaw the England’s special branch assigned to cover Fenian activity. He glossed over the eight years from O’Neill’s 1870 invasion until 1878 when Le Caron was inducted into the Clan-na-Gael as an interval “marked by a series of characteristic quarrels and plots.”[[318]](#footnote-319) Anderson’s comment reflects his loss of inside information on nationalist activity that had been supplied by Le Caron, who followed O’Neill into the Savage Wing. The shift of power that occurred from the Senate Wing to the Clan-na-Gael left Le Caron out of the loop until Alexander Sullivan’s introduction of Le Caron into the Clan-na-Gael hierarchy in 1878. Anderson was at a real disadvantage since Clan-na-Gael activity, with its membership rolls and operations kept secret even from regular members.

With only a mediocre response generated by the Irish Confederation, the focus of the Exiles turned to the Clan-na-Gael. As the Irish Confederation disintegrated, many members of the Irish Confederation clubs simply applied to the Clan-na-Gael, forming new “Camps” and thereby increasing Clan-na-Gael membership. The merging of the clubs into the Clan-na-Gael is hinted at as early as January 1871 when a New York “Convention” of the United Irishmen included the Napper Tandy and Hamilton Rowan Camps of the Clan-na-Gael.[[319]](#footnote-320)

As mentioned above, John Devoy, as well as his close friend and adviser James J. O’Kelly, foresaw two mutually affiliated organizations supporting Irish American nationalism: one public and open to all and another secret revolutionary section that would provide weapons and finances for a rebellion in Ireland. The failed Irish Confederation was to be the public organization. The first successful public organization would have to wait until the Irish Land League movement of the 1880s. The secret revolutionary organization that Devoy and O’Kelly sought would come to fruition in the Clan-na-Gael. James J. O’Kelly was a veteran of the IRB, and a *New York Herald* reporter. O’Kelly, while a member of the Irish Confederation, urged his friend Devoy to take control of the Clan-na-Gael organization:

Has anything been done in the matter of the Clan-na-Gael? That is important work, and I have a presentiment that whatever is to be done towards putting them in the right way must be done now, or it may become impossible ever to put the organization in the right channel.[[320]](#footnote-321)

Nothing found so far indicates that the Exiles ever formally sat down around a conference table and discussed infiltrating the Clan-na-Gael and the Savage Wing as an alternative to open unification, but the results were the same as if they had done so. Exiles Jeremiah O’Donovan Rossa, Thomas Clark Luby, and James J. O’Kelly entered the hierarchy of the Fenian Savage Wing. John Devoy, John McClure, and Thomas Francis Bourke joined the Clan-na-Gael. O’Donovan Rossa and Luby were members of both organizations. The result of these moves meant the Exiles now held important positions in the two main factions of Irish American nationalism left after the demise of the Irish Confederation. After Devoy joined the Clan-na-Gael any discussions held between Bourke, Rossa, Devoy and O’Kelly concerning directions being taken in Irish American affairs meant Irish American nationalism had, at least informally, established a communication network and a sort of virtual unity. This does not mean that the goals of the various groups were the same and it is very important to recognize that many of the Exiles were opinionated and rather intolerant of criticism, and none of them was ever “subjugated” by any group. The Exiles remained what might be aptly called “loose cannons” within the organizations to which they belonged.

James J. O’Kelly’s focus on the Clan-na-Gael unlocked the secret of unification. If the Clan-na-Gael began to recruit more aggressively, was able to plan and execute a plausible agenda and could pull off a coup against the British showing everyone the Clan-na-Gael meant business, the Clan-na-Gael might, by default, begin to drain off the cream of the membership of the old factions, allowing the Clan-na-Gael to become the de facto leader of physical force nationalism.

Because the Clan-na-Gael allowed its members to belong to other organizations, the Clan-na-Gael had the advantage of a clear view into what the competition was doing. Clan-na-Gael rules allowed members to belong to both the Senate Wing and the Savage Wing. Members of all factions of the Fenian Brotherhood as well as the Ancient Order of Hibernians and other Irish societies, nationalist or otherwise, had members of the Clan-na-Gael in important positions, a fact that, at least initially, minimized public quarreling.[[321]](#footnote-322) The strictly enforced secrecy of membership of the oath-bound constitution insured that the advantage stayed with the Clan-na-Gael.

Membership in two or more societies created cross-pollination in the hierarchy of Irish American nationalism. It must be imagined that the Exiles would meet, at a minimum informally, and discuss the options open to the various organizations to which they belonged. The arrival of the Exiles led to a dramatic drop in public squabbling among Irish American nationalists. Public interchanges were not always cordial between the different organizations or even among the Exiles, but the ability of the hierarchy of one group to communicate in private with the hierarchy of another group prevented the more virulent public name-calling and pistol-waving that had characterized the Irish American nationalist factions from 1858 to 1870.

At the time O’Kelly wrote Devoy to get the Clan-na-Gael on the right track, some of the Exiles were already members. Based on Devoy’s own writing, Devoy and most of the Exiles joined the Clan-na-Gael shortly after their arrival in New York. In his Gaelic American article “The Story of the Clan-na-Gael,” Devoy states, “In 1871 the Clan-na-Gael was nearly 4 years old. We all joined it, but some of us did not like its excessive secrecy and some of its absurd initiation ceremonies.”[[322]](#footnote-323)

John Devoy was a member by autumn, 1872, when he tried and failed to convince the Clan-na-Gael at their convention to undertake a military-prisoner rescue.[[323]](#footnote-324) We know that another Exile, John McClure, was a member of the Clan-na-Gael Executive Body by autumn, 1873, although his exact position is not known.[[324]](#footnote-325) Harry Mulleda was listed as a member on June 23, 1874[[325]](#footnote-326) and noted as president of the Clan-na-Gael Association for New York in 1875.[[326]](#footnote-327) One Exile, Denis Dowling Mulcahy did not join until February 14, 1876.

Devoy along with his close friend and fellow Clan-na-Gael officer, Dr. William Carroll, held a somewhat blasé attitude towards the Clan-na-Gael constitution and its rituals. Carroll enrolled some members without all the required rituals into his Philadelphia Camp. Dr. Carroll wrote a letter to John Devoy regarding Mulcahy’s case, indicating that they could skip the initiation rigmarole: “I can simply swear him in and place his name on the roll of D48, of which I am the SG, and the whole matter will be finished.” Dr. Carroll goes on to warn Devoy that he should not mention this to anyone else, “not even [Executive Body] members, lest some ‘strict constructionist’ should get into a spasm of devotion to ‘the constitution.’”[[327]](#footnote-328)

John O’Neill’s address from prison in 1870, quoted above, indicates that the Clan-na-Gael Camps were known from their inception to be physical-force nationalist clubs and therefore rivals of the Fenians. Although small references to Clan-na-Gael picnics had appeared in the newspapers as early as August 1871, the debut of the Clan-na-Gael into the public eye as an Irish nationalist organization can be tracked from the summer of 1872. In addition to the public mention of Napper Tandy as a Clan-na-Gael Association club in May, on August 17, 1872, *The* *Irish-American* published an article concerning the sale of Irish National Bazaar lottery tickets offered by the MP of Tipperary, T. P. O’Connor, who was visiting the United States collecting money for the “National Party” in Ireland.[[328]](#footnote-329) T.P. O’Connor asked for a distribution of tickets by the Fenian Brotherhood, the Irish Confederation, and the Clan-na-Gael Association. T. P. O’Connor is indicates that the Clan-na-Gael was a nationalist society by directing a request to those organizations as the most likely to help him collect money for the nationalist cause.[[329]](#footnote-330) Gradually, the Clan-na-Gael began showing up in more announcements in relation to grand balls, picnics and the like, with one of the first such announcements being January 1, 1873 for an “Annual Ball.”[[330]](#footnote-331) In February, 1874 we find the Clan-na-Gael Association of Chicago announcing its first annual ball.[[331]](#footnote-332) Clan-na-Gael games were announced August 13, 1876 in Cincinnati.[[332]](#footnote-333) The effectiveness of the secrecy of the Clan-na-Gael is manifested by the fact that the first mention of the name in England in its context as a nationalist organization, found in a search of the *London Times*,is in an 1881 article that quoted an 1877 letter from Dublin’s Archbishop Cullen to his flock, railing against “skirmishing,” the Fenians and the Clan-na-Gael.[[333]](#footnote-334) Cullen presumably had knowledge of increasing Clan-na-Gael membership through communications with his fellow prelates in America. The *London Times* seemed to not yet have connected the dots that showed this nationalist group had replaced the slowly dissolving Fenian Brotherhood. A Clan-na-Gael rally held in Chicago in August 1883 did attract the attention of the British press when the invited speakers spoke in favor of the nationalist cause.[[334]](#footnote-335)

The Clan-na-Gael’s clandestine behavior was in sharp contrast to the open informer-infiltrated Fenian meetings that had made it easy for the British to keep abreast of every move the Fenians made or contemplated. Airing of Fenian dirty linen in the media made great copy for newspapers in the big urban centers where Irish-born immigrants lived and worked. Blustering against Britain and bragging about grandiose projects created an environment where failed Fenian operations appeared frivolous in the eyes of the Americans, the British and, worst of all, the Fenians themselves. Jerome Collins had noted the unsatisfactory results of Fenian openness and attempted to ensure Clan-na-Gael operations were kept out of view of the public and, more importantly, of the British.

To preclude documents from falling into the wrong hands, circulars and other memoranda from the Clan-na-Gael Executive Body were to be demonstratively burned by each Camp leader in full view of the membership immediately after reading.[[335]](#footnote-336) To make it difficult to determine what the Clan-na-Gael was up to, various codes were used to confuse anyone happening on a piece of Clan-na-Gael correspondence. A simple early code was to have the names of people and places, when they might give away secrets, spelled using the letter of the alphabet after the letter meant, so that United Brotherhood or U.B. was written “VC” and Executive Body or E.B. was written “FC.” Letters and numbers were used to designate official positions and designate Camp members.

To a reader of Clan-na-Gael correspondence of the time, the fight for the “Republic of Jsfmboe”[[336]](#footnote-337) sounds a bit whimsical as it must surely have sounded to John Devoy. However, Devoy was not amused at all by what he called the masonic-like “grotesque initiation ceremonies” that were so contrived and childlike that he originally refused to participate in them. During part of the initiation ceremony, for instance, the candidate had to wait in an anteroom, blindfolded and with his hands tied behind his back. At a certain point in the ceremonial a “Commander,” with sword in hand and wearing an appropriately colored pendant, led the candidate into the inner sanctum of the Camp meeting hall, which had been laid out in a prescribed pattern. The candidate then was asked a series of questions regarding any allegiance he might hold that could conflict with the secrecy required by the United Brotherhood. Upon giving a satisfactory answer, the candidate swore fealty to the United Brotherhood in front of God while holding a bible in his right hand. After completion of the oath the candidate kissed the bible and, at this point, had the blindfold removed and was welcomed by the Camp Senior Guardian and his lieutenants into the United Brotherhood.[[337]](#footnote-338) The Masonic influence in the rituals originated with Clan-na-Gael member James Sheedy[[338]](#footnote-339) who, according to Devoy, made a “hobby of collecting secret societies.”[[339]](#footnote-340) In an interesting comment, Devoy’s stated that the Clan-na-Gael’s use of this type of ceremony pointed to a lack of the sophistication required by a serious revolutionary society:

Americans of the less intelligent class are more addicted to this kind of folly than Irishmen, and the success of the Ku Klux Klan is largely due to its grotesque ceremonial, which one would think could only affect men in a primitive state of civilization.[[340]](#footnote-341)

Even the founder, Jerome Collins, at one point was expelled for objecting to these ceremonies.[[341]](#footnote-342)

Devoy succeeded in getting the most obnoxious parts of the rituals abolished but it took several years. At the time of his initiation, however, Devoy succumbed to the indignities for the good of the cause but only after much urging by members who knew well what a determined John Devoy might do to ignite the organization into action.[[342]](#footnote-343) The members would not be disappointed as Devoy began immediately to infuse the Clan-na-Gael with his particular measure of unquenchable energy and unceasing drive toward the goal of an Irish Republic. But not everyone greeted the news of Devoy’s entry into the Clan-na-Gael with enthusiasm.

### A Young Star Rising

John William Goff was born on January 1, 1848 to Protestant parents in Gorey, County Wexford, Ireland. After losing both his parents, he emigrated from Ireland at seventeen years old. When he arrived in New York he became a Roman Catholic.[[343]](#footnote-344) His character could be described as pugnacious and he did fight as an amateur boxer before taking a job as clerk in Alexander Stewart’s Dry Goods store in New York City. Studying after work, Goff graduated from Cooper Institute and worked for New York Attorney Samuel Courtney while taking law courses. Goff was admitted to the New York Bar on June 3, 1876. His later career as an anti-corruption, anti-Tammany lawyer culminated in an appointment as chief counsel on the famous Lexow Committee investigating New York Police Department corruption. His relentless attacks on rogue cop witnesses gave him his “tough” reputation and led to his election as New York County Recorder and finally saw him elected a New York State Supreme Court Justice.[[344]](#footnote-345)

Goff was thin and wiry with a whistling sort of speech. His character was “notably persistent, at times merciless.” Goff, as chief counsel, was characterized as presenting “to his victims [the police witnesses] a terrible figure.” He was elected a justice of the New York Supreme Court in 1906.[[345]](#footnote-346) Goff did not mellow with age. After his election to the Supreme Court, he became notorious for giving no quarter to criminals. Newman Levy, a son of noted New York criminal lawyer Abraham Levy, tells the story about his father, who had a client scheduled to face Judge Goff. The elder Levy directed that an unnecessary appendix operation be performed on his client to obtain a trial postponement and get a different judge. Levy explained that the superfluous removal of an appendix was far less of a danger to his client than Judge Goff would have been. Judge Goff, learning of the request for postponement, burst into a rage and sent his personal physician to the hospital to verify the man had indeed had his appendix removed.[[346]](#footnote-347)

John Goff joined the Fenian Brotherhood shortly after he arrived in New York. September 24, 1868, we find Goff listed on the Committee of Resolutions of the powerful General Sheridan Circle, a Senate Wing affiliate.[[347]](#footnote-348) On January 7, 1869, John Goff was elected secretary of the General Sheridan Circle when the previous secretary resigned, and he served as such until March 21, 1870. Goff resigned due to problems created in the hierarchy of the Sheridan Circle as a result of the Fenian Brotherhood crisis created by General O’Neill’s fight with the Senate Wing Council.[[348]](#footnote-349) Shortly after P. J. Meehan was shot by James Keenan on February 28, 1870, members of the Sheridan Circle canvassed the Manhattan District Senate Circles and found they were the only Circle that backed the Senate Council over O’Neill. The Sheridan Circle issued (probably at their March 7 meeting) a resolution to this effect. Signatures on the resolution included John Goff (spelled Gough) along with eleven others. Unfortunately for Goff he did not get the resolution to *The* *Irish-American* newspaper on time to be published and it came out a week late on March 26.That angered the Sheridan Circle membership, and Goff was publicly, although not by name, chastised.[[349]](#footnote-350)

It is interesting to note that the Sheridan Circle Centre, Edward Murphy, did not sign the resolution, indicating the internal conflict probably put Goff on a forked stick. April 2, 1870 *The* *Irish-American* published a letter from the General Sheridan Circle which stated that on the evening of March 24 the Sheridan Circle at its regular Thursday meeting removed Head Centre Edward Murphy, the Recording Secretary [Goff], and two financial officers “for neglect of duty.” John Goff was the only defrocked member who was not mentioned by name which indicates that he was not part of the apparent rebellion and is listed in the same report as being a member of the Committee of Safety which removed Murphy and the others.[[350]](#footnote-351)

Goff was not shown in the new “anti-O’Neill” General Sheridan Circle hierarchy from April 1870 onward but apparently remained an important member in good standing. On May 11, 1871 Goff is shown as part of a Sheridan Circle committee which sent a telegram to General Phil Sheridan inquiring about his supposed snub of nationalists in Dublin.[[351]](#footnote-352) A month after the shakeup Goff attended a dinner for the new Sheridan Circle president, Richard McCloud, and, on September 2, 1872, Goff is seen as a member of the Sheridan Circle Literary Committee. It is apparent that he continued as a member in good standing at least through 1872.[[352]](#footnote-353)

In September 1871 the Sheridan club was addressed by the Exiles on behalf of the Irish Confederation. The Exiles were apparently convincing in their approach because the Sheridan Circle opted out of the Fenian Brotherhood.[[353]](#footnote-354) A few months later June 15, 1872 we find that the General Sheridan Circle is mentioned in *The Irish World* as belonging to the Irish Confederation.[[354]](#footnote-355) We should recall that John Goff was the New York District Secretary of the United Irishmen/Irish Confederation and this fact might have contributed to the turmoil within the General Sheridan club.[[355]](#footnote-356)

According to John Devoy, John Goff, along with James Fitzgerald of New York and several other members of the Sheridan Circle, founded a Clan-na-Gael Camp called the Hamilton Rowan Club in 1869.[[356]](#footnote-357) The divergent opinions evident in the General Sheridan Circle demonstrated how difficult the task of converting the entire membership of any Fenian Circle, Irish Confederation Club or any nationalist entity into a Clan-na-Gael Camp. Devoy’s statement shows that Goff was a member of the Clan-na-Gael at least a year prior to the Cincinnati Congress and that could explain his support of the Senate against O’Neill and the turmoil that was created in the Sheridan Circle. Goff’s name appears in several Irish World society columns in 1873 where he was active promoting and managing Clan-na-Gael functions. In addition to his Fenian and Clan-na-Gael activities he was elected Commander of an Irish literary society, the Red Branch Knights.[[357]](#footnote-358) Goff often spoke in public on Irish American subjects. He was also active in New York politics, something that was anathema to John Devoy who forever preached against using Irish nationalism as a stepping-stone into American politics.

By 1874 John Goff was moving up in the organization. He was Senior Guardian of Camp D25 and chairman of the Clan-na-Gael New York District, which was the next most influential post below that of Chairman of the Clan-na-Gael Executive Body. Goff had developed a following among the New York Clan-na-Gael members and might have expected to be selected as the Executive Body Chairman at some point. John Goff suddenly found himself outranked when John Devoy was sworn into the Clan-na-Gael.

### Devoy to the Rescue

By 1874 Clan-na-Gael had 6,800 sworn members and, by 1875, the number had risen to 7,400.[[358]](#footnote-359) The Clan-na-Gael had no interest in weekend revelers or those who wished to impress others with their “Irish-ness.” The organization went to extraordinary lengths to initiate only serious revolutionaries who were willing to take an oath in God’s name to fight for Ireland’s independence. Devoy recounts to his readers later, “More pains were taken to keep out undesirable men than to get in good ones, and this accounted for the slow growth of the organization.”[[359]](#footnote-360)

Secrecy works against an essential requirement for any society trying to bring about a revolution: Money. Increased funds implied increased membership. To attract new members, the Clan-na-Gael first needed to establish its credibility among its own members that, in turn, would impart some enthusiasm into recruiting in the Irish American community. A successful rescue of the IRB military-prisoners held in Western Australia would be the perfect vehicle to bring in new members and provide the funds necessary to threaten British rule in Ireland. At each of the yearly Clan-na-Gael Conventions from 1872-1874, Devoy pleaded with the membership to shoulder its responsibility and approve a project to rescue the military-prisoners.[[360]](#footnote-361)

Devoy canvassed individual Camp meetings, reading letters from the military prisoners in Australia, who pleaded to be rescued so they could join their brothers living in America. In one letter prisoner Martin Hogan wrote, “. . . [W]e appear to be forgotten, with no prospect before us but to be left in hopeless slavery to the tender mercies of the Norman wolf.”[[361]](#footnote-362) It was not only creating a more powerful Clan-na-Gael that drove Devoy. He felt a particular urgency in seeking to free these men:

Most of the evidence on which the soldiers were convicted related to meetings with me, and I felt that I, more than any man then living, ought to do my utmost for these Fenian soldiers.[[362]](#footnote-363)

He was certain that a well-planned operation had a good chance of freeing these prisoners but carrying out such a rescue would be an expensive affair. With the United States in an economic depression, the rescue projects proposed by Devoy to the conventions in 1872 and 1873 were tabled for lack of money and the members’ general belief that the plan was not “feasible” which was many times a euphemism for suspicion that the Executive Body leaders would waste the organization’s money.[[363]](#footnote-364)

The purchase and outfitting of a ship, estimated to be $17,000 converts to $340,000 in modern currency, no small sum, especially since all of it had to be financed through members’ contributions. Money already accumulated in the Clan-na-Gael “war-chest” was restricted by the constitution for use in case of a rebellion in Ireland and was not available. That meant the sum of $2.50 ($50.00 in modern currency) for the rescue would have to be shelled out by every member above the normal month’s dues. This was a large amount for an Irishman, working at menial labor, with a family to support. Another hurdle to overcome was the skepticism of many ex-Fenian members who still remembered the familiar “final calls” for money that was later frittered away. These members fought energetically against any subscription increases.

Economic conditions were better when the sixth annual United Brotherhood Convention convened July 1874 in Baltimore, which offered Devoy his first real opportunity to obtain membership approval for a rescue.[[364]](#footnote-365) Once again he read Martin Hogan’s letter and implored the membership to rescue the prisoners.[[365]](#footnote-366)

But it was not an easy sell. Still to be overcome were the conservative members who viewed every request for extra funds as an attempt to line leaderships’ pockets and voted no on any project that required more funds. Led by Colonel Timothy Hanley from New York Camp D105, they spoke one after another against the appropriation of funds. They insisted that Devoy’s scheme was not well thought out and would never work. Devoy was forced to reveal much more of the details of his plan than he wanted.[[366]](#footnote-367) But, overall, it was a compelling project.

In the final showdown the eloquence of Thomas Francis Bourke, an Exile trusted by the membership, became crucial to passage of the rescue plan.[[367]](#footnote-368) Bourke rose to speak in favor of the rescue and proposed Devoy be placed in charge of the project.[[368]](#footnote-369) After considerable wrangling, the Convention finally approved Devoy’s proposal and approved the establishment of the Australian Prisoner Rescue Committee (APRC) to carry out the steps necessary for the rescue.

Most of the members sensed that they had found at last someone who might invigorate Irish nationalism. Devoy was elected Chairman of the APRC and, for good measure, Chairman of the Clan-na-Gael Executive Body.[[369]](#footnote-370) Bourke then gave Devoy advice that subsequently proved prophetic: “John you have to take the chairmanship and see this thing through. There’ll be plenty of kickers making trouble and it will require the strong hand to keep them in order.”[[370]](#footnote-371) And as if to prove Bourke’s point, Timothy Hanley immediately filed a petition with the Judiciary Committee asserting that providing additional funding was unconstitutional. Hanley’s move failed and the project was cleared for implementation.

There is no information as to why John Goff was not present at the 1874 convention. One would certainly have expected him to be there based on his ambitions and the high profile he had in the Clan-na-Gael. Perhaps he expected that Hanley or another of his supporters would put his name out to be chosen Chairman of the Executive Body “in absentia” and did not expect anyone would oppose him. It is possible that Goff was unaware that Devoy intended to make a presentation and therefore Goff was caught off-guard. At any rate Goff’s absence helped John Devoy to gain control of the organization.

The act of spending a large amount of money from Camp treasuries on a risky venture such as the prisoner rescue would not have pleased Goff. He had seen enough of the grandiose Fenian schemes that had wasted large amounts of money set aside to support Ireland. If Goff had attended the convention, he mighht have joined those who had tried to stop the convention from voting to spend money on such a project. Goff must have felt that the project now placed too much power in the hands of someone who had not had enough time as a member to prove himself. In any case, Goff “appointed” himself to be the watchdog against waste and corruption during the execution of the rescue plan. Goff in his capacity of New York District Chairman was automatically part of the Executive Body. It is significant that, despite being absent, Goff was selected to serve with Devoy on the APRC.[[371]](#footnote-372) It is known that Goff’s New York intimates in the Clan-na-Gael at this time included penny-pinching members like Timothy Hanley, as well as James Fitzgerald (NY), Denis Burns, and Miles O’Brien. These men would later join Goff in making fiscal irresponsibility charges in regard to Devoy’s handling of the *Catalpa* rescue funds.

The ultra-secrecy of the Clan-na-Gael proved its value in the case of the Australian prisoner rescue. Devoy traveled from one district to another for over two years, talking to 7,000 members in eighty-six Camps, exhorting the membership to contribute funds to the rescue attempt. Devoy often received outright rejection in some Camps. Threats of withdrawal from the organization were made in other Camps. In the case of several New York Camps, there were outright accusations that the Executive Body was plundering funds, yet, in all the turmoil, no informer handed the rescue plans to the British.

“That there was no informer or spy in the organization is proved by the fact that the British government took absolutely no precaution against the rescue.”[[372]](#footnote-373) Lack of awareness that a shift in power had taken place in Irish American nationalism led to a failure of the British to obtain any information from the 1874 convention. British ignorance of the existence of the Clan-na-Gael is further confirmed by Edward Archibald, British Ministry in New York in March of 1876 when he writes: “Owing to the great decay of the Fenian Organization, I have not, for a long time employed any special informant in regard to Fenian Movements.”[[373]](#footnote-374)

There were no informers as far as the Clan-na-Gael organization in America was concerned, but on January 20, 1876, four months before the rescue, IRB informers in England told the authorities that members of the IRB in England had collected money for a similar rescue effort.[[374]](#footnote-375) British Secretary of State Lord Carnarvon notified Australian Governor William Robinson of what he had found out. In a crucial decision that doomed any chance the Australian authorities might have had of thwarting the rescue. Carnarvon emphasized that the information was to be kept secret in the hope of catching the IRB men. Governor Robinson notified the comptroller of the Fremantle prison, William Fauntleroy, and Police Captain Matthew Smith of a possible attempt to free the prisoners, and that knowledge of the plot must be kept secret. Fauntleroy in early March 1876 informed Prison Assistant Superintendent Joseph Doonan, who suggested quite intelligently they immediately take all military-prisoners off their outside tasks and keep them in their cells. Fortunately for the Clan-na-Gael rescue party, Fauntleroy negated the request. Governor Robinson, agreeing with Fauntleroy’s decision, informed Carnarvon seven days before the rescue took place that any attempt to rescue the Fenian prisoners would “end in a total failure.”[[375]](#footnote-376) Doonan was ordered to keep any hint of an escape secret. He was successful: the guards who dealt directly with the prisoners while they were outside the prison were kept in blissful ignorance of the possibility that a rescue attempt was expected.

An interesting resolution in the minutes of the 1877 Cleveland United Brotherhood Convention indicates that there was at least one potential leak in Yonkers, New York. A certain Mrs. Garrahy had threatened to expose the rescue mission and was prevented from doing so by a Mrs. Higgins, who kept Garrahy “under surveillance.” Mrs. Higgins was awarded a “suit of furniture, or some such suitable present” for her effort from the grateful membership.[[376]](#footnote-377)

To ensure the critical operational details of the project remained secret, Devoy made sure that only a small circle of the Executive Body and the Australian Prisoner Rescue Committee members got involved: “. . . the main details of the work were known only to less than ten men and the full knowledge was confined to five.”[[377]](#footnote-378)

### Skirmishing

A series of newspaper editorials that threatened to refocus British government attention on Irish American nationalist activities began at an inopportune time for the prisoner rescue committee. The owner-editor of the *Irish World* newspaper, Patrick H. Ford, was tired of what he perceived as the lack of action by Irish American nationalists and he began a campaign of Fenian-like rhetoric. On July 18, 1874 he closed off a two-column article with, “If our Irish revolutionary organizations mean business, they will hurt [England.] . . . . It is the duty of the sons of Ireland, then, to strike for their Motherland wherever and whenever and however they can.”[[378]](#footnote-379) On October 10, 1874, in response to a call for unity from the newly-formed Savage Wing Fenian Council, over 7,000 Irish nationalists showed up for a meeting at the Cooper Institute. O’Donovan Rossa in a speech to the assembly called for all nationalist societies to send out a few good men to prepare the way for insurrection:

We must have somebody to organize the means to pioneer a pathway through that thick wood behind which the enemy is entrenched, to engage in the little skirmishes that will necessarily arise during the progress of the work, and we want every friendly society to send us a few of its brave men for this work.[[379]](#footnote-380)

“England’s misfortune is Ireland’s opportunity,” was the nationalist’s oft-quoted axiom. Ford’s editorial changed the perspective a bit. “You [Irish nationalists] watch for the long-looked for opportunity. That is right. But it is your duty, too, to make that opportunity. Be active and vigilant.”[[380]](#footnote-381) Two weeks after the curtain rang down on a Clan-na-Gael executive meeting in Cleveland where planning for the rescue of the Fenian prisoners took place, a Ford editorial appeared in The Irish World that foreshadowed the sinister change that was to take place in Irish nationalist activity in the mid-1880s. Echoing Rossa’s speech at the Cooper Institute, the *Irish World* embraced the “skirmishing” concept: “There must be action and preparation before a revolution, and some little skirmishing, too, before the general battle comes on . . . .”[[381]](#footnote-382) Presenting an eerie glimpse into the future and the Northern Ireland “Troubles” of the 1960s and modern terrorist activities where terrorist bombings attempt to overturn governments, Ford painted a much clearer picture of his interpretation of “skirmishing” in his editorial of December 4, 1874 wherein he told his readers:

The Irish cause requires skirmishers. It requires a little band of heroes who will initiate and keep up without intermission a guerilla warfare*—*men who will fly over land and sea like invisible beings*—*now striking the enemy in Ireland, now in India, now in England itself as the occasion may present.[[382]](#footnote-383)

Motivated by Patrick Ford’s call to strike England “wherever and whenever and however,” James L. White, Clan-na-Gael Senior Guardian of Denver Camp 144, wrote to the *Irish World*, suggesting less talk and more action, and that a fund should be established for revolutionary purposes and with that said, White told Ford’s readers he had already collected $160.00 that he would donate to this proposed fund to be managed by a “committee composed largely of ‘exiles,’ and such others as have proven their patriotism.”[[383]](#footnote-384)

Exile Jeremiah O’Donovan Rossa, a member of the Clan-na-Gael as well as a member the Fenian Savage Wing, volunteered to turn speculation into reality. Rossa wrote an open letter to *The Irish World* proposing what he called a “Skirmishing Fund” which could then be used to fund guerilla activity. This letter was published in the March 4, 1876 issue.[[384]](#footnote-385) After Rossa agreed to manage the “skirmishing fund,” James L. White once again wrote to *The Irish World* reminding Ford and Rossa of his offer over a year earlier, implying that deeds not words were required, and pointed out that the last time this scheme was proposed he was forced by the lack of any response to give back the $160 he had collected. This time White submitted $42 he hadtaken in response to Rossa’s proposal.[[385]](#footnote-386)

John Devoy, watching the Skirmishing Fund project develop in public, wrote with some anxiety to James L. White: “I see we have the old difficulty to face still . . ..” Devoy was referring to the Fenian-like public airing of “secret” plans. Devoy, with the Revolutionary Directory in mind, went on to explain that he, too, favored “a public revolutionary fund, to be placed in the hands of a committee who should have full control of it . . ..” Referring to the *Catalpa* mission, Devoy reminds “we have one ‘skirmish’ afoot now. If that succeeds it will give us an immense lift and we can then tackle the same job in England.”[[386]](#footnote-387)

What Devoy vigorously objected to was using the word “skirmishing” in the press which alluded to clandestine activities “in a sufficiently direct way to give British prosecutors ample proof against any man who should fall into their hands.”[[387]](#footnote-388) Devoy, who tried but failed to convince O’Donovan Rossa to stop using the word “skirmishing,” was right to worry that the British would connect the *Catalpa* mission and the skirmishing fund together. As Devoy predicted, the *London Times* immediately attributed, although erroneously, the success of the *Catalpa* voyage to financing from the skirmishing fund.[[388]](#footnote-389)

The buildup of cash in O’Donovan Rossa’s “Skirmishing Fund” was to become the object of a public tug-o-war between Rossa, John Devoy, Patrick Ford and others. Rossa’s loose handling of the Skirmishing Fund money and his drinking were used as a brickbat that forced Rossa to turn over the Fund to the Clan-na-Gaelwhere it was placed under control of a newly formed Revolutionary Directory and at that point renamed the National Fund. The Clan-na-Gael took control of the funds in 1878. But, back in 1876, Devoy’s letter to White of Denver was simply indicating his exasperation with Rossa and Ford for focusing the attention of both the British and American authorities on Irish American nationalism at a time when the organization was progressing with the *Catalpa* mission.

### The IRB Joins the Clan

An important task on the Clan-na-Gael agenda was to establish linkages to the IRB now drifting rudderless in Ireland after active Irish American financial support dried up. The first attempt made by the IRB to establish a link with the Clan-na-Gael was made by John O’Connor Power during a visit in 1869, but his “arrogant manner and ridiculous demands made agreement impossible.” Faced with the inability of the O’Mahony/Savage faction to supply funds, a second IRB envoy, James O’Connor, contacted the Clan-na-Gael in 1870 and proposed that an agreement be reached in order that the Clan-na-Gael could provide funds to support IRB activity in Ireland. By the time O’Connor arrived in New York, John Devoy introduced James O’Connor to John McCarthy, the treasurer of the Clan-na-Gael, and a tentative connection was established. At that time there was also $3,500 left in the coffers of the “United Irishmen” which was given to O’Connor to deliver to the IRB.[[389]](#footnote-390) Throughout his life John Devoy never wavered from his belief that Irish-America must work in unison with the IRB towards the common goal of Irish independence.

In early 1874, before Devoy’s election to the Clan-na-Gael Executive Body, contact had occurred between the Clan-na-Gael Executive Body and the Supreme Council of the IRB, during which promises of cooperation had been made. The IRB was unimpressed with the lack of Clan-na-Gael action on the request for cooperation. An internal Clan-na-Gael memo in 1874 states, “[The IRB Supreme Council] think*—*and quite naturally*—*that we mean nothing by our promises . . .. It is very unfortunate that our Ex[ecutive] B[ody] cannot be more prompt in action.”[[390]](#footnote-391) Devoy might be justly accused of a lot of things, but inaction **wa**sn’t one of them. After his election in 1874 to Chairman, he lit a fire under the Executive Body in regard to IRB overtures. By June 30, 1875, the tone of the Supreme Council had changed as can be seen in the IRB response to John Devoy regarding the Clan-na-Gael initiative:

I have the pleasure of transmitting to you a copy of a resolution unanimously passed to consider some proposals made by the E of the U.B. [Executive of the United Brotherhood] as to establishing closer relations between the two great bodies*—*the IRB in Ireland and the U.B. in America*—*for future operations.[[391]](#footnote-392)

In his *Recollections*, Devoy quotes an article in the *Gaelic American* written by Ricard O’Sullivan Burke. O’Sullivan Burke states in that document that a convention was held in Manchester, England by the IRB at the end of July or early August 1867 at which a resolution (number 4) decided that the “good men” of the Fenian factions in America were “to be approached and organized into a new body…to be known as the Clan-na-Gael.”[[392]](#footnote-393) Uncharacteristically, Devoy added no clarification to O’Sullivan Burke’s statement although it conflicted with Devoy’s “Story of the Clan-na-Gael” in which Devoy wrote that the organization was founded by Jerome Collins June 20, 1867 but did not mention any request from the IRB in or after July 1867.[[393]](#footnote-394)

In my research I have run across several authors, citing O’Sullivan Burke, who state that the IRB chose to deal with the Clan-na-Gael in America in 1867. This implies that the Clan-na-Gael was an existing unified organization at a time only the Napper Tandy Club existed. O’Sullivan Burke only writes that a new organization was being considered in America. O’Sullivan Burke may have retroactively applied the name Clan-na-Gael to the newly formed Napper Tandy Club in New York.

William R. Roberts, acting as the Senate Wing envoy, left America for France on June 1, 1867 and attended a meeting with representatives of the IRB in Paris on July 4, 1867. Roberts at that time requested the IRB form a central council representative of the scattered IRB clubs to deal with the Senate Wing.[[394]](#footnote-395) The IRB meeting in the summer of 1867 which O’Sullivan Burke attended was the probable result of that request. There is certainly a possibility that Roberts and Jerome Collins might have discussed the formation of Napper Tandy earlier than June 20, 1867 as a precursor to an organization designed to unify Irish American nationalism with the IRB in Ireland. Therefore it is possible that Roberts might have mentioned such a concept in Paris in some context.

The date of 1867 is far too early to use as a date for the IRB and the Clan-na-Gael joining forces. The formation of Napper Tandy, the growth of the Clan-na-Gael from 1867 to 1870 and the Clan-na-Gael influenced delegates attempt to convert the Senate Wing to secrecy during the Irish National Congress in Cincinnati in 1870 certainly match O’Sullivan Burke’s statements in his recounting of the 1867 IRB meeting concerning the new American organization to be formed. However, the attempt to unify the United Irishmen with the Clan-na-Gael foundered on the secret oath requirement. Even if we accept the probability that various Senate Wing leaders conspired to convert the Senate Wing into a secret society as early as 1867 in Chicago, it took six years and John Devoy as Executive Chairman before the IRB and the Clan-na-Gael agreed to a unified policy. O’Kelly’s letter, quoted earlier, indicated that the Clan-na-Gael was not “in the right way” in 1871 and was operating on an American focused agenda without regard to the IRB in Ireland. The fact that the Irish Confederation in 1872 was still attempting to get the Clan-na-Gael to cooperate in funneling funds to the IRB is cited elsewhere in this book. The letter of June 1875 from Doran to Devoy, quoted above, indicates close relations did not yet exist. Although there was an attempt to establish relations that occurred in 1869, the correct date for the start of formal cooperation between the Clan-na-Gael and the IRB must be placed after the acceptance of Executive Body Chairman Dr. William Carroll’s proposal by the IRB Supreme Council to establish the Revolutionary Directory agreed to by the Clan-na-Gael delegates at the August 1876 Philadelphia United Brotherhood Convention.

On January 26, 1876, Dr. Carroll proposed to John Devoy a structure for a “Revolutionary Directory” or central council, composed of three each IRB and Clan-na-Gael members selected by both entities.

. . . [T]his committee shall be known only to the SC [Supreme Council, IRB] and the FC [Executive Body, Clan-na-Gael] and be changed only by death or misconduct; vacancies to be filled by the bodies that create it. This committee to have full access to the meetings of all the D’s on both sides, and to have charge of the funds and revolutionary forces.[[395]](#footnote-396)

Devoy agreed to Dr. Carroll’s proposal and negotiations with the IRB for establishment of the Revolutionary Directory (RD) began in earnest. A Clan-na-Gael Executive Body meeting was to be held in New York, on January 30, 1876, to present the constitutional changes required for the implementation of the RD structure. Dr. Carroll indicated that he had canvassed the members of the Executive Body and the plan would pass and they would be able to submit the changes for approval at the 1876 Philadelphia convention in August.[[396]](#footnote-397)

Devoy had now achieved one of his major objectives; the IRB and the Clan-na-Gael would now begin to coordinate their efforts toward agreed upon goals. Devoy’s next task was to ensure that the Clan-na-Gael could provide financial help to the IRB in case of an insurrection in Ireland. This task required two major changes to the Clan-na-Gael financial structure: centralized control of Clan-na-Gael funds and decision-making powers for expenditure of the war chest removed from the Camps and transferred to a directory that could dispense funds in an emergency without having to seek approval of the individual Camps.

### Ireland’s Opportunity?

Insurrections in the Balkans in 1875 and 1876 leading to a war between Russia and Turkey gave the Clan-na-Gael hope. The widening conflict made war between Russia and England appear possible. Nationalists immediately saw an Irish opportunity in England’s new difficulty. When tensions were at their peak, Dr. Carroll exhibited a bit of Fenian-like exuberance as he suggested that the Clan-na-Gael “. . . [I]mmediately prepare a plan of operations. 10,000 men should be enlisted and drilled here.”[[397]](#footnote-398) Dr.Carroll’s surrealistic hope for an insurrection prompted him to seek foreign connections in Washington D.C. Dr. Carroll’s friend in Congress was Florida Senator Dr. Simon Barclay Conover. Senator Conover was educated as a physician and had gone to college with Dr. Carroll at the University of Pennsylvania where they became close friends. Senator Conover’s great grandfather was Presbyterian Irish whose family fled Ireland after the 1798 United Irishmen rebellion. Along with their common religious affiliation, Dr. Carroll and Dr. Conover served together as surgeons during the Civil War. Conover ended up in Florida and was elected a senator from that state. Senator Conover, whose friendship with Dr. Carroll led him to name his son Carroll Conover, was also a Clan-na-Gael member in Dr. Carroll’s Philadelphia Camp.[[398]](#footnote-399)

Calling on his old friend, Dr. Carroll asked Senator Conover to set up a meeting between the Russian Ambassador and a delegation from the Clan-na-Gael seeking Russia’s help to foment a rebellion in Ireland. This meeting was held on November 1, 1876 and was a prelude to Devoy’s “New Departure” policy which is discussed below.

# Part V

# CATALPA: A Success at All Hazards

### Where’s the Money?

Each year, in convention, Clan-na-Gael delegates approved ongoing and newly proposed Executive Body objectives. Any chance that the organization might have to complete its agenda of ongoing projects would be compromised if the APRC prisoner rescue mission turned into a Fenian-style debacle. Devoy staked his reputation as well as the future of the Clan-na-Gael on the success of the rescue. It would not be enough just to have an excellent plan; significant monetary resources were required to fund the project. The viability of the Clan-na-Gael rescue depended on Devoy’s ability to drum up these funds. Devoy’s trips from Camp to Camp collecting money for the rescue were the only source of funds. The necessary funds for critical expenditures many times only appeared at the last minute to stave off project cancellation. Devoy summed up this period: “I have not a solitary minute to myself. This thing must be made a success at all hazards.”[[399]](#footnote-400)

The difficulty was not only the relatively large amount of funding required. Camp finances were a volatile issue with the members. Clan-na-Gael dues were 10 cents [about $2.00 in modern currency] a week. Devoy recalled one member who quipped to him, “These fellows want ‘value’ for their money. They want ten cents’ worth of revolution every week.”[[400]](#footnote-401) The difficulties Devoy encountered while collecting APRC funds for the rescue mission only served to strengthen his belief that Clan-na-Gael revolutionary funds should be centralized with disbursement control residing in the Executive Body. Devoy had no illusions as to the problems that such a change would create. The Camps would resist any attempt to move funds under a central authority with a vengeance. A successful rescue, on the other hand, could strengthen Devoy’s position to the point where such a proposal might obtain approval from the membership.

The Fenian Brotherhood’s cavalier use of funds entrusted to its governing body was the model of how not to run an organization and was the root of the Clan-na-Gael member’s reluctance to entrusting funds to a central authority. In 1865, Fenian Headquarters in Union Square in New York City was described as:

. . . fitted in a manner to satisfy the caprice of an Eastern despot, with luxurious carpets, ebony and rosewood desks, carved folding doors, with gorgeously tinted stained-glass windows, sofas, divans, and inviting-looking arm-chairs, all comfortably upholstered with national colors, green and gold.[[401]](#footnote-402)

The minds of many members were convinced that the surest way to prevent such extravagance was to entrust “as little money as possible to the governing body.”[[402]](#footnote-403) This led to each Camp maintaining a separate bank account for the accumulation of revolutionary funds. Devoy warned the various Camps, that misuse of Camp funds in such an environment was a temptation not always resisted. Instances of misappropriation of Clan-na-Gael funds occurred frequently in different Camps. Devoy emphasized to the members that control by individual Camps did not resolve this pilferage problem. Devoy also pointed out that spreading out the money among the Camps prevented the Executive Body from employing revolutionary funds rapidly without the British government finding out. “It did not seem to occur to them that the final call for the money would be practically an announcement that a fight was about to take place and must inevitably reach the British government through its spies.[[403]](#footnote-404)

Devoy’s plan for reorganization of Clan-na-Gael finances received a big boost from an unexpected quarter when a major financial problem in one of the Camps surfaced prior to the Baltimore Convention in July 1874. W. J. Nicholson, the secretary of the Clan-na-Gael Executive Body since its inception in 1867, was unable to produce $3600 of his Camp’s funds that he had loaned to a friend who did not pay him back.Nicholson was expelled from the Clan-na-Gael after attempting to cover up the defalcation.[[404]](#footnote-405) The resultant scandal created an urgent need to address financial reforms. The delegates at the Clan-na-Gael’s convention gave the Executive Body instructions to make changes in the handling of funds to eliminate another credibility crisis like the one Nicholson had created. Not all delegates agreed but the majority prevailed and the measure passed.

Devoy, now chairman of the Executive Body, set out to show the members that the Clan-na-Gael was under new management and financial chicanery was not going to be tolerated. In Circular No. 2 dated January 15, 1875 to Clan-na-Gael officers and members from the Executive Body it states:

Many grave abuses have occurred through treasurers of D’s [Camps] holding more money in their possession than is allowed by the Constitution, and through lending a portion of the funds to individual members.[[405]](#footnote-406)

Circular No. 2 closed with a clear warning given to the Clan-na-Gael officers that a general housecleaning was in process: a list of eighteen Camps reorganized was followed by a list of expulsions by the Executive Body. Three men were mentioned by name. One of these men was charged with “Conspiring with the leader of a band to defraud the D and the brotherhood of money.” Another was charged with “Gross insubordination to the orders of the [Executive Body].” In addition to the three expelled by Devoy directly, the list included 17 individuals expelled by the various Camps. Two New Jersey Camps, D2 in Jersey City and D162 in Passaic were suspended.

After the 1874 Baltimore Convention, Dr. William Carroll was selected to be part of the rescue committee.[[406]](#footnote-407) Dr. Carroll was a Philadelphia physician who was also a member of the Fenian Brotherhood. He was born in 1835 in Rathmullen in County Donegal to a Presbyterian family that immigrated to Ohio when he was three years old.[[407]](#footnote-408) During the Civil War Dr. Carroll applied for service as a physician and enlisted on May 14, 1863. He was promoted as Brevet Major on March 13, 1865 and then Brevet Lt. Colonel on August 22, 1866 while serving on the Volunteer Medical Staff. He served on the medical staff until his discharge in December 8, 1866. In 1867 Dr. Carroll moved to Philadelphia, where he set up his practice.[[408]](#footnote-409) He died at age 91 in 1926.[[409]](#footnote-410) Unfortunately for historians Dr. Carroll’s family burned all his papers upon his death. While a surgeon during the war Dr. Carroll met another surgeon with Presbyterian Irish roots, Simon Barclay Conover. Conover was later elected senator from Florida and made a member of Dr. Carroll’s Clan-na-Gael Camp D48 in Philadelphia. Dr. Carroll enlisted Conover to help in the Catalpa rescue project, as will be shown. There is evidence that Dr. Carroll was a leading member of the Clan-na-Gael as early as 1870.[[410]](#footnote-411) He was an implacable enemy of British rule in Ireland and, although a warm person to his friends, he could be cold and calculating when it came to running the affairs of the Clan-na-Gael. John Devoy and Dr. William Carroll, although with different cultural backgrounds and personalities, seem to see in each other the fervor and integrity that was required in order to make the Clan-na-Gael successful.Immediate mutual respect and cooperation united them as they began to execute the Clan-na-Gael objectives laid out at the 1874 convention.

### The APRC: Who’s in Charge?

John Devoy’s greatest challenge was funding the prisoner rescue. Devoy knew that a successful prisoner rescue could move the Clan-na-Gael agenda forward and expected that all members would work together to achieve that end. Unfortunately, in addition to the normal risks that come with such an operation and the expected resistance of the Camps against any attempt to increase their contributions to the Executive Body, Devoy and the APRC were also faced with a cadre of malcontents from the New York District. These men began to send messages to other Camps making various accusations against Devoy. If the wrangling became public, it would expose the rescue project.

At the 1874 convention Bourke had predicted that Devoy would face strong opposition in the execution of the rescue plan and the first meeting of the APRC confirmed he was right. The old nemesis of Irish politics, a propensity toward factionalism, threatened to derail the project. The main cause of the squabbling was the clash of characters between John Devoy and John W. Goff, neither of whom could be described as pleasant to deal with. John Goff’s abrasive, almost imperious character was discussed above.

John Devoy’s similar character was his main strength—and his main weakness. An old IRB man, Dr. Mark Ryan, gave a flavor of what it was like to deal with Devoy:

It was not easy to get along with Devoy. He was a man of very strong views, and when he took up a position, it was difficult to get him to see anyone else’s point of view. During his career he engaged in many controversies, sometimes with old colleagues, and his language towards his opponents was always vigorous.[[411]](#footnote-412)

Thomas Beach (alias Le Caron), the British spy, characterized Devoy as “Forbidding of aspect, with a perpetual scowl on his face...”[[412]](#footnote-413) John O’Leary, one of the founders of the IRB, told Devoy he was “devilishly touchy” on matters considered personal.[[413]](#footnote-414) As regards Irish nationalism, John Devoy took most opinions that differed from his as “personal.”

The Baltimore Convention of 1874 selected, in absentia, John Goff, Senior Guardian of New York Camp D25 to the Australian Prisoner Rescue Committee, the APRC. Goff was a member of the Executive Body because of his position as Chairman of the New York District of the Clan-na-Gael.[[414]](#footnote-415) He was a dedicated Irish nationalist and a long-time member who did his share when it came to the rescue project fund-raising and could be counted on to support Irish nationalist agendas, but Goff’s personality, his unfettered personal ambition, and his involvement in New York City politics made a clash with Devoy inevitable.

Goff and other “kickers,” including long-time New York Clan-na-Gael members, Miles Murrough O’Brien, James Fitzgerald (NY), Denis Burns and Timothy Hanley, began putting obstacles in front of Devoy, Dr. Carroll, and James Reynolds as they attempted to fund the rescue mission.

The tension between Goff and Devoy was immediate. Devoy later wrote that Goff’s desire to control anything in which he was involved was his main weakness.[[415]](#footnote-416) Devoy might as well have been writing about himself. Setting aside his objections to spending money, Goff proposed to the APRC that a ship manned with Clan-na-Gael members, with himself in command, “sail off to Australia and charge the jail at Fremantle to free the prisoners.”[[416]](#footnote-417) The committee convinced Goff that, along with the fact he had no experience in seafaring, a boatload of Irishmen arriving off the coast of Fremantle would be sure to attract the immediate attention of the British authorities. Goff’s idea was scrapped and Devoy was left with the task of developing the rescue plan. Goff then began a string of attacks designed to prove that Devoy was irresponsible and inept as Clan-na-Gael Executive Body Chairman and insinuated funds were being misappropriated. Forced to cope with Goff’s attacks at the same time he was striving to maintain the Clan-na-Gael Camps focused on funding the rescue mission, Devoy plowed ahead with his usual tenacity. Goff did help secure a large part of the required funds in New York for the rescue project, but he kept those funds in New York under his control. The infighting between Goff and Devoy notwithstanding, the rescue plan continued to move forward.

### A Yankee Captain Takes the Helm

John Devoy decided to seek out John Boyle O’Reilly for guidance concerning the planning required for the rescue. O’Reilly, we should remember, was one of Devoy’s IRB recruiters in the military barracks back in Ireland before they were both arrested. O’Reilly had escaped from Australia aboard the American whaling ship *Gazelle* in 1869 and his story was the perfect model for a rescue. O’Reilly joined the Fenian Brotherhood shortly after his arrival in America and was given a short-lived command over part of the Fenian Army after O’Neill’s capture during the 1870 Canadian invasion. O’Neill’s failure soured O’Reilly on the viability of the Fenian organization and from that point he rejected the Fenian Brotherhood as a vehicle for obtaining Irish independence. O’Reilly turned to the Clan-na-Gael as more likely to be able to assist Ireland’s drive for independence.

O’Reilly was an author and poet who had already made his mark in American journalism. By 1872 he was editor of the *Boston Pilot* newspaper.[[417]](#footnote-418) O’Reilly resigned from the Clan-na-Gael under pressure from Boston’s Roman Catholic Archbishop, John J. Williams, who wouldn’t countenance Catholics becoming members of secret societies.[[418]](#footnote-419) Even though O’Reilly was no longer an official member, John Devoy and the Clan-na-Gael hierarchy trusted him implicitly.[[419]](#footnote-420) As editor of the *Boston Pilot*, the most widely read Irish American newspaper in America, O’Reilly had the ears of the Irish community across the nation. His friendship with John Devoy must be viewed as an important endorsement of Devoy’s sincerity and competence, even more so considering O’Reilly’s firm belief that the first prayer of every Irishman to his God should be “Save us from our leaders!”[[420]](#footnote-421)

In January of 1875, Devoy set out for Boston where he first met with members of the Celtic Club, O’Reilly’s old Boston Camp of the Clan-na-Gael. Devoy encountered so much animosity directed at O’Reilly at this meeting as a result of O’Reilly’s resignation from the Clan-na-Gael that Devoy decided not to take the members into his confidence.[[421]](#footnote-422) On February 1, 1875, he met O’Reilly in his office, along with O’Reilly’s friend, Denis B. Cashman, who was an IRB man who had been incarcerated with O’Reilly at Fremantle Prison.[[422]](#footnote-423) They discussed the rescue and the need to put together a plan that would guarantee a good chance of success. O’Reilly told Devoy that his best option was to go and talk with Henry Hathaway at the police station in New Bedford.

During his voyage aboard the *Gazelle*, O’Reilly had formed a lifelong friendship with the *Gazelle*’s third mate, Henry C. Hathaway. Hathaway spent the first eighteen years of his adult life on the open sea, but, by 1875, he was a landlubber and captain of the night police force in the whaling town of New Bedford, Massachusetts.[[423]](#footnote-424) O’Reilly originally agreed to accompany Devoy and introduce him to Hathaway, but on the appointed day, O’Reilly was indisposed and instead gave Devoy a letter of introduction. Devoy found Hathaway on watch at the police station. Devoy, who must have given some thought as to how far to trust Hathaway, was pleasantly surprised to see that “When I gave him O’Reilly’s note [I] saw a good effect produced at once.”Devoy was impressed with Hathaway. “Splendid physique; handsome, honest face; quite English-looking. Wears only side whiskers; very reserved in manner; speaks low and slowly, but every word fits.”

Each morning and evening over the next several days Hathaway and Devoy discussed in detail the steps required to ensure a successful rescue. Devoy copied down all the information so he could brief the APRC. Devoy had convinced the Clan-na-Gael that the rescue was possible, but it was really Hathaway who provided a workable plan. Devoy emerged from these meetings buoyed up by a new confidence: “I have seen the man I expected to meet and he has measured up to my highest expectations.”[[424]](#footnote-425)

Hathaway explained to Devoy that a successful whaling venture could be turned into a prisoner rescue without exciting suspicion of the authorities in either the United States or Australia. The action of whaling itself would pay for the cost of the rescue and had a reasonable chance of providing a tidy profit for the Clan-na-Gael.[[425]](#footnote-426)Devoy was now very anxious to act. A few days later, Hathaway introduced Devoy to John T. Richardson, a whaling agent, whose son-in-law, George S. Anthony, had sailed in the whaling trade for ten years. Richardson proposed that Anthony would make a good captain for the venture and arrangements were made for APRC members Devoy, Goff, and James Reynolds, to meet with Anthony at Richardson’s store at 18 South Water Street in New Bedford.[[426]](#footnote-427)

George Anthony must have had more than a few doubts about Clan-na-Gael sanity when, as he entered, the lights were put out, the shutters drawn, and a small man with full black whiskers proceeded to explain his proposal for an Australian jailbreak.[[427]](#footnote-428) Devoy, however, was seen by the Yankee whaling men as genuine. His presentation of the plight of the Irish military-prisoners convinced Anthony to take captaincy of the voyage. There is every reason to believe that Anthony not only accepted the chance to earn a profit and command his own vessel, but also sympathized with the prisoners’ predicament.[[428]](#footnote-429)

Anthony and Richardson located a ship named the *Catalpa* at Boston Harbor, a three-masted, two-hundred-ton, ninety-foot-long bark built in 1844 in Medford, Massachusetts. The *Catalpa* had initially sailed out of New York as a merchant ship but in 1852 she had been converted to a whaling vessel at the New Bedford shipyards. She sailed the Pacific grounds until 1860, then sailed again as a merchant ship out of San Francisco until 1866 when she returned to the Pacific grounds as a whaler out of New Bedford. In 1868 the *Catalpa* was converted to a cargo ship and sailed out of Boston carrying cargo in the lumber trade. The *Catalpa* was purchased in 1874 on behalf of the Clan-na-Gael by James Reynolds, a wealthy businessman from New Haven, Connecticut.[[429]](#footnote-430) Reynolds held a seven-eighths share of the *Catalpa* in partnership with J.T. Richardson who held the other eighth-share.[[430]](#footnote-431) Later dubbed “*Catalpa* Jim,” James Reynolds was a member of the Clan-na-Gael Executive Body, a supporter and confidant of Devoy, and a member of the APRC. A successful foundry owner, Reynolds at one point paid Richardson out of his own money when Clan-na-Gael funds got hung up in the wrangling between Goff and Devoy. The *Catalpa* was overhauled, equipped as a whaler, and made ready to sail by mid-March 1875, under the direction of Anthony and Richardson.

# PART VI

# CATALPA: The Clash between Goff and Devoy

### The Seeds of Dissension and Disorder

The bickering that occurred between the Exile John Devoy, the newly elected chairman of the Executive Body, and John Goff, the old Clan-na-Gael bureaucrat, had far-reaching consequences for the organization. Devoy’s progress in coming up with a plan and rapidly putting it into action was about to receive a setback. An internal squabble between Devoy and Goff erupted over who should speak at a memorial to be held in New York for John Mitchel, the recently deceased Irish nationalist patriot.

Goff, as chairman of the New York Clan-na-Gael district, wanted to be the principal speaker.[[431]](#footnote-432) Devoy, as chairman of the Clan-na-Gael Executive Body and a member of the Mitchel Memorial Committee, outranked Goff and although Devoy indicates that the committee selected the speakers, it is apparent that Devoy pushed through his own choice from the context of Devoy’s description of the event. Devoy wanted eloquence and well-known speakers and chose two old guard veterans of 1848, Thomas Clarke Luby and Thomas Francis Bourke to do the honors.[[432]](#footnote-433)

Devoy later stated his, probably valid, concern about what the English Press might say if, for Mitchel’s memorial, Irish-America ended up choosing “a poor reporter like Devoy to preside, backed by a draper’s assistant” for the keynote speech.[[433]](#footnote-434)

“Draper’s assistant” Goff was not happy over his exclusion and retaliated by publishing a Clan-na-Gael “Executive Order” in the *New York Herald* stating the memorial should not be attended by members, thereby airing out a Clan-na-Gael internal disagreement in the press. Although the article had no relation to the rescue project, in Devoy’s eyes, it was proof of Goff’s capacity to breech Clan-na-Gael secrecy.

Goff’s notice was an attempt to embarrass Devoy by quashing attendance for the Memorial ceremony. The *New York Herald* announcement reads as follows:

DIST. A. To the officers and members of the Clan-na-Gael: It having been publicly reported that the Clan-na-Gael has appointed a Committee of Arrangements for the proposed funeral procession on Sunday, it is but proper to announce that no such committee has been appointed or authorized to use the name Clan-na-Gael. While it is but right and proper that a fitting tribute should be paid to the memory of John Mitchel, yet the nature and principles of our organization forbid such demonstrations, and our tribute to the dead patriot will be other than a public display.A.F.C.[[434]](#footnote-435)

The coded message, easily recognizable by Clan-na-Gael members, indicated it originated from the Chairman of the Executive Body. The Clan-na-Gael’s Mitchel Memorial Committee had their parade permit turned down by the city government a day later, effectively eliminating any visible role for John Goff. Not an acceptable outcome for any aspiring politician and, it must be assumed, it added to Goff’s pique.[[435]](#footnote-436)

Devoy published a rebuttal in the *New York Herald*. In his recounting of this story later in the *Gaelic American,* Devoy dubbed the memorial turnout “the greatest Irish gathering since the breakup of the Fenian movement.” The New York Times, however, indicated that only half of the expected crowd showed up.[[436]](#footnote-437) As for Goff’s gaff, Devoy must also have been worried that if Goff continued to publicly air Clan-na-Gael squabbles and such a posting contained the slightest hint of the impending rescue, British agents would ensure the authorities in Fremantle were put on full alert. The result could be the failure of the rescue and the probable imprisonment of the *Catalpa*’s crew, along with any participating IRB or Clan-na-Gael members in Australia. In addition, it would put the “un-rescued” prisoners at risk of further punishment as accessories in the attempt.[[437]](#footnote-438) When Goff came up against Devoy he met his match in bull-headedness. Devoy angrily dashed off a letter to James Reynolds, suspending Goff from the Clan-na-Gael until he could be called to account for his impropriety.[[438]](#footnote-439)

Goff was excluded from the podium, missed a chance to be seen and heard in his own New York District at an important Irish American event with full press coverage, and suspended from the Clan-na-Gael. Goff and his cronies responded by inventing a “Vigilance Committee” within the New York District to watch over expenditures during the outfitting and voyage of the *Catalpa*.[[439]](#footnote-440)

The Vigilance Committee was particularly irksome to Devoy.On May 9, 1875, Devoy was summoned to a Vigilance Committee meeting but declined to attend. Devoy did receive an insider report on the meeting. The report indicated Thomas Brennan, Miles O’Brien, and John Goff were in attendance. It appeared to Devoy that the meeting was set up by O’Brien and Goff to accuse Devoy of malfeasance in the use of Clan-na-Gael funds for the rescue.[[440]](#footnote-441) “To prevent the crooked work which they claimed to suspect, they adopted crooked methods and sowed the seeds of dissension and disorder.”[[441]](#footnote-442)

The next Devoy-Goff clash was not long in coming and took place on the New Bedford docks on the day the *Catalpa* set sail.

### Exile Influence or a Personal Vendetta?

In extant sources, Devoy is the focus of persistent financial impropriety charges made by John Goff and Miles Murrough O’Brien.[[442]](#footnote-443) It seems probable that Goff, abetted by O’Brien, was attempting to wrest control of the Clan-na-Gael from Devoy. A secondary motive or perhaps even the real motive of Goff’s attacks might have been the Exiles’ increasing influence represented by Devoy and others in the hierarchy of the Clan-na-Gael pressuring for the changes in the organization’s focus that had been sought by James J. O’Kelly in his letter to Devoy quoted earlier in this book.

Perhaps Devoy received anti-Exile attention, if there was any, simply because of his position as Chairman of the Executive Body after 1874. Devoy wished to see the Clan-na-Gael centrally controlled, operating in total secrecy, oath-bound, and totally Ireland-focused. The Exile “takeover,” as it might have been viewed by many long-time Irish American members, and the ensuing changes incensed various old-timers suspicious of centralized money-collecting and who were only willing to authorize money for an active rebellion.

The Exiles were seen by some nationalists, especially by Fenian Brotherhood leaders worried that the Exiles might replace them, as interlopers who did not understand Irish-America. The Fenian Brotherhood [Savage Wing] President John Savage had sounded the alarm back in 1871 by rebuking the Exiles for “their dictatorial course” and their attempts to establish “a secret directory composed of themselves for the custody of the funds of the organization.”

In a curious statement by Devoy in a letter to Reynolds, Devoy tends to confirm, from the Exile’s point of view, the existence of an anti-Exile reaction by Irish Americans:

The newest slander circulated by [Miles M.] O’Brien is that the Exiles*—*poor devils, they get their share of venom*—*have formed a league with McCarthy and that a big effort will be necessary at the [Providence] Convention to ‘Save the organization.’[[443]](#footnote-444)

O’Brien’s charges, generalized to include “the Exiles” as a group, reflected an attack by Goff, Fitzgerald, O’Brien and their New York allies on all the Exiles, not just Devoy. “McCarthy” was footnoted in *Devoy’s Post Bag* as “H.O.C. McCarthy.” That is an error by the *Devoy’s Post Bag* editors since Henry O.C. McCarthy, an early Fenian, is noted in *D’Arcy* as having died in July, 1865.[[444]](#footnote-445) The “McCarthy” that better fits Devoy’s statement would be thetreasurer of the Clan-na-Gael, John M. McCarthy, from County Kerry, who was Clan-na-Gael treasurer in 1869, a position he still held in 1873.[[445]](#footnote-446) In any case, O’Brien’s concern is natural since he believed that Devoy was on good terms with the Clan-na-Gael treasurer.[[446]](#footnote-447) It cannot be stated conclusively that Goff, O’Brien and Fitzgerald were focused on elimination of Exile influence, and not simply Devoy as a person, but the “poor devils” remark by Devoy above suggests that to be a possibility. Devoy and Goff each believed that he himself was the man best fitted to run the Clan-na-Gael. Their feud lasted until Devoy and Dr. William Carroll, expelled Goff and his adherents from the Clan-na-Gael after the 1877 Cleveland Convention.

### Thomas Brennan Misses the Boat

Initially, the APRC sought to have seven or eight Clan-na-Gael members on board the rescue ship. Hathaway’s conversations and warnings from O’Reilly that Anthony would not tolerate non-crew members on board limited the number to two Clan-na-Gael members who would report to Anthony as regular members of the crew and must perform regular crew duties while on board ship.Clan-na-Gael members John O’Connor and Harry Mulleda were chosen for the voyage. O’Connor and Mulleda agreed they would go but only if they could go together as a team. O’Connor had experience as a steward and Mulleda as a carpenter. Mulleda then backed out as he was getting married and O’Connor subsequently declined to go. Both men probably would have been approved by Captain Anthony because of their skills. After O’Connor and Mulleda declined, James Reynolds and the rest of the APRC attempted to defuse a new Goff-Devoy feud by ruling that Goff and Devoy would each be allowed to choose one crewmember for the voyage.[[447]](#footnote-448)

Devoy chose Denis Duggan as his man. Duggan was born in Dublin and served under Patrick Lennon fighting “with great nerve and coolness” at Stepaside during the Rising in 1867. Devoy had also chosen Duggan to be part of Stephen’s bodyguard at the time of James Stephen’s rescue from Richmond Prison. Duggan was with Devoy when they were both captured during the roundup at Pilsworth’s Pub mentioned earlier. A crowd of twelve thousand attended Duggan’s funeral and burial at Glasnevin Republican Cemetery in Dublin in 1884.[[448]](#footnote-449)

Goff, apparently with visions of regaining control of the rescue project, chose Thomas Brennan, a confidant of his from the New York District, to be his representative aboard the vessel. Brennan could serve as a watchdog for the Vigilance Committee in this position and could pursue Goff’s agenda on board ship. Brennan had been born in Dublin, Ireland in 1842, and Thomas Brennan and John Devoy knew each other from their school days together.[[449]](#footnote-450) Devoy never expressed any objection to Brennan going on the voyage in his *Recollections* or other writings.

Brennan was an imposing six feet tall and impetuous with a perpetual chip on his shoulder and he, too, had proved his bravery fighting for the IRB in the 1867 Rising. After 1867 Brennan escaped to New York where he joined the Clan-na-Gael in 1870. In later years, probably through Goff’s intervention, Brennan became an officer in the New York Supreme Court system.

John Goff was about to lose another round in his battle for control of the *Catalpa* mission. Hathaway and Anthony vigorously objected when Devoy told them of the two Clan-na-Gael members who had been chosen to sail on the ship. They explained that Thomas Brennan had no useful shipboard experience and two Irishmen on the ship might draw suspicion of the port authorities. Reynolds, in deference to Anthony, Hathaway, and Richardson, made the decision that Brennan would not be added to the crew.[[450]](#footnote-451) Duggan’s carriage-making experience made him competent to be the ship’s carpenter and would not cause any suspicion among the authorities or the crew, so Anthony added Duggan to the ship’s crew list and then immediately presented the list to the port authorities for approval.

None of this was mentioned to Goff—probably hoping the *Catalpa* would sail before Brennan’s last-minute elimination became known. However, Goff and Brennan arrived just at sailing time, and a dockside quarrel broke out over Brennan’s exclusion. Anthony and Richardson told Goff and Brennan the reasons why Brennan was excluded. Goff insisted that Brennan must go. Finally, they struck a compromise when Hathaway suggested Brennan might be able to join the ship when it stopped at St. Michaels Island in the Azores; but, they emphasized, the final decision as to whether Brennan could board the *Catalpa* would be made by Captain Anthony.[[451]](#footnote-452)

The problem was pushed, still unresolved, out into the middle of the ocean by this procrastination. Nothing mandated that Anthony had to accept Brennan on board in the Azores. Without some change necessitating a new crew member, Brennan stood little chance of getting on board, especially if, either by implication or directly spoken, Anthony perceived that Brennan might cause problems. Devoy had indicated or implied that the APRC was not particularly interested in pushing Anthony to accept Brennan.

The difficulty that was created by adding an extra Clan-na-Gael man to the ship’s complement should not have come as a surprise. O’Reilly had warned Devoy not to try to add Clan-na-Gael members to the crew: “My knowledge of ships, men, and arrangements of shipping your men may be of some use.” wrote O’Reilly, explicitly warning Devoy, “Keep the idea of your 7 or 8 men from the Captain.[[452]](#footnote-453) Anthony had been given full command of the ship for the voyage. For a whaling captain, any man above the actual number required for the journey created significant logistical problems regarding space and food and reduced the crew’s potential for efficient whaling.

Not only logistics but discipline was involved. Anthony was very worried about having extra men aboard, a fact that might disclose her mission to the crew. One need only look at Anthony’s official crew list submitted to the New Bedford authorities, where Denis Duggan was listed as a German born in New York to see that Anthony was a bit paranoid about doing anything that would tip off someone as to what was afoot.[[453]](#footnote-454)

Goff and Brennan apparently decided that it was neither Anthony nor Reynolds, but Devoy, who had made the choice to exclude Brennan. Devoy, vindictive as he oftentimes was, must surely have felt some satisfaction at getting the upper hand on Goff; but in Devoy’s defense, the probable reason for Brennan’s rejection was Anthony’s desire to sail out of New Bedford in as inconspicuous a manner as possible, doing nothing that would jeopardize his decision to keep the crew totally ignorant of the real purpose of the voyage. Besides, the ship’s crew was already registered with the New Bedford authorities and any change requested would re-open the registry process and bring the risk of new questions. Anthony’s plan was firm from the beginning: The sailors who shipped on the *Catalpa* were not at any time to be made privy to the real reason for the voyage. It was only when the rowing crew landed on the beach at Rockingham, Western Australia that the crew would learn of the real purpose of the voyage.

Other forces were working to bring attention to the ship. The small New Bedford whaling community was becoming curious to know more about the titled owner, James Reynolds, who was not one of their own.[[454]](#footnote-455) Eyebrows were raised when the ship was not whaler-rigged but merchant-rigged with double topsails, an odd configuration for a whaling voyage.[[455]](#footnote-456)

Devoy and Goff remained civil in their disagreement on the day of the sailing. Goff was aware of the importance a successful prisoner rescue would have for the Clan. Goff also knew that Devoy, as originator of the plan, would be the beneficiary of whatever success the rescue would bring. The rescue and its attendant publicity would show the strength and audacity of the Clan-na-Gael to the British and to the Russians who were being courted to help in event of an Irish insurrection. The rescue would be likely to increase Clan-na-Gael membership in America*—*and it would strengthen the power of the incumbent Executive Body Chairman.

The more it became apparent that the rescue was actually feasible, the harder Goff began to work behind the scenes to make Devoy appear dishonest or incompetent. At one point Goff criticized Devoy as “incapacitated” by remarking on Devoy’s poor eyesight.[[456]](#footnote-457) More seriously, Goff implied, through the constant complaining of the Vigilance Committee and circulars issued to the Camps, that there was malfeasance going on with rescue mission expenditures, thereby implying that he, Goff, was the only Clan-na-Gael leader ensuring that funds were only used for legitimate purposes. Goff perhaps hoped that this constant criticism of the *Catalpa* expenditures when added to Devoy’s explosive temperament would lead Devoy to misstep or commit some constitutional blunder which could be used as proof that Devoy was unfit for Clan-na-Gael leadership. Some of Devoy’s actions, born of a natural tendency to make decisions without consulting anyone, helped Goff convince some skeptical Clan-na-Gael members that something was being covered up. Goff set up procedural impediments to APRC expenditures that were designed to keep the individual Camps in control of the funds raised for the enterprise until all the i’s were dotted and the t’s crossed, with the eager assistance of the penny-pinching treasurer of the APRC, Patrick Mahon of Rochester, New York. Devoy obstinately refused to respond to the Vigilance Committee requests for expenditure backup. “I have refused to show any papers until I have consent of the FC [Executive Body], and dishonesty is insinuated . . ..” fumed Devoy in a letter to Reynolds.[[457]](#footnote-458)

Goff, Brennan, and Devoy returned to shore after the departure of the *Catalpa*. Brennan, disappointed, returned to his job. Goff went back to New York determined to get Brennan to the Azores to join the *Catalpa* rescue expedition. John Devoy went back to making trips to the Camps to secure funds for paying the accrued *Catalpa* outfitting costs and to accumulate funds for the land-based rescue team that would need to arrive in Australia before the end of the year. Richardson immediately forgot about Brennan and did not book him on the promised trip to the Azores.

Goff wanted to be sure his man was aboard the *Catalpa* in case of a triumphal return with the prisoners. When the ship to take Thomas Brennan to the Azores didn’t materialize, Goff, in the midst of delaying payments to Reynolds and Devoy for the *Catalpa* outfitting costs, apparently had no problem at all obtaining $300 from his Camp’s funds and booking Brennan’s passage to St Michael’s Island after securing Brennan a fake passport under the name of Thomas Hawley.[[458]](#footnote-459) Devoy made sure the Executive Body later ratified the decisions reached at dockside in New Bedford and issued Brennan an official Clan-na-Gael document “drafted by me [Devoy], giving him explicit instructions, in the name of the governing body of the organization, to abide by the Captain’s decision in Fayal.”[[459]](#footnote-460)

The *Catalpa*’s principal mission was to rescue the military prisoners; however, one of Devoy’s main selling points to the members was the profit the whaling voyage would make for the Clan-na-Gael. Devoy assured the Camps that advances made to the APRC from Camp treasuries were to be fully reimbursed and there would be money left over. The *Catalpa* sailed out of New Bedford harbor as an investment that would pay a handsome return into the Clan-na-Gael treasury, whether, or not, a successful prisoner rescue took place. Devoy’s reputation as a leader depended heavily upon a successful whaling venture. Such a venture in the 1870s was a risky business with chances for an unexpected disaster waiting beyond each thirty-foot swell.

### The Providence Convention of 1875

It must be emphasized that Goff at no time appeared to be trying to jeopardize the actual rescue mission. All his activity was directed at proving ineptness or malfeasance on the part of Devoy and later John Breslin. The plan was to oust Devoy from the Chairmanship of the Executive Body at the Clan-na-Gael at the Providence Convention in the summer of 1875. Perhaps Goff’s hope was that he might gain the Chairmanship of the Clan-na-Gael Executive Body while the mission was in progress to ensure he would be in charge if a successful rescue occurred. Miles O’Brien proposed an amendment, passed by the membership, limiting the term of the Chairman of the Executive Body to one year and thereby eliminating Devoy from re-election at the convention. O’Brien, who also held a personal grudge against Devoy, wanted to ensure that Devoy was taken out of the driver’s seat.[[460]](#footnote-461) Unfortunately for Goff and O’Brien these convention maneuverings came to naught when Dr. William Carroll, Devoy’s staunch supporter and personal friend, took Devoy’s place as Chairman of the Clan-na-Gael Executive Body. Devoy later gloated a bit in Dr. Carroll’s victory, “He was no more acceptable to O’Brien than I was but he got a practically unanimous vote.”[[461]](#footnote-462)

Goff also had a monetary reason why he did not want to lose his high position. The membership had voted to give Goff $500 [$9,000 in present day currency] for his “labours during the past year.”

That this bonus for Goff did not sit well with Dr. Carroll is evident in the note Dr. Carroll jotted down on the request to pay the money to Goff he received from C.V. Gallagher, Chairman of the 1875 Convention. Dr. Carroll stated: “the present [Executive Body] have no discretionary power in the case.” Dr. Carroll went on to conclude that they must pay all other Clan-na-Gael debts first and set aside money for contingencies before paying the Goff claim, “which is in the nature of a donation,” thereby ensuring it would remain unpaid most of the year.[[462]](#footnote-463)

This type of vindictiveness only served to poison more the tense atmosphere within the APRC.

Devoy and Dr. Carroll, working together had successfully pushed to completion two items on the 1874 Baltimore Convention agenda: closer ties to the IRB nationalists in Ireland and the launching of the Australian Prisoner Rescue project. The Providence Convention of 1875 rewarded these efforts when the delegates elected Dr. Carroll chairman of the Executive Body and left John Devoy as chairman of the rescue project with all APRC members retained in their positions. Dr. Carroll and John Walsh, the newly elected Clan-na-Gael treasurer, were also given seats on the APRC.

Devoy and Dr. Carroll’s aggressive actions had put new life into the Clan-na-Gael. The delegates in Providence were obviously content to continue Devoy and Dr. Carroll’s policies forward into 1876. The fact the *Catalpa* had set sail for Australia and the IRB had agreed to mutual cooperation[[463]](#footnote-464) improved the Clan-na-Gael’s self-image significantly and that was a good omen for future membership growth. A successful *Catalpa* expedition would all but guarantee the Clan-na-Gael the financial resources necessary to fulfill its role as a catalyst for Irish independence.

The potential downside, as everyone in the Clan-na-Gael’s hierarchy was well aware, would occur in the case of the *Catalpa*’s failure to return with the rescued prisoners on deck and whale oil in the hold. In such an event all the hard work would go up in smoke and probably eliminate any chance the organization could ever again launch an enterprise of this magnitude.

# PART VII

# CATALPA: The Outward Voyage

### The Catalpa Logbook

The next sections of this book tell the story of the voyage of the *Catalpa* extracting all actions and events from the ship’s logbook entries and a plot of the ship’s daily position from the daily reckonings. Footnotes are not used except in cases where the information is not from the logbook. In addition, published reports of the participants are compared to the Logbook. The shipboard trip from New Bedford, Massachusetts to Western Australia and the return voyage to New York are told in detail. The events occurring on the *Catalpa*, the whaling done in the Atlantic; the rescue mission events in Australia and the return voyage to New York City, form an essential key to understanding the personal conflicts that occurred within the Clan-na-Gael and among the rescue mission members in the aftermath of the voyage.

Events are based on the daily entries of First Mate Samuel P. Smith in the *Catalpa* logbook, including, where appropriate, amplified or compared information from Captain Anthony’s book, *Catalpa* *Expedition* published in 1897.[[464]](#footnote-465)

When the *Catalpa* encountered another whaling ship during the voyage, if the logbook omits such, the full name of the ship’s captain is given, using Starbuck’s *History of the American Whale Fishery* as the source.

I have constructed a plot of the daily logbook reckonings of latitude and longitude which is used to note significant changes in the ship’s direction and location.[[465]](#footnote-466) Smith’s *Catalpa* logbook entries abide by the international convention in use in 1875, with each day divided into three eight-hour segments or watches:

“First Part” is from noon to 8:00 PM

“Middle Part” is from 8:00 PM to 4:00 AM

“Latter Part” is from 4:00 AM to noon.

The date given for “First Part” precedes the midnight start date of a normal calendar day by twelve hours.[[466]](#footnote-467)

The dates for the events of the voyage are converted to standard calendar days and, therefore, will match those found in most sources.

First Mate Smith uses the phrase “This day commences” in place of “First Part,” otherwise he follows the convention.

The logbook describes changes to the prevailing weather and notes wind and ship direction for each eight- hour segment of the ship’s day. With a few exceptions, Smith records the events that occur on board the ship in terse phrases without comment.

The decks of the *Catalpa* as designed by Hathaway and Anthony contained three cabins built as living quarters, one fore, one aft, and one amidships. Captain Anthony had a double-sized room furnished on the starboard side of the aft cabin. Opposite Anthony’s room on the port side was First Mate Samuel Smith’s quarters.[[467]](#footnote-468) Antoine Farnham, the Second Mate, and George Bolles, the Third Mate, had furnished quarters in the fore cabin. Amidships “Sail and rigging pens were built on one side and the steerage cabin on the other.”[[468]](#footnote-469) Duggan, as the carpenter, along with the boatsteerers, the cook, and the other crew members slept in the steerage cabin.

### “She Looked Splendid, With Every Sail Set”

The crew, except for the officers, was already aboard ship on the morning of Thursday, April 29, 1875, by 9:00 AM. First Mate Samuel Smith ordered the crew to hoist the anchors and the *Catalpa* headed out from New Bedford into Buzzard’s Bay.At 11:30 AM, a yacht with Captain Anthony, his officers and thirty well-wishers on board joined the whaling bark under sail. Despite all the APRC bickering, John Goff, Thomas Brennan, and John Devoy attended the gala send-off in apparent harmony.

That evening after arriving back on shore, an elated John Devoy sat down at 5:30 PM and penned James Reynolds a note:

Goff, Brennan, and I have just returned from seeing the ship 40 miles out to sea, eating our dinner of hard tack, salt beef, and cheese aboard. She looked splendid with every sail set, a clear sky overhead and a calm sea beneath, and the scene at parting was one we shall not soon forget. . .. Not a man aboard but ourselves had the least suspicion of her mission, and she is well on her way now.[[469]](#footnote-470)

Anthony adjusted the course south-southeast out of New Bedford to clear Martha’s Vineyard, then headed the vessel into the open waters of the Atlantic Ocean. The crew immediately set about getting the ship ready for whaling. The Clan-na-Gael’s only representative on board, Irish freedom fighter and New York carriage-maker, Denis Duggan, was now face-to-face with a year-long voyage as the ship’s carpenter.

When Duggan learned from John Devoy he was to board the *Catalpa* as the carpenter, he may have imagined he would be given deference as a Clan-na-Gael official, but Anthony expected Duggan to perform his assigned tasks as would any regular sailor to preclude any suspicion among the crew that this was not a routine whaling cruise.[[470]](#footnote-471) It is certain that Duggan had not envisioned himself like Ishmael jumping “from spar to spar, like a grasshopper in a May meadow,” but there he was.Every morning at daybreak the whale watch was assigned in rotation. Every man on ship from the mates on down pulled masthead duty, hanging draped over the royal-yard, trying to spot a whale breeching or spouting as the mast pitched to and fro to the rhythm of the swells. During heavy seas the unlucky lookout would feel he was about to be dipped into the blue-green sea at each roll of the vessel.

A shout was raised once a whale was spotted and everyone had an assignment to carry out. Duggan’s overall shipboard tasks, as the ship’s cooper, were to maintain all barrels, water casks, and oil vats in good order, make new ones or break open old ones on request, and perform all the carpentry work required aboard ship.[[471]](#footnote-472) In addition, he could be called upon at any moment to help perform the constant rigging adjustments that maintained the sails in proper position to the wind or help unfurl or furl the sails. If the sails tore in a heavy sea, he would be called to join the crew in mending or replacing them. If there was a need to lower all three whaleboats he had to be ready to take the tiller and guide the main ship while the whaleboats were away.[[472]](#footnote-473)

Duggan, along with the cook, the boatsteerers, the blacksmith, and the other artisans aboard, were called the “steerage gang.” Reality now peered at Duggan out of the dingy darkness of his sleeping quarters in the steerage cabin amidships. As far as is known, Duggan did not keep a shipboard diary, but a cooper on the whaler *Sunbeam*, out of New Bedford, gives us a perspective on what steerage quarters were like:

The steerage was not an inviting place to sleep. The floor was littered with rubbish, the walls hung deep in clothing; squalid, congested, filthy; even the glamour of novelty could not disguise the wretchedness of the scene. The floor was wet and slippery, the air smoky and foul; often a bottle was dropped in the passing, or an empty one was smashed to the floor. Through it all was an undertone of water bubbling at the ports and a rustle of oilskins swinging to and fro like pendulums. Roaches scurried about the walls. . . .”[[473]](#footnote-474)

For Denis Duggan, it was going to be a long voyage.

### On the Western Grounds 1875

“You will cruise until fall, about six months, in the North Atlantic,” Devoy instructed Anthony.[[474]](#footnote-475) In his discussions with Hathaway, Devoy had been told that six months whaling in the Atlantic before the rescue attempt and another several months of whaling after the prisoners had been landed in Fernandina, Florida, should net 500-600 barrels of oil and that would assure the Clan-na-Gael a financially successful voyage.[[475]](#footnote-476)

The first storm blew over the vessel three days after clearing Martha’s Vineyard at 8:00 PM in the evening. All sails had to be furled except the upper topsail, the configuration used to stabilize a sailing ship in heavy seas. After a day of rough weather, clear weather returned and the *Catalpa*, again under full sail, headed toward the whaling grounds. Four days into the outward journey, the lookout spotted whales going windward, but they were gone before Anthony could lower the whaleboats. Whales were spotted again the next day, May 5, at 10:00 AM, and two whaleboats were lowered. They were unable to reach the whales and the *Catalpa* was luffed to the wind[[476]](#footnote-477) and held her position for the night.

The whales showed up the next morning but this time the *Catalpa* had better luck. The larboard and waist boats were lowered at 9:00 AM and struck their whales. The waist boat iron strap parted, losing one whale, but by 2:00 PM the remaining whale was made fast to the ship.[[477]](#footnote-478) The cutting began at 5:00 PM. Men standing on two platforms jutting out from the side of the vessel cut the start of an endless strip that would go girth-wise around the whale. A large hook dangling from the ship’s crane was attached to the start of the cut. The men hacked furiously as the crane pulled upward on the cut and the blubber was peeled off. The upward pulling action rotated the whale lengthwise, much like one would spin and spiral-peel a large orange. The cutting was finished by 8:00 PM.

At this point a gale blew up and the ship was again luffed to the wind to ride out the storm, leaving the large mass of whale blubber to slide around on the decks. The gale lasted two days until 10:00 AM on Sunday when the wind moderated enough to allow “the works,” as the rendering fires were called, to be started in preparation for converting the blubber into oil. The rendering was still in process when, on Sunday afternoon at 4:00 PM, the merchant bark *Eos* bound from New York to Limerick pulled alongside. The captain of the *Eos* conversed with Anthony.

Monday morning, May 10 at 6:00 AM, the rendering was complete as Duggan began to break open casks containing provisions, rigging and sails. The casks were then swabbed out to receive the hot whale oil then left to cool before being stowed below. Some men were detailed to repair the top foremast staysail, which had torn during the storm. After that task was completed the ship was ready for the next sighting.

On May 12, at 4:30 PM, whales were spotted, and the waist and larboard boats were lowered. Both boats struck and killed a whale. At 7:00 AM the next morning, the ship’s crane hooked on for the first cut and by 4:00 PM the cutting process was complete. The boats were lowered the next day in two futile attempts to kill whales. Meanwhile, the blubber from the previous catch was fed to the rendering works until Sunday, May 16, at which point rendering was complete. By Wednesday, May 18, at 4:00 PM the oil had been stowed below.

Back in New York City, John Devoy scanned the maritime news sections of the daily papers for mention of the *Catalpa*: “I saw by the Herald’s shipping news that the ship was spoken at sea on the 30th, and I watch every day for news of her.”[[478]](#footnote-479) A kind gesture by Captain Anthony provided Devoy with more news of the ship. Storms had interrupted the whaling and for several days the ship was blown about in the same general area. On May 30 at 8:00 AM, the *Catalpa* encountered a merchant brig in distress, dismasted, with the crew on the verge of starvation. She was the *Florence*, out of Annapolis, Nova Scotia, bound from Liverpool to St. Stevens with a cargo of salt. Anthony generously provided the ship with enough provisions and sails to reach port. When the ship reached harbor, the incident was reported in the *New Bedford Standard*. Hathaway forwarded Devoy the article:

Brig *Florence*, of Annapolis, N. S., with salt, arrived at ST Stephens, N. B., yesterday, 63 days from Liverpool. May 10th a violent gale carried away her foremast, main topmast, and all the sails but the main staysail. The provisions ran short, and the vessel drifted helplessly about for 20 days, the crew suffering intensely from hunger and thirst. May 30th, bark, *Catalpa*, Anthony, of this port, rendered assistance and jurymasts were rigged, enabling the vessel to reach the mouth of the St Croix. During the gale a French sailor named Le Blanc was fatally injured by falling from a loft.[[479]](#footnote-480)

After the encounter with the *Florence*, Captain Anthony decided to make one last circular cruise around their present whaling location, during the process of which they encountered the brig *Rescue* out of New Bedford on June 3. They compared chronometer settings and determined the chronometer on the *Catalpa* was not functioning correctly and that any position readings taken would be inaccurate. There was nothing to do about the chronometer at that point and Anthony would have to wait until they reached the Azores to address the problem. The ship was set to a northeast course in hopes of finding better hunting. The change in course paid off, when, on June 12, between 6:20 PM and 10:00 PM, two whales were killed and lashed to the ship for cutting; that process took two days. Unfortunately, a large quantity of prime spermaceti oil was lost from that catch while pulling the whale’s head on board. Smith’s logbook reads: “At 6:30 finished cutting all but the head. Latter part strong breezes with heavy swell. At 5 AM hook on to cut head. Got the junk and lost case. So ends another day.”[[480]](#footnote-481)

### Cruising “Nothing for It”

During the next two months’ frustration set in as the *Catalpa* cruised the mid-Atlantic without sighting a whale. In the logbook on Friday, June 25, we can sense disgust as First Mate Smith remarks, “So ends this day without nothing.” A few days later Friday, July 2, Smith again laments, “So ends this day like many more and nothing for it. Saw one sail.” On July 15, Smith became a bit poetic, “Nothing but gales and no whales.” The logbook recounts instances of picking up floating spar material, discarded buoys, and the sighting of sails and grampuses. Nothing outside this boring daily routine is recorded until an entry in the logbook for July 19 mentioned that Robert Kanacker, one of the boatsteerers, had taken sick. Every two days or so thereafter a simple entry “Kanacker still sick and off duty” appears in the Logbook.

The *Catalpa* encountered two ships as she sailed a meandering course; on July 1, the merchant brig *Heroine of Perce* bound for Barbados, and Anthony posted letters with the ship for forwarding to New Bedford; and, on July 3, the bark *George and Mary*, Captain George Cannon at the helm, a whaler out two months with nothing caught. On July 25, Anthony wore the ship southeast in search of a better location. Smith writes about a large iceberg floating by as the *Catalpa* continued south.

The reckoning for August 2 was latitude 35 degrees north, longitude 41 degrees west. At this point Anthony set the vessel on circular cruises to determine if they were in a better whaling location. The next day, August 3, they encountered the whaling brig *Eunice H. Adams*, Captain Leonard West in command and, later that day, another whaling bark *John Dawson*, under Captain Caleb Babcock. The three ships held a three-way gam[[481]](#footnote-482) from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM and Anthony learned that neither of these ships had taken a whale yet. Anthony then set the ship cruising for ten days in a large circle that ended up back where they had previously met up with the *Dawson* and the *Adams*. No whales were raised.

By this time, Anthony would have started to worry. The *Catalpa* had now been out for Devoy’s stipulated six-month period at which point she ought to be setting course for Australia, yet they had only taken 120 barrels of oil of the 250 barrels that would be normal for the time spent at sea. Anthony set the *Catalpa* on an eastward course toward a new hunting location. On August 19, the *Catalpa* gammed the *Rosseau* under Captain Eber Almy. Smith’s logbook entry continued lamenting their lack of luck, “Five weeks out and nothing to show.” They continued sailing east. On August 20, the ship was three hundred miles southwest of the Azores at latitude 36 degrees north, longitude 36 degrees west.

### A Change of Luck!

The new location put the *Catalpa* nearer the Azores, the designated jumping off point for Australia. Anthony again set the vessel’s course to cruise in a circular pattern. The *Catalpa* came into an area where they saw several whaling ships cruising, a good omen that things might get better. At 5:00 PM in the afternoon of August 20, “spoke and gammed the bark *Peru* under Captain Jasper Ears, 4 months out, 130 barrels.” At 10:00 AM Saturday morning, August 21, Smith saw a ship with boats down and they headed towards her but had no luck. By noon four ships were in sight. In the afternoon two more whaling ships were seen with their boats lowered, but still the *Catalpa* had not raised a whale.

Sadly, after an illness of one month, Smith notes in the logbook on Sunday, August 22, “At quarter of six Robert Kanacker boatsteerer dies. Died of consumption.” Forty-five minutes later the logbook notes that the *Catalpa* “spoke and gammed the bark *Headley*, Captain Hiram Cleveland, 60 barrels this season.”[[482]](#footnote-483) On Monday morning, August 23, 1875, there was a single logbook entry, “At 9:00 AM buried the boatsteerer that died.” Monday evening at 6:00 PM, the log reads, “Spoke and gammed the bark *General Scott*, Captain Charles [H.] Robbins, which had just taken two small whales” and was in the process of rendering the oil. The *General Scott* was a J.T. Richardson ship out of New Bedford, so it is not surprising that they cooperated, however, it is odd that Pease does not mention this fact.[[483]](#footnote-484) At least the ships they were encountering had harvested whales in the area and Anthony must have felt that finally the *Catalpa* was in for some successful hunting. Tuesday the crew was kept busy shaping a spar out of a pole they had recovered from the sea earlier in the month. Gamming with the *General Scott* continued into Tuesday evening.

The *General Scott* was still nearby and another gam was held on Wednesday, August 25th. Anthony’s change of location finally paid off at 7:00 AM when the *Catalpa* “raised a lone whale.” All three boats were lowered for the chase. The nearby *General Scott* saw the *Catalpa* lowering her boats and her logbook reads, “The latter part, saw the *Catalpa* chasing a whale, lowered the boats and mated.”[[484]](#footnote-485) The two ships had agreed to “mate,” that is, work together and split the resulting oil harvest. The *Catalpa*’s larboard boat had killed a big whale and they pulled the carcass to the larger ship, *General Scott*, for rendering. Captain Anthony and some of his crew went aboard the *General Scott* to help in the work while the *Catalpa* continued cruising for whales.

Thursday went by with no luck. Friday afternoon boats were lowered again and the chase was on. A lone whale was killed and, by 6:00 PM, was lashed to the *Catalpa*. Cutting commenced on Saturday morning at 5:00 AM and finished at 10:00 AM. Smith noted in the logbook that three whalers were visible. The *General Scott* and the *Catalpa* resumed gamming at 3:00 PM Sunday afternoon. The whale they shared yielded 130 barrels of oil, or 65 barrels each. The smaller whale taken by the *Catalpa* netted 40 barrels. Anthony must have been elated to see the yield of one day almost double their previous harvest.[[485]](#footnote-486) The *Catalpa* and *General Scott* bid each other good day and went their separate ways.

At 4:00 PM in the afternoon of Tuesday, September 1, the *Catalpa* “spoke and gammed the bark *Sarah B Hale*, Captain Holder Slocum, 90 barrels.” The next day, the *Catalpa* again gammed the brig *Eunice H. Adams* and found that she had taken 40 barrels of oil since their last encounter, in addition the bark *Wave*, Captain B. A. Briggs, was gammed and she, too, had taken 40 barrels.[[486]](#footnote-487) By Friday, the *Catalpa* had finished stowing down the oil. On Saturday, September 4, the *Catalpa* gammed the *E. B. Phillips*, Captain Joseph Frances, and the next day, Sunday, “spoke and gammed the bark *Draco*, under Captain Henry Peaks, two months out, 80 barrels.”

They saw no more whales for the next few days, although on Wednesday a whaler was spotted with two boats down. The *Catalpa* crew was put to scraping one of the yards to get it ready for painting. Thursday the bark *Draco* was gammed again. Friday the *Draco* and the *General Scott* were gammed. At 10:00 AM, Monday, September 13, the air was calm and the bark *Peru* was gammed again.

The winds picked up and the *Catalpa* began cruising. On Wednesday, at 7:00 PM “Spoke and gammed the bark *Pacific*, Captain Gilbert B. Borden, 23½ months out, with 13 hundred sperm [barrels of oil].” At 10:00 AM Monday, September 18, they “Spoke and gammed the bark *Janet*, Captain Peter Gartland, 450 barrels sperm oil this season.” Two whales were raised at 9:00 AM Sunday, and both the larboard and waist boats struck and killed their whales. By 6:00 PM, the larboard boat whale was lashed to the *Catalpa*. Anthony then sailed off to leeward to help the waist boat. By 9:00 PM, the second whale was lashed. At 5:00 AM Monday, September 20, all hands were called out but by then the weather was so bad the decision was made not to begin cutting the whales. By 10:00 AM the weather was more moderate and they hooked on to the smallest whale and “cut him in. So ends this day cutting.”

Gale winds from the northwest hampered efforts the following day with a “very heavy swelling running” and the ship lay to under the lower topsail. The next day saw the same gale force winds from the north-northwest and it was not until Tuesday, September 21, at 5:00 AM, that they were able to begin cutting the larger whale. Cutting the body was finished at 10:00 AM. “Cut the head square off and let it lay alongside; too rugged to take it. At 11:00 AM started the works,” notes Smith. Wednesday they were still cutting the blubber for the rendering process. At 8:00 AM on Thursday morning “hooked on to the head. Saved the case.” Boiling continued until 7:00 PM Thursday evening. “Made about 25 barrels” that were stowed down by Friday at noon. By now the *Catalpa* had drifted or been blown about 150 miles southeast of the location where they had killed the whales.

Captain Anthony set a course “northard” back to the whaling grounds and by Monday, September 26, the ship was back in the whaling area. The crew was set to repairing the top foresail and the flying jib and the captain went back to cruising. Friday, October 1 at 2:00 PM, a boat was lowered and a merchant ship was boarded with hopes of news, but the ship was from Rio bound to Havre “so no news from the States.” Anthony headed the *Catalpa* northward up into the merchant shipping lanes and spoke to the *Ospray*, Captain Reuben Crapo, on Tuesday, October 5, 1875 at 4:00 PM. It is possible Anthony was worried that the rescue plot had been found out and was searching for someone with recent news from the States. He turned the vessel south and exchanged longitude with the merchant brigantine *Josephine* of New York. The *Catalpa* chronometer position, off by one degree, had to be adjusted again.

### The Azores:Rough Weather and Desertions

With the increase of 130 barrels of oil rendered during September, the *Catalpa* logbook entries now indicated 250 barrels of oil stowed, which was the amount Captain Anthony would have needed to be successful for the first leg of the voyage. It was now time to comply with Devoy’s orders for the second part of their mission:

“. . . [Y]ou are to put into Fayal, ship home any oil which you may have taken, and sail at once for Australia, wherewe expect you to arrive early in the spring of 1876.”[[487]](#footnote-488)

Finished with whaling on the outbound leg on October 8, 1875, Anthony set sail north for four days and then sailed the vessel east toward the Azores, making from 50 to 150 miles per day. On Wednesday October 13, 1875, Smith notes, “At 11:30 AM raised Flores [an island in the Azores chain] bearing about southeast by east half east.” Thursday evening the log read, “Spoke and gammed the bark *Andrew Hicks*, Captain Timothy Howland, of Westport, 380 barrels this season.”

After arriving off the coast of the island of Flores in the Azores, First Mate Smith and Captain Anthony lowered a whaleboat to go ashore at the town of Santa Cruz das Flores leaving the *Catalpa* “laying on and off Flores.” Captain Peaks of the *Draco* had told Anthony it was a good idea to catch albacore for trading at Flores. Anthony having followed Captain Peaks’ advice, entered port with his whaleboat filled with albacore. Upon landing in Flores, Anthony was arrested for smuggling “American fishing waters’ property.” Anthony, after considerable discussion, was allowed to pay a native to take the fish out to sea and dump them, which apparently satisfied the port authorities.[[488]](#footnote-489)

Smith reports, “Three men sick and off duty.” The *Andrew Hicks* was noted as still to be seen “laying on and off” Flores. Friday afternoon the *Catalpa* continued to maintain offshore near Flores waiting for Anthony and Smith’s return.

In the logbook entry for Friday October 15 Smith writes, “At 1:00 PM boat came on board and the cooper and two of the men was drunk.” Cooper Denis Duggan was apparently fitting right into his new role as a sailor. This incident, which included hauling a senseless Duggan on board with a winch, apparently set the captain, a teetotaler, against Duggan. The incident also had repercussions for the rest of the *Catalpa*’s voyage and may have confirmed in Anthony’s mind the wisdom of not allowing Brennan on board ship, as will be seen.

At 2:00 PM another whaleboat was let ashore for liberty with a new crew. An hour later a local trading boat was hauled up to the ship’s davits with potatoes and onions for the pantry. Anthony came back on board at 5:00 PM, carrying more potatoes. At this point the *Catalpa* “braced forward and stood to sea” en route to Fayal, another island in the Azores lying south of Flores. Unfortunately, Anthony soon discovered that he had left his Bill of Health Certificate on shore and the *Catalpa* was forced to weather a storm that blew up before returning to Flores for the document.

The *Catalpa* and the *Andrew Hicks* were in fresh breezes “on both tacks working to the windward.” Saturday morning commenced with fresh breezes again as the *Catalpa* worked her way windward between the islands of Corvo and Flores.[[489]](#footnote-490) Owing to the threatening “heavy squalls of wind and rain,” the *Catalpa* put farther out from land between Corvo and Flores and battened down for the storm with only the lower main topsail set for stability. By 10:00 AM, Tuesday morning, they had drifted southeast, Smith noting Flores at a bearing of northwest. At 3:00 PM Tuesday afternoon, the winds moderated but visibility was low. Captain Anthony calculated the ship was still at the “south end of Flores.” The weather abated and, on Wednesday morning at 8:00 AM, Anthony was able to lower a whaleboat with a crew and he “started for Point Del Gardo” for a quick trip to shore to recover his papers. The *Catalpa* was located northeast off Flores.[[490]](#footnote-491)

At noon Smith reported that the *Andrew Hicks*, which had also hunkered down for the storm, was sailing south toward Fayal. By sundown, the *Catalpa* was once again off the town of Santa Cruz das Flores. At 7:00 PM Anthony, having recovered his papers, returned in the whaleboat and the *Catalpa* was finally able to head southeast for Fayal. Anthony’s omission had cost the *Catalpa* a week of precious time guaranteeing a late arrival in Australia.

The crew was put to work washing the ship on the trip to Fayal. They spied Fayal on Thursday afternoon at 2:30 PM and by sundown they were ten miles off with the island at bearing south. Anthony lowered a whaleboat on Friday morning at 7:00 AM and went into the island town of Horta with letters for the States. At 4:00 PM, Smith got worried and lowered a whaleboat “to go ashore after the captain,” but the weather was so rough that the boat was winched back up to the davits and secured. Smith worked the *Catalpa* to the leeward between Fayal and the nearby island of Pico. Smith notes in the log, “Four men sick and off duty.” On Saturday, October 23, the logbook reads:

At 2 pm abreast of the town and the captain came off [the whaleboat] and we concluded to come to and anchor. Got the chains up and back then and got the anchors off the bows. At 5 pm came to anchor in Fayal. Middle and latter part blowing strong. Employed in mooring ship. At 3 AM finished mooring. So ends this day with bad weather.

The four sick men were taken ashore. Two were taken to a hospital and one was put in a boarding house and one returned with the whaleboat. The crew went to work off-loading the oil, which was standard procedure for whaling ships. The oil would be taken back aboard transport ships. Tuesday October 26, the weather was pleasant and the logbook reads:

Employed in breaking out oil. At 12 Noon finished got out 165 barrels. The *Ospray*, [Captain Reuben W. Crapo], the *Stafford*, [Captain Edward A. King], and the *Janus*, [Captain Warren Gifford], are laying here.”

Anthony boarded the *Ospray* and he and Captain Crapo reset the chronometer again. In the afternoon Duggan was at work, “employed in cooping and filling cask.” The next day Smith writes, “Stowing off the ground tun and filling with saltwater. Our oil still on deck.” The work of filling the large ground tun for ballast continued into the next day. During the morning of October 28, the oil was off-loaded onto a lighter[[491]](#footnote-492) and taken ashore. Duggan was “employed in breaking out the bread and flour and coopering it.” This task continued throughout the day. One watch was allowed shore leave for 24 hours’ liberty on Friday, October 29.

On Saturday, October 30, problems began to occur for Anthony when Henry Paine and Edward Gleason failed to return from shore liberty. The remaining watch was sent ashore for liberty anyway. The exodus of sailors continued on Sunday, October 31, as the second watch returned, “except the third mate George E. Bolles and one boatsteerer, Caleb Cushing, and three sailors, Cyrus S. Hill,[[492]](#footnote-493) John Cocking, and Robert Ceil.” Seven men were now absent from their duty posts. On the morning of November 4, First Mate Smith writes, “All of the above mentioned men still absent. Heard that two of them had been caught.”

November 6 was a hard day for Captain Anthony as he attempted to reconstitute a crew for the voyage to Australia. Henry Paine came back on in the morning and four new men from Fayal were signed up to continue the voyage. Another man, Antone Silva, was brought aboard as third mate.[[493]](#footnote-494) The logbook indicates, “Discharged three men while in port.” [[494]](#footnote-495) These apparently were the three men mentioned previously as sick and taken on shore. At 1:00 PM Cyrus Hill and John Cocking, the two men who had been caught by the authorities, were returned to the ship.

Anthony returned to the ship at 5:30 PM, happy to get out of Fayal with a full crew. The wind was blowing from the southwest. The *Catalpa* set course against the wind to clear the Pico-Fayal channel, stowed her anchors, and began working on both tacks southward.

The *Catalpa* had reached the halfway point of her whaling mission. The target set by the Clan-na-Gael was 265 barrels of oil stowed during the first half of the voyage, which was average for a whaler of the *Catalpa*’s tonnage.[[495]](#footnote-496) There are inconsistencies as to how much oil Anthony had collected by the time he arrived at the Azores. Extant sources consist of the *Catalpa* logbook entry for Fayal, “Whalemen” reports in the *New York Herald*, the numbers given in Z. W. Pease, the “Finances of the *Catalpa*” published by John Devoy, and Starbuck’s data for the *Catalpa*. The *Catalpa* logbook indicates that only 165 barrels were off-loaded in Fayal. This is 45 barrels less than the amount shown in other sources and is likely due to logbook omissions by Smith. The amount given by Pease [and therefore by Anthony] was 210 barrels. The *New York Herald*’s Whalemen column on November 14, 1875 indicates *Catalpa* at sea with 220 barrels including the 40 from the *General Scott*, but the same column on November 29 reports that the bark *Kate Williams* in Fayal was to return to the United States with 210 barrels of oil from the *Catalpa* but indicated 250 barrels taken overall.[[496]](#footnote-497) *Starbuck*’s indicates 211 barrels.[[497]](#footnote-498)John Devoy’s numbers calculate to 200 barrels. If we accept the sources which calculated the oil off-loaded at Fayal at the high amount of 250 barrels, including the 210 barrels off-loaded by the *Catalpa* and 40 barrels off-loaded by the *General Scott*, then the *Catalpa* and her crew would have to double that amount on the second leg of the journey if the rescue project was to pay voyage expenses and return any money to the Clan-na-Gael treasury.

Captain Anthony drew $1000 in gold [about $17,000 in modern dollars] at Fayal for the cost of re-outfitting the vessel. Whatever the amount of oil one chooses from the various sources, the return voyage needed take a large whaling harvest.

### The Lost Sailors at Tenerife

According to Anthony, it was during the trip from Fayal to Tenerife that he revealed to First Mate Samuel Smith the real purpose of the voyage. Scouring the logbook for some sign of a change in Smith’s entries because of Anthony’s revelation yielded no visible alteration in the customary terse entries of wind and weather and on-board activities. Before arriving in Fayal, the *Catalpa* logbook “Remarks” entry at the top of each page had always contained the handwritten statement “Cruising on the Western Ground.” After they left Fayal a “Remarks” entry is no longer made. This is several days in advance of the time Anthony says he told Smith the real reason for the voyage, but it is the only change in writing style which was detected from beginning to end of the *Catalpa* logbook.

According to Z.W. Pease, after being told the true mission, Smith signed on with gusto: “Captain Anthony” said he, “I’ll stick by you in this ship, if she goes to hell and burns off her jibboom.”[[498]](#footnote-499)

The *Catalpa* continued to work her way south against the prevailing winds after leaving Fayal. The logbook only mentions occasional sightings of merchant ships as the ship was no longer in whaling grounds. Madeira was seen in the distance on November 16, 1875 at 6:00 AM, as they continued south. They saw Tenerife 60 miles to the southeast on November 17th, at 4:00 PM in the afternoon, with the ship heading south-southwest.

This was an unwanted surprise for Anthony as he expected to encounter Tenerife dead ahead. Once again, the chronometer had proved it could not be trusted. Anthony began working toward the island. It took three days to work the ship against the winds around Punta De Anaga on the northeast corner of Tenerife, using the point’s lighthouse as a reference.

Before they could enter the Tenerife port of Santa Cruz, Spanish custom officials boarded the *Catalpa* to check papers and Anthony found himself in serious trouble. In his hurry to escape Brennan, Anthony had logged the crew compliment as 25 sailors. When the crew assembled at the bidding of the authorities only 22 men appeared, leaving the crew three men short. Apparently, Anthony had not reduced the crew by the three sick men left in Fayal. After “profuse apologies and explanations” the ship was allowed into port.[[499]](#footnote-500) On November 20th, sailing in “clear and pleasant weather” after passing the Faro [lighthouse] De Anaga “at 5 PM came to anchor off Santa Cruz in 20 fathoms of water. Give her 45 fathoms of chain and furl the sails.”

Anthony did not give the crew liberty, perhaps fearing that they might try to escape again. He purchased lumber to build deck housing for the prisoners to be picked up in Australia, informing the crew that it was for rebuilding the whaleboats. In addition to the $1000 Anthony drew in Fayal, he drew another $300 in gold in Tenerife, raising the total draw on the voyage to $1300, or about $25,000 dollars in modern terms.

Anthony’s discovery that the chronometer, reset near Fayal, was off by sixty miles after the short trip to Tenerife made him determined to fix the problem. Once again Anthony boarded the schooner *Ospray* that had just arrived in Tenerife, bought a chronometer from Captain Crapo, and spent the next several days recalibrating it for the journey to Australia. In the process, he discovered he had been given the wrong calibration numbers with the unit. Resetting the instrument with the correct numbers, he relaxed. At last Anthony felt he had a chronometer that would give him accurate location reckonings.

With the ship still at anchor at Tenerife, First Mate Smith’s hitherto fore laconic style becomes almost loquacious as he writes in the logbook recounting an escape attempt of two sailors and a later visit to one of the recaptured sailors by a doctor. Smith’s logbook tells the following story:

**Monday, Nov 22nd**

This day commences with light variable winds and clear pleasant weather. Middle and latter part much the same. At 3:30 am Cyrus S Hill, John Cocking jumped overboard and try to swim ashore. The men that had the watch on deck discovered it. Called the mate captain and all hands. Lowered the waist boat and went to look for them. Heard them crying out for help. [Note written in the margin in another hand: ‘Lowered another boat for them.’] Went to them and took them in the boat. They had a big bag of clothes with them and John Cocking came near drowning. At 4 am got on board and hoisted the boat up. At 10 minutes past four took some spun yarn and made their hands and feet fast and run a wood pole between their arms and legs. Had no irons. Aboard of the ship at 7 am asked them if they had enough of that and if they was ready to go to work and behave. They made not much of any reply. At 7:20 am John Cocking said he was tired of it. Took the spun yarn off of him and sent him to work. Cyrus S Hill said he was no calf and sassed the captain. At 9:30 give him his breakfast and un-cast him. At 11 am made him fast again. Employed in pumping out water in the ground tun and getting read[y] to fill with fresh water.

**Tuesday Nov 23rd**

This day commences with light variable winds and clear pleasant weather. At sundown took John Cocking and Cyrus S Heill and put them in irons and put them down in the steerage. At 6:30 am let John Cocking out of irons. At 8:30 am Cyrus S Heill said he wanted to see the captain. He said his back was lame and he was sorry for what he said to the captain. Took him out of irons and rubbed his back with some opodeldoc [a mixture of camphor and soap]. At 6 am got the water boat and commenced taking water. Cyrus S Heill still out of irons.

**Wednesday Nov 24th**

This day commences with light variables winds and occasionally light squalls of rain. Still taking water. At 4 pm finished taking water. Took about 275 barrels. Stowed hold and at 5 pm ready for sea. Got some lumber to[o]. Cyrus S Heill complained that he could not make water. Captain on shore. At sundown put the two men in irons. At 7 pm Captain came on board took Cyrus S Heill out of irons and give warm water for the trying to start his water. Middle and latter part light variables winds. At 6:30 am set John Cocking out of irons.Cyrus S Heill still out of irons.

**Thursday Nov 25th**

This day commences with light variables winds and clear pleasant weather. At 3 pm Captain came off with the doctor and three men he had shipped ashore. The doctor started the water on Cyrus S Heill. At 3:30 pm hove short and loosed the sails. At 6:15 pm gave it up, clued up the sails and give her 45 fathoms of chain and furled the gallant sail it being calm. Middle part much the same. Latter part light breezes from the N. At 5 am hove up our anchor and got under way at 7 am took them on the bow and lashed then stowed the chains below. At 8 am wind died away to a dead calm. Cyrus S Heill still sick and off duty.

### “Mr. Brennan May Get Left”

When Thomas Brennan was not allowed to join the crew of the *Catalpa* in New Bedford, he was told he might be allowed to board the ship in the Azores. After the *Catalpa* sailed, he went back to his job in New York. Goff was assigned to give Brennan his instructions during a Clan-na-Gael Executive Body meeting held in New York. When the ship promised by Richardson did not show up, Goff located a schooner scheduled to arrive on or about October 1 in the Azores and booked Brennan’s passage. This arrival date was expected to give Brennan plenty of time to board the *Catalpa*. Goff contacted Brennan and gave him a check for $300 and told him to board the *Catalpa* at St. Michaels.

Brennan arrived in Fayal in early October. He contacted an Irish lady who ran a boarding house on the island and gave her a note for Duggan on the off chance the *Catalpa* might put in first at Fayal. Brennan then booked his passage for St. Michaels to await the *Catalpa*’s arrival. After six weeks on St. Michaels, Brennan received a letter from Duggan that the *Catalpa* was at Fayal and that the captain probably would not let him come aboard. Brennan wrote back to Duggan and told him to wait, that he would be there on November 7th. November 6th Duggan picked up the note from Brennan and showed it to Captain Anthony. “I think we have all the crew we need at present,” remarked Captain Anthony, “Mr. Brennan may get left.” Anthony went to the customhouse and cleared his vessel for Tenerife. He then re-boarded and the *Catalpa* sailed away before Brennan arrived in Fayal.[[500]](#footnote-501)

As shown above, Anthony’s rush to get away from Fayal would create serious documentation problems for him upon the *Catalpa*’s arrival in Tenerife. Meanwhile, Brennan booked passage on a steamer and arrived at Fayal in time to find out that Captain Anthony had just left. When Brennan arrived at Fayal, he “Went to the hotel and the keeper told me that he believed the captain went to that island [Fayal] to avoid me. They left without taking water on board.”[[501]](#footnote-502)

There is little doubt that Anthony deliberately left Brennan in the Azores.[[502]](#footnote-503) Brennan had been told by Anthony, Devoy, and Richardson that if he (Brennan) could get to the island St. Michael’s he might be taken on board. Brennan’s perception of the event was that “The vessel, instead of going to the island to meet me, went to an island 180 miles away. .... I came to the conclusion I was sold.”[[503]](#footnote-504) Apparently Anthony had no intention, either at the dock in New Bedford or at St. Michaels in the Azores, to take Brennan on board his ship. The dockside quarrel over Brennan’s exclusion from the ship and the fact that Anthony was given the choice to reject Brennan in the Azores would certainly imply to Anthony that Brennan aboard the *Catalpa* was not mandatory from the Clan-na-Gael’s point of view. It can be assumed that Duggan drinking himself into a stupor at Flores did nothing to facilitate a change in Anthony’s decision not to bring an additional Clan-na-Gael Irishman on board.

Perhaps Anthony had entered into a conspiracy with Devoy against Goff and Brennan to ensure Brennan was not brought aboard in the Azores. However, it should be noted that when Brennan showed up in Australia, Breslin and Anthony made room for him on the *Catalpa*’s return voyage, which might not have been the case if there actually was a Devoy-Anthony conspiracy to keep Brennan off the ship. The most probable explanation is that Anthony did not want two conspiring Irishmen on board his ship to create problems with his crew, a crew that had a propensity for trouble anyway as attested to by the desertions at Fayal. Thomas Brennan was a formidable, opinionated man with a propensity for trouble and Anthony may have grasped that. As we shall see, Anthony’s evaluation, if he had such, was borne out on the return voyage.

A lesser man than Brennan would have been discouraged: rejected at the dock in New Bedford and left on the quay in the Azores. As for a triumphal return to America with the rescued prisoners, it might be imagined that Brennan at that point would have discarded such visions and found his way back to New York. But Brennan was hewn of stouter timber. Taking the last money he had, he stowed away aboard a ship to London where he “. . . [W]rote a letter to Goff that the vessel had not put into the Island as she promised, in answer he received a letter from Goff, enclosing twenty-eight pounds,” and a nebulous statement that “I would advise you to think well of what you are doing. My advice would be for you to return, I leave it to yourself, do what is right, and, if you intend to go, God Speed you.”[[504]](#footnote-505)

If that is an accurate account of Goff’s message, Goff was treading on thin ice. The APRC issued $125 to Goff and instructed him to send it to Brennan in Fayal and tell him to return to New York. They did not ask Goff to hint that he could continue to Australia.[[505]](#footnote-506) If we assume that Goff did as he was instructed and sent the $125 to Brennan in Fayal without such a note, then we must accept that it was Brennan on his own who made the decision to go on to Australia. If Brennan is quoting Goff accurately, although Goff did not explicitly advise Brennan to go to Australia against the instructions, supplying the £28 [about $156][[506]](#footnote-507) allotted for his return passage from Fayal, and implying that Brennan, fierce competitor that he was, had a choice, Goff must have counted on the fact that Brennan would attempt to get to Australia.

One is inclined to believe that the essence of Goff’s note “quoted” by Brennan at the 1877 Convention is genuine. Upon arriving in England Brennan was forced to jump ship to avoid arrest as a stowaway. Brennan then wrote to Goff for more money. That Goff apparently sent Brennan additional money was discovered during the investigation into Brennan’s part in the mutiny, for Dr. Carroll, after acknowledging the $125 sent by the APRC to return from Liverpool, went on to say that “aided, however, by money secretly collected in New York, [Brennan] proceeded to Freemantle and returned on board the *Catalpa*, arriving with her as already stated in August, 1876.”[[507]](#footnote-508)

John Devoy was not a man to sidestep controversy so that must be kept in mind when we consider that he never indicated in any recounting of the *Catalpa* voyage that Brennan and Goff were in a conspiracy. Devoy always mentions the troubles with Goff in the context of overzealousness, and that Goff and Brennan believed they were simply fulfilling their duty by protecting the Clan-na-Gael’s investment. Staked by Goff, Brennan was able to make the final leg of the journey to Australia in time for the rescue. Many of the problems that Brennan created on the return voyage can be traced to Brennan’s naturally aggressive personality and his belief that he was the senior Clan-na-Gael man aboard the ship and deserved to be treated as such.

Back on the *Catalpa*, ship’s carpenter Duggan cannot have been happy that Anthony did not wait to take Brennan aboard and sailed off in haste for Tenerife. Duggan had to continue to Australia without the companion with whom he had expected to share the rest of the voyage.

### Bound for West Australia

Friday November 26, 1875 as the ship sailed southward, Cyrus Heill was reported “back on duty.” The logbook then returns to Smith’s sparse recounting of wind and weather. For the next two weeks under “clear and pleasant weather,” the ship’s crew repaired sails and performed various maintenance tasks. They lowered the whaleboats and the larboard boat killed a blackfish on December 6, at 11:30 AM. After the foresails had been put in order, the crew made a new mizzen staysail, and two jibs were mended. The *Catalpa* stuck to the standard ocean route and turned southwestward on December 18, leaving the African coast in route to the Brazilian coast, still blessed with clear weather.

Whales were raised on December 19, 1875 at 3:00 PM, and “At 3:30 lowered for them. Struck to larboard, waist, and starboard boat and killed them.”Smith makes a final entry, “So ends this day cutting.” They cut the whales and the next morning fired up the works for rendering the blubber. The weather, up until then clear, began to turn overcast. By midnight in the evening of December 22, the rendering was complete and stowing down began. By December 25th, at 3:00 PM, stowing was finished with “about 38 barrels” of oil harvested. The next day the *Catalpa* crossed the equator. On December 30, 1875, the *Catalpa* was one hundred miles out to sea east of Recife, Brazil.

By January 3, 1876, with the weather clear and pleasant, the crew was set to painting the whaleboats, chains and chain-plates as the *Catalpa* once more swung southeastward toward the Cape of Good Hope. The crew was put to work and the mainsail was patched and the mizzen topmast staysail was mended. The pleasant weather stayed with them and repairing continued at a good pace until the evening of January 14th when “rainy squally weather” set in. By Monday, January 17th, at 8:00 AM, it was “blowing strong” and the jib-stay parted. Sails were furled and tackles had to be used to get the ship under control. By Tuesday, January 18th, the winds had moderated and the crew was “employed in fixing the jib-stay and the wheel blocks.” The weather continued “thick and cloudy” until January 19th in the evening.During the storm, Anthony noticed the ship was not properly balanced and when the weather had moderated, he had the crew fill the forehold cask with salt water to “fetch her down more.”Beginning January 20th, the ship’s course was set due east and they began making good time. January 24th, Duggan was put to work “breaking out the beef and pork and coopering it.”

The *Catalpa* was still making good time as she passed one hundred miles north of the three small islands of Tristan da Cunha on January 26, 1875. The weather was variable, but mostly pleasant and more repairs were made to the sails and a new footrope was attached to the foretopgallant sail. The lookout spotted a whale on February 6 at 6:00 AM, and the boats were lowered but without success. Anthony broke off the chase and the ship plowed on toward Australia. The Cape of Good Hope was still 2000 miles away and there is no doubt Anthony felt the pressure of being behind his goal of making landfall on the coast of Western Australia in early spring.

The wind began to pick up on the afternoon of February 8th and by afternoon the logbook entry indicated “blowing strong.” The following morning the winds abated and the ship was back under full sails east by southeast, making good time. Two days later at noon on February 10th, the ship hit cloudy, thick, drizzly weather with strong breezes. The winds began to strengthen and the ship began to experience problems in rigging and sails. At 1:00 AM February 2nd, Anthony directed the crew to begin taking in sail and the ship was luffed to the wind, putting her heading at the southeast. At 2:00 AM the captain put the ship heading southeast by east. By 4:00 AM in the morning, all sails were in except two lower topsails and the top foresail. It began blowing heavy in squalls and, at 6:00 AM on February 11th, the captain brought the *Catalpa* into the wind from south-southeast to south. At 11:00 AM the top foresail tore to pieces and was pulled in. Anthony had been warned to always run under the top foresail in rough weather to keep the ship “from rolling windward and shipping seas” and now he began to worry that without the top foresail in place, the ship might slide sideways and roll over in the heavy swells. Luckily, nothing of the sort happened and the ship rode out the rest of the storm in good shape.

The wind dropped off but the weather was still rainy and squalling. At 2:30 PM, a whaling bark, the *Platina*, passed the *Catalpa* with only the main spencer and the foretop stay sail unfurled. Anthony, who recognized the ship and knew the captain, kept going to keep from explaining what he was doing in southern waters. But the *Platina* wore around and fell in alongside the *Catalpa*. At noon on February 12 the two ships gammed. The *Platina* was a New Bedford ship skippered by Captain Walter Howland, an “intimate friend” of Anthony’s. The *Platina* had been out four months.[[508]](#footnote-509) Captain Howland quizzed Anthony several times concerning what Anthony was “really” doing in these waters. But Anthony put him off. At 7:00 PM in the evening the two ships parted. By the afternoon of February 13 there were “fresh breezes from the southwest and pleasant weather” again.

On the morning of February 16 at 8:00 AM, the merchant ship *Ocean Beauty*, seventy days out of Liverpool headed for New Zealand, stopped and gammed the *Catalpa*. The captain of the *Ocean Beauty* was a “jolly Englishman,” and Anthony was told that he had been the master of the *Hougoumont*, the ship that had taken John Boyle O’Reilly and the Fenian prisoners to Fremantle in 1868.[[509]](#footnote-510) William Cozens, if it, indeed, be the same man, was the captain of the *Hougoumont*. But Fennell and King remark it as odd that Z.W. Pease does not mention this captain by name and Lloyd’s Registry lists a W.C. Cuzens was on a ship named the *Peep O Day* at that time, and that a Mr. Pearce was captain of the *Ocean Beauty*.[[510]](#footnote-511) When the Captain of *Ocean Beauty* found that Anthony was bound for Australia, he gave Anthony details of the area and offered Anthony a large quantity of charts he had used while transporting the Fenians. Anthony was urged to take any of the charts he wanted. The captain bid him “Godspeed” and Anthony left the *Ocean Beauty* in a rousing good humor with a fine chart of the areas around Bunbury, Fremantle, Rottnest Island, and Swan River. Smith and Anthony jovially discussed the strange turn of fate that brought them such good luck. It must be concluded that either William Cozens was captain of the *Ocean Beauty,* perhaps explained by some error in Lloyd’s registry; or Captain Pearce had Cozen’s charts with him and Anthony was mixed up; or perhaps Anthony just spiced up the story of the meeting in order to connect the *Catalpa* to the story of the Hougoumont which brought the prisoners they were to rescue to Australia in 1868.

Pleasant weather accompanied the *Catalpa* broken only from time to time by some rainsqualls. This time was used to repair sails as the ship moved rapidly eastward. On March 1 the weather suddenly changed and the sails had to be furled, leaving only the two lower topsails still in the wind for stability. The ship was laying to and the wind continued “blowing heavy.”March 6 at 7:00 AM, the bobstay was found to be parted and a tackle was fixed to it to keep it from thrashing about. The ship drifted, pushed by the heavy weather until March 7, at which time Captain Anthony found they had been blown three hundred miles north of their charted path. Anthony set the *Catalpa*’s course southeast and by March 11 the vessel had regained her original course. Under clear weather the ship began to make up the time lost and the crew set about repairing the bobstay and the other equipment damaged during the storm.

On March 15th at 2:00 AM, the *Catalpa* spotted St Paul’s Island at bearing northeast half-east. Captain Anthony shortened sail and luffed back and attempted to run the ship toward the land. St Paul’s had an excellent fishing ground and Anthony intended to catch fresh fish for the crew. At 6:30 AM they arrived to the lee of the island but it was “blowing too hard and too rugged” to lower a boat. Anthony then steered the ship off east by east and returned to the original course. Anthony set all sail although the weather was squally, cloudy, and raining. St Paul’s Island and the chance for fresh fish rapidly fell away behind them.

### Australia!

A little over a week later, on March 26, 1876 at sundown, the crew sighted Australia ten miles off, directly in front of them. Anthony then worked the ship windward to gain the land. By 2:00 PM they were off Cape Naturaliste, still working landward. At 5:00 PM they passed Vasse and at 7:00 PM came to anchor in ten fathoms of water in Geographe Bay. Smith gave the ship thirty fathoms of chain and set the night watches. Smith steered the ship toward Bunbury the next morning at 5:00 AM. On March 28th at 10:00 PM, the *Catalpa* came to anchor in seven fathoms of water in Bunbury Harbor. Smith gave her 45 fathoms of chain and furled the sails.

The first half of the *Catalpa*’s great odyssey was over.

Anthony now had to find a way to contact the Clan-na-Gael land-based rescue party and work out a strategy to rescue the prisoners. A whaleboat was lowered with Anthony and was put ashore. He walked around town hoping for some sign from the Clan-na-Gael, but no one appeared. Finding no sign of the rescue party, Anthony decided to return to the ship. Smith and Anthony talked it over in low tones and decided that there was nothing they could do but wait.The next morning, they worked the ship up toward the jetty and anchored at a depth of five fathoms.

Once again Anthony took a whaleboat to shore but this time he was met at the jetty by a young boy inquiring if he were “Captain Anthony” and, upon confirming he was, the boy gave him a telegram: “Captain Anthony. Have you any news from New Bedford? When can you come to Fremantle? J. Collins.”

With a sigh of relief, Anthony hurried to the telegraph office and sent a reply: “J. Collins. No news from New Bedford. Shall not come to Fremantle. Anthony.”

The following day, Thursday morning, March 30, 1876 at 5:00 AM, two tons of potatoes were loaded on board and at 7:00 AM the boat stays were taken on shore to be fixed. First Mate Smith went on shore to discuss the repair with Anthony.

Back on the vessel, four members of the crew decided to take advantage of Smith and Anthony’s absence and “at 10:00 AM Joseph McCarty, Cyrus Heill, George Durgin, and Harry Duggin stole a boat and run away.”[[511]](#footnote-512) Other members of the crew lowered another whaleboat and went after them, but the escaped sailors got away, leaving the whaleboat grounded. The search crew finally had to return to the ship, successful, at least, in recovering the stolen whaleboat. Smith recounts in the logbook:

The captain and mate saw the signals go up from the ship, started toward the ship and met the water police who told us that four of our men had run away. Started over towards the beach and saw them way up the beach. At 11 AM the police started after them.

The remaining crew was put to work fixing the main royal lifts and in the afternoon:

At 4 PM the Captain was notified all men had been caught. The captain and mate went up to the courthouse and the men and the police and the captain and mate started to come off with them but Joseph McCarty insulted one of them. They arrested him and lodged him in jail. At 5 pm got on board with the other three. Put them in irons and put them down the steerage. At 6 pm give them their suppers and put them down in the steerage again.

The three men were left in irons in steerage except for mealtimes when they were released and fed. On Friday March 31st, Smith saw to the replacement of the bobstays and bowsprit guy wires. At 7 AM the next day the crew was sent on shore leave. The jailed man, McCarty, who was one of the men who had signed on board at Tenerife, was released after seven days but Anthony refused to let him back on board. While in port with Anthony on shore, the crew had helped a “ticket of leave man” named McDonald stow away in the mizzen topmast staysail.[[512]](#footnote-513)

Anthony felt sorry for the man but would not jeopardize the mission by being an accomplice to the man’s escape. He had the Bunbury police come and haul him away.[[513]](#footnote-514) The *Catalpa* spent fifteen days in Bunbury making repairs. At this point we leave Anthony in Bunbury and return to the United States in the spring of 1875, where Devoy was arranging the landside part of the rescue.

# Part VIII

# CATALPA: The Lay of the Land

### John Breslin Given Command

After the *Catalpa* sailed in April of 1875 on her mission from New Bedford, it was John Devoy’s intention to lead the land part of the rescue himself, but reality brought him to the conclusion that any voyage he or any other prominent Irish American nationalist leader made to Australia might expose the mission. Besides, Devoy’s amnesty status prohibited him from landing on English soil. Therefore, if Devoy was simply recognized, let alone caught in some suspicious act, he would be put in prison alongside the men he intended to rescue. It must be imagined that the leadership around him also would advise their supreme leader not put himself at risk. The best option was for Devoy was to choose a man who could be trusted to direct the critical land phase of the rescue without disclosing the Clan-na-Gael connection. The destiny of the Clan-na-Gael would rest on this man’s shoulders. Devoy decided that John Breslin, the mastermind of the rescue of James Stephens, was the right man for the job.

John Joseph Breslin was born in Drogheda, County Louth, in 1836. He was nearly six feet tall, with receding light brown hair, a flowing beard, a rugged Roman nose and “blue-gray eyes of singular clearness and brightness.”[[514]](#footnote-515) Breslin, as a hospital steward at Richmond prison, carried out the rescue of James Stephens, the most successful anti-British act the IRB ever pulled off. He was quiet and self-confident, meticulous in the details, and steered clear of the limelight. Breslin was not a member of the Clan-na-Gael when Devoy first considered him for the *Catalpa* mission but belonged to a small rival nationalist club in Boston, the United Irish Brotherhood, or UIB.[[515]](#footnote-516) After Devoy had made his decision, he then convinced Breslin to join the Clan-na-Gael in order to ensure that everyone involved in the rescue operation was a member.[[516]](#footnote-517)

John Devoy gave Breslin instructions to travel to Australia and organize a land-based prisoner rescue to be set in motion when the *Catalpa* arrived. Breslin left New York for Sacramento, California on July 19, 1875.[[517]](#footnote-518) In California, Breslin met with the western Clan-na-Gael leaders, first John C. Talbot of Sacramento, and then in Los Angeles with John Kenealy. The Clan-na-Gael Executive Body gave Talbot and Kenealy the right to choose one of their members to accompany Breslin on his mission in recognition of the large amount of money collected in the West, but with one caveat: Breslin had the right to refuse the choice.[[518]](#footnote-519)

The Californians chose Thomas Desmond and they chose well.[[519]](#footnote-520) Breslin was so impressed with him that he wrote afterward:

I now believe that if Desmond alone had been sent the rescue would have been as successfully accomplished, and at far less cost to the organization; for, while my expenses from the position I had to assume, were necessarily rather heavy, Desmond was self-supporting, and his sojourn in Western Australia did not cost the organization anything.[[520]](#footnote-521)

High praise indeed for Talbot’s choice*—*if only Goff and Devoy had been as wise when choosing Brennan and Duggan for the mission the problems that later surfaced might never have occurred.

John Goff found another way to harass Devoy: He banked the APRC funds he had collected in the New York District under his own name. Devoy was livid as he wrote to Reynolds on June 10, 1875, “You see he evidently intends playing the game I suspected*—*holding the money to force us to comply with his wishes.”[[521]](#footnote-522) Goff would have to be managed in a way that ensured the Clan-na-Gael did not enter into public finger pointing and bring the rescue out into the open. “We must handle this thing very delicately but at the same time firmly next Sunday.”[[522]](#footnote-523)

Dr. Carroll and Devoy decided against a confrontation with Goff. In reflection they realized that APRC treasurer, Patrick Mahon, was doing what accountants do best: demanding a receipt for every item and holding on to the money until the last moment. Any conflict was avoided when Dr. William Carroll found members within his own Camp D15 in Philadelphia willing to loan the Clan-na-Gael money until the APRC could unscramble the receipts and requests to the satisfaction of Mahon and Goff.[[523]](#footnote-524) The result of this infighting was that Breslin and Desmond were delayed in California awaiting funds for four weeks.[[524]](#footnote-525) Finally Breslin and Desmond, cash in hand, on “Monday morning, September 13th, sailed for Sydney at 11:20 AM.”[[525]](#footnote-526) They arrived in Sydney on October 15, 1875.[[526]](#footnote-527) The Australian land segment of the rescue plan was finally underway.

### The Australian IRB Signs On

John Breslin chose “James Collins” and Desmond chose “Thomas Johnson” as their aliases for the mission.[[527]](#footnote-528) When Breslin and Desmond reached Australia they arrived in a country where the Clan-na-Gael was aware there was IRB activity, but the status or the extent was unknown. It was probably Kenealy who gave Breslin and Desmond the name of John Kelly as their contact.That Kelly’s whereabouts was not known in New York is attested to by a letter Kelly later wrote to O’Donovan Rossa replying to a remark Rossa had made inquiring, perhaps of Talbot, as to what had happened to J.E. Kelly. Kelly wrote, “Your wonderment concerning myself can now be at rest,” and goes on to give a detail of his life and the status of the IRB in Australia.[[528]](#footnote-529)

John Edward Kelly was born in Kinsale, County Cork, July 6, 1840 and immigrated to Halifax, Nova Scotia when he was two years old and then, at age 14, he was apprenticed a printer in Boston. He later moved to New York and joined the Fenian Brotherhood in 1860, enlisting in the “Phoenix Zouaves,” a Fenian New York State Militia organization. He helped organize the “Emmet Guards” militia in Boston and then returned to Ireland in 1861 and began training IRB men in the area of Cork. Kelly was captured at the end of March 1867 at the battle of Kilclooney Wood in Cork, during the abortive Fenian insurrection.[[529]](#footnote-530) He was convicted of treason and sent to Fremantle, Australia to serve his sentence. In 1871, Kelly was given amnesty and released from Fremantle, but soon found out that most of Australia and New Zealand had laws against any “influx” of criminal prisoners from Western Australia. It ended up that the only places within Australia where the released prisoners could live were Western Australia and New South Wales.

Kelly had joined the Australian branch of the IRB and was undoubtedly in contact with John Kenealy. Kenealy had been given amnesty in 1869 from Fremantle and had chosen to start over in California.[[530]](#footnote-531) There is a passage in Breslin’s report of his California travels where Breslin “. . . saw John Kenneally and obtained all the information he could give about Western Australia. . ..” and, later in the report, Breslin indicates that he “Arrived in Sydney Friday, 15th October 1875, inquired for and found E. J. Kelly [should be J. E.] . . ..” That Kelly and Kenealy were in touch would explain why Breslin and Desmond inquired specifically for Kelly and immediately found him.

The Clan-na-Gael does not appear to have given them any other names to contact. A primitive state of the IRB operations in Australia might explain why by all meetings with IRB men in Breslin’s reports occurred as chance encounters.[[531]](#footnote-532) Obviously, it was very important for the Clan-na-Gael to put Breslin and Desmond in contact with the Australian IRB in order to preclude Breslin and the IRB men from working at cross-purposes during any attempt to rescue the prisoners at Fremantle.[[532]](#footnote-533)

Upon landing in Sydney in New South Wales, Breslin and Desmond contacted Kelly and asked him to set up communications. Through Kelly they contacted the leader of Australian IRB, Michael Cody. Lady Luck began to smile on the rescue mission from the beginning as Kelly led them to John King and James McInerney, two IRB men from Sydney, who were in charge of a prisoner rescue fund collected in Australia. The Clan-na-Gael plan Breslin presented to King and McInerney seemed to them the best chance to free the military-prisoners, and McInerney, treasurer of the fund, immediately gave Breslin £200,from which £30 was used to send Michael Cody to New Zealand to collect rescue funds from the Irish miners there.[[533]](#footnote-534) Cody returned with £384, bringing the amount given Breslin to £554, [about $55,000 in modern currency.][[534]](#footnote-535) Any worry Breslin might have had about money was over. Breslin gave Kelly money for passage to California as a reward for all his efforts and Kelly arrived in California before the rescue attempt was made. In a letter to Rossa, written in California on April 8, 1876, Kelly wrote, “A friend—you may know who some day*—*enabled me*—*and you will know how*—*to come to California.”[[535]](#footnote-536)

Breslin then continued to Fremantle in order to set himself up as a wealthy businessman from America looking to invest in Australia. Soon after his arrival in Fremantle Breslin became acquainted with John Doonan, the assistant superintendent of “The Establishment,” as the Fremantle prison complex was known locally. Doonan gave Breslin, alias “Collins,” a guided tour of the facility; something Doonan richly regretted when it later surfaced that “Collins” was leader of the prisoner rescue team.[[536]](#footnote-537) Breslin was able to establish contact with the military-prisoners and prepare them for the arrival of the *Catalpa* through William Foley, an amnestied ex-prisoner who still worked in and around Fremantle. The Australian IRB man, John King, lodged at the Emerald Isle Hotel in Fremantle with Breslin on March 2, 1876 and assumed the role of a gold miner named “Jones.” [[537]](#footnote-538) King got permission from Breslin to join the rescue mission so he, too, could escape from Australia with the prisoners.

Thomas Desmond went to work in Perth and stayed there until the day before the actual rescue.

### Friend or Foe?

As the time for the expected rescue drew nearer two men arrived in Fremantle who aroused Breslin’s suspicions. He had heard around town that these men, John Stephen Walsh, and Dennis Florence McCarthy, were IRB men sent from England, but neither Breslin nor King recognized them and Breslin was loath to tip his hand in case they were British agents planted to draw out the real rescue team.Breslin discussed his concern with King and King suggested he meet the men and let on to them that he was the leader of a rescue attempt. If the men turned out to be British agents, then only King himself would get arrested and Breslin could continue with the rescue.

To Breslin’s relief, King learned that these men were in fact from the IRB organization and had been sent from England to free the prisoners.[[538]](#footnote-539) They agreed to give Breslin their resources amounting to £1000 and assist in any way they could. Breslin decided not to take the money since he had sufficient funds, but he did assign McCarthy and Walsh the task of cutting the telegraph lines out of Fremantle so word of the rescue could not be relayed to Adelaide where the British Warship Conflict was berthed. They were also to be ready to hide the prisoners if, after their escape from prison, the *Catalpa* did not show up and forced the prisoners to remain in the bush.[[539]](#footnote-540) The telegraph wires cut by Walsh and McCarthy and restored shortly after the rescue are not to be confused with the undersea cable from Port Arthur to Java discussed below.

There were eight IRB prisoners confined in Fremantle prison: Martin Hogan, James Wilson, Thomas Hassett, Michael Harrington, Thomas Darragh, Robert Cranston, James Kielly, and Thomas Delaney. The latter two were left out of Breslin’s plan. Keilly was believed by the other prisoners to be an informer. Delaney, who was not a lifetime prisoner and had completed his original prison term, but he was put back in prison for conduct and was a habitual drunkard whose confinement inside his prison cell during the day precluded him from the rescue.[[540]](#footnote-541)

John Breslin had good fortune with the other military prisoners as he learned the rest of the men had “trustee” status and worked outside the prison almost every day. Breslin sent word to the prisoners through Foley to be ready for the rescue and he would give the men a signal the day before the break would occur. The prisoners would have to find a way to absent themselves from their assigned duties on the appointed morning and meet on the Rockingham road where carriages would be ready to take them to Rockingham from whence a whaleboat would carry them to the *Catalpa*. Breslin now had to wait six months for the *Catalpa* to arrive in order to meet with Captain Anthony and agree on a location where Anthony and his whaleboat crew would wait to collect the rescuers and the prisoners.

The *Catalpa*’s “early spring” arrival was not a precise date. As March drew to a close Breslin and his rescue team began to get nervous. Their anxiety was reflected in a message to John Devoy written May 26, 1876 by “Attorney M. Cooney” in San Francisco.[[541]](#footnote-542) Cooney had received a letter from Australia to contact Devoy with a message from the Australian rescue team indicating that:

…the vessel in which our friends embarked, had not yet arrived, or put into port, although they awaited most anxiously for it. Of course they felt very much troubled for they had a full cargo of rich products to put on board immediately upon “Anthony’s” arrival. It places them in a very precarious position, for the goods on hand may depreciate in value, or become entirely worthless, unless they can be shipped without delay, and worst of all the men employed there to assist them in loading, may get dissatisfied, lose confidence in the enterprise and leave in disgust; and you know it would be impossible for them to get others to replace them, for it is not every person who wants to take a three months’ cruise.[[542]](#footnote-543)

### Breslin’s Problem Children

After arriving in Bunbury, Captain Anthony obtained lodging and waited for John Breslin, alias James Collins, to contact him. The *Catalpa* pulled into Bunbury, 100 miles south of Fremantle, on March 28, 1876. Breslin, who had been watching ship arrivals, wired Anthony the next morning. “Any news from New Bedford? When can you come to Fremantle?”

In the interim as Anthony waited for Breslin, he bought some meat for the voyage from a man named David Hay who mentioned that there was a wealthy American living in Fremantle. The “luck of the Irish” smiled down as Anthony and Hay were together when the mail coach arrived from Fremantle and Hay pointed out “James Collins” and said to Anthony, “come to Spencer’s Hotel and I will introduce you.”[[543]](#footnote-544)This provided Breslin and Anthony with a coincidental instead of a prearranged meeting and helped eliminate any suspicion that a prearranged meeting might have aroused.

After they met and were seated, and Hay had disappeared, Anthony immediately launched into his concerns about Denis Duggan, the Clan-na-Gael’s representative on board ship. Breslin was informed that Duggan’s attitude during the first part of the voyage was “almost insubordinate” and, after stranding Brennan at Fayal, Duggan began taking liberties that Anthony would not have countenanced from regular members of the crew. Anthony told him about the escapade in Flores where Duggan “became so drunk, that, upon returning to the ship, he fell out of the boat three times and had to be hauled on board by making him fast to a rope.”[[544]](#footnote-545) Anthony was almost sure that the crew had learned of the mission from Duggan and that that was the reason for the escape attempt from the ship at Bunbury where three crewmen were still in irons for attempting to desert, and a fourth had spent time in jail for resisting arrest.In addition, Duggan had taken up a hotel room in Bunbury and began drinking again. The ship’s crew was beginning to wonder why Duggan was allowed shore leave and they weren’t.

In Anthony’s eyes the special treatment he was forced to give Duggan was jeopardizing the safety of the mission. Breslin assured Anthony that Duggan, whatever his personal bad habits, would never betray the plan. The only other member of the crew who officially knew of the rescue mission was First Mate Smith. Breslin questioned Smith, who confirmed Anthony’s evaluation of the crew’s rebellious attitude generated as a result of Duggan’s preferential treatment. Breslin told Anthony to go ahead and give the crew shore leave, reminding him that anyone attempting to desert would rapidly return to the ship after getting a taste of the Western Australian bush.

Breslin then held a heart-to-heart talk with Duggan and told him he must quarter on ship and knock off the drinking. He admonished him for betraying the trust put in him by the Clan-na-Gael. Duggan then pleaded with Breslin to be allowed to join the ground rescue operation; but, with the addition of John King to the rescue party, there were already more men involved than Breslin needed. Breslin told Duggan that he would have to stay on board the *Catalpa*.

Duggan went back to his quarters on the ship very upset with Breslin. He had paid his dues aboard the *Catalpa*, putting in a hard year of whaling on the high seas; moreover, as a member of the Clan-na-Gael, he naturally expected to play a major role in the rescue. Instead, he was told that he had been cut out of the rescue party and replaced by John King, who was not even a member of the Clan-na-Gael.[[545]](#footnote-546) Breslin’s real reason for not allowing Duggan off ship was that a strange Irishman appearing in Fremantle might jeopardize the mission. Whatever Breslin’s reasoning, a strange Irishman was about to appear anyway.

On Friday evening, March 31st, over dinner at Spencer’s in Bunbury, Anthony and Breslin decided that Anthony would take a whaleboat from the *Catalpa* and navigate to shore in order to pick up the rescued and rescuers at Rockingham and bring them back to the *Catalpa*. This was a significant act of commitment on Captain Anthony’s part, since under international law the very act of taking a whaleboat from the *Catalpa* to pick up the prisoners made the *Catalpa* captain an accessory to a jailbreak, instead of the neutral act of picking up political prisoners in international waters.

Breslin then arranged for a ticket for Saturday evening, April 1st, so Anthony might travel as his guest on the *Georgette*, a mail steamer that shuttled between Bunbury and Fremantle so they both might familiarize themselves with the area at Rockingham beach where Anthony and the whaleboat crew would pick up the prisoners and the land rescue team.

And who should appear during the dinner at Spencer’s but Goff’s watchdog and Anthony’s nemesis, Thomas Brennan. Brennan went straight to Breslin and introduced himself in a loud voice, as if he had known Breslin in New York.Breslin gave him a chilly reception so as not to excite suspicions and signaled him outside to talk. Brennan told Breslin of the difficult journey he had made in order to reach Australia and be part of the rescue. Breslin later wrote that, at this point, he found Brennan to be “a good, sober, reliable man, and his own account showed he had made extraordinary exertions to be on time.”

Breslin attempted to get Captain Anthony to allow Brennan to wait on board the *Catalpa* during the rescue but Anthony refused, indicating that Brennan on board would increase the problems he was having with the crew. Breslin then decided that he could have Brennan join the rescue party and take a load of baggage to the beach near Rockingham on the day of the escape and wait with Anthony and the whaleboat crew.[[546]](#footnote-547)

Breslin’s last problem child was one month in the womb of the maid who worked at the Emerald Isle Hotel where Breslin was staying in Fremantle. Somewhere after his arrival in November of 1875, Breslin had taken up with Mary Tondut, the twenty-three-year-old daughter of Charles Tondut, a French wine grower from Perth. This was not her first misstep. The Western Australia birth records show that Mary Tondut had given birth to a little girl out of wedlock six years earlier in Perth.[[547]](#footnote-548)

The story was told that Breslin left money with Patrick Moloney, the proprietor of the Emerald Isle Hotel, so Tondut could come to America, but she apparently elected not to go. Instead, she was whisked off to Sydney where on December 5, 1876 she had a child named John Joseph Tondut. Mary Tondut married Harry James Thomas in 1880, a watchmaker from Morpeth, NSW, who was then living in Sydney. Mary settled down as a housewife with Thomas, with whom she had six children.[[548]](#footnote-549)That Mary chose the name John Joseph for their child is evidence of pillow talk but, fortunately for Breslin, later events proved this interlude to be a non-issue.

Nevertheless, a weakness of character is indicated by the fact that Breslin put the mission at risk for an illicit love affair which, at any moment, might have focused negative attention on “James Collins.” The fact that Mary named her child John Joseph indicates she knew more than she should have.

# Part IX

# CATALPA: Rescue and Mutiny

### Rockingham Beach

On Saturday evening, April 1, Captain Anthony, Joseph Breslin, and Thomas Brennan boarded the *Georgette* for Fremantle. The three men agreed while aboard the mail packet that Anthony would be “James Collins’s” guest and “Brennan would be a stranger.” Captain Anthony took advantage of the trip and conversed with Captain O’Grady of the *Georgette* as she sailed to Fremantle. The friendly conversations with O’Grady proved fortunate for Anthony. Because the port of Bunbury lay south of Fremantle, the *Georgette* would navigate along the coast just off the passage between Cape Peron and the southern tip of Garden Island where a whaleboat could enter the narrow straight into Cockburn Sound and emerge at Rockingham Beach, a spot Breslin had determined would make a perfect assembly point to launch a whaleboat toward the open sea. As they pulled into the Fremantle harbor, Breslin and Anthony noted a bad omen for the planned prisoner escape with some alarm: The Royal Navy gunboat HMS *Conflict* lay at anchor with a crew of twenty-seven under command of Lieutenant William Maule Carey.[[549]](#footnote-550) She was an armed, swift-sailing schooner fully capable of running down the *Catalpa* in open water. They decided the rescue operation could not begin until Lt. Carey had sailed the HMS *Conflict* a safe distance from Fremantle.

It was Sunday morning when Anthony, Breslin, and Brennan disembarked the *Georgette* and went to the Emerald Isle Hotel. That afternoon Breslin hired a carriage and they took a ride over the escape route to Rockingham Beach to establish the exact launch point.

There is a narrow passage between Garden Island and Cape Peron at the south[[550]](#footnote-551) end of the island, a point on the mainland which would allow the whaleboat to pass. They arrived from Fremantle at the strand of beach at Rockingham and alighted from their carriage. They were on the western edge of Rockingham Beach where the sandy shore curved out toward Cape Peron, within a short walk of the Jarrah Timber Company jetty.

Anthony stuck a rod in the sand to indicate where the whaleboat would be on the morning of the escape. They agreed upon a set of codes to be used in telegraph messages that would permit Breslin to notify Anthony that the HMS *Conflict* had sailed and the rescue could take place. Anthony was given forty-eight hours from the time the HMS *Conflict* left Fremantle to be on the beach at Rockingham waiting with the whaleboat for the prisoners.

On Monday morning, April 2, Breslin as “James Collins” with Anthony as his guest, accepted an invitation to have dinner, along with some local merchants at a hotel in Perth. During the evening dinner, Captain Anthony thought their plot was discovered when asked by a government official for his name, his business, and what was he doing in Perth. Luckily, Breslin, accustomed to Australian bluntness, rescued the flustered Anthony by introducing him to everyone. To pay for *Catalpa* expenses at Bunbury, Breslin gave Anthony $200 in gold. The merchants’ direct questions at dinner prepared Anthony when later he found himself facing more questions after he stopped to purchase sailing charts at a local store. Anthony boarded a mail coach for the long hot dusty trip back to Bunbury on Thursday, April 6.[[551]](#footnote-552)

On Tuesday, April 11th, the *Conflict* sailed out of Fremantle Harbor for Adelaide and Breslin sent a coded message to Anthony to let him know the ship had sailed. Breslin received back a telegram that the *Catalpa* would sail one day later, having dragged anchors during a storm, but that they were on their way to the coast off Garden Island. When the ship was fifteen miles off Garden Island, Captain Anthony shook First Mate Smith’s hand warmly and told him that, if he did not return, to sail away and “go whaling or go home, as you like.” Anthony then stowed food, water, and warm clothing aboard the whaleboat. He chose five men as his crewmembers for the risky mission: Mopsy and Lombard, two Malay sailors from the original crew, and three sailors picked up in Fayal: Antoine Silvester, the third mate; a boatsteerer named Tobey, and Lewis Toaquin, and set off at 1:00 PM for Rockingham Beach.[[552]](#footnote-553)

To protect the crew in case the Australian police happened to arrest them before the prisoners arrived, the men were told they were going to pick up an anchor in Fremantle. After rowing for three hours, the whaleboat arrived near the shore just outside the passage into Cockburn Sound. At this point they shipped oars and waited for dark, when they entered the passage—where they immediately encountered large breakers and unexpected reefs. The rowers had a rough time bringing the whaleboat through the high, roiling breakers but with some luck they cleared the reefs and entered the calm waters of Cockburn Sound.All that was left was an easy row for three miles across the sound to the jumping-off point. They arrived near the Jarrah Timber Company jetty at 8:30 PM Sunday night. The exhausted crew bedded down on the beach and Anthony kept watch until morning.[[553]](#footnote-554)

Breslin sent Brennan off to Rockingham Beach early Monday morning, April 17, carrying clothes and luggage. Brennan’s orders were to meet Anthony and his rowing crew on the beach. Rebuffed at New Bedford, left by Anthony in the Azores, treated as an interloper in Bunbury, Thomas Brennan strode up the beach toward Anthony. At last, Brennan was an official member of the APR rescue crew.

As Anthony, Brennan, and the whaleboat crew awaited the arrival of the escaped prisoners, a curious Jarrah Timber Company worker named James Bell approached the crowd of men.[[554]](#footnote-555) He indicated to Captain Anthony he was an ex-prisoner himself and supposed Anthony to be a murderer named “Kenneth Brown.” Anthony denied this and told Bell that the whaleboat had come into Cockburn Sound searching for supplies. Bell told Anthony that the passage near Cape Peron Point had dangerous reefs and suggested they exit the channel on the north side of the passage, maintaining a course near the southern end of Garden Island. Bell mentioned that the *Georgette* was coming to pick up wood from the jetty and pointed out the smoke from her boilers then just visible on the horizon.

Brennan asked Anthony who the man was. “A prisoner working on the jetty,” Anthony told him.

Brennan replied, “We must shoot him.”

Anthony would have none of it.[[555]](#footnote-556)

Brennan had judged Bell correctly, for as soon as the whaleboat shoved off after the prisoners arrived, Bell jumped on a horse, rode back to Fremantle, and informed the Fremantle Water Police of what he had seen.

Saturday, Breslin had given the prisoners the agreed-upon signal: “Monday morning.” Breslin’s escape operation began with Brennan’s ride to Rockingham. Next, Robert Cranston, a trustee prisoner, posed as a messenger from another work party and inconspicuously informed one after another of the leaders of several work crews that a specific member of his crew was needed for duty at another location. One by one the prisoners left their workstations with the messenger and quickly made their way to the rendezvous point on the road from Fremantle to Rockingham. Breslin and Desmond were waiting for them with carriages. The prisoners boarded Breslin’s carriage and Breslin immediately took off at top speed for Rockingham Beach where Anthony, Brennan, and the whaleboat crew awaited. John King stayed behind for an hour to see if an alarm would be raised, at which point he could race to Rockingham and warn Breslin and the others. Concluding that the escape had not been discovered, King then went out to join the others.

By 10:30 in the morning, Breslin and the escapees and the rescuers had arrived and piled into the whaleboat. They saw police coming down the road from Rockingham as they shoved off the beach.[[556]](#footnote-557) Professor Richard Cowan of the University of Sydney, (op cit., author of *Mary Tondut – The Woman in the Catalpa Story*), in an email to myself, pointed out that Bell, on his way out of Rockingham, most likely encountered a group of policemen from Fremantle chasing the escapees and directed them to the Jarrah Timber jetty, thereby allowing the police to arrive at the jetty much earlier than they would have if they had had to search for the location themselves. It was an hour and ten-minute ride at a fast pace from Rockingham to Fremantle, and the policemen, who left at 10:00 AM, were seen on shore at the Jarrah Timber jetty by Anthony in the whaleboat as it pulled away just after 11:00 AM, showing that the police went directly to the jetty. Bell then rode on, perhaps at the behest of the arriving policemen, to inform the Water Police in Fremantle. Captain Anthony had everyone lie down in the bottom of the boat, set the rowers into sync, and piloted the whaleboat full of Irishmen on the perilous voyage from Rockingham Beach through the reefs immediately south of Garden Island into the safety of international waters.[[557]](#footnote-558) During the night of April 17 the men in the whaleboat experienced a harrowing twenty-eight hours tossing about in a storm that broke the whaleboat’s mast.

The *Catalpa* remained tacking on and offshore fifteen miles south of Fremantle and seven miles off Garden Island on a heading south toward the Murray River estuary.

Back in Fremantle, the Water Police, acting on the information supplied by Bell, immediately launched a cutter and sailed off toward Rockingham.[[558]](#footnote-559) The *Georgette* arrived back in Fremantle in the afternoon the same day to a beehive of activity at the dock. Major Finerty arrived and quickly removed the *Georgette*’s cargo and sent aboard a group of pensioned policemen. At 8:45 PM, Captain O’Grady was instructed to set sail southward in search of the *Catalpa*. The next morning, April 18, the *Georgette*, plowing through the swells, spotted the *Catalpa* in the waters off Garden Island and set off at all speed to catch her.

Piloting the whaleboat with the prisoners in the same area, Captain Anthony also spotted the *Catalpa* south of their position and set off to catch her. The course of the *Georgette* took her on a direct line towards Anthony’s whaleboat. The desperate Irishmen in the whaleboat, anticipating an inevitable encounter at any moment, loaded their arms and then lay low in anticipation of a shoot-out when the *Georgette* arrived. They were saved by that which can only be characterized by the old cliché “the luck of the Irish.” The *Georgette* sailed by close enough that the men in whaleboat could hear the police officers talking, but the police, intent on reaching the *Catalpa*, did not spot the whaleboat. It probably helped that the whaleboat had been de-masted in the previous night’s storm. At 8:00 AM on April 18, 1876, the *Georgette* approached the *Catalpa* “laying off and on the land” about thirty miles south of Fremantle offshore of the Murray River estuary.[[559]](#footnote-560) Hailed by the captain of the *Georgette*, First Mate Smith of the *Catalpa* replied that his master, Captain Anthony, was on shore for supplies and that he could allow no one on board.

When Smith was requested to allow the *Georgette* to send men aboard to search the ship, he replied, “Don’t know, got no instructions; but I guess you had better not, anyhow.”[[560]](#footnote-561)

The *Georgette* by then was running out of fuel and, seeing that nothing indicated the escaped prisoners were on board, she steamed back to Fremantle.[[561]](#footnote-562)

As was described earlier in this book, Anthony and the whaleboat crew outdistanced the Fremantle Water Police cutter, reaching the *Catalpa* at 3:00 PM. Anthony brought the whaleboat up to the weather side of the *Catalpa*. When First Mate Samuel Smith hauled the Stars and Stripes “to the peak,” identifying the *Catalpa* as an American vessel, the police boat gave up, responding only by raising the British colors, then heading back toward Fremantle. Captain Anthony resumed command of his vessel and set a westward course away from Australia, hoping they had faced the last challenge from the Australian police.

### “You Shan’t Board My Vessel”

Unfortunately, the winds were from the west and that made westward progress difficult. Early the next morning at 5:30 AM, April 19, the *Catalpa* was still off Garden Island sailing north. The *Georgette* appeared to the west on the horizon and Breslin and Anthony realized it was not as clean a getaway as they had hoped.

With a 12-pound Armstrong artillery piece strapped onto her foredeck and crowded with armed police from Fremantle, the *Georgette*, now fully refueled, made a beeline for the *Catalpa*. The superintendent of Fremantle Water Police, John F. Stone, now in command of the *Georgette,* was determined to recapture the prisoners and return them to Fremantle.[[562]](#footnote-563) The breeze was picking up and the *Catalpa* was able to maintain distance.Stone fired a shot across the stern of the *Catalpa,* hoping she would heave to. The *Catalpa* ran up the American flag but otherwise took no action. Stone saw the American ship was not going to come to rest, whereupon, “the *Georgette* under full steam and all sail gave chase.”[[563]](#footnote-564) As the *Georgette* drew alongside the *Catalpa*, Stone fired a second shot across *Catalpa*’s bow.

After the cannon shot was fired, Breslin and the ex-prisoners agreed together that they would fight before surrendering. Breslin told the ex-prisoners to remain hidden in the cabin with their rifles and revolvers ready until he gave the order.

Stone shouted from the *Georgette*, “Heave to!”

Breslin told Anthony to maintain course and inquire the reason. Captain Anthony climbed into one the suspended whaleboats to be better seen and heard and shouted, “What for?”

“Have you got any prisoners on board?” Stone called.

Anthony replied, “No prisoners here; no prisoners that I know of.”

Stone had apparently had enough of the pleasantries and gave Anthony an ultimatum that in fifteen minutes “. . . if you don’t heave to I’ll blow the masts out of you.”[[564]](#footnote-565)

Captain Anthony, pointing up, said, “I don’t care what you do. I am on the high seas and that flag protects me.”[[565]](#footnote-566)

Stone had orders from the Colonial Governor William C. Robinson not to attempt to board by force in international waters. Stone knew Anthony held all the cards but the *Catalpa* was on course to enter British territorial waters. After the fifteen minutes expired Stone made one last attempt, “Will let me board your ship and see for myself?”

Anthony coolly replied, “You shan’t board my vessel.”

Stone warned Anthony that, “Your government will be communicated with.”

Anthony said, “All right,” and communications between the two vessels ceased.

As the *Georgette* continued to pace the *Catalpa*, Anthony realized that he was dangerously close to re-entering British waters and had Smith tack southwest out to sea. In so doing the *Catalpa* ended up bearing directly into the path of the *Georgette*.

Stone backed the *Georgette* out of the way.

Breslin and Anthony knew they had won the encounter. The *Catalpa* maintained her course and reluctantly the *Georgette* turned and sailed back to Fremantle.The *Catalpa*, with the smell of freedom in the air and a cargo of Irish rebels on her deck, headed for the tip of Africa en route to America where the ex-prisoners might begin life anew, safe from British laws and prisons. The plan laid out by Devoy called for Anthony to proceed by the quickest sailing route to Fernandina, Florida and deliver the escaped prisoners to the reception committee that would be waiting there to complete the rescue mission. At that point, Anthony had been given the option to continue whaling at his discretion and harvest more whale oil for the Clan-na-Gael.

### A Mystery: The Port Darwin-Java Cable

Something else aided the *Catalpa* escape. England was kept in the dark about the escape for six weeks because the Port Darwin to Java cable had gone silent. That cable was a recently laid undersea telegraph link that ran from Singapore to Java thence to Port Darwin, Australia. It had become operational in October 1872, allowing messages to be sent directly from Adelaide, Australia to London. A series of exchanges between London and Adelaide might have sent the HMS *Conflict* after the *Catalpa*, but the cable break prevented any communication with London.

An informant to the *New York Herald*, probably John Devoy from the contents and tone of the article, stated that the “Irish revolutionary party” had cut the cable which was taken as a signal by the Clan-na-Gael that the rescue was successful.[[566]](#footnote-567)The failure of the Port Darwin to Java telegraph cable was, indeed, taken as an indication by Devoy, who “surmised” that the rescue had been successful from the fact the cable was cut and wrote Dr. William Carroll saying so. We do not have Devoy’s letter, only Dr. Carroll’s reply hoping Devoy’s “surmise” was correct.[[567]](#footnote-568) Accounts, written afterward by John Walsh, John King, and Joseph Breslin, only mention cutting the local telegraph wires from Fremantle to Perth and Adelaide. John Denvir, an IRB man in England, talked to Walsh after the rescue at a Liverpool IRB meeting where Walsh related his part in the rescue:

Walsh and his friend had offered their co-operation to the men from America in any capacity, and arrangements were made accordingly. They lent the Americans arms, and they cut the telegraph wires from Perth to King George's Sound, where a man-of-war was stationed.[[568]](#footnote-569)

Extant documents originating from the Clan-na-Gael or the IRB do not mention any attempt to cut the Java cable, nor do various interviews of the men involved. *The Irishman* of New York and the *London Times* accepted the *New York Herald*’s informant’s statement that it was a signal from the IRB that the rescue had succeeded. The same newspaper is cited by Sean O’Luing indicating that Dr. Carroll’s reply to Devoy makes “it evident” the cable was cut on April 27, 1876 by the IRB as a signal to the Clan-na-Gael.[[569]](#footnote-570)Keith Amos quotes an Australian newspaper that indicates that the cable was cut April 24, 1876, three days earlier than O’Lúing quoted from the *Irishman* and the *Times*.Amos goes on to speculate that a Fenian in Darwin, Timothy Lonergan, could have done it, but Amos, too, references Devoy’s “surmise” as his reason for believing the IRB might have done it.

There is a perceptible absence of conviction in Dr. Carroll’s references concerning the cable in his letter to Devoy and a reader is left unconvinced by the *New York Herald* interview or the Dr. Carroll letter that the cable was cut as an intentional signal. Furthermore, neither the IRB nor any rescue participants indicate knowledge of a plan to cut the Darwin to Java cable; nor did Devoy claim such in his series of articles, “The History of the *Catalpa”* in the *Gaelic American* in 1924. Amos does point out that the reason the British government might conveniently find no reason to suspect the IRB was to ensure the government was not held libel for the anticipated $30,000 cable repair bill.These cables were not immune to breakage from natural causes.If the cable had been severed by natural causes or random vandalism, that surprising occurrence taking place so near the date of the rescue certainly makes it understandable that Dr. Carroll and Devoy would “surmise” the cable was cut as part of the rescue operation. The mystery remains. Lacking evidence, it seems unlikely that the Australian IRB intentionally cut the Darwin to Java cable as a signal to the Clan-na-Gael in America.

### Breslin’s Authority Challenged

There is a great similarity between James Stephens’ personal escape from prison and the escape of the prisoners from Fremantle Prison. Both escapes had well-conceived plans carried to conclusion with no loss of life and neither the rescued nor the rescuers caught. John Breslin, once again, could take pride in his latest accomplishment.[[570]](#footnote-571) But the spectacular success of the rescue and the fact the prisoners were now free men on their way to America notwithstanding, Breslin and Anthony were about to face a serious challenge from Brennan, Duggan, and the rescued prisoners.

Breslin apparently hit it off well with Anthony and was treated like a ship’s officer rather than abiding with the crew as was the case with the rest of the rescuers and rescued. Breslin’s preferential treatment negatively influenced Thomas Brennan’s view of Anthony. Brennan grumbled to Denis Duggan that Breslin’s treatment should be no different from the rest of the men. Brennan suspicions were natural, based on his self-appointed role as a fiscal watchdog. Nothing in his Fayal and Australian adventures leading up to the rescue altered his suspicions that Breslin and Anthony were wasting money.

Brennan had arrived in Bunbury harboring at least three major misconceptions. The first was that John Breslin was not a member of the Clan-na-Gael. Goff, who ought to have known that Breslin had joined the Clan-na-Gael and had been put in charge of the rescue, apparently did not inform Brennan of Breslin’s position. Brennan believed Breslin was simply an equal player in the rescue, and worse, a rival UIB member, and that Brennan and Duggan outranked Breslin because of their positions in the Clan-na-Gael.

Secondly, Brennan assumed that the Clan-na-Gael had collected plenty of funds for the prisoner rescue and that the prisoners, as well as the IRB and Clan-na-Gael personnel on board ship, ought to be on some sort of luxury cruise instead of a low-budget whaling mission.

Thirdly, Brennan was unaware that the Clan-na-Gael Executive Body had given Captain Anthony absolute authority aboard the *Catalpa*.[[571]](#footnote-572) This led Brennan and Duggan to believe that he and Duggan as members of the Clan–na-Gael, the owner of the vessel, were also superior in rank to Captain Anthony. Thomas Desmond, although he later accompanied Duggan and Brennan in a confrontation with Breslin, was also a Clan-na-Gael member but is not mentioned as taking part in the mutiny which occurred in the investigation reports.

It did not help Brennan’s disposition toward Anthony when Duggan told him that Anthony had sailed away from Fayal with the full knowledge that Brennan was to arrive the next day. It is also possible that Brennan knew of, or suspected, Breslin’s involvement with Mary Tondut at the Emerald Isle Hotel. Perhaps the most important factor pushing Brennan to revolt from Breslin’s and Anthony’s authority was the possibility that Breslin was an infiltrator who belonged to a breakaway Boston nationalist faction, the UIB, an organization that was in opposition to the Clan-na-Gael, and, in fact, had once attempted to recruit Brennan himself away from the Clan-na-Gael.[[572]](#footnote-573)

Devoy had remedied that UIB problem by swearing Breslin officially into the Clan-na-Gael before Breslin took charge of the rescue. Breslin, if confronted with his UIB connection, would have told Brennan that Devoy had sworn him into the Clan-na-Gael, though Brennan might not have believed Breslin in any case. There is no indication in the sources that the subject ever came up. Apparently, Brennan continued to believe that Breslin was an interloper and a danger to the Clan-na-Gael and he proved this at the 1876 Cleveland Convention.[[573]](#footnote-574) Breslin and Anthony, for their part, felt they owed no explanation to anyone, having been given full authority by Devoy to do what they thought best to rescue the prisoners and obtain funds from whaling to help defer expenses.

Faced with the harsh life found aboard a whaling ship, Brennan began to create problems, telling the prisoners that Breslin and Anthony were short-changing them, and either explicitly or implicitly saying that Breslin and Anthony were pocketing Clan-na-Gael funds. Duggan was chastised by both Breslin and Anthony for drinking too much during his shore leave on Flores and while on shore leave in Bunbury. When Breslin wouldn’t allow Duggan to be part of the ground rescue party, Duggan had no problem joining with Brennan in order to stir up the others. The prisoners, egged on by Brennan, began to complain of the food and the fact there were no “delicacies” on board; a fact that John Devoy, when he heard about it later, was quick to point out meant “whiskey.”[[574]](#footnote-575)

Captain Anthony and First Mate Smith were non-drinkers and that ensured that there was no liquor aboard ship for other than medicinal purposes. Brennan was successful in undermining Breslin and Anthony’s authority and became a spokesman for the prisoners and the men of the rescue party.

### Heading Home

As the *Georgette* pulled away from the *Catalpa*, the logbook for April 19, 1876 reads, “At 9:30 AM [the *Georgette*] left and we kept on our course heading southwest. So ends this day.” The voyage was calm for the first few days and the crew was set to work mending sails. Captain Anthony then had Duggan and the crew tear down the rigging pens and construct housing for the new passengers. Duggan opened up casks of apparel so each man could discard his prison suit and select two sets of thick clothing in order to the face the rough weather they expected to encounter rounding the Cape of Good Hope. With the purpose of the mission now out into the open, two tiers of bunks were built and a table made. A “boy from the forecastle” was assigned to attend the prisoners. If we are to believe Captain Anthony everything was jolly and Breslin wrote a song that all the men sang as they sailed toward America and freedom.[[575]](#footnote-576) Smith, other than the day the prisoners and rescuers climbed aboard after their harrowing trip from Rockingham, never mentions them in the logbook again. For information concerning the interaction between Breslin, Anthony, the rescuers and rescued, we rely on Anthony’s *Catalpa Expedition*, several published accounts by the participants, Clan-na-Gael internal documents, contemporary newspaper interviews with the men, and the UB 1877 Convention minutes.

At 2:30 PM, April 25th, a storm blew up which lasted into the next day. At 2:00 AM, “Called all hands and took in everything but lower main topsail. The mainsail got tore up bad in the squall.” By 6:00 AM the winds had moderated and they began to unfurl the main topgallant sail and pick up speed again. The weather was pleasant during the next week, with light breezes and the crew set about repairing the mainsail. The *Catalpa* had reached an area about 900 miles east of the Island of Madagascar when, on Monday May 8, Smith writes in the logbook:

At 7:00 PM our second mate felt unwell. Told the Captain of it and he gave him some balsalm of life and sugar. At 8:00 PM the boatsteerer came down and told the captain that Mr. Farnum acted curious. Went on deck and found him in a dying condition. At 10 minutes past eight he was dead apparently of the heart disease. Middle and Latter part more moderate. At 10:00 PM buried our second mate Mr. Farnum of which I pray God be peace to his soul.

The next week the men and the crew all enjoyed clear sailing in pleasant weather. On May 16, 1876 the ship passed 100 miles south of Madagascar, heading for the coast of Africa. The crew was again put to work mending sails. On the evening of May 25th, the ship was 150 miles off Port St. Johns on the coast of Africa when a squall hit that blew her 50 miles off course westward toward Port St. Johns. There was a short break in the weather and then another storm hit which shredded the mainsail before they could furl it properly. The captain kept the ship close into the coast of Africa in order to round the Cape of Good Hope. On June 4, at 7:00 AM, the coast of Africa near the area of Mossel Bay was spotted and kept in sight during the entire day before the ship wore southward to clear the cape area. Strong winds picked up June 5, at noon, which converted into a gale by 2:00 PM and lasted into the next day. The waist whaleboat was “tore up” during the storm, but, by the afternoon June 6, the ship had passed through the worst weather. The weather turned relatively mild over the next several days and the crew began to repair damage that had occurred to the spanker.

On June 15, Captain Anthony began a three-day maneuver to avoid contact with two British-owned islands in the Atlantic. On the first day he reset the course of the *Catalpa* from northwest to north-northeast. On the following day, he adjusted the course due north and then, over the next two days, gradually resumed the original northwest heading. This change took the vessel about two hundred miles east and north of St. Helena, ensuring no random contact with British vessels heading in and out of Jamestown. On June 27, Captain Anthony piloted the ship to a more westward course. On June 30, the vessel passed 100 miles south of the port of Georgetown on Ascension Island. The ship was making excellent time and Anthony calculated that the onboard rations would hold out, making restocking of supplies unnecessary.

Now back on course, they sailed briskly northwest while the crew continued to repair torn sails, painted ship fixtures, and fixed rigging. The weather remained fair and their course heading stayed northwest and south of the equator, following the westerly trade winds. Anthony changed the ship’s heading to due north on July 8, to cross the equator where for several hundred miles there is a calm wind area known as the “doldrums.” They crossed the equator on July 10th and Captain Anthony told the passengers, “You are almost American Citizens now.” On July 14th, the ship began to catch the northwest Atlantic trade winds that could carry the ship to North America. The original plan called for the *Catalpa* to follow the trade winds to Fernandina, Florida where the prisoners and rescuers would disembark, and the *Catalpa* return to whaling. The idea was to have the Catalpa arrived at an obscure port to avoid any excitement or publicity that might be caused by the arrival of the freed prisoners.[[576]](#footnote-577) Florida Senator Conover made arrangements for a U.S. revenue cutter to be held at the ready in Fernandina with orders to transport the *Catalpa* passengers to New York as soon as they arrived. After unloading the prisoners, the *Catalpa* was to proceed into the North Atlantic whaling grounds and spend several months whaling to “. . . pay back the advances made to the committee [APRC] by a large number of clubs.”[[577]](#footnote-578)

On July 20, at 6:00 AM, whales were spotted and at 7:30 AM whaleboats were lowered. The passengers complained immediately of the delay and the whaleboats were raised back up early. The bearings taken in the *Catalpa* logbook show that somewhere between July 23 and July 24, 1876, the vessel’s course began a subtle shift to the north and held that course for four days until July 26.[[578]](#footnote-579) The *Catalpa* continued its new heading, taking the vessel out of the trade winds. At that point, the crew and the passengers began to suspect that the *Catalpa* was not headed for Fernandina but rather heading north into the western whaling grounds.

Captain Anthony had decided to extend the voyage for four to six weeks of whaling in the western grounds with the object to net another $10-15,000 worth of oil for the Clan-na-Gael coffers. Anthony felt they had sufficient stores for them to begin whaling again and, anyway, if they ran short, they could buy more from passing whalers. Anthony sought and obtained agreement from Breslin to proceed to the western whaling grounds.[[579]](#footnote-580) Breslin, in his report, indicates it was Anthony’s decision and he agreed to it as the best opportunity for profits for the Clan-na-Gael. What Breslin failed to obtain, before signing on with Anthony to veer to a northeast heading, was acquiescence from the ex-prisoners and the members of the rescue party.

### A Pack of Green Micks

As far as Thomas Brennan was concerned it was the final straw when Anthony set the *Catalpa* on a northeast heading. It was now evident to everyone that they were not on a heading for Fernandina as originally planned. Thomas Brennan immediately assumed his role of Vigilance Committee agent and, with Duggan and Desmond, asked to talk to Breslin. In this meeting Brennan vigorously objected to the idea of going whaling, saying that the prisoners were afraid of capture and suffering from malnutrition and they wanted to head immediately into port in order to be on time for the annual Clan-na-Gael convention to be held in August in Philadelphia.

Breslin tried to reason with Brennan, pointing out that the prisoners were well off and in a better a state of health than they had been when they were freed and, finally, that there was little likelihood of being stopped on the high seas by the British while they flew the United States flag. Breslin told the group that $15,000 of whale blubber would mean more to the Clan-na-Gael than a “pack of green micks” on parade in New York.[[580]](#footnote-581)

It is interesting that Brennan used the upcoming Philadelphia Clan-na-Gael convention as a reason to head directly to port. This fact cannot have been critical to the prisoners nor the IRB representative, John King, none of whom were members of the Clan-na-Gael. Only Brennan, Duggan, Desmond, and Breslin were members. The convention would have been important to Brennan of course, if he had been asked by John Goff to ensure that they got there before the meeting took place. It is hard to believe the convention was important to Duggan or Desmond other than basking in the glory of the rescue. On the other hand, notwithstanding Brennan’s motives, the reality of the voyage would make it natural to suppose the rest of the men were not interested in going whaling and would certainly have joined with Brennan if by doing so it ensured they would arrive sooner to port.

It is natural that the prisoners were worried. The only thing that had prevented them from being captured and taken back to prison was the reluctance exhibited by Governor Robinson of Australia to create an international incident without specific orders to do so.[[581]](#footnote-582) Robinson, not willing to create a *casus belli* from his position as Colonial Governor, prudently forbade any precipitous action by the police aboard the *Georgette*. The British government back in London, once it learned of the incident, might not have been as timid. The so-called Trent Affair of 1861 created an affront to British dignity when Captain James of the USS *San Jacinto* boarded the British mail-steamer *Trent* out of Cuba in international waters and removed two Confederate emissaries, Slidell and Mason. In this instance, when Britain threatened war, the United States backed down and returned the men to British control.[[582]](#footnote-583) So a precedent had indeed been established by the United States when they boarded the *Trent* in international waters, effectively leaving the rescued prisoners’ safety resting on how much risk Britain was willing to take, all this presupposing, of course, the unlikely possibility that Britain could locate the *Catalpa* on the high seas. The fact remains that the prisoners were right to believe that the longer the *Catalpa* stayed outside United States territory, the higher the risk for a chance encounter with a British warship and a potential recapture.

When Captain Anthony landed the *Catalpa*’s whaleboat on Australian soil, he altered the original plan whereby the *Catalpa*’s part would be the simple act of aiding political prisoners on the high seas outside territorial limits. When Anthony and Breslin decided to use the *Catalpa*’s whaleboat to pick up the prisoners at Rockingham they raised the risk significantly and provided a pretext whereby a British warship might board the *Catalpa* on the high seas, considering her a pirate vessel. The United States might not protest or take action even if the British boarded the *Catalpa* and removed the prisoners and their rescuers, up to and including Anthony himself. That Anthony must have harbored this thought is shown when he deliberately steered the *Catalpa* wide around St. Helena and Ascension Island on the return trip.[[583]](#footnote-584)

There is no clear explanation given in the sources why the ship did not proceed directly to Fernandina as originally planned and then resume whaling. There was the worry that a landing in New York would corrupt the reception of the prisoners with all the attention they would get. Conover had set it up for the prisoners to be transported from Fernandina to New York using a Navy transport. The distance to Fernandina was approximately thirty nautical miles farther away than was New York from the *Catalpa*’s location where the dispute occurred, adding perhaps a half a day difference in arrival time.

The spark that finally created the mutiny by Brennan’s group occurred when the *Catalpa* encountered the *Kentuckian*, a merchant ship bound for New Orleans and running out of provisions. Ex-prisoner Wilson pleaded to be put on board but Breslin told him the *Kentuckian* was in too much of a hurry. Breslin, perhaps sensing the developing crisis would lead to recriminations, oddly gave a precise nautical position in his report to the 1877 Clan-na-Gael Cleveland Convention: “July 27, 1876. Latitude 20º 12’ north; Longitude 46º west, at 1:00 PM sighted a ship steering west. . ..” at the precise time the *Catalpa* encountered the *Kentuckian* and the mutiny occurred. The *Catalpa* logbook reckoning entry for July 27, taken at noon the day before the date given, was given as latitude 20º 20’, longitude 46º 47’.It cannot be determined without some doubt why Breslin included a specific reckoning differing from the ship’s normal noon logbook reckoning entry and, in fact, it seems an erroneous location based on the actual logbook entries which, with latitude and longitude increasing as the ship went forward, made Breslin’s 1:00 PM reckoning a retrograde ship motion when compared to the *Catalpa*’s position after the noon reckoning.[[584]](#footnote-585)

Breslin attempted to convince Brennan and the rest that the ship had made excellent time and they were only six days away from the northern whaling grounds so it made sense for them to go whaling.[[585]](#footnote-586) As the discussion went on, Breslin could see that he was not going to change the men’s minds. He requested that the men write down their desires on a piece of paper and take full responsibility for the losses that would incur if no more whaling were done. They returned with this letter:

July 27th, 1876

John Breslin:

We the undersigned do hereby request that this ship be brought into port with out delay, for the following reasons:

1st. Owing to the innutricious quality of the food, the ex-prisoners believe it injurious to their health.

2d. Owing to the ill-health of some of the ex-prisoners it is deemed dangerous to prolong the voyage.

3d. The ex-prisoners consider themselves not actually free men until placed on American soil.

4th. By complying with the above we believe it will be satisfactory to all parties interested in this undertaking.

[Signed] Thos. Desmond, Thomas Brennan, Denis Duggan, John King, Martin Hogan, James Wilson, Robert Cranston, Thomas H Hassett, T. Darragh[[586]](#footnote-587)

Breslin then consulted with Anthony and gave Brennan, Duggan, and Desmond the following rebuttal and summation of their positions to be endorsed by the men. Brennan told Breslin that he did not want the prisoners to take full responsibility for the loss of revenue to the Clan-na-Gael and a final line was added to include everyone in the responsibility and they all signed it:

ON BOARD CATALPA

July 27th, 1876

GENTLEMEN:

In reply to your note received this evening, I beg to state:

The food on board the Catalpa is good, sound, ordinary ship’s food; the water is good, and in sufficient quantity.

The ex-prisoners are in as good a state of health to-day as when they came on board.

The ex-prisoners are anxious to get on shore, believing they are not free men until placed upon American soil.

The ex-prisoners take the responsibility of all loss to the owners incurred by my compliance with their request to go into port.

We endorse this statement as correct and request to captain to go into port.

The signers take equal responsibility with the ex-prisoners.

[Signed] Denis Duggan, Thos. Desmond, Thomas Brennan, John King, Martin J Hogan, James Wilson, M. Harrington, Robert Cranston, Thomas Darragh[[587]](#footnote-588)

It is interesting to note that one ex-prisoner, Thomas H. Hassett, did not sign the note taking responsibility. John Breslin and Captain Anthony decided to accede to the prisoner’s wishes rather than face the possibility of an armed confrontation aboard ship. On July 28th, Anthony set the *Catalpa* on a northwest course heading directly to New York.

# Part X

# CATALPA: Recriminations and Repercussions

### The Philadelphia Convention of 1876

The *Catalpa*’s arrival in New York on August 19 coincided with the last day of the Clan-na-Gael’s seventh national convention in Philadelphia.

Dr. Carroll had warned Devoy to “expect a storm at the Convention” but also told him that they would be ready for the clash. Dr. Carroll told Devoy that “able and unscrupulous men [were] sent there to attack the FC [Executive Body] and the APR Committee.”[[588]](#footnote-589) The proposed “Revolutionary Directory” and the financial report for the *Catalpa* APR mission would be vigorously scrutinized. Dr. Carroll was convinced that Goff and O’Brien and their adherents would attempt to wrest control of the Clan-na-Gael from him and Devoy. The battle opened when Dr. Carroll fired the first shot in what was to be the showdown over who would control the Clan-na-Gael. Dr. Carroll sent Devoy his resignation and requested that it be honored and that the organization focus their attention “on Goff & Co., whose conduct more nearly concerns its welfare.”[[589]](#footnote-590) Dr. Carroll’s resignation was refused and his point was made.

The “one term” limit put through by Miles O’Brien at the 1874 Convention had been expunged from the constitution in 1875, permitting Dr. Carroll to serve another term. Despite Dr. Carroll’s worries, the majority of delegates were satisfied with the progress being made by the Executive Body under Devoy and Dr. Carroll. The convention closed with Dr. Carroll being re-elected Chairman of the Executive Body. Constitutional changes were passed clearing the way for implementation of the Revolutionary Directory in concert with the IRB. John Devoy was elected chairman of New York District A, which gave him the constitutional authority to reorganize it; District A contained Camp D25 from whence John Goff and his group were directing the defamation campaign against Dr. Carroll and Devoy.

Devoy, in his series of articles titled “The History of the Clan-na-Gael” in the *Gaelic American* in 1904 tells the story of his election to Goff’s New York district:

Congressman Martin A. Foran, Cleveland (later a judge), who was Chairman of the [Clan-na-Gael] Judiciary Committee which investigated those charges [against Breslin, Reynolds, Devoy, and Dr. Carroll] and vindicated the victims, came to me before the election of the Executive, and said: “’Devoy, you’ve got to take hold of the New York District to restore order and discipline. Conditions there are a menace to the very existence of the organization, and it will require the iron hand to set things right.’ I was elected, and at the very outset was confronted by an open mutiny, led by O’Brien, John W. Goff, and James Fitzgerald (later Justice of the Court of New York), with Dinny Burns, ‘the Mimber for Sligo’ (who was not a speaker) whispering the dirtiest kind of falsehoods. The new Executive had issued a call for 50 per cent of the funds in the Club Treasuries to be sent to the Home Organization. The mutineers organized a corps of speakers who went from meeting to meeting appealing to the Clubs to refuse to give the money.[[590]](#footnote-591)

Devoy was now in a position to lock horns with Senior Guardian Goff and his cronies. The constitutional increase in collected dues from three percent to five percent being sent to the Executive Body was a major victory for Devoy. In April of 1877, Devoy recounts:

I have now received the 5 per cent from 23 [Camps] and it has been voted in 5 more that I know of so that we have won a complete victory here.[[591]](#footnote-592)

### A Failed Coup in the New York Harbor

The weather was clear and pleasant as the *Catalpa* rose and fell on the swells. A school of sperm whales was spotted on August 12th at 1:30 PM, seven days out from the anticipated arrival into New York harbor. The whales sensed the *Catalpa*’s approach and veered off. A boat was quickly lowered but the whales disappeared and the boat was raised back on board. At 6:00 PM that same day, a heavy squall blew up and all sails were furled except for the lower main topsail and foresail. By 3:00 AM the sea had moderated and the crew began to unfurl the sails again. The next two days went uneventfully with pleasant weather and the crew repairing sails and rigging.

On August 18th, at 2:00 PM a New York harbor pilot came on board the *Catalpa* as she approached the city. At 5:30 the tugboat *Scandinavian* came alongside and fastened ropes for the tow into the harbor. At 1:30 AM, August 19th, the *Catalpa* dropped anchors off the Battery in New York. The year and a half voyage was over. The rescue was successfully done, but the mutiny and the change in course to New York had ended all hope of further whaling and created a financial shortfall that would have to be made up by the Camps.

Breslin’s decision to go to New York rather than Fernandina was made expecting that Devoy would be there and would be able to take command of the situation. As it was, Devoy was called out of a sick bed at Dr. Carroll’s house in Philadelphia to hurry to New York and greet the prisoners. The telegraphic exchange with Carroll was as follows:

[To Dr. Carroll] New York, August 19. *—*Catalpa lies at Battery. Men Crazy to get off. No one here with authority. Telegraph instructions. “Signed, “D. O’Donovan Rossa.

[From Dr. Carroll] Take the men to the hotel very quietly. John starts immediately.[[592]](#footnote-593)

That Devoy got out of a sickbed and rushed to New York speaks to the importance that he and Dr. Carroll placed on ensuring that the prisoners remained under Devoy’s control. John Talbot, a Devoy man from the California Clan-na-Gael district, and Dr. William Carroll, the newly-reelected Chairman of the Clan-na-Gael Executive Body, went along with Devoy to the Rossa’s hotel. Patrick Lennon, who in 1867 had been a leader of a Dublin informer assassination squad, was assigned to bring the prisoners to the hotel to meet with Devoy and Dr. Carroll. It turned out to be a good choice.[[593]](#footnote-594)

John Devoy, fed up with Goff’s tactics, had earlier told Dr. Carroll to leave Goff off the prisoner welcoming committee.[[594]](#footnote-595) This was apparently the last straw for Goff and led to the most overt and bizarre action yet taken by Devoy’s nemesis. Devoy recounts the story of what happened just after the *Catalpa* anchored in New York. He did not mention Goff by name, but it is clear from his article the “so and so” Devoy is referring to is Goff:

I found that before the men left the vessel a bold attempt had been made to take them away from the committee and put them in charge of a little knot of ‘kickers’ in New York. . .. It did not succeed, even for a minute, because one very resolute, but very quiet–mannered man, with a well-earned reputation for straight shooting happened to be in New York and took charge of the landing. This man was Patrick Lennon, who had commanded the Dublin men at Stepaside and Glancullen in 1867, and who had seen plenty of service, both in the British army and in the American Civil War.

Lennon was a member of the Reception Committee and went down with two carriages to the Battery. Denis Duggan had served with him, and the rescued men had all heard of him. As the men were about to go with Lennon and his friends, two other carriages appeared on the scene in charge of a man who was not a member of the reception committee and who is rather well known in commercial life in New York. There is no particular need of mentioning his name, but I may express the opinion after twenty-eight years that there would have been no trouble worth speaking of in connection with the expedition but for his special talent for making mischief and his doubtless sincere conviction the he was the only really honest man in the movement. This man was introduced by Brennan, and he proceeded at once to try to get them to go with him. Lennon reminded him that he was not a member of the committee and had no business there. He blustered a bit, but Lennon stepped over to him and very quietly said: ‘So and so, if you don’t get out of here in two minutes I’ll put a hole in you.’ ‘So and so’ knew the man’s reputation so that ended the attempt to ‘capture’ the rescued men, and Lennon took them to O’Donovan Rossa’s hotel, where they were when I arrived from Philadelphia.[[595]](#footnote-596)

An article was posted in *The Irish World* before the *Catalpa* landed, by the Clan-na-Gael prisoner rescue committee treasurer, Patrick Mahon, that stated a fund had been started to secure money for the prisoners.[[596]](#footnote-597) Mahon’s article, plus the large public celebrations attended by the prisoners after they landed, created the impression with Richardson and Anthony down in New Bedford awaiting their share of the Clan-na-Gael “profits,” that there was plenty of money for everyone, increasing significantly their expected return on investment for their part in the *Catalpa* mission. Meanwhile, Goff’s continual accusations against Devoy, Breslin, and Dr. Carroll in memoranda to the Camps, attempting to slow or stop Camp contributions, continued to add to the Clan-na-Gael’s financial woes.

This turmoil and the loss of revenue created by the *Catalpa*’s unexpected return without further whaling ensured that Richardson, Anthony, Hathaway, and the ship’s crew at New Bedford would be kept waiting for months for their share of the revenue from the voyage. Patrick Mahon, treasurer of the APRC indicated to Devoy the problem created by the Executive Body having authorized a payout of $2,000 to Breslin and King before the *Catalpa* account with Richardson and the New Bedford people was settled and the investigation into the “Breslin-Brennan imbroglio” was completed.

“If we pay out $2,000 to Breslin and King it will leave us bare of funds and we cannot very well do anything with Richardson unless we have money.”[[597]](#footnote-598)

A settlement was finally reached under implied threats from Hathaway that there would be a public disclosure of Richardson and Anthony’s frustrations, including possible litigation.[[598]](#footnote-599) All newspaper accounts state the voyage was funded by “nationalists” or “Fenians” and do not mention the Clan-na-Gael. The *Chicago Sunday Times* and papers in London made a connection between the skirmishing fund and *Catalpa*, but that fund was not attributed to the Clan-na-Gael but rather to Jeremiah O’Donovan Rossa.[[599]](#footnote-600)

### The Cleveland Convention of 1877: Brennan Under Fire

Captain Anthony’s book, *Catalpa* *Expedition*, mentions that on the return voyage a disagreement took place that was resolved by choosing to go to port in the prisoners’ best interests and a joint decision to immediately sail to New York had been made. Breslin, in his report, indicates the men were upset about going whaling and that he required them to sign a document taking responsibility for not continuing to the whaling grounds. Both these sources, available for public scrutiny, indicate that a minor disagreement was amicably resolved.

Devoy’s discussion with the prisoners in their room at Sweeny’s Hotel evidently convinced the ex-prisoners that it was not in their best interest to air Clan-na-Gael laundry in public. Devoy’s admonishment apparently had a good effect, as interviews given by the ex-prisoners as they were feted by Clan-na-Gael Camps and at public functions do not recount any problems occurring on the voyage home from Australia. There is a mention of food shortages, but no hint of animosity from the passengers toward Breslin and Anthony. An *Irish World* reporter interviewed Thomas Darragh and then listened to the other prisoners telling their stories at Sweeny’s Hotel:

[*The Irish World*] Reporter. *—*What sort of a voyage had you?

Mr. D[arragh]. *—*Tolerably good. We encountered several very severe gales, and at one time were a little anxious for our safety, but we came through all right, thank God. Our provisions ran short when the voyage was half over and we were on short allowance the balance of the time. But we had not borne ten or eleven year’s imprisonment without getting used to hard usage and short allowance. There you have all I know about the rescue. In some minor particulars my statement may differ from others, but the main facts, I take it, are what’s wanted.

[*The Irish World* interviewer then summed up] Mr. Darragh’s narrative may be said to be that of the whole six, for, as he says, their different statements differ, if at all, only in minor particulars.[[600]](#footnote-601)

Several days later a *Philadelphia Press* reporter interviewed the prisoners in that city and similar results were obtained. In answer to the *Philadelphia Press* reporter’s question:

Your treatment by the American master and the crew of the bark *Catalpa* was?”

Michael Harrington replied:

Was all that you could ask. In fact, had they been our own countrymen, and members of our own order, they could not have been more enthusiastic. Every thing that could conduce to our comfort was done and had it been necessary, as it fortunately was not, I believe they would have fought with us, shoulder to shoulder, before they permitted our recapture.[[601]](#footnote-602)

After a subscription had been taken up for the prisoners, there was a disagreement over the purpose of the subscription. Devoy assumed, or knew all along, that the money was for paying off Clan-na-Gael debts incurred from the rescue and the released prisoners, and stated the collection was exclusively for that purpose. The ex-prisoners had some validity to their claim as it was stated publicly that the subscriptions were being taken up “to help the prisoners.” There was no mention made of paying off Clan-na-Gael debts. An altercation occurred in January 1877 that received some publicity when ex-prisoner Martin Hogan got drunk and challenged John Breslin and/or John Devoy to a duel, whipping out two pistols and placing them on their table. A pistol went off in the scramble that occurred. Martin Hogan was taken to jail at Breslin’s insistence. John Goff intervened to get Hogan released, after which Hogan then indicated he was going to sue. Later on, this fund was distributed to the ex-prisoners and nothing else came of it.[[602]](#footnote-603)

In contrast to the prisoners’ public statements, Brennan’s interrogation at the United Brotherhood convention reveals that, in the eyes of the Executive Body, a mutiny took place:

Three members of the FC, namely, Brothers Devoy, Talbot, and Chairman Dr. Carroll, hastened to New York, and learned to their frustration that a virtual mutiny had occurred on board, by which the prisoners and part of the rescuing party had compelled Brother Breslin to abandon whaling and bring the vessel direct to New York.[[603]](#footnote-604)

The ship owned by the Clan-na-Gael and commanded by Captain George S. Anthony, who was vested by the organization with full authority over the ship while on the voyage, was forced to change course and dock in New York against the express orders the Clan-na-Gael had given Anthony and Breslin to go whaling on the return voyage. These men, who were in possession of revolvers and rifles, and included Clan-na-Gael crewmember, Denis Duggan, demanded a course change on the high seas. The UB Convention minutes document the mutiny charge against Brennan, along with the more complete report of John Breslin. The minutes are a fascinating glimpse into the Clan-na-Gael’s inner workings.

The reason that the mutiny is not part of the *Catalpa* story which has been told and re-told numerous times is that neither the Clan-na-Gael nor Captain Anthony had anything to gain and a lot to lose by publicly airing the charges against Brennan, Duggan and the rest in August 1876. It should be remembered that the *Catalpa’s* mission was never ascribed in public to the Clan-na-Gael but rather to “Irish American Nationalists” or “Fenians” in a generic sense. If the mutiny and the recriminations became public and involved the Clan-na-Gael, attention would suddenly have focused on the militant aspect of the organization which in 1876 was simply viewed by the public as an Irish American social organization.

When Devoy met the men in Rossa’s hotel room in New York he was thoroughly astonished at the men’s aggressive behavior who, instead of thanking Devoy and the Clan-na-Gael for their salvation, complained bitterly about their treatment at Breslin and Anthony’s hands. Devoy gave them a dressing down, believing that the men were simply distraught from their ordeal. Unfortunately, Thomas Brennan, perhaps egged on by Goff, persisted for months in making claims within the organization insinuating that Breslin and Anthony had pocketed money that belonged to the Clan-na-Gael and that the prisoners had been forced to suffer in the midst of plenty. In an attempt to muzzle Brennan and Duggan from publicly airing the dispute in the press, the Clan-na-Gael appointed a committee of inquiry into Brennan and Duggan’s charges.

The committee held a secret, two-month-long investigation into the mutiny, culminating in a trial during which Brennan and Duggan were charged with making false accusations against Breslin and Anthony and stirring up trouble on the return voyage, thereby costing the Clan-na-Gael $10,000 in profits.[[604]](#footnote-605) The committee ruled Breslin’s actions were “thoroughly satisfactory.” Brennan was censured for his part in bringing the ship into port early against the wishes of Breslin and Anthony. The committee declared him culpable of fomenting problems among the prisoners and the rescuers and his conduct was called “reprehensible,” but the committee exonerated him from being the cause of the loss of the whaling revenue. Duggan was simply chastised for action “not what it should have been.”[[605]](#footnote-606) This rather lenient judgment served to mitigate the possibility of a public squabble that might have ensued had the Clan-na-Gael attempted to get Brennan and Duggan to pay back the lost whaling revenue. Duggan was chastised for his attitude toward Breslin but given no punishment.

Refusing to leave well enough alone after a relatively mild rebuke by the trial committee, Thomas Brennan showed up uninvited at the Eighth Annual Convention of the United Brotherhood on September 7, 1877 in Cleveland, Ohio. Still smarting from his punishment at the hands of the committee of inquiry, he requested, as representative of Camp D54, to be allowed to tell his version of what happened during the rescue to the assembled delegates. Although Brennan was not an elected delegate, the delegates at the convention voted to allow Brennan to address the Convention and speak his piece, perhaps out of curiosity, or in deference to Brennan’s tenure in the Clan-na-Gael, or to clear up suspicions that Goff and his adherents had created with their accusations.

Brennan in his testimony tried to implicate Breslin in prisoner abuse and misuse of organization funds. Brennan also made the claim that he, Brennan, had best served the wishes of the Clan-na-Gael by ensuring the *Catalpa* reached port in time to save the prisoners from the sickness and death they would have experienced aboard ship had the voyage continued whaling in the North Atlantic.

Thomas Brennan’s testimony and interrogation by various Clan-na-Gael members is found recorded in the minutes of the Convention.[[606]](#footnote-607) Brennan’s testimony was frequently interrupted as he was cross-examined by Devoy and others. As a rebuttal to Brennan’s accusations John Breslin was allowed to read into the minutes of the Convention his official report, previously submitted to the Executive Body, of the events that occurred during the rescue project. In addition to being published in the Convention proceedings, a portion of Breslin’s report was published in *The Irish World* and the *New York Herald*. *The Irish World* and *New York Herald* versions were shorter and did not mention the Breslin-Brennan controversy. John Denvir republished Breslin’s report in England as “The Rescue of the Military Fenians” in 1882. Beginning in July of 1904 a series of articles on the *Catalpa* voyage were published by John Devoy in the *Gaelic American* in which Breslin’s report was published again, this time some information concerning the controversy aboard the *Catalpa* was included; however, Breslin’s negative characterizations of Duggan and Brennan’s behavior are only found in Breslin’s report to the Clan-na-Gael Executive Body recorded in the convention minutes.

Thomas Brennan began his testimony at the Convention by assuring the assembled delegates that he did not ask for the job but was pressured to take it. Brennan insisted that he could easily have served onboard ship as the steward. Implying that a conspiracy to exclude him existed before he arrived in New Bedford, Brennan said:

I saw Richardson the agent of the ship when I went down, and I partly thought he came to the conclusion that I was not a fit person to go on board the ship.

Whatever interpretation one makes of “I partly thought,” Brennan was correct in his assumption that Captain Anthony and Richardson did not want him onboard the *Catalpa*. Brennan stated that he had not received explicit orders to return to New York.[[607]](#footnote-608) If we believe Devoy, Brennan simply ignored the written orders Devoy had given him to return if he was not allowed to board in the Azores.When Brennan finally reached Bunbury he made contact with Duggan. They found themselves in immediate agreement in their negative judgment of Breslin and Anthony. Brennan tells how both exchanged stories of duplicitous treatment. Brennan was convinced that John Breslin had plenty of Clan-na-Gael money that he could have used to help them out of their “poverty.” Brennan recounts how on the day of the escape he saw a bag of money and rifles and revolvers lying around unguarded in Breslin’s room and that he had a run-in with Breslin at the Emerald Isle Hotel on the morning of the escape.

Brennan states, “I have been charged with saying that Breslin was drunk on the morning of the rescue. I did not. . ..” Brennan then tells of riding to the meeting place at Rockingham and meeting up with Anthony. The harrowing voyage aboard the whaleboat was not mentioned. Brennan continued:

When we came to the vessel we got on board, Breslin went into the cabin. The six prisoners were in a bad state*—*without beds and sleeping on the bare boards*—*there were three of them that I would not be surprised if they were found dead any morning*—*Harrington had diarrhea, he had to go to the bows of the vessel six or seven times a day, he was kept constantly going all the time. Hassett was spitting blood, Wilson was also sick, and, on one occasion, when Wilson complained to Breslin, he said ‘God Damn you, you are always sick.’

Brennan is interrupted by Breslin at this point, who asked Brennan if he actually heard Breslin say that. Brennan admitted that he did not actually hear the exchange between Breslin and Wilson, saying, “I have been told so by those that heard him.”

Brennan then began to read from the “Trial Committee” minutes and was stopped by Breslin, who said that, “If any portion of the proceedings of the trial committee be read I ask that all the proceeding be read.” The convention Chairman C. B. Gallagher of Camp D44 in Omaha, Nebraska, ruled that all the evidence from the trial committee proceedings would be read to the delegates.[[608]](#footnote-609)

After the Trial Committee proceedings were read, Brennan continued:

Now, Mr. Chairman, I understand that I have been charged with being the cause of mutiny on board the ship; if that is mutiny I don’t know what mutiny is. The vessel was to put into Fernandina in Florida, she was out nearly four months, said to be whaling, but had caught nothing.

Brennan then referred to the letter signed by the prisoners and the other Clan-na-Gael members:

That statement was signed by Desmond, King, Duggan, I, and the six prisoners. I leave it to anyone whether that was mutiny or not.

Brennan may not have considered that the forced return of the *Catalpa* constituted a mutiny but the Clan-na-Gael certainly did.[[609]](#footnote-610) The questioning continued:

Bro[ther] 4 [P.J. Connolly] of D200: Is this statement you made in regard to that mutiny all that you had to do in the so-called mutiny?[[610]](#footnote-611)

Bro[ther] Brennan: That is the only thing. There is the document we had.

Brennan then is questioned on how he found out about the location of the convention. He replied that it was common knowledge.[[611]](#footnote-612)

Devoy and others then asked several questions about whether or not Brennan had received orders to return to New York after not being able to board the ship in the Azores. Brennan’s reply is somewhat less than straightforward:

I recollect I received a letter from Goff with twenty-eight pounds; he advised me to return; I have also heard of being ordered to return by the FC [Executive Body], but I am sure I never received the order to return.[[612]](#footnote-613)

Brennan then admitted that he told the prisoners that any one of them was of equal rank to Breslin on the rescue project. Referring to Brennan’s complaints to the prisoners of the preferential treatment given Breslin by Anthony aboard ship, Devoy then asked, “Do you think that had anything to do with their hostility?” Brennan replied, “I don’t know.”

Devoy addresses the point of Brennan’s hostility toward Breslin, asking Brennan:

Did you state that you were prosecuted for your honest convictions, in stating that he [Breslin] was a dangerous man to the organization, is that true?

There follows a long diatribe by Brennan wherein he indicates that Breslin attempted to undermine the Clan-na-Gael by forming a rival group called the United Irish Brotherhood. Brennan goes on to say:

Breslin was a member of [the UIB], they are bitterly opposed to this organization, they are men who seceded from this organization.

Brennan states that Breslin was a Clan-na-Gael member before the UIB breakaway. Devoy does not mention that fact anywhere in his writings. Whatever the case, Breslin was not a member of the Clan-na-Gael in respect to the *Catalpa* mission until he was initiated by John Devoy to ensure all participants in the rescue party were members.[[613]](#footnote-614)

The investigation returns to the subject of the mutiny when a delegate asks Brennan:

Do you wish to convey to this Convention that there was no mutiny on board that ship?

To which Brennan replies:

Of course I will say that there was no mutiny.

John Breslin then read his report into the minutes and “replied verbally to the charges made against him by Brennan.”

The most damning evidence against Brennan came after Breslin finished his defense. Thomas Desmond of Los Angeles Camp D64, the California Clan-na-Gael representative on the voyage, was called to testify and proceeded to denounce Brennan to the convention:

Brother Desmond then took the floor and corroborated the statement of Brother Breslin, and condemned in the strongest terms the conduct of Brennan on board the ship. He explained that he only signed the demand to take the vessel into port to prevent bloodshed, as he had good reason to believe a refusal would result in a mutiny.

Under cross-examination, Desmond stuck to this statement.

A motion was then made that the verdict of the Trial Committee in the case of Brennan be re-affirmed. A substitute was offered by the Chair that Brennan be expelled, which was declared carried, by a vote of 32 to 29. Devoy and Breslin, among others, did not vote. [After the vote] Bro[ther] John Egan, of New Jersey, appealed from the decision of the Chair, and called for the ayes and nays on the appeal. The decision of the Chair was sustained, there being 39 ayes, 34 nays, and 8 not voting. . ..[[614]](#footnote-615)

A Clan-na-Gael negotiating team consisting of Devoy, Reynolds,[[615]](#footnote-616) and Cannon,[[616]](#footnote-617) who had been sent by the Executive Body to New Bedford to try to resolve the monetary disputes with Richardson that erupted after the voyage, recorded:

. . . Captain Anthony could point to the fact that the prisoners themselves had compelled him to abandon a whaling cruise in the North Atlantic which he had been instructed by us to take on the home trip, and which would in all probability have enabled him to bring back $15,000 more oil.[[617]](#footnote-618)

The vote to expel Thomas Brennan from the Clan-na-Gael showed that there was substance to the charges brought. That the expulsion was carried by only five votes indicates that there was sympathy for Brennan, mutiny or not.

### A Muted Mutiny

The minutes of the 1877 United Brotherhood Convention in Cleveland show the seriousness with which the Clan-na-Gael took the actions of Brennan and Duggan and the IRB prisoners aboard the *Catalpa*. The mutiny on board the *Catalpa*, brought on by Thomas Brennan’s antics, nearly unraveled the rescue.

Reading the minutes of the Clan-na-Gael Convention one concludes from the vote that, had Brennan not showed up uninvited to the Convention in an attempt to justify his actions, he would not have been expelled from the organization. John Devoy, in his *Recollections of an Irish Rebel* published shortly after his death, retells the story of the *Catalpa* rescue. Devoy’s account does not mention the mutiny trial, although he mentions in passing a “controversy” that occurred after the arrival of the prisoners in New York.[[618]](#footnote-619) Making sure the mutiny discussions stayed inside the Clan-na-Gael and out of public scrutiny was Devoy’s primary objective and, for the most part, he was successful. The important fact that Brennan and Duggan were tried for insubordination and mutinous behavior has been underemphasized by most authors recounting the *Catalpa* rescue.

John Goff’s actions during the period of 1874 to 1876 show he wanted to eliminate Devoy’s influence in the Clan-na-Gael, and probably coveted the position of Executive Body Chairman. Goff impersonated the chairman of the Executive Body and, more importantly, openly defied John Devoy, theelected Chairman, when he published the message not to attend the Mitchel memorial gathering.It appears from everything Goff did subsequently, that he made an all-out effort to discredit Devoy and, after the rescue mission became a success, tried to sabotage the credit accruing to Devoy as the chairman of the rescue committee.

I have not uncovered enough information to determine how many sympathizers Goff had within the organization, but the close vote on Brennan’s expulsion would makeone suspect that either quite a few members felt the case to expel had not been made or that members voting in favor of Brennan did so as Goff adherents. Miles O’Brien, James Fitzgerald (of NY), Timothy Hanley, Denis Burns, and Thomas Brennan are names of whom we are sure. Denis Burns sent an open letter sent to Clan-na-Gael members, ostensibly an answer to a query by committee member James A. Branegan, who, by context, was investigating APRC funding, wherein Burns launched into a rambling diatribe against the APRC and the Executive Body of the Clan-na-Gael. Burns charged that Mahon covered for those who misused APR funds and calls Mahon “an accomplished cloak to the rascals that have been pretended Gentlemen.”[[619]](#footnote-620) Patrick Mahon, the APRC treasurer was not in Goff’s group of “kickers,” as Devoy labeled his opponents, and, although angering Devoy by nitpicking his expense reports, Mahon seems to have been merely a no-nonsense accountant. Overall, the mission’s success diffused the dissent of Goff’s followers.

Goff’s actions after the arrival of the rescued prisoners continued to point a finger at Devoy for misusing the rescue funds. Had the *Catalpa* rescue not been successful Goff might have succeeded in becoming chairman of the Executive Body in 1876. Dr. William Carroll stated that Goff’s actions were vindictive, resulting from Goff’s failure to get elected Executive Secretary at the 1875 Convention.[[620]](#footnote-621) There is also a good possibility that Goff honestly believed that rescue funds were being spent inappropriately. Goff himself did not leave us his version of the controversy, so it is important to keep in mind Goff’s view of events isn’t available to compare to Devoy and Carroll’s extensive writings. Supporting a theory that Goff was not as bad a character as Devoy and Dr. Carroll portrayed him their letters, is the fact that Devoy never publicly accuses Goff of anything other than being a danger to the mission and insubordinate to the Clan-na-Gael constitution, stating that Goff thought he was the only honest man in the organization.

The Devoy-Goff fight was already in full swing by the 1875 Convention and the defeat of Goff’s bid for secretary in 1875 certainly may have been the result of machinations by Devoy or Dr. Carroll, or both. Despite the bitterness between Goff and Devoy, nothing that Goff did seemed directed at making the rescue unsuccessful. But Goff certainly ought to have known that the unplanned appearance of Thomas Brennan in Fremantle during the most delicate part of the mission brought a high risk of exposing Breslin and Anthony. Brennan’s insistence that he outranked Breslin in the Clan-na-Gael hierarchy on the *Catalpa*’s return voyage from Australia, even though it ought to have been obvious to himself and the others that Breslin had been chosen to mastermind the escape, appears an attempt by Brennan to wrest control of the rescue from Breslin, perhaps to prepare the way for Goff to assume credit for the rescue.

The mutiny aboard the ship was a direct result of Brennan conspiring against Anthony and Breslin. In later life, notwithstanding his debt to Goff for his job as a New York Supreme Court officer, Brennan never publicly spoke badly of Devoy, even when upholding Goff’s integrity in the face of political attacks by Goff’s enemies. In 1890, Brennan told the story of the rescue, albeit with a number of errors, indicating Goff and Devoy worked together to make the voyage a success.[[621]](#footnote-622) As in the case of Goff, Devoy, not a man to withhold his judgment or opinion, never indicated any hard feelings against Brennan and always mentioned Brennan in the context of taking “his part in the rescue.”[[622]](#footnote-623)

As we attempt to decipher Brennan, Goff, Breslin, and Devoy’s moves and countermoves, it seems apparent that Brennan’s insistence on getting to Fernandina was based on his desire to be on time for the 1876 Clan-na-Gael Convention in Philadelphia. Had he been successful in that endeavor, Brennan, with his Clan-na-Gael seniority and fresh from a successful rescue, might have been able to influence the Convention in Goff’s direction. Brennan, had he succeeded in browbeating Breslin and taking charge of the rescue, could have claimed a much larger role in the rescue for himself. Breslin probably realized Brennan’s objective and countered the move by having the *Catalpa* bypass Fernandina and change course to New York. By the time Brennan faced the Clan-na-Gael delegates in 1877, the success of the mission had already converted Devoy into a hero and Brennan into a troublemaker.

When the *Catalpa* arrived in New York, Brennan became desperate to get off the ship. One suspects it was his anxiety to get in touch with Goff before anyone could inform Devoy they were in New York. Brennan attempted to leave the ship against Breslin’s orders, who was waiting for Devoy to arrive. Brennan finally ended up getting off the ship and contacting Goff, which was exactly what Breslin was trying to avoid. Breslin wrote in his report to the Executive Body, “His conduct on board the *Catalpa* at New York amounted to mutinous disobedience of orders, and in this he was abetted by Duggan and the ex-prisoners.”[[623]](#footnote-624) In any case, the telegram sent summoning Devoy to New York foiled Brennan’s plan.

The events that occurred in New York certainly indicate that Goff, with Brennan’s assistance, intended to take charge of the prisoners for his own purposes.Patrick Lennon’s action at the Battery and Devoy’s quick arrival from Philadelphia defeated Goff’s intention to exploit the prisoners for his own gain and to be the main character at the victory celebrations sure to ensue.

Breslin makes a cryptic statement in his report concerning his decision to sail the *Catalpa* to New York. “It was too late to go to Fernandina and, for other reasons, I had already determined not to go there.”

Brennan and the other men were not informed of the *Catalpa*’s change of course to the northeast to resume whaling. Anthony made the decision in consultation with Breslin, leading one to conclude that Anthony and Breslin had decided to do as they saw fit without regard to the wishes of the others, a decision within their charge, but not made in a spirit of cooperation with the ex-prisoners and the other rescue team members.

Breslin gives a less conspiratorial reason to head north instead of landing at Fernandina when he mentions in his report that there was a chance of dropping off the prisoners on a ship heading from the whaling grounds for New York, thereby allowing the *Catalpa* to turn back for whaling. Based on the circumstances aboard and attested to by the resulting problems in New York and the unwanted publicity that might expose the Clan-na-Gael, it is improbable that Breslin would have taken the chance of allowing Brennan, Duggan and the prisoners to arrive in the United States aboard a strange ship. Brennan immediately made known his desire to reach the 1876 Philadelphia Convention and it appears that was reason enough for Breslin to choose not to go to Fernandina.

“John, you have to take the chairmanship and see this thing through. There’ll be plenty of kickers making trouble and it will require the strong hand to keep them in order.”[[624]](#footnote-625) Thus Thomas Bourke spelled out Devoy’s task at the 1874 convention. Bourke had rightly judged the problems Devoy would face. The rise of the Clan-na-Gael to prominence was in good part due to the perseverance of John Devoy against his detractors and his success in maintaining the mutiny and most of the subsequent squabbling within the membership of the Clan-na-Gael, and out of public knowledge.

### The Fruits of Success

Devoy was now the man of the hour and Dr. Carroll found his Revolutionary Directory concept a lot easier to implement in the euphoria of their triumph over the British government. In less than a year one finds that a “Catalpa Club” joined “Wolfe Tone” and “Napper Tandy” as a popular Clan-na-Gael Camp public name.[[625]](#footnote-626) On August 12, 1877 the IRB formally agreed to set up the Revolutionary Directory as a decision-making executive council with the power to allocate Clan-na-Gael funds and supplies directly to the IRB in case of an insurrection in Ireland.The acceptance of the Revolutionary Directory by the IRB was not without its detractors. Here is the letter from Dr. Carroll to Devoy indicating the Supreme Council of the IRB had passed the measure [my clarifications in brackets]:

Phila. 12 August 1877

Dear Devoy,

“Cablegram” just received from Shields - “Tobacco Brisker,” sent to large Tobacco house here, which means R.D., has passed. So all goes well in that way. We must elect our man Monday evening 3 Sept., 1877 at F. C. [Executive Body] meeting, in same room in which Convention meets the next day.

Everything must now be done to aid our friends with the least possible delay, as you may be sure O’B[rien] & Co., will be getting up a concern of their own here in alliance with somebody over there—probably with the expelled H.R. [Home Rule] members of the regular firm [HR men purged from IRB Supreme Council].

In haste. Respectfully & Fraternally, (“C”) [Dr. William Carroll] [[626]](#footnote-627)

On November 1, 1876, in Washington DC, John Devoy led a delegation which spoke to the Russian Ambassador Nikolay Shiskin. The Ambassador did not speak English and Devoy was translator for a discussion that was held in French.

Shiskin told them that Russia would negotiate with Irish revolutionaries only in the case of war with England.[[627]](#footnote-628)

Shiskin also indicated that the Irish did not seem to be strongly in favor of separation from England and that without political backing of the Irish populace, any insurrection had but small chance of success. The ambassador “. . . insisted that the Irish only seemed to be seeking minor reforms, and that public officials never failed to present loyal addresses to English Royal Princes when they visited Ireland.” Russia was contracting shipbuilders in the United States to provide what the British press called “Alabamas” and Britain was not unaware of the possibility of meetings between Russia and Fenian agents, but they concluded without a declared war between Britain and Russia military cooperation with Fenianism would not occur.[[628]](#footnote-629)

Shiskin’s words seem to have made a great impact on Devoy’s thinking and Devoy became convinced the IRB and the Clan-na-Gael were obligated to get the mass of the Irish people involved politically in self-rule to make any insurrection viable.[[629]](#footnote-630)Devoy began a campaign (The New Departure) to effect a major change to Clan-na-Gael and IRB constitutional rules in an attempt to enlist cooperation of all nationalist societies seeking self-government and/or land reform in Ireland.

By the Cleveland convention of 1877, enrollment had risen to 11,000, up from 6,800 in 1874 with well over a hundred functioning Camps. Dr. Carroll was doing his part by setting up Camps all over Pennsylvania. He began setting up Camps in the Pennsylvania coalfields, an area that up to then “belonged” to the Molly Maguires.[[630]](#footnote-631) Before the Philadelphia Convention of 1876, Dr. Carroll organized twelve Camps in Pennsylvania. Until he began this drive for membership, Dr. Carroll’s own D15 had been the only Clan-na-Gael Camp. As a direct result of the *Catalpa* success, Clan-na-Gael organizing became vigorous across the United States and successful recruiting would ensure full coffers for whatever new adventures the Clan-na-Gael wished to pursue.

John Devoy and Dr. William Carroll had established credibility with the Clan-na-Gael membership and together determined the organization’s policy from 1875 to 1880. Contributions, although many times reluctantly given, finally covered the expenses accrued by the *Catalpa* rescue which had mounted up to some $37,000 [$700,000 in modern currency]. Subscriptions were abetted by whale oil sold, and finally the sale of the *Catalpa* herself.[[631]](#footnote-632) By the 1876 Cleveland Convention the Clan-na-Gael war chest for an Irish rebellion contained $62,000 [$1,200,000 in modern currency]. That money, by the constitution, as mentioned above, was for a rebellion in Ireland and could not be used for any *Catalpa* mission expenses.

### A Career Change for John Goff

Devoy was now in a position to lock horns with Senior Guardian Goff of Camp D25 and his cronies. Mentioning his success with the 5% subscription call to aid the IRB, Devoy opines, “The ordeal has done us good and will end by weeding out a lot of worthless obstructionists.”[[632]](#footnote-633)

The time had come to deal with the obstructionist-in-chief. Devoy brought Goff up on charges for the negative actions taken during the *Catalpa* rescue fund-raising and ordered him removed from his position of Senior Guardian of Camp D25. Devoy felt he had now sufficient backing within the Clan-na-Gael to deal with Goff and Camp D25:

Tomorrow night I am going to 25 meet Goff on the charges. I am simply going to lay the matter before them and get the four prisoners before who are here to state the facts. Lamb, Melvin, Reilly, Foley, and others from our side of the house in [D25] have been drumming up the men and count from 30 to 35 who will stand by the [Executive Body] and insist on the order removing S. G. [Senior Guardian, i.e. Camp president, John Goff] being obeyed. If they fail, then we gather them together and re-organize the [Camp], leaving the factionists out. …. The war has at last broken out and we must go to work as soon as possible to prepare for what may come.”[[633]](#footnote-634)

Goff’s interference in Devoy’s execution of the rescue and his behind-the-scenes intrigue finally culminated in his expulsion from the Clan-na-Gael and a reorganization of the New York District. When Goff refused to step down as SG, Devoy had D25 thrown out of the Clan-na-Gael. Dr. Carroll described Goff as the “clique” leader who, “ever since the Providence Convention [March 1875] refused to select Mr. Goff Secretary with a $1000 salary, has laboured to our ruin.”

Dr. Carroll can be forgiven for poetically exulting in the final downfall of their archenemy as he wrote to Devoy that Camp D25 was “expelled, as a viper would be from a hearthstone on which it was found warming into life and venom. . ..” [[634]](#footnote-635)

John Goff dropped out of Clan-na-Gael activities for a time and went on to become a district attorney and a judge on the New York Supreme Court and gained notoriety, as noted above, as a tough prosecutor of corruption. Thomas Brennan never said anything in public negative about Devoy but remained loyal to Goff. In the November 2, 1890 *New York Times*’ interview mentioned above, Thomas Brennan, at this point a New York Supreme Court Officer, credited Goff with the “successful management of the rescue” and stated that:

The work of Goff in preparing the expedition is still fresh in the minds of Irish Nationalists in this city. His interest in Irish Matters has never diminished, and the country is as dear to him to-day as when night and day, with Devoy and Miles O’Brien, he traveled over this city, Brooklyn and Jersey City to secure money and make preparations to save his suffering countrymen from Australian prison Servitude.[[635]](#footnote-636)

Although the bitter defeat he received in the fight with Devoy must have left some scars, Devoy and Goff continued to correspond and met from time to time at activities in support of Irish nationalism up to and including addressing Clan-na-Gael meetings.[[636]](#footnote-637)Devoy and Goff attended a Friends of Freedom convention in 1918 where Devoy spoke to the convention urging the delegates to operate in harmony and Goff was appointed chairman of a committee that drew up a set of resolutions in favor of the right of Irish American to support Ireland’s right to be free of British rule.[[637]](#footnote-638)

As mentioned before, Miles O’Brien’s anti-Devoy term limit was thrown out at the 1875 Clan-na-Gael Convention, allowing Dr. William Carroll to be re-elected each year. Dr. Carroll went on to serve six years as Chairman of the Executive Body. The Clan-na-Gael members on the Revolutionary Directory were John Devoy, Dr. William Carroll, and William J. Hynes, who was a moderate Clan-na-Gael member from Chicago.

Back in Ireland the IRB, however, had its own problems. In 1875 the IRB lost half its subscribers in a Fenian-style split generated when Munster and Leinster stopped paying dues until the Supreme Council returned to its policy of supplying firearms for the members. The requirement for funds for the arms forced the IRB into seeking linkage with the Clan-na-Gael and Irish-America. This “treacherous path” would once again bring the IRB into total dependency on Irish-America.[[638]](#footnote-639) Author Owen McGee in his book *IRB* refers to Dr. William Carroll as leader of the Clan-na-Gael. From a titular standpoint McGee is correct, but I must add a caution not to minimize the close relationship that existed between Dr. Carroll and Devoy and the deference shown by each to the other’s opinions. Dr. Carroll’s election in 1875 was a subversion of Miles O’Brien’s intention to eliminate Devoy by the constitutional amendment that required Devoy to step down in 1875. Dr. Carroll as president and Devoy as New York District chairman meant a virtual duumvirate ruled the Clan-na-Gael. This arrangement ensured that Dr. Carroll might handle the executive tasks in consultation with Devoy and still continue to generate his livelihood from his physician’s practice in Philadelphia while Devoy did the legwork required to maintain the organization.

# Part XI

# Devoy and Carroll Take Command

**A New Departure**

After expelling John Goff from the organization, John Devoy and Dr. William Carroll put the Executive Body to work and began to send money through the Revolutionary Directory to the IRB to assist in acquiring modern rifles to replace its out-of-date arms. The IRB needed rifles in order to hold onto their rural membership in the western part of Ireland, where members saw the guns, in some cases used for hunting, as *the* reason for keeping their IRB subscriptions up to date. Dr. Carroll and Devoy saw the rifles as arming nationalists for the coming battle. The result was that both sides felt that gun-running was the proper course to pursue.[[639]](#footnote-640)

The Clan-na-Gael’s meeting with Russian Ambassador Shiskin in Washington DC, mentioned above, had convinced Devoy that physical-force nationalism would never get foreign recognition or aid, before, during, or after an insurrection, unless the Irish populace vigorously supported self-government. He proposed to the Clan-na-Gael a *quid pro quo* with Irish politicians with the understanding that if the various political parties and societies seeking home rule chose not to oppose one another, then the physical-force nationalists would support everyone who supported land reform and self-government.[[640]](#footnote-641) Devoy contended that all groups sought “self-government” in one form or another and that the precise definition ought to remain nebulous while the Irish populace was educated to support the idea of self-government. Once the Irishman in the street was in favor of self-government then the various groups could strive to obtain whatever support they could get by whatever means they could get it.

Devoy and the Clan-na-Gael also wanted the Irish MPs to act in unison which they saw as a first step to seceding from the English Parliament and meeting in session in Dublin. Devoy believed the real solution to the land question would only come about by a return to self-government, but that nationalists of all beliefs in the meantime could work to resolve the plight of the small Irish farmers.[[641]](#footnote-642) Devoy publicly defined this policy in the *New York Herald* in 1878, a concept the *Herald* reporter interviewing Devoy headlined “A New Departure.”[[642]](#footnote-643) Devoy urged the nationalists to “come out of the rat-holes of conspiracy” and begin to take an active role in Land League agitation.[[643]](#footnote-644)

The New Departure did not impress the IRB Supreme Council, isolated in Paris, which was adamantly against getting mixed up in politics and forbade the organization to take part in Land League activities.

They feared that a solution to the land problem would divert public opinion from political goals, and were prepared to sacrifice the last Mayo peasant to the separatist ideal. Sulking in their Parisian tent, the Supreme Council remained officers without an army.[[644]](#footnote-645)

However, the IRB Supreme Council, under pressure from the Clan-na-Gael, did release its members to make their own choice to follow, or not, the proposed change in nationalist strategy.

The Irish Land League had a spontaneous origin among farmers in the west of Ireland when low crop prices led to increasing evictions and farmers began to meet to protest.[[645]](#footnote-646) Devoy cajoled the Clan-na-Gael into acquiescence and the various Camps around the country provided support to Michael Davitt, an IRB Supreme Council member, to collect funds for the fledgling Land League during Davitt’s 1878 tour of America. Davitt and the Land League are discussed later in this book. Devoy’s support for the New Departure in the end led to the rise of Alexander Sullivan, The Triangle and eventually a split in the Clan-na-Gael. According to one IRB leader, Mark Ryan, Devoy, nearing the end of his life, admitted, “The one mistake I made in my life was in supporting the New Departure!”[[646]](#footnote-647)

### The Fenian Ram

Perhaps the most farsighted strategic military move John Devoy and Dr. William Carroll pursued in the Clan-na-Gael’s drive to overthrow British rule in Ireland was to support the development of a submarine that would be able to attack British shipping. Devoy and Dr. Carroll were not the originators of the idea for such a weapon; however, when presented with what appeared to be a feasible submarine concept, they immediately grasped its potential to cripple or sink British navy and merchant shipping.

The Fenian Brotherhood was aware of the possibilities presented by such a weapon ten years before the Clan-na-Gael took an interest. General Thomas William Sweeny, despite being dismissed from the U.S. Army in December of 1865 for his Fenian Secretary of War activities, was commissioned by the U.S. Navy to do research work on a submarine vessel called the *Intelligent Whale* in April, 1866.[[647]](#footnote-648) The Navy test included Sweeny exiting the vessel under sixteen feet of water in a diver’s suit and placing a charge on a scow and then, after returning to the submarine, blowing up the scow by means of a lanyard connected to a primer.[[648]](#footnote-649) Sweeny’s involvement explained a later incident where a Fenian acquaintance of naval historian Simon Lake was able to relate the organization’s plans for outfitting a merchant vessel with several of these submarines located in compartments below the waterline. The merchant ship was to sail into an English harbor and release the vessels to begin sinking British naval ships.[[649]](#footnote-650)

In the early spring of 1876, the Clan-na-Gael initiated its submarine project. A member of the Fenian Brotherhood, Michael Holland, showed some plans his brother John had drawn up to Jeremiah O’Donovan Rossa who at the time was a member of both the Fenian Brotherhood and the Clan-na-Gael. John P. Holland’s plans were for an underwater vessel capable of delivering an explosive device against the side of a ship. Rossa put Michael Holland in contact with Jerome Collins of Napper Tandy Camp D1. Collins, an engineer and Science Editor at the *New York Herald*, would certainly have been aware of Sweeny’s successful sinking of a scow using the *Intelligent Whale* in 1866, and immediately recognized the possible uses for such a vessel. Collins brought Holland’s proposal to the attention of John Devoy and John Joseph Breslin. Breslin, fresh from his successful *Catalpa* rescue, was assigned to oversee the expenditure of Skirmishing Fund money, now called the “National Fund” and being administered by the Clan-na-Gael, to build the underwater ship proposed by John Holland. Three ships were constructed from 1876 to 1881 under Breslin’s direction before a change in Clan-na-Gael leadership resulted in the loss of funding for the project.

The boats were built at the Delamater Iron Works on West 13th Street, New York. The first failed through improper riveting, which would let the water trickle in. The second failed because the machinery was so placed that the chief weight was aft and the ste[r]n of the boat was lower than the prow, but it completely demonstrated the soundness of Holland’s theories. The third was a complete success.[[650]](#footnote-651)

It is impossible to predict what a successful Clan-na-Gael submarine might have meant for the organization. Such a weapon deployed might have provided the Clan-na-Gael with the ability to force England to the negotiating table. Being on a tight budget and under constant pressure to provide visible action against British interests, the Clan-na-Gael did not have the money or time required for the proper development of Holland’s proposed submarine into a real weapon. There was a rising crescendo of discontent among many in the Clan-na-Gael who wanted all subscription monies to be spent on immediate attacks on England.

A challenge to Devoy and Dr. Carroll’s leadership is seen in the election of Michael Boland, an anti-Devoy member, as Chairman of the Executive Body at the 1879 Wilkes-Barre Convention. Boland and his associate, Alexander Sullivan, represented a new “men-of-action” pressure group for immediate attacks against England. Two years later at the 1881 Chicago Convention Alexander Sullivan and Michael Boland assumed leadership of the organization. Under their direction the National Fund was used to send dynamite excursions to England in the 1880s. All available funding went to the “dynamitards” and funds for the Fenian Ram project dried up. The Fenian Ram became another victim of the factionalism which is an integral part of the entire history of Irish American nationalism.

Devoy and Dr. Carroll’s plan to use the submarine against British shipping was ahead of its time. Their perception of the military value of submarines was later vindicated when Holland’s concept proved to be a prototype for the German U-Boat fleet which nearly defeated Great Britain in World War II. The loss of Clan-na-Gael funding caused Breslin to confiscate the ship from the manufacturing area away from John P. Holland’s control, and transfer the ship to “*Catalpa* Jim” Reynold’s foundry where it lay rusting, a victim of the Dynamite War.[[651]](#footnote-652)

### The Wilkes-Barre Convention of 1879

The first Clan-na-Gael convention held after Devoy’s ouster of John Goff and the reorganization of Camp D25, was held beginning August 8, 1879 in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania.[[652]](#footnote-653) Michael Boland was elected Convention Chairman and William J. Hynes was elected Convention Vice-chairman. Michael Boland, who had fought with John O’Neill at Ridgeway, had become part of the hierarchy of the organization. During the Convention Boland was elected Chairman of the Executive Body until the next convention. At this same convention Alexander Sullivan of Chicago was elected District Chairman of Illinois, Ohio, and Indiana.[[653]](#footnote-654)

Dr. Carroll in 1877 and then John Devoy in January 1879 made trips to Ireland to assess the status of the IRB organization and begin to help the Supreme Council regain control of its constituency from the state of turmoil created by Land League agitation. Devoy reported to the convention that the Supreme Council was reunited, and various districts were now working in “harmony” after a period of disunity engendered by “local quarrels, mostly connected with H[ome] R[ule].”[[654]](#footnote-655)

The delegates at the convention noted that the U.S. Clan-na-Gael “military department” was being neglected with only 600 men participating in organized military training. The delegates voted to increase the organization’s emphasis on military training and to organize more military Camps around the country. The military committee went on to report that it was “poor policy” to sponsor state militia groups since often these militias were run by those who had “very little sympathy with us.”

An interesting note in the minutes shows that the Clan-na-Gael post of Treasurer was again in trouble. John McCarthy had his Clan-na-Gael membership stripped for coming up short $2000 during the last term. The note indicates that the delegates proposed reinstating him since he had paid back the money.

The minutes also show that a committee was appointed to meet with John Goff and recover the money Goff and the previous trustees of New York Camp D25 held and return it to the new officers of that Camp.

A move towardconsolidation of power in the Executive Body is evidenced when the Convention members in Philadelphia amended the constitution so that in the future the UB conventions would be held every two years rather than annually. This move would prove important after the 1881 Convention as it gave the new Illinois District Chairman Alexander Sullivan and his confidant Michael Boland a two-year period during which the rank-and-file members were not able to review Executive Body actions and hold them accountable.

### “The Wolfdog of Irish Vengeance”

Michael Davitt, the IRB activist and gunrunner who had served seven years and five months of a fifteen-year sentence, was released on a ticket of leave from Dartmoor Prison in Ireland, in December 1877.[[655]](#footnote-656) Farmers were suffering near famine conditions at that time in the west of Ireland again due to poor crop yields, and the number of evictions for failure to pay rent rose significantly. Davitt began promoting a return to rent levels based on land value per Griffith’s Valuation done thirty years earlier in 1848.[[656]](#footnote-657) His efforts resulted in the formation of a new organization called the “Land League” whose purpose was to agitate for tenant relief from the landlord system. Davitt called for suspension of payments for any amount over the 1848 valuations. This movement enjoyed wide support from Irish farmers.

John Devoy saw Davitt’s enterprise as the way to involve the Irish population in nationalist politics and Devoy convinced the Clan-na-Gael to assist the Land League by agreeing to Devoy’s “New Departure” proposal discussed above. Michael Davitt had now done the hitherto impossible: engaged physical-force nationalism in land reform agitation. Devoy’s New Departure concept further suggested that nationalists might cooperate with Charles Stewart Parnell and the Irish Parliamentary Party MPs who supported Home Rule. Devoy believed that this action would further expand anti-English, pro-independence political support in Ireland.

But Parnell’s political charisma converted his candidacy into a personality cult. When Parnell’s followers dubbed him “the uncrowned king of Ireland” hardline republicans viewed Parnell as more of a political opportunist than a nationalist activist. At the same time the Catholic Church injected itself into Land League administration and attempted to change Davitt’s strident aggressive demands into supplications to the British parliament for constitutional reform. The watered-down demands caused the IRB to withdraw its support from both Parnell and the Land League. Davitt sensed that the British authorities were getting ready to move against the Land League leaders and, at a speech at Kilbrin in County Cork, he mentioned to a large assemblage of farmers that it was only the Land League that kept the “wolfdog of Irish vengeance” from bounding across the Atlantic.

Davitt’s “wolfdog” speech was viewed as an overt threat: If the British dismantled the Land League, the result would be violence from Irish-America and Britain would only be able to blame herself. Davitt’s gauntlet throw-down was a challenge that British authorities were not going to ignore, and they arrested him for inciting insurrection; the rest of the Land League leaders were arrested and joined Davitt in prison over the next several months.[[657]](#footnote-658)

Charles Stewart Parnell was arrested for his participation in the Land League. He made an agreement with British authorities in 1882 that, if they released him, he would dismantle the Land League, which he did, and in its place formed the Irish National League, which advocated Home Rule. Radical nationalists in the IRB wanted no part of Parnell’s new watered-down organization.

Over the “pond” in the United States, Davitt’s wolfdog began to stir.

# Part XII

# The End of an Era:

# The Chicago Convention of 1881

### The Old Guard Cast Aside

Before the Convention, on June 4, 1880,[[658]](#footnote-659) Dr. William Carroll resigned as Chairman of Executive Body of the Clan-na-Gael in protest when the organization voted to implement Devoy’s New Departure and support Parnell and the Land League.[[659]](#footnote-660)

John Devoy pushed the vote through the Executive Body, believing that Land League agitation and some quasi-support of Home Rule MPs was the only viable means to awaken a nationalist urge in the Irish people, something required if there was to be any international support during a revolutionary struggle. Devoy acquiesced to his old friend’s resignation; however, they remained close friends and Dr. Carroll continued in his position as a member of the Revolutionary Directory. Owen McGee in his book, *The IRB*, states plausibly that Devoy “forced” Dr. Carroll to resign because of Dr. Carroll’s part in expelling Michael Davitt from the IRB Supreme Council when Davitt went to America to Collect Land League funds against the Supreme Council’s express orders not to go.[[660]](#footnote-661)

“Catalpa Jim” Reynolds was temporarily assigned to fill Dr. Carroll’s post as Chairman of the Executive Body until the UB Chicago Convention could choose a new chairman. Dr. Carroll was highly respected by most of the membership and Devoy probably blundered by not objecting to Dr. Carroll’s resignation in the face of the challenges Devoy and his supporters were about to face at the Chicago Convention.

In August 1881 the Chicago Convention opened. Le Caron, (testifying later against Parnell in1888) indicated the Clan-na-Gael organization “consisted of about 300 D’s and between 13,000 and 14,000 members.” Le Caron’s testimony included divulging the names of the newly elected Executive Body, the 15 district chairmen and Clan-na-Gael finances.[[661]](#footnote-662)

There had been increasing discontent arising in the membership from the fact that the organization was not involved in active attacks on England. Devoy was being openly criticized for leading the Clan-na-Gael into Irish politics with his New Departure and deflecting the organization from its primary goal: to provide Irish American support for an armed revolution. A vocal group led by Alexander Sullivan of Chicago claimed that the IRB Supreme Council was weak and ineffectual. Sullivan was disgusted with the apparent willingness of the IRB Supreme Council to sit and wait for the perfect moment to act. In a letter to Devoy in 1880, he wrote, “I fear our work and money are wasted while the IRB is under control of men who lack activity and brains. . ..” [[662]](#footnote-663)

At the Convention Alexander Sullivan and Michael Boland, joined by Denis Feeley of Chicago, were able to enlist enough support to wrest control of the Clan-na-Gael Executive Body from Devoy and his supporters. To consolidate their position, Sullivan and his partners convinced the delegates to reduce the Executive Body membership from seven to five. The new Executive Body, as constituted after the changes, included Sullivan, Boland, and Feeley, and two Devoy men, “Catalpa Jim” Reynolds, and Jim Treacy. Under an Executive Body membership of five, Reynolds and Treacy could be outvoted on any issue, effectively removing Devoy from active participation in Clan-na-Gael policy.

After the Convention, Devoy and Dr. Carroll resigned from the Revolutionary Directory as a courtesy to the new Executive Body. Devoy’s resignation was submitted in earnest as he was unable, due to his workload, to continue; however, Dr. Carroll indicated to Sullivan and Boland his desire to continue in his post on the Revolutionary Directory. In the first meeting of the Executive Body, the soon-to-be-called “Triangle”: Boland, Sullivan, and Feeley, wanted a complete break with Devoy and Dr. Carroll’s leadership and were not interested in having anyone of Dr. Carroll’s stature in a position of influence. They appointed themselves as the allotted three Clan-na-Gael representatives on the Revolutionary Directory. Sullivan and Boland’s strategy to rid the Clan-na-Gael of all vestiges of the previous administration manifested itself as they ignored Devoy and Dr. Carroll patiently waiting in a nearby hotel expecting the call that never came. After realizing they were now *persona non grata*, they left to return to their homes.[[663]](#footnote-664) The old guard was to have no direct role in the new Executive Body directory that was to become known as the Triangle.[[664]](#footnote-665)

Two Devoy-Carroll supporters, Reynolds and Treacy, remained on the Executive Body but Sullivan, Boland, and Feeley now constituted a majority that operated in secret, holding meetings without informing Treacy and Reynolds. They tapped into the Revolutionary Directory’s National Fund without consulting the IRB members on the Revolutionary Directory. As mentioned above, Devoy and Dr. Carroll had manipulated the “Skirmishing” fund out of control of the consummate loose cannon, Jeremiah O’Donovan Rossa. The fund name was changed to “National Fund” and had been placed by Carroll and Devoy under Revolutionary Directory control to keep money from being used without IRB concurrence.

Rossa was expelled from the Clan-na-Gael in 1880 after he formed a rival organization named the “United Irishmen or UI, a new organization with an old name. With the funds Rossa obtained from UI subscriptions, he staged bombing excursions into England, with the first attack launched on January 14, 1881 in the face of a unanimous rejection of all such projects by the IRB.[[665]](#footnote-666)

The change in control of the Clan-na-Gael that occurred in Chicago in 1881 saw the Skirmishing, now National, Fund come under control of another loose cannon, Michael Boland.

The Clan-na-Gael, under Boland’s direction and using money from the National Fund began its own bombing campaign in March 1883 when a bomb went off at the Local Government Board in London and another unexploded bomb was found at the offices of the *London Times*.[[666]](#footnote-667) This led to a bitter dispute within the Clan-na-Gael. Devoy, along with those of his supporters who still remained, vigorously opposed the dynamite missions sent to England against the will of the IRB Supreme Council.[[667]](#footnote-668)Dr. Carroll at this point dropped out of Clan-na-Gael activities and entered into Republican politics.[[668]](#footnote-669) Devoy, although not against bombing per se, but, rather, against the way it was being operated, insisted that any such projects should not harm civilians, should have specific military objectives and should be accomplished in cooperation with the IRB. Devoy, in fact, agreed with one of the Triangle bombers, his good friend, William Mackey Lomasney, who said he “would not hurt the hair of an Englishman’s head” but rather wanted to strike terror into the government. Devoy believed that “. . . if honestly carried out on [Lomasney’s] lines the policy of terrorism might succeed, but I utterly disbelieved in the sincerity of those men who were directing it. . . .”[[669]](#footnote-670)

Devoy also remained friends with another of the Triangle bombers, Luke Dillon. The friendship continued although Dillon remained in the Triangle faction until 1887. Dillon was one of the first bombers sent to London by the Triangle. That Dillon successfully remained out from under the watchful eye of British intelligence can be attributed to his penchant for secrecy that included not telling his Triangle superiors what he was up to.

Luke Dillon was essentially a man of action, fit for any work requiring cool courage and nerve. Sent to England by the Triangle (on whom he afterward turned), he was the man who threw the bomb through the front window of the Carlton Club in London, walked coolly away, turned his reversible coat inside out, changed his headgear and, returning to the scene, joined the crowd of curiosity seekers while the police were seeking him elsewhere. He also exploded a bomb in one of the rooms of the House of Commons and with his companion, Roger O’Neill, got safely away.[[670]](#footnote-671)

Once the bombing attacks by Rossa and Boland commenced, beginning the so-called “Dynamite War,” all cooperation between the Clan-na-Gael and the IRB ceased. The Triangle ignored the Revolutionary Directory and kept the IRB Supreme Council in the dark as to its bombing missions. Boland generated false Revolutionary Directory Fund receipts to show that large amounts of money were being sent to the IRB Supreme Council instead of their actual use in funding the bombing missions.[[671]](#footnote-672) Alexander Sullivan, whose actions were always more focused on his political career in Chicago, resigned from the Clan-na-Gael in 1884 after a tense confrontation with the visiting IRB Supreme Council Secretary John O’Connor, where Boland’s pilfering of the Revolutionary Directory’s National Fund was uncovered.[[672]](#footnote-673) Boland, who controlled the Executive Body, began suspending or reorganizing Camps that opposed severing IRB ties and continuing the bombing campaign. “Reorganize” was a Clan-na-Gael euphemism used to describe a process that expelled all the members from a given Camp who opposed the Executive Body’s actions and then reconstituting the Camp with the same designation but with only Executive Body supporters allowed to participate.

In 1884, several ostracized Camps requested that Devoy set up a temporary Executive Body to monitor Boland’s activities and inform the IRB of what was happening until the split could be patched up.[[673]](#footnote-674)

Boland’s organization upon the departure of Alexander Sullivan was known as the Irish National Brotherhood (INB), and later, after the murder of Doctor Patrick Cronin further split the INB, it became known as the United Irishmen (TH in code).[[674]](#footnote-675)

### Assassination and Disintegration

Extremist elements were active not only in the Clan-na-Gael, but also in the IRB. The Irish National Invincibles, a small cell of self-proclaimed IRB vigilantes, murdered Lord Frederick Cavendish, the Chief Secretary in Ireland, and his under-secretary, Thomas Burke, in Phoenix Park, Dublin, on May 6, 1882, sparking revulsion in all but the most radical men in the nationalist movement. The Supreme Council, the old Land Leaguers Michael Davitt and John Dillon and Charles Stewart Parnell, the Parliamentary Party leader, all condemned the murders outright. Davitt, Parnell and John Dillon issued a manifesto against the Phoenix Park attack. Irish nationalism suffered significant negative publicity from this seemingly senseless act.

Another negative result of the Phoenix Park murders for the nationalists was an increase in the budget for Dublin Castle to cope with what was viewed as a new terror campaign.[[675]](#footnote-676)

The Phoenix Park murders were followed by a crescendo of dynamite missions launched from America under Michael Boland’s direction. Boland’s strategy was characterized by various ineffective random bombing attempts in England that occurred from 1883 to 1885. Many Clan-na-Gael agents were caught just before they could act and there is strong evidence that the dynamiting was abetted, if not instigated, by British provocateurs attempting to turn public opinion against nationalist agitation.[[676]](#footnote-677) There were several British agents within the Clan-na-Gael. One of these agents was Henri Le Caron, the paid British spy, operating his own Clan-na-Gael Camp in Braidwood, Illinois. Le Caron was also a close friend of Alexander Sullivan. Others who were later accused of being on the British payroll were the Clan-na-Gael Executive Body Chairman, Michael Boland, who oversaw the dynamite raids, along with two Clan-na-Gael war ministers, Francis Millen and Michael Kerwin. These men had access to Clan-na-Gael bombing mission plans.[[677]](#footnote-678)

The information given to British authorities helped render most the missions of the “dynamitards” ineffectual. Information was funneled to the British Home Office, initially under Robert Anderson (1868-1884), and, later, under Nicholas Gosselin (1884-1904). Anderson and Gosselin supervised the Special Crimes Branch in Ireland. The *London Times* trials, under prodding from the British government, unsuccessfully attempted to tie Parnell to the Phoenix Park murders of 1882 and the dynamite wars of 1882-1885. If Devoy is right in his accusation that Michael Boland was a British agent in the Clan-na-Gael, then Boland must be considered the British Intelligence’s most important asset.[[678]](#footnote-679) In addition to his position on the Executive Body, Boland was the person who sent the men on their missions and, therefore, was in an excellent position to give definitive information on times, targets, and agents.

In 1886, John Devoy moved to Chicago where he joined forces with Dr. Patrick Henry Cronin, an anti-Sullivanite Chicago Clan-na-Gael member, and together they set out on a crusade to expose the Triangle’s “misuse” of Clan-na-Gael funds. The main accusation against Alexander Sullivan made by Cronin and Devoy was that Sullivan used Revolutionary Directory funds without approval of the IRB for the dynamite campaign, which was a violation of the Clan-na-Gael constitution at the time the bombing missions began. These charges brought home to the membership for the first time the fact that for all practical purposes the Revolutionary Directory was no longer functioning since the IRB Supreme Council members on the Revolutionary Directory were not consulted in spite of the fact that Revolutionary Directory money was being used for the bombing runs.

Unable to change the Clan-na-Gael from within, Devoy was called on by the ostracized Camps to form a competing nationalist organization. The official split happened in 1887 when the temporary Executive Body of dissidents that Devoy had set up in 1884 became a new organization under Luke Dillon. The conversion was formally constituted at a Convention in Brooklyn. The new organization retained the name Clan-na-Gael. Devoy describes the founding of the new Clan-na-Gael under Dillon:

Early in 1887 a Joint Convention of three groups of protesters*—*the original “kickers,” the Philadelphia and New Jersey Districts, and the New York Clubs which had not been suspended, but which joined the original protesters*—*was held in Brooklyn and was very well attended. . .. The old constitution, with some few amendments, was adopted and an Executive was elected, of which Luke Dillon was made Chairman. . .. Recognition by the Home Organization [IRB Supreme Council] was immediately secured and financial support, which had only been stopped for a short time, was pledged.[[679]](#footnote-680)

The Triangle group had renamed itself the Irish National Brotherhood (INB).[[680]](#footnote-681) The INB, by far the larger of the two factions, established branches in Ireland and England, some of which were connected to a growing amnesty movement to free jailed Fenians. The confusion created by the rivalry between the two Clan-na-Gael branches in America recreated an antagonistic climate among the various nationalist organizations in Ireland and England. They fought against each other in America, Ireland, and England for a thirteen-year period, from 1887 until 1900, each trying to woo constituents away from the other.

As a result, British Intelligence was able to capitalize on the infighting and infiltrate informers into many nationalist clubs.

As happened during the Fenian split in the 1860s, the Clan-na-Gael rank-and-file put continuous pressure on the leadership to unify the organization. By 1884, Sullivan was no longer in the Clan-na-Gael and was heavily involved in Chicago politics and the Irish National League. Devoy refers to Sullivan, although not a member, as the de facto ruler of the INB until Boland’s expulsion in 1888.[[681]](#footnote-682) As a result of agreements made with an eye to facilitating unification, Devoy and Cronin managed to get a trial committee convened in 1888, in New York, where they charged Boland and Sullivan with violating the Clan-na-Gael constitution by not delivering funds to the IRB, instead using the funds to outfit the bombing missions sent to England from America without IRB approval. Sullivan testified in his own behalf. Despite the case presented by Devoy and Cronin, Sullivan was exonerated, but Boland was expelled from both organizations.

Cronin persisted in his vendetta against Sullivan and threatened to make public Sullivan’s Clan-na-Gael connections which might ruin Sullivan’s position in Chicago politics. Cronin also stated he had proof that Sullivan had invested $100,000 of Clan-na-Gael funds obtained from Parnell’s Irish National League in his own name in the stock market for personal gain. Sullivan responded by informing the INB Camps that Cronin was a British spy. The result of their quarrel led to a public relations nightmare that nearly destroyed the Clan-na-Gael.

Members of a Chicago Clan-na-Gael Camp loyal to Alexander Sullivan decided to solve Sullivan’s problem with Cronin once and for all. Cronin’s bludgeoned body was found in a Chicago sewer.[[682]](#footnote-683) The trial of the men accused of Cronin’s murder erupted into a nationwide newspaper frenzy and investigative reporting exposed the Clan-na-Gael’s secret rituals and speculated that the Clan-na-Gael was behind the dynamite expeditions to England. Alexander Sullivan was arrested but no evidence was found that he was involved in the conspiracy and he was released. Arrested and tried for the murder were Daniel Coughlin, a policeman and Sullivanite assigned to the Cronin murder case, who turned out to be involved, as well as Clan-na-Gael members, Patrick O’Sullivan, Martin Burke, and John Beggs. Also arrested as an accessory was a non-Clan-na-Gael member, John Kunze. Coughlin, O’Sullivan, and Burke were convicted of murder and sentenced to life in prison. Beggs was acquitted and Kunze sent to prison for three years for manslaughter.

The murder of Cronin and stories of the leaders’ pilfering of the organization’s monies for personal gain publicly disgraced the organization. Devoy summed it up: “Many clubs went out of existence and members dropped out by hundreds.”[[683]](#footnote-684) The murder of Dr. Cronin caused a split between those who claimed Cronin was a spy and deserved what he got and those who believed that Cronin was an Irish patriot who had tried to point out that Le Caron was the real spy in the organization in the Convention of 1888. The large numbers of adherents on both sides meant that accepting the validity of either assumption, ensured that a reunified Clan-na-Gael would be hard to achieve.

# Part XIII

# The Birth of the Irish Republic[[684]](#footnote-685)

### Back in the Saddle Again

It took seventeen years from the 1883 break with the IRB until July of 1900 to overcome the bitter fighting in the Clan-na-Gael groups that had seen a mass exodus of membership that peaked as a result of the murder of Dr. Patrick Cronin and the ensuing exposure of Clan-na-Gael involvement. The split was a gradual process that began when the Triangle intentionally left the IRB out of the loop when utilizing Revolutionary Directory funds. The bombings without IRB approval drove Devoy and his moderate followers farther apart from Boland and his INB dynamitards. The Murder of Dr. Patrick Cronin again divided those who believed that Sullivan’s followers had executed a spy from those who believed that Sullivan instigated the Cronin murder because Cronin represented a political danger to Sullivan in Chicago politics.

Devoy left his newspaper job in Chicago and returned to New York in 1894 where he attended a convention of the anti-Triangle organization which still used the name Clan-na-Gael and began recruiting members from the INB.[[685]](#footnote-686) Both Sullivan and Boland were no longer in the Clan-na-Gael and the INB faction (which was now called the “TH,” a code for United Irishmen) was led by a rather shady character named William Lyman as Chairman of the Executive Body.[[686]](#footnote-687) A convention was called by the officers of the TH/INB and held in Buffalo, New York.[[687]](#footnote-688) The Buffalo Convention elected a committee to negotiate the reunification of the Clan-na-Gael. The reunification negotiations began a healing process in Atlantic City, New Jersey in August 1896 that lasted until 1899.

The task of writing a constitution acceptable to all, wherein all the recriminations made in twenty years of infighting could be smoothed over was no small undertaking. The most difficult area of dispute was whether the murdered Patrick Cronin was a spy or an Irish patriot. Devoy was convinced that unless the subject of Cronin was addressed directly, the wounds that had been opened in 1889 would not be healed. The initial proposal by the Devoy faction was a circular to all Camps stating the terms of the unification, including a manifesto that defined the essence of the split of 1889:

This circular shall specifically state that Dr. Patrick H. Cronin was a faithful member of the Organization, an upright and honorable Irish Patriot, and that the attacks upon his memory are unwarranted. That it is due to his memory and to the cause of justice to let it be known that in the Committee on Credentials he vigorously opposed the admission of the spy Le Caron to the Union Convention of 1888, on the grounds that the Camp from which Le Caron claimed to be a delegate, viz.: No. 433 of the INB (now the TH) of Braidwood, Illinois was not then in existence and was not entitled to representation.[[688]](#footnote-689)

The TH/INB faction vigorously objected to this paragraph, which stigmatized their membership with the fault for admitting Le Caron into the organization and by implication that they condoned the murder of an Irish patriot. A final, less onerous statement was agreed to that, after two years of negotiations, allowed the unification of the two factions:

This circular shall specifically state that Dr. Patrick H. Cronin was a faithful member of the organization, an upright and honorable Irish patriot and that attacks upon his memory are unwarranted.[[689]](#footnote-690)

In 1899 the Executive Body of the TH/INB ousted William Lyman for malfeasance in respect to the TH organization’s funds. The Clan-na-Gael was reunited at a “Union” Convention held in Atlantic City, New Jersey on July 9, 1900, albeit with some lingering friction still existing between the various factions.[[690]](#footnote-691) The new Executive Body exhibited an equal share of UB (Clan-na-Gael) and TH/INB members and the focus of the organization turned once again to Ireland and strengthened ties with the IRB.

Also requiring the Clan-na-Gael attention was the drive to defeat an Arbitration Treaty with England progressing in the U.S. Congress. Devoy, having regained his leadership position, established a new newspaper, the *Gaelic American*, in 1903 to present the news in a manner that reflected the newly-reunited organization’s views of current events.

John Devoy was the conscience of the Clan-na-Gael from 1874 until his death in 1928. He always reproached any member who used their Clan-na-Gael membership as a steppingstone into politics. However, that does not mean that Devoy did not understand American politics –in fact, just the opposite. Devoy was actively, and often successfully, engaged in injecting the Irish American nationalist agenda into American politics. During every election cycle, Devoy expended Clan-na-Gael energy and money on political campaigns focused on both Democratic and Republican party platforms, promoting Irish self-determination planks, and attempting to remove any planks that favored Great Britain.[[691]](#footnote-692)

R.F. Foster characterized John Devoy as “the Lenin of the movement.”[[692]](#footnote-693) Devoy certainly left large footprints along the road that ultimately led to an Irish Republic. While the *Catalpa* rescue was John Devoy’s most remarkable public achievement, his lifelong work in the trenches was a much more important contribution to Irish nationalism. Devoy waited until after he and Dr. William Carroll were shoved to the side and the Dynamite War began before becoming a U.S. citizen in 1883.[[693]](#footnote-694) With Devoy back harness the Clan-na-Gael supported Sinn Féin and the IRA during the 1916 Easter Rising that led to the emergence of the Irish Free State. Devoy lived long enough to be the guest of honor on the day the Southern counties in Ireland became independent in 1922. T. W. Moody, the Fenian scholar, summed up Devoy’s character:

He was the most clear-headed, realistic, implacable, and incorruptible of all the Fenian leaders, and he pursued the ideal of Irish independence throughout his long life with unflagging vigour, indomitable perseverance, and ruthless devotion.”[[694]](#footnote-695)

Devoy’s enemies agreed. The *London Times* wrote of Devoy at his death:

Mr. John Devoy . . . was . . . the most bitter and persistent, as well as the most dangerous enemy of [England] Ireland has produced since Wolfe Tone. . .. For sixty years Devoy was unremittingly engaged in conspiracies, both in Ireland and in America, for the establishment of an Irish Republic.[[695]](#footnote-696)

Devoy certainly would have been proud to be compared to Wolfe Tone and could not have denied a single word in the rest of the statement. The complexity of Irish nationalism from 1860 to 1922 notwithstanding, a casual reader cataloging Devoy’s contributions to the cause of Irish independence might be tempted to conclude that John Devoy single-handedly established the Irish Republic. Although Devoy was able to regain his influence over the organization as it molded itself to the changing realities in Ireland at the turn of the century, old and almost blind, he no longer dictated Executive Body strategy as he had done from 1874 to 1881.

The Clan-na-Gael put special emphasis on defeating Anglo-American treaties during the years of British anti-German angst that led up to WWI. Treaties were proposed for fishing rights and extradition that sought to reduce Anglo-American friction, which Devoy and the Clan-na-Gael viewed as attempts to draw the United States into a closer relationship with Great Britain. Devoy relates an interesting story that during the fishing rights controversy, John Boyle O’Reilly was approached by an ex-Massachusetts governor, the infamous Civil War General, Benjamin “Spoons” Butler, along with a Massachusetts congressman named Mosely and a Captain Tarr who was the owner of a fishing fleet.[[696]](#footnote-697) Tarr’s fishing boats had been confiscated by the Canadian authorities. Butler and Tarr wanted to send an American fishing vessel into the disputed area manned by the Clan-na-Gael, but under the command of Captain Tarr, to resist by force of arms any attempt by Canadian gunboats patrolling the disputed waters to detain them. According to Devoy, the object was to instigate an incident which would force the United States government to defend the fisherman. The Clan-na-Gael was thought by Butler and Mosely to be an organization that might be able to execute such a filibustering expedition without being discovered before the expedition had put out to sea. That plan was thwarted by the resolution of the problem by an arbitration commission which arrived at a *modus viviendi* in February 1888.[[697]](#footnote-698)

Devoy claims several Anglo-American treaties were prevented from being adopted by Clan-na-Gael actions.[[698]](#footnote-699) It is difficult to credit the Clan-na-Gael as the only cause of the defeat of these treaties as many unrelated political factors were involved in the Senate’s proclivity to reject binding treaties during this period. The most credible Clan-na-Gael victory occurred when British Ambassador James Bryce proposed that the United States agree to an Arbitration Treaty that would bind both nations to arbitrate any dispute without recourse to arms. The idea caught on as many idealists of the time hoped that such a treaty might be a precursor to the end of all international armed conflicts through implementing such arbitration treaties. For John Devoy, however, any treaty with England represented an alliance with the enemy and he was quick to point out to all who would listen that such a treaty infringed on United States sovereignty and would be unconstitutional in that it would remove the Senate’s prerogative of approving all foreign treaties and, instead, transfer this power to the President.

From an Irish nationalist’s standpoint, the creation of any Anglo-American treaty of mutual defense and cooperation removed any push for Irish independence off the table as a topic of foreign policy and require the United States to side with England in any Anglo-Irish dispute. Ambassador James Bryce, as his last act before retiring, worked with a special zeal attempting to push this treaty through Congress.[[699]](#footnote-700) Devoy, while digging through Bryce’s early writings, found a document wherein Bryce had vigorously denounced the treaty veto power of the U.S. Senate. Bryce’s argument was that Senate approval, which required a two-thirds majority vote, subjected treaties to the vagaries of party affiliations rather than the best interests of the country.[[700]](#footnote-701) Devoy made sure that copies of Bryce’s opinion were placed on the desk of every Senator the night before the treaty was to be debated. One biographer of John Devoy wrote:

The effect of the document on [the Senate] was electrical, and the Treaty was so disfigured by amendments and reservations that its closest friend could not recognize it.”[[701]](#footnote-702)

Devoy and the Clan-na-Gael were quick to claim the credit for its failure when the treaty with all its new amendments did not pass.

With a war between England and Germany apparently inevitable, Devoy and the Clan-na-Gael orchestrated the formation of an open Irish American organization called the “Friends of Irish Freedom,” or “FOIF,” under the direction of New York Judge Daniel Cohalan. In addition to supporting Ireland’s drive for independence, funds were used to combat what was viewed by Irish nationalists as a drive by Great Britain to lure the United States into a mutual defense pact. The Clan-na-Gael, with a majority of seats on the governing directory of the FOIF, remained in the background as the “ginger group” that guided FOIF strategy.

### The Easter Rising of 1916

On August 4, 1914, Britain declared war on Germany. For Padraig Pearse, leader of the Dublin Irish Volunteers; James Connolly, socialist leader of the Citizen Army; and Thomas Clarke, member of the Supreme Council of the IRB, the time had come to strike.

In the United States, the Clan-na-Gael, led by John Devoy and his good friend and staunch ally, Judge Cohalan, stood ready to provide monetary support to the nationalists. The Nationalists in Ireland had no way of communicating with Germany themselves. As a result, John Devoy and the Clan-na-Gael became the conduit using contacts at the German Embassy to relay Irish Nationalist communications with their representative in Germany, Roger Casement. Casement had been sent to Germany by the IRB to arrange an arms shipment to arrive in Ireland the day after a proposed Easter Rising. The Clan-na-Gael and its public voice, the FOIF, now came under the scrutiny of the FBI because of the organization’s outspoken pro-German policies and suspected contacts with German diplomats. Monitoring of the organization’s activity by government authorities intensified when communications were discovered between Devoy and the German government. The persistence with which the United States government went after the Clan-na-Gael was also influenced by Judge Cohalan’s support of the Republican presidential candidate, Charles Hughes, an action that angered the then Democratic candidate and subsequent United States’ president, Woodrow Wilson.[[702]](#footnote-703)

From 1905 to 1916, the period leading up to the Easter Rising of 1916, the various nationalist organizations in Ireland clamored for support from the Clan-na-Gael. The infighting between these various factions, the IRB, the Irish Volunteers, Connolly’s Citizen Army, and the Sinn Féin Clubs made it difficult for the Clan-na-Gael to determine where it ought to allocate its funds.[[703]](#footnote-704) The Irish Parliamentary (Home Rule) Party, under Irish MP John Redmond realized that the Irish Volunteers, then counting over 100,000 members, had become a significant military force, and Redmond demanded control of the Irish Volunteers. The Irish Volunteers’ acquiescence to Redmond’s demand for a controlling majority on the governing council of the Volunteers soured Clan-na-Gael support for that group. The Irish Volunteers almost disappeared with the advent of WWI as thousands of their members heeded MP John Redmond’s call for Irishmen to join the British in the fight against Germany. The number of soldiers left on the rolls of the Irish Volunteers diminished to 15,000. Redmond’s representatives remained on the Irish Volunteers Council; but, although they constituted a majority, the Council itself had been isolated from the now Republican controlled military structure. Control of what remained of the Irish Volunteer military rested in a sub-council headed by Padraig Pearse.[[704]](#footnote-705)

As the day of the rising approached, a merger occurred between the Citizen Army under James Connolly, the IRB under Eoin MacNeill, and the military sub-committee running the Irish Volunteers headed by Tom Clarke and Padraig Pearse. This merger, made just prior to the Easter Rising, removed much of the political infighting among the nationalist groups in Ireland and made it possible for the Clan-na-Gael to provide monetary and armament assistance to a “bona fide” Republican enterprise.

Eoin MacNeill a college professor and always conservative nationalist, learned that the expected shipment of German arms had been scuttled and immediately issued an order that countermanded Pearse’s order to the Volunteers to support the Easter Rising. MacNeill’s action grounded arms of the Volunteers in all the counties outside of Dublin. This left Pearse and Connolly with only 1,500 troops at their disposal. After a week of urban fighting, the area around the Dublin General Post Office was in ruins and the British military were clearly in control. Pearse, Connolly, and the nationalists unconditionally surrendered. Ordinary Irish citizens, who were unanimous in their rejection of the uprising, “repudiated and condemned the whole business.”[[705]](#footnote-706)

The Easter Rising of 1916 was a disaster from a military standpoint. MacNeill and Pearse ended up working at cross-purposes. Many nationalist historians state that MacNeill’s countermanding of Pearse’s orders was the cause that ensured the defeat of the Republican forces. In the overall analysis there is no clear evidence that, even if all factions were working in unison, it would have turned defeat into victory against the British troops stationed in Ireland.

The anger of the general population that focused on the stupidity of the rebels began to abate as British government began a heavy-handed treatment of the rebel prisoners. There arose a clamor of support for humane treatment and fair trials for the nationalists from most Irish citizens. Instead, secret military tribunals were held by the British military. Ireland was put under martial law and a series of arbitrary executions caused immediate anti-British reaction in Ireland and Irish-America. Warren Bradley Wells, a Loyalist journalist, attempted to explain to the English people in an open letter, “An Irish Apologia,” what the repercussions of the executions without open trials had on Irish public opinion.

I am simply inviting you to endeavour to understand their effect on that Irish public which read of [the executions] ‘with something of the feeling of helpless rage with which one would watch a stream of blood dripping from under a closed door’….[[706]](#footnote-707)

Wells continued:

… [and how] that the memory of Ireland’s thousands of soldiers who had died in the face of the enemy in France and Flanders, in Gallipoli and Macedonia, suddenly [became] less vital and real to her than the memory of her dozen rebels who died at the hands of English firing-parties in the barrack-yards of Dublin.[[707]](#footnote-708)

The British authorities had managed to produce a nationalist victory out of their successful defeat of the Irish rebel forces, a defeat that was initially roundly applauded by the Irish man in the street. As Wells accurately pointed out, Irish public opinion was rapidly alienated when martial law was imposed, and the secret tribunals began to take what was seen as a brutal anti-Irish vengeance on the misguided but “patriotic” nationalist prisoners.

### Out of the Rubble

The Clan-na-Gael and the FOIF, while they publicly exhibited a pro-German bias leading up to America’s entry into the war, continued to stress their loyalty as American Citizens.

Devoy and Cohalan did not oppose the American war effort and McGarrity was annoyed with them for what he called “a rather slavish circular” to members on 31 March 1917. “We will remain loyal and will yield to none in devotion to the flag, whether the United States goes to war or remains at peace.”[[708]](#footnote-709)

On April 6, 1917, the United States entered the war on the side of Great Britain and the Allies.

In June 1917, Éamon de Valera, the thirty-five-year-old Commandant of the Third Dublin Brigade of the Irish Volunteers during the Easter Rising, was released from prison. De Valera, born in 1882 in New York City, was the son of a Spanish father and an Irish mother. His father died in 1885 and de Valera was brought up by his grandmother and his uncle in County Limerick from the age of two.

De Valera was to play a major role in Ireland’s rocky road to a Republic. He joined the Irish Volunteers in 1913. In July that same year, he won election as the Sinn Féin candidate for MP from County Clare. Prior to the election, an “optimistic” forecast by Sinn Féin was for the party to gain one thousand of the eight thousand votes to be cast. De Valera’s margin of victory surprised the pollsters with a three thousand vote plurality. His election portended a major shift in preference of Irish voters toward Sinn Féin away from Redmond’s Irish Parliamentary “Home Rule” Party.

The executions and the postponement of the implementation of Home Rule had a profound effect on Irish voters. In December 1918, Sinn Féin nationalist candidates were elected in 73 of the 105 parliamentary districts assigned to Ireland. The Home Rule party, hitherto the majority, fell to 6 seats and the Ulster Unionists made up the remaining 26 seats. Many people attributed this dramatic turnaround solely to the declaration of martial law and the resulting executions of the nationalists. Although the summary executions generated sympathy for the rebels, the most important factor that explained Irish voters turning to Sinn Féin after the Easter Rising was the British government’s failure to implement the Home Rule Act for Ireland that had been constitutionally approved in 1914.[[709]](#footnote-710) Specifically onerous were rumors circulating that modifications to the Home Rule Act were being secretly negotiated by the British government with the Unionists in Ulster. Unionists were promised that counties with a Unionist majority in Ulster would be partitioned off outside any Home Rule government, something that had never been contemplated in the original bill. When news of the possibility of a partition leaked out, the Irish Parliamentary Party lost most of its support.

“There now exists a [political] wilderness. . ..” observed Michael Collins, president of the IRB.[[710]](#footnote-711) It was a wilderness into which a rejuvenated Sinn Féin and the Irish Republican Army (IRA), Sinn Féin’s military organization, were only too happy to enter. The nationalist cause was further strengthened when, on April 16, 1918, Parliament passed a conscription act that portended Irishmen being drafted into the British Army. Meanwhile, expecting trouble, the authorities in Ireland once again arrested the leaders of Sinn Féin.

On January 21, 1919, in Dublin, an Irish Parliament, calling itself the “Dáil Éirean” met for the first time on Irish soil in over one hundred years. The Dáil was made up of elected Sinn Féin party MPs who refused to enter their posts in the British Parliament. The Dáil was immediately repudiated by the British government and the Dáil members who were not already in jail went into hiding. Éamon de Valera was elected prime minister of the declared Republic in May of 1919. Fresh from his spectacular election victory in County Clare and his election as president of the new “Republic,” Éamon de Valera arrived in the United States in June 1919, where he stayed until December 1920, raising money for the Dáil and pushing for United States recognition of the Republic of Ireland government now under siege by British military forces.

With the tacit consent of the Dáil, Sinn Féin and its IRA military arm began an escalating number of guerrilla missions that involved sending masked men to confiscate rifles from police barracks and from ordinary citizens whom they happened to know owned guns. Many of these raids ended up with innocent people, including Irish policemen doing their duty, getting killed. Initially, the actions of the IRA were repudiated by the clergy and many nationalist sympathizers. Once again the British response was to increase its military presence in the locality where clandestine attacks were taking place and commence acts of indiscriminate violence that, in turn, negated the Irish public’s initial anti-IRA reaction and returned the focus back to British repression.

The escalation of violence continued unabated. By the summer of 1921, it was clear to both sides that neither side was going to defeat the other through force of arms. British public opinion would never have supported the increase of the 250,000 British troops estimated to be necessary to eliminate guerrilla activity on the island and the IRA was increasingly finding it more difficult to replenish supplies. Meanwhile the ordinary Irishman was fed up with war and longed for peace. On July 10, 1921, a truce was agreed to by both sides and put in place. A proof of the desire on all sides to end the violence is well illustrated by Robert Kee in his book *Ourselves Alone* when he describes the abrupt end of the mayhem.

. . . as soon as the truce came into force, over most of Ireland where violent death had long been as routine as the rising-up and going-down of the sun, there was in almost unearthly fashion suddenly a total abstinence of killing.[[711]](#footnote-712)

Hanging over the negotiations between the Dáil and Great Britain were black clouds of IRA intransigence and the abstinence of any Ulster Unionist participation. A “Free State” treaty was proposed and accepted by Michael Collins and his negotiating team that “recognized” a partitioned Unionist North. The IRA army was an entity unto itself not under control of the Dáil. Within the IRA ranks were both Free State moderates and diehard anti-treaty Republicans. Absent official control by the Dáil, the IRA disintegrated into two opposing factions. A plebiscite was held in the South in June 1922 that returned a pro-treaty Dáil which then accepted the Free State treaty with Great Britain. The IRA split in two groups, each under its own leadership structure: On the one side were the Free Staters who pledged themselves to the Dáil, on the other side were anti-treaty Republicans who vowed to fight on for a united Ireland. Britain refused to accept the treaty as valid as long as an armed military force under command of anti-treaty Republicans existed in the field. The result was a return to guerrilla warfare and assassinations. The civil war between “Free Staters” and “Republicans” lasted until May 1923 when what was left of the anti-treaty forces admitted defeat and surrendered to the Free State government. Southern Ireland now set off on a quest to establish itself as a democratic republic.

### Ireland’s Pancho Villa[[712]](#footnote-713)

The Clan-na-Gael, in 1919, and its surrogate public forum, the FOIF, found itself in a difficult position in respect to its public policy in the United States. The Dáil had proclaimed itself the government of Ireland and, although repudiated by the British government, the Dáil was supported by most Irish nationalists in Ireland. United States’ recognition of the Dáil as the legitimate government of an independent Irish nation without Britain recognizing it as such would carry the possibility of that it might be viewed by Britain as an act of aggression by the United States.

Devoy and Cohalan knew there was no possibility of the United States going to war to establish an Irish Republic. This was a fact that was understood by Irish Americans.[[713]](#footnote-714) Fugitives from the Easter Rising residing in the United States and a splinter group of Clan-na-Gael members under Joseph McGarrity publicly opposed the FOIF position that Ireland should be allowed “self-determination,” a phrase palatable to United States foreign policy. McGarrity and his followers wanted the FOIF and the Clan-na-Gael to eliminate “Americanism” and officially demand that the United States government recognize the Irish Republicas represented by the Dáil and its new president, Éamon de Valera.

President de Valera, in an inauspicious beginning to his American visit, landed in New York and made straightaway to Philadelphia to visit with Joseph McGarrity, a move guaranteed to irk Clan-na-Gael members, specifically Devoy, Cohalan, and the FOIF.[[714]](#footnote-715) De Valera certainly felt he represented the proclaimed Irish Republicand therefore expected the Clan-na-Gael and all Irish Americans should follow his orders as the Republic’s legal representative. It was a naïve belief, and it did not take him long to learn that Irish Americans were not Irish first and Americans second but the reverse. In order to exist as citizens in America who supported Irish independence, Irish Americans had to ensure that they were viewed by the rest of the American citizenry as Americans first and to this end they proclaimed a steadfast, vociferous loyalty to the United States. This strategy was most successful when Irish Americans vigorously supported George Washington’s admonishment that America must not get entangled in European conflicts—except, of course, an Irish American’s version proclaimed, in the case of Ireland’s struggle for freedom.

Even though recognizing an Irish Republiccould be viewed as an act of war in Great Britain, Irish American opinion began to side with de Valera and the Dáil. Under pressure of losing its relevance and subscription monies, on April 14, 1919 the FOIF’s national council voted to join the call for the United States to recognize the Irish Republic. The result was that FOIF membership rapidly shot up from 6,000 to 70,000.[[715]](#footnote-716) The FOIF was now committed to “recognition” of the Irish Republicbut publicly the organization could only approach any official discussions with Congress or with President Wilson using the term “self-determination.”

Slow to officially recognize de Valera as the new leader of an Irish nation, Devoy and Cohalan were aware of the political problem their new position presented. De Valera did not help his cause when, in an interview with the American press, he espoused a “Cuba-like” arrangement for Ireland. To the Clan-na-Gael, and any Americans familiar with Cuban-American relations, de Valera’s statement indicated an Ireland that would be officially subject to British intervention when Britain’s interests were perceived to be at stake.

Despite the rapidly growing friction between de Valera and the Clan-na-Gael, de Valera for his part was astute enough to recognize the importance of the Irish American origin of the Australian Prisoner rescue mission that had catapulted the Clan-na-Gael to the forefront of Irish American nationalism in 1876. One of de Valera’s first stops was to visit ninety-year-old James Wilson, last surviving member of the rescued prisoners. Later on, he made a stop in New Bedford to place a wreath on the grave of George Anthony, the captain of the *Catalpa*.[[716]](#footnote-717)

The Clan-na-Gael was also faced with the possibility that the United States might join the League of Nations which the FOIF characterized, with some justification, as an abdication of the United States’ right to act unilaterally on its own behalf in international disputes. The League would, as in the case of the Anglo-American Arbitration Treaty, place the United States in a position of support for England in any dispute involving Ireland. Always alert to what it perceived as any British influence in American foreign policy the Clan-na-Gael fought against any United States’ participation in the League of Nations, calling the proposed world organization a tool of Great Britain. The Clan-na-Gael/FOIF impression of de Valera suffered further when de Valera vacillated on this issue, stating to a reporter “that I am not against the League of Nations. . ..” although he did go on to say that amendments would be required.[[717]](#footnote-718) This interview was done at a time when the Clan-na-Gael was pouring thousands of dollars into an anti-League campaign. On November 19, 1919 the United States Senate voted not to join the League of Nations.

During the Republican nominating convention in Chicago in June 1920, Cohalan was able to get a plank inserted into the Republican Party platform recognizing Ireland’s right to self-determination. De Valera set up his own camp in Chicago and demanded that the Irish plank be an outright recognition of the Irish Republic. This convenient lack of unity allowed the Republican Committee to remove Cohalan’s potentially divisive plank from the platform. In a statement regarding De Valera’s action, Bishop M.J. Gallagher of Detroit made the point that if de Valera were President of Ireland he would have to be regarded as “a foreign potentate” and blamed him for the failure to obtain the Irish self-determination plank.[[718]](#footnote-719)

Devoy and Cohalan rejected any interference in Clan-na-Gael operations as the central fund-gathering agency for Irish American nationalism. After an unsuccessful attempt in the fall of 1920 to usurp control of the FOIF, de Valera set up his own organization, the AARIR[[719]](#footnote-720), for collecting funds in America and then severed all ties with the Clan-na-Gael and founded a “reorganized” Clan-na-Gael. Joseph McGarrity sided with de Valera and backed de Valera’s fund-gathering apparatus, officially producing a split in the Clan-na-Gael. Given all of the infighting, the FOIF saw its membership drop from 100,000 in 1920 to 20,000 in 1921. Although membership blossomed in the AARIR, that organization, too, went into decline after de Valera left for Ireland in December, 1920.[[720]](#footnote-721)

In June 1922 the voters of Ireland elected to the Dáil a pro-treaty majority. The newly constituted Dáil voted to accept the treaty and the Irish Free State was born. The Free State government, as mentioned above, was immediately embroiled in open warfare between Free State supporters and the IRA Republicans who refused to accept the new government. Éamon de Valera sided with the Republicans. The Clan-na-Gael and the FOIF through Devoy’s *Gaelic American* heaped abuse on de Valera as the perpetrator and sole cause of the civil war. Among a growing number of modern historians, Diarmaid Ferriter, using newly released documents, plausibly presents the case that the civil war was unpreventable and certainly not the fault of one man.

Any account of those times that seeks to blame any one person or party for the Civil War involves simplifying a confused time, and it is fair to describe de Valera during the Civil War as being led rather than being the leader.[[721]](#footnote-722)

In August 1922, Michael Collins, the ablest of the Free State leaders, was shot in an ambush by Republicans. In 1923, with no hope of success, de Valera and the Republicans agreed to lay down their Arms.

De Valera and the Republicans took no part in the Dáil but, instead, ran their own candidates which in number represented about a quarter of the available Dáil seats. However, the Republicans refused to enter the Dáil because of the oath required to King George. In 1926, De Valera formed a new political party “Fianna Fail” and got around the problem of the oath by signing the document that recognized he had agreed to the oath and then refused to swear loyalty to the king on the provided Bible. The large number of followers of de Valera’s entry into the Dáil further split the Republican nationalists. The Republican militants in the IRA went underground. Fianna Fáil grew in political power and in 1933 de Valera and his party were elected to power.

In 1937 de Valera rewrote, and the Dáil passed, a constitution that abolished the oath to the king and proclaimed sovereignty over all thirty-two counties in Ireland, while officially recognizing that sovereignty over the six Union counties in Ulster could not be implemented in the immediate future. The Republic of Eire was now a reality. A recently published book details the influence that Irish Americans and their descendants in America and Irish American nationalist organizations had on the attainment of an Independent Republic in Ireland. Well sourced, this book reveals Irish American influence on American foreign policy towards Great Britain that ultimately led to the Irish Republic: [[722]](#footnote-723)

# Summation

The Clan-na-Gael came into existence in 1867 as a reaction to the internal disunion within the Fenian Brotherhood caused by the Canadian invasions of 1866 that deviated from the original revolution in Ireland strategy. That disunion was augmented by personality clashes and the fear some of the Fenian leaders had that they might lose their lucrative positions in the Fenian hierarchy. The Oath of Secrecy requirement was a factor which enticed increasing number of Fenians, distressed by the incessant airing of dirty linen in the press that plagued the Fenian Brotherhood, to join the Clan-na-Gael.

The failure of O’Neill’s Canadian invasion in June 1870 and his subsequent bolting from the Senate Wing to accept a leadership position in the Savage Wing led directly to a call from inside the Senate Wing to restructure the organization. An “Irish National Congress” was called by the Senate Wing in August 1870, hoping to spark a reunification with the Savage Wing. The Cincinnati Congress was boycotted by the Savage Wing with minor exceptions, and the result was that, except in name, another Senate Wing Congress took place. The Clan-na-Gael was able to ensure that the organization that emerged from the restructuring had Clan-na-Gael members in most key directory positions, a natural result of many Senate leaders also belonging to the Clan-na-Gael. In a display of wishful thinking, the new organization was christened the “United Irishmen.” Although Clan-na-Gael members held many of the directory positions at the Irish National Congress, they were unable to convert the organization into a secret oath-sworn body.

The new United Irishmen organization directory turned itself over to John Devoy, O’Donovan Rossa, and the other IRB Exiles upon their arrival in New York in 1871. Devoy and the Exiles changed the name to “Irish Confederation” but the new leadership was unable to slow the disintegration of the organization. Maintenance of an open democratic constitution and an inability to achieve unification with the Savage Wing spelled the demise of the Irish Confederation, which officially ceased operations in 1873. The Clan-na-Gael, meanwhile, continued to recruit “right-minded” Clan-na-Gael members from the nationalists that belonged to the Irish Confederation. It is safe to assume that Fenian Brotherhood Circles and Irish Confederation Clubs that agreed to join the Clan-na-Gael were allowed to convert to a Clan-na-Gael Camp once the members took the mandatory oath of secrecy.

The successful prisoner rescue executed by John Devoy in 1876 established the Clan-na-Gael as the new leader of Irish American nationalist activity and helped Devoy cope with John Goff and his conservative followers. In spite of the internal dissensions resulting from the feud between Devoy and Goff, the Clan-na-Gael continued to increase in membership.

The Clan-na-Gael saw a significant drop in membership because of the mid-1880s dynamite campaign against England and the murder of Dr. Patrick Cronin in 1889 when public opinion turned against the Clan-na-Gael and generated an exodus of members. John Devoy succeeded in reuniting the Clan-na-Gael in 1900 and focused the organization once again on an Ireland-centric strategy providing a source of funds for the IRB and later for Sinn Féin and its IRA military wing. During the World War I years, the Clan-na-Gael suffered for its unpopular pro-German policies in 1918 and later in 1942, but the organization weathered these relatively short-lived nadirs in public opinion. The Easter Rising of 1916 brought an increase in membership that lasted up until the split that occurred when de Valera as the president of the Dáil attempted to wrest control of the organization from Devoy in 1920. After the Irish civil war, the underground organization of Sinn Féin and the IRA military focused its attention on trying to liberate the six counties of Ulster in what is called Northern Ireland.

The IRA established bases in the new southern Irish Republic and began launching guerilla attacks against loyalist militias and British outposts in Ulster. These attacks escalated significantly during the so-called “Troubles” of the 1960s. There followed a negative reaction in Irish-America to “British Occupation” when the British army increased its presence in Ulster in an attempt to restore order and defeat the IRA. Negative Irish American reaction to the escalation, in turn, enhanced the ability of the Clan-na-Gael to raise funds and ensure that the organization could continue to supply money to the Sinn Féin political wing and arms to the IRA military. The result was continuous sectarian violence in Northern Ireland characterized by attacks on police, random bombings, and assassinations carried out by the IRA and similar retaliatory actions by Loyalist militias. The violence lasted up to the Easter peace accords of 1998.

The Clan-na-Gael still exists today although significantly reduced in membership as a result of a subsequent loss of Irish American interest when, for the most part, the violence ceased after the Easter Accords of April 10, 1998. The grounding of arms agreed to by Sinn Féin and the IRA provoked another internal split in America as splinter radical groups wanted to continue the fight.[[723]](#footnote-724) One faction wished to carry on the fight and another faction continued to support Sinn Féin in its drive to unite Ireland within the political system now in place in Northern Ireland. The Clan-na-Gael of today in the United States is, of course, a much different organization from that of the 1870s and 1880s as it has evolved to adjust to modern times and the advent of the Irish Republic. If there is one legacy of the past that still haunts the organization, it is factionalism. Manifested in Brendan Behan’s famous quip about the “split,” it is the one facet of Irish nationalism that continues to stalk the modern republican leadership as it did their predecessors.

In America as well as in Ireland there will always be a core group of nationalists ready to continue the armed struggle for total independence; but, the Easter Accords truce seems promising and, if the now-disarmed Loyalists and Republicans in Northern Ireland are able to work together to create a functioning all-inclusive government and confine their disputes to the voting booths, perhaps the North-South border will fade away as the years go by, and the Clan-na-Gael in America may very well become an anachronism —an old man’s club— where grizzled members talk about the old days and raise their glasses to the yet-to-be-known configuration of an Ireland finally united.

APPENDICES:

**APPENDIX I   
Notes on Sources Used for this Book**

Membership rolls and the inner workings of the Clan-na-Gael were not open to public scrutiny. Clan-na-Gael correspondence, after being read aloud at meetings by Camp leaders was designated to be burned in front of those present. Historians owe a large debt of gratitude to John Devoy’s penchant for saving his Clan-na-Gael correspondence, reports, notebooks, and circulars. The Devoy family donated these documents to the National Library in Ireland. An equally large debt is owed to the British spy, Thomas Beach, alias Henri Le Caron, who infiltrated the Senate Fenians and later the Triangle faction of the Clan-na-Gael by means of his connections to Fenian General John O’Neill and the 1881 Chairman of the Clan-na-Gael Executive Body, Alexander Sullivan. Beach, alias Le Caron, was allowed by his “handler” Sir Robert Anderson, head of British intelligence, to break cover and testify during the *London Times* Commission Trial of Irish MP Charles Stewart Parnell in 1889. During that trial, Beach put into evidence Clan-na-Gael documents that he had copied while at his post as a Clan-na-Gael Camp Senior Guardian. Beach outlined in court the structure of the organization and related conversations he had had with Clan-na-Gael leaders. The prime source material disclosed by Le Caron and the correspondence and diaries of John Devoy are invaluable aids to understanding the motivations and thought processes of the Clan-na-Gael hierarchy.

At the Catholic University of America archives in Washington D.C. there can be found the VC Report of the Eighth Annual Convention held in Cleveland, Ohio, September 4,1877 which documents the Clan-na-Gael investigation into Thomas Brennan’s role as a mutineer aboard the rescue ship *Catalpa*. Other primary sources include books authored by Clan-na-Gael and IRB members, principally, John Devoy, Michael Davitt, Thomas Clarke Luby, Mark Ryan, and John O’Leary, as well as the British spy Henry Le Caron [Thomas Beach] and his handler Sir Robert Anderson. John T. McEnnis included a brief history of the Clan-na-Gael as an adjunct to his recounting of the 1899 investigation into the assassination of Chicago Clan-na-Gael reformer Dr. Patrick Cronin and the subsequent trial of the Clan-na-Gael men involved in the murder. McEnnis was a member of the Chicago anti-Cronin branch of that organization.

John Devoy as the editor (1903-1928) of the New York *Gaelic American* newspaper wrote numerous articles on Clan-na-Gael history and policies as a member of the Clan-na-Gael hierarchy for forty years. Source material in the Devoy archives at the NLI includes hundreds of letters from the prolific Clan-na-Gael Executive Body Chairman (1875-1879), Dr. William Carroll. Dr. Carroll’s letters, written several times a week during his tenure, discuss all aspects of Clan-na-Gael activity. Many of these letters were transcribed and published in a two volume set, edited by Ryan and O’Brien, entitled Devoy’s Post Bag. Specifically helpful is document MS. 9,824 cataloged at NLI as “Devoy’s notebook” in the Devoy archives where lists of the Clan-na-Gael Camp designations and hierarchy from the formation of the first Camps in 1867 until the author stops making entries in mid-1874. In that document the author notes officers and dates of founding or “reorganizing” for most of the Clan-na-Gael Camps. I am convinced, first by the fact that most entries were made before John Devoy joined the Clan-na-Gael or had an official position in the organization and, second, by the fact that the handwriting doesn’t match other verified Devoy manuscripts, that this document is actually the notebook of William J. Nicholson who was Clan-na-Gael secretary until he was deposed in 1874 for embezzling funds and was forced to give back all documents in his possession to the Clan-na-Gael.

A wealth of background information can be found in Irish American newspapers where nationalist controversies and activities received significant attention. These newspapers, in addition to containing numerous articles on the movement, also contain letters to the editors by Fenian and Clan-na-Gael functionaries and interviews with dissidents, all of which help a researcher to better understand the issues that were being grappled with by the nationalist movement. The most important of these newspapers are the aforementioned *Gaelic American*, as well as Patrick Ford’s *Irish World* and Patrick Meehan’s *The Irish-American*, and two relatively Irish-friendly newspapers, the *New York Herald* and the *Chicago Tribune*.

The Fenian Brotherhood has been researched by many able scholars and several books have been published on the history of Fenianism. Until this present work, published sources that discuss the Clan-na-Gael left more questions than answers. Michael Funchion’s book, *Irish American Voluntary Organizations,* provides a capsule history of the Clan-na-Gael. Funchion also published his doctoral thesis, the almost impossible to obtain “Chicago’s Irish Nationalists” that covered Clan-na-Gael activity in Chicago during the 1880s. John Devoy’s articles in the *Gaelic American*, “The Story of the Clan-na-Gael” and “The Story of the *Catalpa* Rescue,” are excellent sources; but Devoy must be read with caution as his primary objective was the advancement of the Clan-na-Gael agenda, not historical accuracy.

Owen McGee in his book, *The Irish Revolutionary Brotherhood*, gives an excellent in-depth look at the IRB and its Supreme Council and covers the role that the Clan-na-Gael played in Ireland’s fight for independence. McGee’s book does not cover early Clan-na-Gael history and is focused the organization’s interface with Ireland.

The story of the *Catalpa*’s voyage has been told and retold, with varying degrees of accuracy, as an adventure story of Irish heroes, of victims rescued, and of Britain shamed. Sean O’Lúing’s *Fremantle Mission* (1965), John Devoy’s articles “The *Catalpa* Story” in the *Gaelic American* newspaper (republished as John Devoy’s *Catalpa* *Expedition* by New York University Press in 2007), Zephaniah Pease’s *Catalpa* *Expedition* (Cambridge, 1897), and the logbook of the *Catalpa* are among the sources used here to tell the story of the *Catalpa* rescue. Several other books on the rescue are better classified as historical fiction: Paul Buddee’s *The Escape of the Fenians* (1971), William J. Laubenstein’s *Emerald Whaler* (1960) and Peter Stevens’ scrabbled-together *Voyage of the* *Catalpa* (2002).

The bibliography below lists those books and sources that contributed the majority of information upon which the research for this book is based.

**I. Primary sources:**

**Books:**

Ryan and O’Brien, *Devoy’s Post Bag,* Vols. I & II.

John Devoy, *Recollections of an Irish Rebel*

Z.W. Pease, *The Catalpa Expedition* [written under the auspices of, and published by, Captain George S Anthony].

**Newspapers:**

John Devoy’s the *Gaelic American*, especially Devoy’s articles: “The Story of the Catalpa Rescue” and “The Story of the Clan-na-Gael.”

John Devoy’s *Irish Nation*

Patrick J. Meehan’s *The Irish-American*

Patrick Ford’s *Irish World*

*New York Times*

*Chicago Tribune*

*New York Herald*

**Other sources:**

The Devoy Collection in the archives of the National Library of Ireland, Dublin

The Eighth Annual VC Convention Report, from the Jeremiah O’Donovan Rossa Papers at the Archives of the Catholic University of America, Washington, DC

The Logbook of the *Catalpa* on microfilm, New Bedford Whaling Museum, MA.

The Sir Frederick William Adolphus Bruce Papers at the River Campus Library Collections at the University of Rochester, NY.

The Francis B. Gallagher collection of Fenian Brotherhood records at Philadelphia Archdiocesan Historical Research Center.

Minutes from 1921-1926 of the Cincinnati Wolfe Tone Club (Camp D10 and later Camp D7). Also: from this club a quarterly Term Report for September 1925, for club statistics and finance, and an 1882 Ritual Book, describing the meeting and induction rites used by the club. These documents are in the possession of Andrew Sweeny of Cincinnati who kindly allowed me access to them. Andrew’s great grandfather George Sweeny was, off and on, President and Recording Secretary of the Cincinnati Wolfe Tone Club for some fifty-seven years.

**II. Secondary sources:**

**For the *Catalpa* Rescue:**

Seán Ó Lúing, *Fremantle Mission*

Keith Amos, *The Fenians in Australia*

Philip Fennell and Marie King, *John Devoy’s Catalpa Expedition*

**For Fenians in Ireland:**

R. V. Comerford, *The Fenians in Context*

Marta Román, *A Provisional Dictator: James Stephens and the Fenian Movement*

**For United States Fenianism:**

William D’Arcy, *The Fenian Movement in the United States 1858-1886*

Michael Ruddy, “Here Comes That Damn Green Flag Again,” *Civil War Times*, April, 2002

Jack Morgan, *Thomas Sweeny: Through American and Irish Wars*

Brian Jenkins, *Fenians and Anglo-American Relations During Reconstruction*

Michael Kane, “American Soldiers in Ireland, 1865-1867,” *Irish Sword*, Summer, 2002

Brian Sayers, “John O’Mahony and the Emmet Monument Association” in *Iris Mhuintir Mhathúna, Uimh* 26, 2003

Kevin Thaddeus Brady, doctoral dissertation: “Fenians and the Faithful: Philadelphia’s Irish   
Republican Brotherhood and the Philadelphia Diocese 1859-1870” (UMI-ProQuest)

**For the Clan-na-Gael:**

John T. McEnnis, *The Clan–na-Gael and the Murder of Dr. Cronin*

Michael Funchion, *Irish American Voluntary Organizations*

Michael Funchion, “Chicago’s Irish Nationalists, 1881-1890” (doctoral dissertation- UMI ProQuest)

Owen McGee, *Irish Republican Brotherhood from the Land League to Sinn Féin*

Leon O’Broin, *Revolutionary Underground: The Story of the Irish Revolutionary Brotherhood*

Terry Golway, *Irish Rebel*

Terrence Dooley, *The Greatest of the Fenians*

**APPENDIX II   
IRB Irish Exiles who arrived in America:**

**The Cunard ship *Cuba* arrived January 19, 1871**

Jeremiah O’Donovan Rossa, 20 years.

John McClure, 20 years.

Charles Underwood O’Connell, 4 years.

John Devoy, 11 years.

Harry Shaw Mulleda, 4 years.

**The Cunard ship *Russia* arrived January 26, 1871**

Thomas Francis Bourke, 20 years.

Edward Power, 11 years.

Edward (Pilsworth) St Clair, 6 years.

Patrick Lennon, 12 years.

William Francis Roantree, 5 years.

Patrick Walsh, 11 years.

Peter Maughan, 7 years.

Denis Dowling Mulcahy, 5 years.

George Browne, 6 years.

**The Cunard ship Siberia to Boston February 20, 1871**

William G. Halpin, 11 years.

**The Cunard ship Parthia to Boston February 26, 1871**

Michael Sheehy, 16 years.

William Mackey (Lomasney) 9 years.

**The Baringa from Sydney to San Francisco October 10, 1869[[724]](#footnote-725)**

Denis B Cashman released in Australia.

David Cummins released in Australia.

Patrick Doran released in Australia.

**The Baringa from Sydney to San Francisco October 21, 1869[[725]](#footnote-726)**

Patrick Dunne released in Australia.

Maurice Fitzgibbons release in Australia.

Thomas Fogarty released in Australia.

Eugene Geary released in Australia.

Denis Hennessy released in Australia.

John Kenealy released in Australia.

Patrick Leahy released in Australia.

Michael Moore released in Australia.

John Sheehan released in Australia.

John Bennett Walsh released in Australia [probably].

Patrick Wall released in Australia.

**The Baringa from Sydney to San Francisco October 31, 1869[[726]](#footnote-727)**

David Joyce released in Australia.

The City of Melbourne to San Francisco Summer of 1871[[727]](#footnote-728)

Thomas McCarthy Fennell released in Australia.

The *Catalpa* arrived from Fremantle to New York August 18, 1876

Thomas Darragh, prisoner freed by Clan-Na-Gael.

Daring Robert Cranston, prisoner freed by Clan-Na-Gael.

Michael Harrington, prisoner freed by Clan-Na-Gael.

Thomas Henry Hassett, prisoner freed by Clan-Na-Gael.

Joseph Martin Hogan, prisoner freed by Clan-Na-Gael.

James Wilson, prisoner freed by the Clan-na-Gael.

John King, Australian IRB leader permitted aboard.

**Miscellaneous Exile Arrivals in America**

John Boyle O’Reilly: escaped from Fremantle, Australia February 18, 1869 aboard the Gazelle and later arrived in Philadelphia aboard the Bombay November 23, 1869.[[728]](#footnote-729)

Jerome James Collins: arrived probably under a false name in 1866, having fled England  
after being discovered in a plot to free Fenian the prisoners being held at Pentonville (London) prison. Collins founded Napper Tandy the first Camp of the Clan-na-Gael.[[729]](#footnote-730)

Mortimer Shea (Moriarty), immigrated to Canada “after Famine” returned to Ireland and was captured in 1867 sentenced to 10 years and released before February 17, 1871. Arrival date unknown.[[730]](#footnote-731)

John McCafferty: was released June 7, 1871, 20 years.

Ricard O’Sullivan Burke: released in 1871 to custody of his brother to America in 1873;[[731]](#footnote-732)

John O’Leary: went to Belgium then Paris then to America arriving July 19, 1871, 14 years.[[732]](#footnote-733)

Thomas Clarke Luby: went to Belgium and then came toAmerica in May of 1871, 14 years.

James J. O’Kelly: joined the IRB in 1860. Enlisted in the French Foreign Legion in 1863 returned to Ireland in 1866. Came to America in 1871.

Denis Duggan: arrested in Ireland, served time and sailed for America arrived before 1874.

Thomas Delany, released in Australia arrived in America in 1882.[[733]](#footnote-734)

John Edward Kelly: released in Australia arrived from Sydney to San Francisco in 1876.

**APPENDIX III**

**Plot of Catapa voyage using daily reckonings from Catalpa Logbook**

**Map

Description automatically generated**

1. This thesis was the basis of Marta Ramón’s book *James Stephens: A Provisional Dictator* (UCD Press, Dublin, 2007). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Many Catholics in Ireland in the 1800s refused to attend public schools which were proselytizers of the Anglican Church. Also, in rural areas many children did not have access to public schools. The problem was solved by employing “hedgerow” teachers, men who for a small amount would teach children out in the open. The hedgerow teaching tradition originated in the 1700s when Catholics were forbidden by law to educate their children except in the Anglican schools. This law was abrogated in 1782 but hedgerow teaching was still being done in rural areas until the 1890s. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Edward MacLysagt, *Irish Families*, p. 137 (Dublin, 1957): John Boyle O’Reilly was a poet and cavalryman in the British Hussars who was arrested in Dublin while for working for John Devoy as a recruiter among the Irishmen serving in the British Army. MacLysagt’s Bernard McNulty turned out to be a poet who emigrated in 1849, was living in New Jersey and was influential in the founding of the Fenian movement. He had no known relationship to my great-grandfather other than they both died in 1892. Grandma Annie is gone now and whether the New Jersey Bernard McNulty was the origin of Annie’s story, or she had firsthand knowledge of her father’s involvement in a local Fenian club in Minnesota is unknown. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. *Cincinnati Daily Enquirer*, July 31, 1870; *Irish American*, September 3, 1870. Gibbons used “Convention” in his call for nationalists to meet in Cincinnati. The *Irish American* called it “The Irish National Convention.” The *New York Herald* August 24, 1870 and the *New York Times,* August 25, 1870, called it an “Irish National Congress.” Based on the fact that the Senate Wing used “Congress” to designate its annual national delegate meetings, and for purposes of consistency in this book, I will henceforth use “Congress” for all Fenian Brotherhood national delegate meetings. The Clan-na-Gael (United Brotherhood) used the word “Convention” for their Clan-na-Gael annual delegate meetings. I use the word “Convention” for any national Clan-na-Gael meetings. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. Sinn Féin is a Gaelic phrase meaning “ourselves alone” and a nationalist political organization of that name was founded in the years leading up to the Easter Rising in Dublin in 1916. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. *Irish American*, January 19, 1878, p. 1; Tom Fox, *The Hidden History of the Irish of New Jersey* (2011, Charleston, SC) p. 33. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. Hereward Senior, *The Last Invasion of Canada,* Dundurn Press (Toronto, 1991). [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. “Clan-na-Gael Association,” later shortened to “Clan-na-Gael,” was the name used publicly by the organization to advertise fund-raising events. The name was just a public front name. Internally the members called themselves the “United Brotherhood” or, in cipher, “VC,” based on an internal code explained elsewhere in this book. Each Clan-na-Gael club, called a “Camp,” had a front name such as “Napper Tandy” or “Robert Emmet Literary Society” for public use and a secret internal numerical designation: D1, D2, etc. which stood for Camp 1, Camp 2 and so on. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. Michael Funchion’s difficult-to-find book (Arno Press, 1976) is a reprinting of his 1973 doctoral dissertation given at Loyola University. Owen McGee’s book is a recent publication (Four Courts Press, 2007). Both these books add significant research to Leon O’Broin’s Ireland-focused *Revolutionary Underground* (Rowman and Littlefield, 1976). [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. *New York Times*, May 21, 1870 and *Irish American*, September 3, 1870. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
11. William O’Brien and Desmond Ryan, eds., *Devoy’s Postbag*, pp. 2-5 (C. J. Fallon, Dublin, 1948) [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
12. For Devoy’s life see Terry Golway, *Irish Rebel,* St Martin’s Press (NY, 1988); Terrence Dooley, *The Greatest of the Fenians*, Wolfhound Press (Dublin, 2003); William O’Brien and Desmond Ryan, eds., *Devoy’s Postbag*, Vol. I, p. 10 [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
13. Referred to officially as the “Executive Body,” this elected group was the governing council of the Clan-na-Gael. It is often referenced as “FC” in Clan-na-Gael’s ciphered correspondence, which in the beginning used the following letter in the alphabet to disguise certain organizational sections (so Camp became “D”; e.g. Napper Tandy is also called “D1” in this book). I have not abbreviated Executive Body nor Clan-na-Gael in an attempt to avoid ambiguity. “Clan” and “executive” each have a different meaning when used alone. If in my research I found Executive meant Executive Body, I used the full phrase. If my job is done well, when “executive” is seen standing alone it should not be taken as the Executive Body, likewise for the word “clan” and Clan-na-Gael. There are some instances when Executive is within a quoted statement where I did not alter or footnote the quote, confident that the reader would understand that Executive Body was meant by the original source. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
14. This description of the *Catalpa*’s rescue of the prisoners is an amalgam of the extant sources: The *Catalpa Logbook*, *Catalpa Expedition* by Pease, accounts by the participants reported in newspapers, the *Gaelic American* account: “The Catalpa Story” by John Devoy, *Catalpa* related letters found in *Devoy’s Postbag* *Vols. I & II* and amended by my own research using maps of Western Australia. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
15. Z. W. Pease, *Catalpa Expedition*, published by George S. Anthony, Riverside Press (Cambridge, 1897), p. 81, whaleboats normally had five rowers, three at starboard and two at port. A sixth oar was used to steer the boat. Five rowers had left the *Catalpa* with Captain Anthony. In general, Pease based his book on conversations with Captain Anthony and the *Catalpa* logbook. Page references are from a reprint edition from Hesperian Press, Carlisle (Western Australia, 2002). [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
16. Pease, *Catalpa Expedition*, p. 92-93, “at the sweeps” means the rowers were working the large oars. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
17. ‘already bent’: A sail or flag fixed to the yard or halyards is “bent.” The mizzenmast is the aft-most of the bark’s three mainmasts. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
18. *Logbook of the Bark Catalpa*, entry for Saturday November 6, 1875, microfilm copy of original at the New Bedford Whaling Museum in New Bedford, Massachusetts; Antoine Silva was not on the original crew list. He signed on as third mate at Fayal in the Azores. “Weather side” is the side of the ship towards the wind, cf: “lee side” or sheltered side; this phrase is from the logbook. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
19. Pease, *Catalpa Expedition*, p. 93. I have given Captain Anthony’s version. Several versions exist describing how the men arrived onto the deck. In an interview (*The Irish World*, August 26, 1876) Thomas Darragh said that First Mate Smith “lowered his grapnels, and took boat, crew and all on board at one hoist.” Breslin in his report to the UB Convention (see footnote below), p. 43, states that everyone “scrambled on board in double quick time.” Samuel Smith (*San Francisco Sunday Call*, April 29, 1900) said he “hoisted the whole thing on board.” Note: “davits” are the two crane-like devices with block and tackle which are used to lower and raise the whaleboats. A later version from Captain Anthony’s point of view is told in the *Washington Post*, June 1, 1913, at the time of Anthony’s death in New Bedford. This version does not mention the men clambering up the ropes. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
20. *Report of the Eighth Annual VC* [United Brotherhood] *Convention Cleveland, Ohio, September 4-8, 1877* p. 42, Catholic University of America History Research Center and Archives, “Box 6” microfilm of The Fenian Brotherhood Records and Personal Papers of O'Donovan Rossa is referred to hereafter as: *UB Convention*; see also “Report of Coxswain Mills*”* quoted in Keith Amos, *The Fenians In Australia*, NSW University Press, (New South Wales, 1988) p. 238; *The* *Herald*, Perth, Australia 22 Apr 1876; *The Western Australia Times*, 21 April 1876. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
21. *Boston Pilot*, June 17, 1876, quoted in Pease, *Catalpa Expedition,* and is also mentioned in F. H. O’Donnell, *A History of the Irish Parliamentary Party*, (2 Vols.), (London, 1910), *Vol. I,* p. 157, the phrase quoted is Benjamin Disraeli’s negative response to a petition for the prisoner’s release as reported in *London Times* May 23, 1876 a month after the prisoners had escaped. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
22. *London Times,* June 10, 1876. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
23. *Hansard Report, House of Commons: HC Debates* 22 June 1876 Vol 230 c251 [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
24. William O’Brien and Desmond Ryan, eds., *Devoy’s Postbag*,(2 Vols.) C. J. Fallon (Dublin, 1948, 1953), Vol. I, p. 181, Letter from William Carroll to (probably) Patrick Mahon. This source will be hereafter referred to as *DPB, I & II*; also see Christy Campbell, *Fenian Fire,* Harper Collins (London, 2002), p. 92. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
25. *London Times,* August 8, 1876, the *Times* described the elation on board the *Catalpa* as she sped away from Australia. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
26. John Devoy, *Recollections of an Irish Rebel*, Irish University Press (Shannon, 1969), p. 252 [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
27. *London Times,* August 7, 1876; Seán ÓLúing, *Fremantle Mission*, Anvil Books (Tralee, 1965), p. 149. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
28. “*Supplement Report of Chairman of FC*” dated September 3, 1877 MS. 18,017(3) NLI: *Circulars issued by the Clan-na-Gael 1874-1927*. [FC is code for the Executive Body of the United Brotherhood.] [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
29. *London Times,* June 26, 1876; the next day the *London Times*, June 27, 1876, reported the abrogation of the treaty and admitted nothing formal could be done. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
30. In 1875 the United States had obtained the extradition of a Mr. Lawrence from England on forgery charges as stipulated in the 1870 treaty, but upon his arrival Lawrence was charged with smuggling, not an extraditable offense under the treaty. It became obvious to all that smuggling was the real reason for the extradition. Britain noted the ruse thus perpetrated and upon the next extradition request for forgery charges against a Mr. Winslow, Britain requested assurances that Winslow would only be charged with the crime for which he was extradited. Based on subsequent United States’ action, Britain seems to have been on firm ground: Lawrence was never tried and Winslow was never extradited. After some cooling-off time, the Lawrence and Winslow incidents came to be ignored by both governments and extraditions resumed. *The Irish American* September 2, 1876, http://www.gutenberg.org/files/13012/13012-h/13012-h.htm, (12 December 2005); Spencer, Herbert, *The Man Versus The State, with Six Essays on Government, Society, and Freedom*, *Library of Economics and Liberty*;

    http://www.econlib.org/LIBRARY/YPDBooks/Lalor/llCy439.html (accessed December 12, 2005). [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
31. House of Commons, “Hansard Report,” HC Deb 15 February 1877 Vol. 232 cc383-4. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
32. Michael J. O’Brien, *Pioneer Irish in New England*, PJ Kennedy & Sons (New York, 1937), p. 27. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
33. Michael J. O’Brien’s works, including *A Hidden Phase of American History* and *Pioneer Irish in New England*, are virtually ignored as not objective enough to be scholarly research. O’Brien was a man on a mission to show the importance of the role of the Irish in the founding of the American Colonies. O’Brien did have a propensity to jump enthusiastically to conclusions in his eagerness to prove his thesis and often he writes long soliloquies against his peers whom he claims ignore colonial Irish immigration. Modern readers, who are willing to trudge through these rants and are willing to let pass a few wishful conclusions based on wispy possibilities, will find sufficient documented source material to snuff out the theory, prevalent in O’Brien’s day—and only slowly dissipating in our time—that the Irish played no role in the formation of the Thirteen Colonies and the American Revolution. If a researcher is disposed to question the extent of prerevolutionary Irish immigration and then chooses to overlook Michael J. O’Brien’s research and sources, he does so at his own peril. An unpublished manuscript by Professor Leroy V. Eid of Dayton University, in the process of reviewing the validity of Michael J. O’Brien’s work, took a random sample of O’Brien’s sources, and came to the conclusion that “His genealogical work, his search for shipping statistics and their coherence with the data from Ireland, warrant scholarly respect,” Leroy V. Eid, “The Validity of Colonial Irish American History: The Case of Michael J. O’Brien*,*” at symposium, Northwestern University, “Working Papers in Irish Studies,” (1990). [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
34. O’Brien, Pioneer Irish in New England, p. 47 [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
35. O’Brien, Pioneer Irish in New England, p. 32. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
36. John P. Prendergast, *The Cromwellian Settlement of Ireland*, P.M. Haverty (New York, 1868) Appendix VI, pp. 244-246, quoted by O’Brien, *Pioneer Irish in New England*, pp. 33-34. O’Brien apparently chose his sources well; witness a modern Irish historian Nicholas Canny, who states that John Prendergast (et al) “. . . both published worthy history and salvaged and edited documentary compilations that enabled future research.” Nicholas Canny, “Writing Early Modern History: Ireland, Britain, and the Wider World” *Cambridge Historical Journal*, 46, 3 (2003), pp. 723–747). [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
37. Note that men and women were also collected in England and sold as indentured servants in America in a like manner to Prendergast’s description of the Irish process. Obviously, there was less political risk if one harvested the people in Ireland. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
38. This “hostility” suggests that Irish and English immigrants landed in America with different perspectives, an important factor illustrating the validity of postulating that different influences motivated Irish versus English rebels during the American Revolution. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
39. O’Brien, *Pioneer Irish in New England*, p. 32-48; O’Brien wrote this book to refute claims made by historians of his era that only Englishmen came to the colonies in the 17th and 18th centuries – it is fascinating to read O’Brien as he traces what happened to indentured servants like the *Goodfellow* passengers and their descendants using colonial documents as sources. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
40. *Irish Immigrants in the Land of Canaan* edited by Miller, Schrier, Boling & Doyle, Oxford University Press (New York, 2003), p. 8. The editors did not subscribe to the “Irish rising” thesis but point out that the Irish were an important component of the Revolution. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
41. Nicholas Canny, ed., *Oxford History of the British Empire,* Volume I, Oxford Press (London, 1988), p.31. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
42. David Noel Doyle [Professor of history, University College Dublin], *Ireland, Irishmen, and Revolutionary America 1760-1820*, Mercier Press (Dublin, 1981), pp 127-132. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
43. Ronald H. Bayor and Timothy Meagher, Eds. *The New York Irish*, John Hopkins Press (Baltimore, 1996), p.45. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
44. Robert Foster, *Modern Ireland 1600-1972*, Penguin Books (US/UK, 1989), p.216; the term “Scots-Irish” did not exist at the time; the Scots-Irish differentiated descendants of the Scots who immigrated into Ireland in the 1600s from the original Irish inhabitants. It is an Americanism which gained popularity in the1840s during the period of a large influx of usually poor, uneducated Catholic Irish into the US in the famine years. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
45. James Horn “British Diaspora: Emigration from Britain, 1680-1815,” Oxford History of the British Empire, Vol. I, Oxford University Press (August, 1998), p.28. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
46. Foster, *Modern Ireland 1600-1972*, cites D.N. Doyle, *Ireland, Irishmen, and Revolutionary America 1760-1820* (Dublin, 1981), p.73. Doyle estimated that ten years later in the census year of 1790, 447,000 Irish and Irish descendants were in America with 300,000 of these being Ulster Scots-Irish stock. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
47. O’Brien, Pioneer Irish in New England, p.281. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
48. John Phillip Reid, *In A Defiant Stance*, Pennsylvania State Press, (University Park, 1977) p.44. Reid compares British law and its implementation in Massachusetts versus the same law and its implementation in Ireland. British moderation in ruling the American Colonies, Reid theorizes, resulted in almost no violent reprisals against loyalists during or after the Revolution. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
49. David A. Wilson, *United Irishmen, United States*, Chapter Two “Hordes of Wild Irishmen” pp.36-57, Cornell University Press (Ithaca, 1998); a study of Irish American influence in American politics prior to 1845. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
50. Michael Durey, *Transatlantic Radicals and the Early American Republic*, University of Kansas Press (Lawrence, 1997) p.145. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
51. Michael Funchion, ed. *Irish American Voluntary Organizations*, Greenwood Press (Westport, 1983); an excellent treatment of Irish American societies. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
52. Brian Jenkins, *The Liberal State and Irish Nationalism*, McGill-Queen’s University Press (London, 2008), p.23. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
53. Marta Ramón, “National Brotherhoods and National Leagues: the IRB and its constitutional rivals during the 1860s” (paper presented in 2008) [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
54. Wilson, *United Irishmen, United States*, p.40; Aki Kalliomaki, doctoral dissertation: “The Most God-provoking Democrats on This Side of Hell” University of California at Santa Cruz (June, 2005); a look at United Irishmen Exiles and their role in American politics and their life in America. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
55. Wilson, United Irishmen United States, p.56. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
56. John Mitchel, *The History of Ireland from The Treaty of Limerick to the Present Time* (2 Vols.), James Duffy & Co. (Dublin, 1868), Vol II, p.459. The validity of Mitchel’s charge is examined by Malcolm Brown, *The Politics of Irish Literature*, University of Washington Press (Seattle, 1972), pp.145-147. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
57. John Worley, *The Life of William Ewart Gladstone*, (2 Vols.), Macmillan, (London, 1922), Vol. II, p.558. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
58. George Buckle, ed., *The Letters of Queen Victoria*, (2 Vols.), John Murray (London, 1926), Vol. I, p.255, Viscount Palmerston to Queen Victoria 24 February, 1865. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
59. Brian Jenkins, *Irish Nationalism and the British State*, McGill-Queen’s University Press (Montreal, 2006), pp.75-79; italics in the original quotation. Pau Bew, *The Politics of Enmity* “Kindle” Edition, location 3067-3069. And footnote 80, Oxford University Press, (NY, 2007). [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
60. Yossi Shain, *Marketing the American Creed Abroad*, Cambridge University Press (New York, 1999), p.12. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
61. *Irish American*, November 14, 1868, the Gladstone speech was delivered in Dublin. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
62. John Stuart Mill, *England and Ireland*, Longmans, Green, Reader, Dyer (London, 1868), pp.22 and 44; notwithstanding Mill’s erroneous characterization of Irish immigrants as “prosperous multitudes,” his words were prophetic. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
63. Worley, *The Life of William Ewart Gladstone*, (New York, 1922), a letter Gladstone sent to Victoria on January 15, 1870, quoted in Vol. I, p.927. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
64. Lawrence McCaffrey notes in his preface to *Textures of Irish America*, Syracuse University Press (1992), that there exists among modern authors two significant perspectives on the Irish immigrant experience. One group of authors focuses on the negative aspect of the immigrant’s arrival into the ghettos of America and the hard life they faced for survival, versus another group of authors who emphasize the uplifting hope for a better life for themselves and their children that buoyed the immigrants in America. Reality likely lies in an amalgam of both views, a continuum going from an overwhelmingly negative arrival into chaos, moving toward a growing positive perspective as the immigrants and, even more so their children, began to see that a better life was possible in America. The Fenian movement nurtured the negative angst of first arrival and the always-present yearning to return to familiar surroundings and the friends and family left behind. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
65. Shain, Marketing the American Creed Abroad, p.83. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
66. Joseph Lee, *The Modernisation of Irish Society 1848-1918*, 1979 reprint, Gill and Macmillan (London, 1973), p.96. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
67. A *quid pro quo* existed as both the U.S. Government and Irish nationalists attempted to manipulate voters, each in pursuit of its own agenda. Without a large Irish American community acting in seeming concert, the Irish nationalists would not have been able to exert the kind of political leverage that permitted Irish nationalists to arm themselves for an attack on the British while claiming to be law-abiding United States citizens. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
68. Carlos Martyn, *Wendell Phillips: The Agitator*, Funk & Wagnalls (New York, 1890), p.556. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
69. Brian Sayers, an unpublished manuscript, “Revolutionary and Scholar, the Life and Thought of John O’Mahony,” p.39. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
70. Marta Ramón, ed., *The Faith of a Felon and Other Writings* *by James Fintan Lalor*, “Introduction,” UCD Press, (Dublin, 2012), p.34; Owen McGee, *The Irish Republican Brotherhood from Land League to Sinn Féin*, Four Courts Press (Dublin, 2005), p.29. Hereafter this source is referred to as McGee, *IRB*. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
71. Marta Ramón, *A Provisional Dictator: James Stephens and the Fenian Movement*, UCD Press (Dublin, 2007), p.42. Hereinafter this source is referred to as Ramón, *A Provisional Dictator*. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
72. Ward politicians in New York, Chicago, and other large cities used mass “naturalizations” of Irishmen to stuff ballot boxes and Irish toughs to “rough up” the opposition. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
73. “The Congressional Election of 1866”byPaul Samuel Smith, Master’s Thesis (University of Wisconsin, 1920), p.36, Smith states that politicians in 1866 believed that there were 750,000 Fenian sympathetic voters who would be swayed by an Irish freedom plank in the Republican Party platform. Many non-Fenian Irishmen would have to be included to obtain such a large estimate. Not all Irish were Fenian sympathizers principally because almost all the Catholic clergy were opposed to their members belonging to secret organizations. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
74. Jenkins, *Irish Nationalism and the British State*. The influence of the Catholic Church as a factor in Irish nationalism is emphasized. Jenkins theorizes that the Scots and the Welsh diaspora communities did not join their Celtic Irish brethren in anti-British activity in America (see p.287 ff, Chapter 9 “The Roman Catholic Church and Fenianism”). [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
75. Michael Funchion, a doctoral dissertation, *Chicago’s Irish Nationalists, 1881-1890,* Loyola University (Chicago, 1973), p.30. Funchion is speaking of Chicago but the concept is applicable to all Irish concentrations. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
76. *Irish World,* 1 January, 1876; quoted by Timothy G. Lynch, who explores this theory within his article, “A Kindred and Congenial Element: Irish American’s Embrace of Republican Rhetoric” (*New Hibernia Review*, Volume 13, Number 2, Samhradh/Summer 2009), pp.77-91. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
77. Proceedings of the Second National Congress of the Fenian Brotherhood, James Gibbons, (Philadelphia, 1865), p.55. [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
78. Now called by many historians the “Irish diaspora” from the term once usually applied to the Jewish immigrants forced into exile from various countries. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
79. Jenkins, Irish Nationalism and the British State, p.145. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
80. Louis R Besceglia, “The Fenian Funeral of Terrance Bellew McManus” *Éire-Ireland Fomhar,* (Fall, 1979) p.53; Gerry Kearns, Economic and Social Research Council, “The Geography of Fenianism,” accessed August 16, 2013. http://www.esrc.ac.uk/my-esrc/grants/RES-000-22-0499/read; it is probable that the “Captain Smith” who Kearns quoted from a *Boston Pilot* article is Captain Michael C. Smith of San Francisco who, with Jeremiah Cavanagh, comprised a California delegation to Ireland. [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
81. He would later author a book of biographies “*Fenian Heroes and Martyrs*.” Savage would succeed John O’Mahony as president of the O’Mahony branch of the Fenian Brotherhood in 1867. [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
82. Ramón, A Provisional Dictator, p.53 ff; Richard Pigott, Personal Recollections of an Irish National Journalist, Hodges & Figgis (Dublin, 1882), pp.58-59. [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
83. Physical-force nationalist was a title commonly applied to those Irishmen whose premise was that the only way Ireland could achieve Home Rule was at the point of a gun. [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
84. Michael Phelan had patented a process that made the manufacture of perfectly spherical billiard balls a repeatable, viable process. He also held numerous patents, including a special process for mixing Indian rubber for cushions. Phelan employed 150 people in his five-floor New York factory that manufactured billiard tables and shipped them to a worldwide market. Phelan also played billiards in challenge matches where the winner might be awarded $10,000 or more. [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
85. George A Hussey and William Todd, eds., *History of the Ninth Regiment NYSM NGSNY*, Ogilvie (New York, 1889), p.3. [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
86. *The Irish American*, February 3, 1850, Doheny is said to have worked as a reporter on this newspaper, see:

    http://fethard.com/people/doheny.html (accessed May 11, 2011). [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
87. *Irish American*, February 3, 1850 [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
88. *Irish American*, April 22, 1854. [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
89. Pigott, *Personal Recollections of an Irish National Journalist*, p.58-59; Marcus Bourke, *John O’Leary,* University of Georgia Press (Athens, 1967), p.28-29; Ramón, *A Provisional Dictator,* pp.53-57. [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
90. Joseph Denieffe, *A Personal Narrative of the Irish Revolutionary Brotherhood*, Irish University Press (Shannon Ireland, 1969), p.3. [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
91. John Belchem,“Nationalism, Republicanism, and Exile: Irish Emigrants and the Revolutions of 1848,Past and Present, Number 146, (February, 1995), Oxford University Press, p.114. [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
92. Shain, *Marketing the American Creed Abroad,* p.13. When Shain speaks of “Anglo-American hegemony” he is referring to the Anglo-Saxon Protestant dominance in American politics and foreign policy. [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
93. Yossi Shain, *The Frontier of Loyalty*, Wesleyan University Press (Hanover, NH, 1989). See this book for a discussion of the modern concept of diaspora nationalism. [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
94. Meagher and Mitchel both served time in Australia before escaping captivity and coming to America. [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
95. Desmond Ryan, *The Phoenix Flame,* Arthur Barker Limited (London, 1937), p.207, although the amount of time to be served in exile is given in most accounts as “for the life of their terms,” Ryan states the prisoners had “conditions of their release” given by the British authorities for exile periods for lesser times than their sentences: Rossa and McClure, twenty years; Devoy, four years; and O’Connell, five years. In the case of John Devoy the four-year exile time given by Ryan is not substantiated: in the *Gaelic American*, August 4, 1906, John Devoy wrote that he was still liable to re-imprisonment if caught in Ireland before 1882, which amounts to the full eleven years of his term; another document, “*Conditional Pardons Granted to Persons Convicted of Treason-Felony, and other Offences of Political Character*,” 1865-80, Session: 1881, House of Commons Papers; Paper Number: (208), Volume/page: LXXVI.381, CH Microfiche Number: 87.669-670, pp.1-8, confirms that Devoy’s Conditional Pardon was for eleven years of exile. [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
96. Liam Barry, *Voices from the Tomb,* National Gaelic Publications (Australind, 2006), provides short biographies of these Australian Fenian prisoners. [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
97. Alicja Iwanska calls this Exile group “core members” of the diaspora. Quoted by Yossi Shain, *The Frontier of Loyalty*, Wesleyan University Press (Hanover, NH, 1989), p.52, where Shain calls them “political exiles” and goes on to show that it is this core group that are the igniters of diaspora nationalist activity. Shain’s work, although not focused on Fenianism, is relevant to the Fenian story. [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
98. Brian J. Sayers, “John O'Mahony’s Emmet Monument Association,” *Iris Mhuintir Mhathúna, Uimh 26, 2003* [*The O’Mahony Journal*], p.10. Executed Irish nationalist Robert Emmet had forbidden anyone to build a monument to him until Ireland “takes her place among the Nations of the earth” thereby making plain the Emmet Monument Association objective. *The Irish American*, February 17, 1877, states that the real president was the Irish patriot, John Mitchel, who had moved to Tennessee without resigning. The EMA split into two sections, one under Doheny and another under Robert Tyler and both groups continued to claim Mitchel as their president. [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
99. Ramón, *A Provisional Dictator*, pp.64-66. Ramón suggests the probability that Stephens was only scouting out the possibility of writing a book and that it was only after the fact that Stephens claimed to his adherents that he was preparing for an insurrection. [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
100. Ramón, A Provisional Dictator, p.50-53. [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
101. Brian Sayers “John O’Mahony and Fenian Relations with the United States Government 1861-1865,” an unpublished manuscript kindly lent to this author, p.1, shows that O’Mahony was not a founder of the association which germinated into the Fenian Brotherhood but joined soon thereafter in 1857. What O’Mahony joined in 1857 was an “association” most likely formed by some members of the EMA. These groups and their relationships are covered in depth by Brian Sayers, “John O’Mahony’s Emmet Monument Association,” *The O’Mahony Journal*, No. 26, 2003, an article on the early origins of the Fenian Brotherhood. [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
102. Someone in Cork thought Stephens had a hawkish look and he was given the name *“seabhac”* or “hawk” in Gaelic. The Gaelic word sounded like “Shook,” so Stephens used “Mr. Shook” as an alias while he traveled Ireland. [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
103. Denieffe, *A Personal Narrative of the Irish Revolutionary Brotherhood*, Appendix I, “Letter from Stephens to John O’Mahony,” p.159. The EMA promised it had 8000 members “ready and willing to return to Ireland to throw off the English yoke” in an article in *The Brooklyn Eagle,* December 5, 1855; also see Funchion, *Irish American Voluntary Organizations*, pp.101-105. [↑](#footnote-ref-104)
104. John O’Mahony was a Gaelic scholar and named his group the Fenian Brotherhood; “Fenian” being derived from the Gaelic genitive used for a warrior class led by Irish folk hero Finn MacCumail [FinnMcCool]. There existed in Cork at that time a radical nationalist group called the Phoenix Society, later allied to the IRB, and that has led some authors to confuse the two societies. Since the phoenix symbol came to be used by the Fenian Brotherhood, it makes the confusion hard to eradicate. [↑](#footnote-ref-105)
105. Over time, Stephens’ organization was also called the “Irish Republican Brotherhood.” [↑](#footnote-ref-106)
106. In *The Fenian Movement*, by Mabel Gregory, Ralph Myles Publisher (Colorado Springs, 1969), p.47, Gregory relies heavily on period newspaper sources and gives Fenian Brotherhood membership at 300,000. She may be using newspaper exaggerations; William D’Arcy, *The Fenian Movement in the United States 1858-1886*, Russell & Russell (NY, 1947), p.46, gives membership of 10,000 by January of 1865. The dues for Fenian membership were 10¢ a week. The Brotherhood was taking in $8,000/month by June, 1865. If dues were the only income, this would be equivalent to 18,500 members. The institution of paid organizers resulted in increases of 60 new Circles a month during 1865. D’Arcy, *The Fenian Movement in the United States 1858-1886*, p.180, gives a number of 45,000 members maximum by the spring of 1866 when the Canadian invasions took place. Calculations made by this author, using Fenian accounting documents at the “Francis B. Gallagher collection of Fenian records” atPhiladelphia Archdiocesan Historical Research Center, RG14, Folder 4, show at least 30,000. We can be safe with 40,000 members at peak. The Philadelphia Archdiocesan source will be hereafter called “PAHRC Fenian Records.” [↑](#footnote-ref-107)
107. Ramón, *A Provisional Dictator*, p.164; D’Arcy, *The Fenian Movement in the United States 1858-1886* p.38; Jenkins, *Irish Nationalism and the British State*, p.284; John Devoy “The True Story of the Catalpa Rescue,” *Chicago Times,* September 29, 1895. After the arrests in September 1865, Stephens postponed the rising and Devoy was forced to dress up in a British uniform and go to all the regiments based in Dublin to let everyone know the rebellion had been postponed; *DPB,* Vol. I, p.144, Devoy mentions Stephens’ commitment to the 1865 date without making the proper preparations, as a proof of Stephens’ unfitness to lead. [↑](#footnote-ref-108)
108. The Treaty of Paris stated that a blockade could be declared only if war existed between two organized belligerent governments. When the United States declared the blockade, Britain and France immediately declared neutrality, recognizing the South as a belligerent. The United States was not a signatory to the treaty. See also *Irish Nationalism and the British State*, p.171. [↑](#footnote-ref-109)
109. Thomas Wodehouse Legh Newton, *Lord Lyons: A Record of British Diplomacy* (2 Vols.), Lohmans, Green & Co. (New York, 1913), Vol. I, p.83; James and Patience Barnes, *The American Civil War Through British Eyes* (3 Vols.), Kent State University Press (Kent, 2005), Vol I, p.72. [↑](#footnote-ref-110)
110. Stuart Anderson, “1861: Blockade vs. Closing the Confederate Ports,” in *Military Affairs*, Vol. 41, No. 4 (Dec 1977), pp.190-194; Jenkins, *Irish Nationalism and the British State*, p.171. [↑](#footnote-ref-111)
111. Richard Brown, *Famine, Fenians and Freedom*, Kindle, Clio Publishing (London, 2012), Location# 10239. [↑](#footnote-ref-112)
112. James D. Bulloch, *The Secret Service of The Confederate States in Europe* (Chapter IV and V), Modern Library reprint of 1884, New York edition, 2001, pp.104-206. The ships were not armed when they left England; they were armed in the Azores. The “*290*” was renamed *Enrica* and finally the CSS *Alabama*. The *Oreto* was renamed the CSS *Florida*. Bulloch was the CSA representative who purchased the ships for the Confederate Navy; his book relates his mission in detail. Bulloch’s daughter, Martha, was the mother of President Theodore Roosevelt. [↑](#footnote-ref-113)
113. Jasper Ridley, *Lord Palmerston,* Constable (London, 1970), p.561, quoting Charles Francis Adams; see also Worley, *The Life of William Ewart Gladstone*, Vol. II, p.4. [↑](#footnote-ref-114)
114. Bulloch, The Secret Service of the Confederate States in Europe, p.293-303. [↑](#footnote-ref-115)
115. Florence E. Gibson, The Attitudes of the New York Irish Toward State and National Affairs 1848-1892, 1968, AMS Press, p.139. [↑](#footnote-ref-116)
116. Sir Frederick Bruce to Lord Clarendon, March 16, 1866, “Sir Frederick Bruce Papers” in theRiver Campus Library Collections at University of Rochester. [↑](#footnote-ref-117)
117. “The British Withdrawal of Belligerent Rights,” *New York Times*, July 18, 1865. [↑](#footnote-ref-118)
118. Sir Frederick Bruce to Lord Clarendon, March 16, 1866, “Sir Frederick Bruce Papers.” [↑](#footnote-ref-119)
119. Sir Frederick Bruce to Lord Clarendon, March 16, 1866, “Sir Frederick Bruce Papers.” [↑](#footnote-ref-120)
120. Sir Frederick Bruce to Lord Clarendon, March 16, 1866, “Sir Frederick Bruce Papers;”D’Arcy, *The Fenian Movement in the United States,* 1858-1856, p. 152. [↑](#footnote-ref-121)
121. For more on the Fenians during the Civil War, see Michael Ruddy, “An Irish Army in America,” *Civil War Time*s, Vol. XLII No. 1, April 2003, p.38. [↑](#footnote-ref-122)
122. D’Arcy, *The Fenian Movement in the United States 1858-1856* p.38, a resolution to that effect was passed at the Fenian Convention in Chicago, 1863. [↑](#footnote-ref-123)
123. J. L. Hammond, *Gladstone and the Irish Nation*, Longman Green (London, 1938), reprint Cass (London, 1964), p.47. [↑](#footnote-ref-124)
124. Brian Jenkins, *Fenians and Anglo-American Relations During Reconstruction*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca (New York, 1969), p.130. [↑](#footnote-ref-125)
125. Lester Burrell Shippee, *Canadian-American Relations 1849-1874*, Yale University Press (New Haven, 1939), p.224. [↑](#footnote-ref-126)
126. Jenkins, Fenians and Anglo-American Relations During Reconstruction, quoting “Seward to Adams,” p.38. [↑](#footnote-ref-127)
127. Sir Frederick Bruce to Lord Clarendon, April 17, 1866, “Sir Frederick Bruce Papers.” [↑](#footnote-ref-128)
128. The “Alabama Claims” were finally laid to rest by an arbitration panel in Geneva on September 14, 1872. The settlement was $15,500,000 paid to the United States by Great Britain. [↑](#footnote-ref-129)
129. “Correspondence Respecting the Fenian Aggression on Canada,” p.41, Inclosure 4 in No. 17, Judge Wilson’s notes, testimony of James Severs, presented to Parliament, February, 1867. [↑](#footnote-ref-130)
130. Jenkins, The Fenians and Anglo-American Relations During Reconstruction, p. 42, quoting “Queen’s Journal” [↑](#footnote-ref-131)
131. James & Patience Barnes, eds., *The American Civil War Through British Eyes*, “Dispatch 263, Lyons to Russell, 8 June 1861,” Vol. I, p.113. [↑](#footnote-ref-132)
132. Brian Connell, *Regina Versus Palmerston*, Evans Brothers Ltd. (London, 1962), p.310. [↑](#footnote-ref-133)
133. “Jenkins, Fenians and Anglo-American Relations During Reconstruction, quoting “Bruce to Seward, December 26, 1865,” p.110. Note: the customary spelling of his name is “Sweeny” not “Sweeney.” [↑](#footnote-ref-134)
134. Jack Morgan, Through American and Irish Wars: The Life and Times of Thomas W. Sweeny 1820-1892, pp.116 and 149-150; also see The *Irish American*, May 21, 1870. Sweeny was retired on May 10, 1870. [↑](#footnote-ref-135)
135. Bruce to Lord Clarendon, February 20, 1866, “Sir Frederick Bruce Papers.” [↑](#footnote-ref-136)
136. “Military Roster of the Fenian Brotherhood New York*,* “found in the “Records and Personal Papers of O'Donovan Rossa,” a collection at the Catholic University of America archives. Attached to many names on this roster there is the letter "I" marking soldiers who returned to Ireland as Fenian infiltrators. See also Michael Kane, “American Soldiers in Ireland 1865-1867,” *The Irish Sword*, Vol. XXIII, No. 91, a well-researched article which describes in detail the soldiers who returned to Ireland. [↑](#footnote-ref-137)
137. Jenkins, Fenians and Anglo-American Relations During Reconstruction, p.70. [↑](#footnote-ref-138)
138. Devoy, Recollections of an Irish Rebel, p.70 [↑](#footnote-ref-139)
139. Devoy, Recollections of an Irish Rebel p.49; Ramón, *A Provisional Dictator*, p.389, where the annotated escape route is reproduced from the plan of Richmond Prison that was attached to “Report of the Inspectors General in Ireland to His Excellency the Lord Lieutenant” with regard to the *Escape of James Stephens*, NAI, Carton n. 3175. [↑](#footnote-ref-140)
140. Dublin Castle was the headquarters of the British-controlled Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) police force. [↑](#footnote-ref-141)
141. As one goes through the sources, a question arose as to whether Breslin was the real hero in the rescue of James Stephens. In his book, *The Irish National Invincibles*, Mershon Press (Rahway, 1894), p.103, P. J. P. Tynan states that Daniel Byrne of the IRB was the real hero of the escape; Devoy, *Recollections Of An Irish Rebel*, p. 76, Devoy states, “The plan was very simple and effective and was Breslin’s in every detail.”; also see Devoy, ´The True Story of the Catalpa Rescue,” *Chicago Tribune,* September 29, 1895. Although the *Chicago Tribune* article appears under the signature “D.J.,” there is little doubt from the style and content that the author is John Devoy. He mentions Martin Hogan as assigned to keep watch outside the prison during Stephens’ rescue. [↑](#footnote-ref-142)
142. John Boyle O’Reilly was arrested on February 14, 1866; see Devoy, *Recollections of an Irish Rebel*, p.156. [↑](#footnote-ref-143)
143. John Devoy, *English and American Prisons*, an undated pamphlet written shortly after December 18, 1913. In 1868 while at Portland prison, Devoy discovered that John O’Leary and Thomas Clarke Luby, both refined, Trinity-educated authors jailed in the raid on the *Irish People*, had the duty each day of carrying the large bucket used to collect the “slopjar” residue from the common prisoners. [↑](#footnote-ref-144)
144. Ramón, A Provisional Dictator, p.183. [↑](#footnote-ref-145)
145. Kevin Thaddeus Brady, “Fenians and The Faithful: Philadelphia’s Irish Republican Brotherhood and The Diocese of Philadelphia 1859-1870,” doctoral dissertation, Temple University, 1999, p.277. [↑](#footnote-ref-146)
146. Ramón, A Provisional Dictator*,* p.195. Ramón covers the political maneuvers leading up to the split in the Fenian Brotherhood and its repercussions. Also see Brady, *Fenians and the Faithful*, pp. 276-288. [↑](#footnote-ref-147)
147. “John O’Mahony to A.L.S.” [probably James Stephens] December 9, 1865, “William Brown Meloney, Mitchel and Purroy Family Papers, 1830-1942,*”* Columbia University Archival Collections. [↑](#footnote-ref-148)
148. Richard Brown, *Rebellion in Canada 1837-1885*, Vols. I & II, (Authoring History: Kindle Ed.) Location# 14560, French-Canadian “Patriotes” uprisings in Canada in 1837-1838 were sporadic and quickly squelched by the local militias or British troops. Many Irish sided with the Loyalists; Kindle Location# 9854-9863. There were several invasions made from the United States by French Canadian Patriote forces but they were repelled and the futility of these cross-border incursions was demonstrated when Canadian citizens failed to join the invaders. “[American Newspapers quoted by Brown] recognized, something the Patriotes conspicuously failed to do, that invasion [from US] would only be successful when significant numbers of Canadians were prepared to take direct action themselves and, and as events in 1837 and especially 1838 clearly demonstrated, this they were not prepared to do.” The response of the Canadians, be they Irish or French or Metis, was to obey the laws of the Canadian colonies and offer no support to the various cross-border incursions, including the Fenians. [↑](#footnote-ref-149)
149. Hereward Senior, *Quebec and the Fenians*, *The Canadian Historical Review*, University of Toronto Press (March 1967), pp.24-44; also see Patrick Steward and Bryan McGovern, *The Fenians*, University of Tennessee Press (Knoxville, 2013), p.112, where the authors discuss the Fenian assumption that, in the case of a Fenian invasion, that Catholic Canadians, French Canadians, and anti-Confederation Canadians will join them. [↑](#footnote-ref-150)
150. Gibson, The Attitudes of the New York Irish toward State and National Affairs, p.194. [↑](#footnote-ref-151)
151. D’Arcy, The Fenian Movement in the United States 1858-1886, p.107 [↑](#footnote-ref-152)
152. *Irish American*, January 16, 1866 [↑](#footnote-ref-153)
153. *Irish American*, March 3, 1866 [↑](#footnote-ref-154)
154. D’Arcy, The Fenian Movement in the United States 1858-1886, p.114. [↑](#footnote-ref-155)
155. Gibson, *The Attitudes of the New York Irish toward State and National Affairs*, p. 180, there is little doubt that Seward or Johnson, or both, led Killian to believe the United States would remain neutral or recognize the Fenians as “belligerents” – but of course there was nothing in writing; also, D’Arcy, *The Fenian Movement in the United States 1858-1886*, p. 137. [↑](#footnote-ref-156)
156. Gideon Welles, *Diary of Gideon Welles* (2 Vols.)Riverside Press (Cambridge, 1911), Vol. II, p.486. [↑](#footnote-ref-157)
157. D’Arcy, *The Fenian Movement in the United States 1858-1886*, p. 137-138). The ship is called the *Ocean Spray* in D’Arcy’s book, but called *M.H. Pray* by the *New York Tribune* (April 26, 1866, p.5) and *E. H. Pray* in documents at the National Archives in Washington: Washington Long, Collector of Customs, to George F. Talbot U.S. District Attorney. Eastport, April 17th 1866: “The schooner *E H Pray* has arrived [April 16] with arms taken in at Portland. Shall I seize vessel and arms or either?” The answer was “Don’t seize the vessel or arms unless evidently bound for a foreign port.” Major General Meade was less reticent and ordered the arms “to be taken from the *E. H. Pray* and deposited at Fort Sullivan and the schooner released.” Canadian Governor Gordon used the name *E H Pray* in a letter cited by Harold A. Davis in “The Fenian Raid on New Brunswick,” *Canadian Historical Review,* Vol. XXXVI No. 4 (December 1955) p.326. Davis saw this conflict but cited D’Arcy’s quoting of “official records” for the name “*Ocean Spray*.” The name *E H Pray* is also the ship’s name found in a *Chicago Tribune* article on April 27, 1866. In his diary entry cited above, Gideon Welles states that Cooper called it the *Ocean Spray* and perhaps this is D’Arcy’s “Official Records” citation. Since Customs Agent Long actually dealt with the paperwork at Eastport, we must believe that *E H Pray* is the correct name of the vessel. [↑](#footnote-ref-158)
158. *Irish American* April 28, 1866; D’Arcy, *The Fenian Movement in the United States 1858-1886*, p.139; “Fenian Brotherhood, Department of Manhattan F.B.,” (New York, 1866), p.51. The results of this internal Fenian Brotherhood investigation stated the expense was “over $26,000.” All sources agree the treasury under control of the O’Mahony Wing was depleted by the Campobello action. [↑](#footnote-ref-159)
159. *Philadelphia Daily Evening Telegraph*, May 12, 1866, “Open letter Stephens to O’Mahony Metropolitan Hotel,” May 11, 1866, quoted in the article attributes the *New York Herald* as the source. [↑](#footnote-ref-160)
160. *The Last Invasion of Canada,* Hereword Senior, this book describes the invasion by the Senate Wing of the Fenian Brotherhood in detail. [↑](#footnote-ref-161)
161. D’Arcy, The Fenian Movement in the United States 1858-1886, p.166. [↑](#footnote-ref-162)
162. Henri Le Caron, *Twenty-Five Years in the Secret Service*, William Heinemann (London, 1892), p59, an autobiographical account by Le Caron, who was a British spy, as a member of the Fenian Brotherhood; George W. Pepper *My Life Under Three Flags*, Curts and Jennings (Cincinnati, 1899), p.118, an autobiography by Pepper, who was a member of the Clan-na-Gael, a Presbyterian, and a close friend of Dr. William Carroll. [↑](#footnote-ref-163)
163. Bruce to Clarendon on June 26, 1866, “Sir Frederick Bruce Papers.” [↑](#footnote-ref-164)
164. *Fenianism narrated by one who knows* [Robert Anderson of British Intelligence], *Contemporary Review* XIX (1872), p.312. [↑](#footnote-ref-165)
165. *The Fenians in Context*, p.133, R.V. Comerford, Rev. to 1985 Edition, Wolfhound Press (Dublin, 1998). [↑](#footnote-ref-166)
166. The Fenian Movement in the United States, p.221. [↑](#footnote-ref-167)
167. John Savage in his book *Fenian Heroes and Martyrs* gave Thomas J. Kelly’s full name as Thomas James Kelly. In correspondence with the author, Erica Veil, a great-great-granddaughter of Thomas J. Kelly, gave his full name as Thomas Joseph Kelly based on family records. [↑](#footnote-ref-168)
168. The Fenians in Context, p.136. [↑](#footnote-ref-169)
169. The Fenian Movement in the United States, p.247. [↑](#footnote-ref-170)
170. “Political Policing in a Liberal Age: Britain’s Responses to the Fenian Movement, 1858-1868,” a doctoral dissertation by Padraic Cummins Kennedy (Washington University, 1996, St Louis, Missouri), pp.179-180. A well-researched document in which Kennedy provides a unique look at police operations in Ireland during the Fenian unrest. [↑](#footnote-ref-171)
171. *Nation,* February 24, 1866, quoted by Kennedy in *Political Policing in a Liberal Age*, p.188. [↑](#footnote-ref-172)
172. Irish People, December 28, 1867, quoted in The Fenian Movement in the United States, p.278. [↑](#footnote-ref-173)
173. See also D’Arcy, *The Fenian Movement in the United States 1858-1886*, p. 193. There is a bit of exuberance on the part of William D’Arcy who says the *New York* *Herald* “openly urged another invasion,” but the article certainly states that the U.S. government would not forcefully stop another invasion. [↑](#footnote-ref-174)
174. The Fenian Movement in the United States, pp.197-200. [↑](#footnote-ref-175)
175. *New York Herald*, August 21, 1866 and September 2, 1866 [↑](#footnote-ref-176)
176. *New York Herald*, September 9, 1866 [↑](#footnote-ref-177)
177. *New York Herald*, October 16, 1866 [↑](#footnote-ref-178)
178. *New York Times*, October 16, 1866. [↑](#footnote-ref-179)
179. *Irish American*, January 12, 1867. [↑](#footnote-ref-180)
180. *Irish American*, January 26, 1867 and April 6, 1867. [↑](#footnote-ref-181)
181. *Irish American*, March 23, 1867; Private Laws of the State of Illinois, passed by the 25th General Assembly, convened January 7, 1867, Vol. II, Jan. 7, 1867, p.502. [↑](#footnote-ref-182)
182. *Irish American*, August 17, 1867. [↑](#footnote-ref-183)
183. *Irish American*, March 14, 1868. [↑](#footnote-ref-184)
184. *Irish American*, April 20, 1867. [↑](#footnote-ref-185)
185. *Irish American*, August 10, 1867. [↑](#footnote-ref-186)
186. A Provisional Dictator, by Marta Ramón, p. 234; The Fenians in Context, p.158. [↑](#footnote-ref-187)
187. San Francisco Chronicle, May 20, 1870. [↑](#footnote-ref-188)
188. IRB, by Owen McGee, p. 52. [↑](#footnote-ref-189)
189. A Provisional Dictator, p.199; The Fenian Movement in the United States, p.279. [↑](#footnote-ref-190)
190. Missouri Historical Society, *Fenian Papers*, *Circular Order* from the War Department May 1, 1869; and a flurry of General Orders on May 1, 1869. [↑](#footnote-ref-191)
191. Missouri Historical Society, *Fenian Papers*, Letter from Headquarters War Department, FB [Fenian Brotherhood] dated April 28, 1870. [↑](#footnote-ref-192)
192. PAHRC Fenian Records,“From the Senate Chamber FB [Fenian Brotherhood] to Officers and Members of the Fenian Brotherhood,” Buffalo NY, July 25, 1868. Noticeably missing was any approval by John O’Neill, the President of the Senate Wing. [↑](#footnote-ref-193)
193. *Gaelic American*, 27 December 1924, *The Story of the Clan-na-Gael*.Devoy states P.W. Dunne was a delegate at the 1876 Philadelphia Convention. Dunne is listed in Document *MS 9,824*, Devoy Papers, National Library of Ireland [here after referred to a Devoy Papers] as an officer of Camp 110 in Peoria, Illinois in May of 1871. O’Neill’s remarks in 1870 in his *Address From General O’Neill in Prison* written at Windsor, Vermont, October, 1870 (CUA Archives) that P.W. Dunne, J.W. Fitzgerald and Michael Boland “. . . were watching our every movement and reporting to their associates. . ..” which shows that O’Neill knew these men to be Clan-na-Gael members before the Cincinnati congress of 1870. [↑](#footnote-ref-194)
194. “Camp” is a specific official designation for a Clan-na-Gael club within the organization’s documentation. I have tried to be precise by using the terms as the Clan-na-Gael organization did. For instance, the Hamilton Rowan Club in New York would be called a Club in the newspaper articles, in public statements made by members or in meeting announcements, but when referred to within the Clan-na-Gael official documents or discussions it would be called Camp D followed by a number assigned by the Clan-na-Gael Executive Body. [↑](#footnote-ref-195)
195. Address of Gen. John O’Neill, President F. B. to the Officers and Members of the Fenian Brotherhood, Baker and Godwin Printers (New York, 1868). [↑](#footnote-ref-196)
196. *Irish American*, April 3, 1868. Clan-na-Gael Camps maintained all subscription funds and sent only enough to the Executive Body to cover its expenses. [↑](#footnote-ref-197)
197. New York Herald, June 27, 1869. [↑](#footnote-ref-198)
198. *Irish American*, July 3, 1869; *Fenian Movement in the United States* p.315; *New York Herald*, June 19, 1869; *Times-Picayune*, July 7, 1869; *Texas Union*, July 2, 1869; less than six months later John Byron and T. O’Leary were working with O’Neill on a military handbook, *New York Herald,* March 10, 1870. Note: the initial “T” in O’Leary’s name is not given in the newspaper accounts. It was obtained from a Fenian Brotherhood War Department circular dated May 1, 1869 signed by him which is located in the *Fenian Files* at the Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis, Missouri. [↑](#footnote-ref-199)
199. This is disingenuous of Gibbons and the Senate Council for as we saw above, the IRB had already opted out of joint action with the Senate Wing. [↑](#footnote-ref-200)
200. PAHRC Fenian Records, Headquarters Fenian Brotherhood, July 10, 1869, “To Officers and Members of the F.B*.*” This memo was signed by all senators and approved by John O’Neill as President of the Senate Wing. Emphasis was in the original. [↑](#footnote-ref-201)
201. *New York Times*, July 7, 1869. [↑](#footnote-ref-202)
202. *New York Times*, June 11, 1869; *Irish American*, July 10 and 17, 1869; also “Devoy’s Notebook” MS. 9,824 lists A.L. Morrison as Camp Secretary of Camp D96 of the Clan-na-Gael. This Camp seems to have been formed by frustrated Chicago Senate Wing members. MS. 9,824 lists the Camp as formed in July of 1870; Funchion, *Chicago’s Irish Nationalists*, p.55, Funchion says Camp 96 was formed in August of 1870. Francis Agnew, also a Fenian Senator, was Camp leader and membership also included Senator William J, Hynes. Richard McCloud is found as a Clan-na-Gael member from New York elsewhere in this book. [Note: in “Notes on Sources….” I explain why this notebook is not “Devoy’s Notebook” but rather a notebook of William J. Nicholson, a secretary of the Clan-na-Gael from the organization’s beginning until he was exposed for embezzlement in 1874.] [↑](#footnote-ref-203)
203. The Fenian Movement in the United States, p.310. [↑](#footnote-ref-204)
204. *The Fenian Movement in the United States*, pp. 323-326 and p.339. Clingen may have already been a Clan-na-Gael member at the time, since Jenkinson states Clingen was in the Philadelphia meeting in 1870 (British National Archives *Folder Cab* 37/14 *Document* C414680). Devoy states that Clingen was in the Clan-na-Gael at the time Sullivan appointed Le Caron to the Military Council. (*Gaelic American*, March 14, 1925). [↑](#footnote-ref-205)
205. Le Caron, *Twenty-Five Years in the Secret Service*, p.40, Thomas Beach, alias Henri LeCaron, the British spy, wrote that O’Neill believed that “the Irish cause lived, moved, and had its being in John O’Neill; and this absurd self-love contributed to many disasters, which a more level-headed leader would never have brought about.” [↑](#footnote-ref-206)
206. D’Arcy, *The Fenian Movement in the United States 1858-1886*, p.336, quoting a letter from LeCaron to McMicken written January 21, 1870. [↑](#footnote-ref-207)
207. PAHRC Fenian Records, Document FB 83-4, February 16, 1870, James Gibbons to Francis Gallagher. This letter is a hastily scribbled note with minimal punctuation. Michael Scanlon’s *Irish Republic* published the letter that Gibbons mentioned as received from O’Neill and Gibbons’ open letter of reply. *Irish American,* March 19, 1870 reprinted the March 12, 1870 Scanlon’s *Irish Republic* editorial and both letters. [↑](#footnote-ref-208)
208. *Irish American,* March 19, 1870. [↑](#footnote-ref-209)
209. D’Arcy, The Fenian Movement in the United States 1858-1886, p.342. [↑](#footnote-ref-210)
210. *New York Times,* March 1, 1870. [↑](#footnote-ref-211)
211. *New York Times*, March 3, 1870. [↑](#footnote-ref-212)
212. LeCaron, *Twenty-Five Years in the Secret Service*, p.77. Letters of this period between Gallagher and Gibbons focus on O’Neill’s planned invasion of Canada and not personal finances. If O’Neill mentioned his expenditures to Le Caron it would probably have reflected a fear that something of that type would be used as an excuse to remove him from military command before he could launch the invasion. [↑](#footnote-ref-213)
213. Clingen was also in the Clan-na-Gael hierarchy in 1870 (Jenkinson in CAB 37/14 C414680, cited elsewhere) and was elected in 1877 to the Clan-na-Gael Executive Body. (*DPB, Vol. II*, p. 369). [↑](#footnote-ref-214)
214. The *Irish American,* July 30, 1870. Clingen was Gallagher’s “friend” until he took an active role in the attack on Canada. Gallagher on his deathbed indicated Clingen had deceived him by taking part in the invasion. Another person who would be expected to be with O’Neill at the Troy meeting was the British spy, Henri Le Caron (Thomas Beach). [↑](#footnote-ref-215)
215. William Clingen to F. B. Gallagher of the Buffalo Fenian District, dated April 18 [two letters] and April 21, 1870 in the “Francis B Gallagher collection of Fenian Records” Philadelphia Archdiocesan HRC, RG14 Folder 1 documents *FB269/4, FB270/4, FB271/4*; *Irish American,* May 7, 1870, “Gen. O’Neill’s Convention”; D’Arcy, *The Fenian Movement in the United States 1858-1886*, p.346, where D’Arcy quotes a letter from McMichael to McMicken stating that O’Neill showed up drunk at one of several such meetings held to force the military officers to accede to immediate movement. [↑](#footnote-ref-216)
216. *Irish American*, April, 30, 1870. [↑](#footnote-ref-217)
217. *New York Herald*, April 13, 1870. [↑](#footnote-ref-218)
218. Cleveland Plain Dealer, April 19, 1870. [↑](#footnote-ref-219)
219. *New York Times,* April 21, 1870, stated that 178 delegates attended; *Irish American,* April 30, 1870 and May 7, 1870, stated it was mostly the Manhattan circles of the Senate Wing that were delegates and that O’Neill had “few partisans;” *New York Herald*, April 20, 1870, stated “quite a large crowd of the sympathizers of the O’Neill faction” were outside the actual meeting room and outside the building. Both sides attempted to show themselves in control of the majority, the actual memberships of these two factions is not known. [↑](#footnote-ref-220)
220. “O’Donovan Rossa Papers” Catholic University of America, “Committee Report and agreement with O’Neill,” dated September 7, 1870. [↑](#footnote-ref-221)
221. *Irish American,* April 30, 1870. This Senate affiliated newspaper was now promising the dire consequences of a Canadian invasion. [↑](#footnote-ref-222)
222. Cincinnati Enquirer, May 6, 1870. [↑](#footnote-ref-223)
223. CincinnatiDaily Gazette, May 28, 1870. [↑](#footnote-ref-224)
224. Cincinnati Daily Gazette, May 23, 1870. [↑](#footnote-ref-225)
225. Cincinnati Enquirer, May 25 1870. [↑](#footnote-ref-226)
226. Cincinnati Enquirer, May 23, 1870. [↑](#footnote-ref-227)
227. British Home Office Correspondence (*HO 144/1538/5),* Robert Anderson’s correspondence concerning Thomas Beach, alias Henri Le Caron, quoted in *Delusion* by Peter Edwards, Key Porter Books (Toronto, 2008), p.87. [↑](#footnote-ref-228)
228. *The Irish World,* October 21, 1871. [↑](#footnote-ref-229)
229. *Report of John O’Neill*, by General John O’Neill, publisher John J Foster (New York, 1870), p.34. [↑](#footnote-ref-230)
230. “Memo: To the Officers and Men of the FB” from James Gibbons, July 1, 1870, Folder 10 RG 14, PAHRC Fenian Records; *Irish American*, June 6, 1870. [↑](#footnote-ref-231)
231. *Gaelic American*, March 7, 1925, e.g.: Michael, John F., Mortimer and Edward H., from Devoy: “[The Scanlon family] had all joined the Clan when it reached Chicago in the late sixties.” Devoy’s article — and other documents that show Clan-na-Gael infiltration into Chicago— lead to the conclusion that these prominent Senate Wing leaders were also Clan-na-Gael members during or before 1868. [↑](#footnote-ref-232)
232. *Gaelic American*, December 29, 1906, “Founder of the Clan-na-Gael” by John Devoy. [↑](#footnote-ref-233)
233. Cincinnati Daily Enquirer, July 31, 1870. [↑](#footnote-ref-234)
234. James W. Fitzgerald was a member of the Emigrant Aid society who, along with others, was arrested for filibustering, tried, and released in Cincinnati in January, 1856. He was invited to join the Fenians at its foundation in 1857 by Michael Doheny and formed the first Fenian Circle outside of New York. He was chosen Fenian Brotherhood Ohio Centre [highest state FB office] in 1866 (*Irish American*, May 26, 1866). For coverage of the filibustering trial, see *New York Times,* January 9, 11-12, 14-15, 1856). [↑](#footnote-ref-235)
235. The use of “United Irishmen” attempts to imbue the Irish National Congress at Cincinnati with the aura of the Irish rebels led by Wolfe Tone who fought the British under the banner of “United Irishmen” in 1798. In 1798 the United Irishmen symbolized the unification of Protestants, principally settlers from Scotland and England in the north of Ireland, and the majority Roman Catholic peasants in Ireland. [↑](#footnote-ref-236)
236. *Cincinnati Enquirer*, September 22, 1870. [↑](#footnote-ref-237)
237. *New York Tribune*, September 1, 1870. [↑](#footnote-ref-238)
238. Cincinnati Daily Enquirer, August 24, 1870; New London Democrat, August 27, 1870. [↑](#footnote-ref-239)
239. *New York Times,* November 23, 1866. [↑](#footnote-ref-240)
240. *MS. 9,824,* Devoy Papers, at National Library of Ireland. This document is hand-written list of Camps and Officers. It should be noted there are spelling variances between the newspaper and this document. Given after the newspaper spellings in brackets for comparison are name spellings and Camp “D” numbers given in the document. One must assume that these are spelling variations and not different people. The names were Michael Russell [not found in the notebook] of New York, Edward C. Reilly [Edward C. Keily, D127] of North Adams Massachusetts, Daniel O. Madigan [Daniel O’Madigan, D14] of St. Louis, John L. Griffen [J.S. Griffin, D14] of St. Louis, George Sweeny [D10], of Cincinnati, J.R. Bannerton [T.R. Bannerman, D33] of Wilmington, Delaware, and William Loughery [William Loghry, D37] of Keokuk, Iowa. [↑](#footnote-ref-241)
241. *Bennington Banner*, September 8, 1870. [↑](#footnote-ref-242)
242. On August 24, 1870, the following newspapers ran articles on the INB in St Louis: *Chicago Tribune*, *New York Times*, *New York Herald*, *Cincinnati Enquirer*, *Maryland Sun*, and on December 12, 1870 on the INB in Buffalo: *New York Times*, *Cincinnati Enquirer*, *New York Herald*, *Cincinnati Commercial Tribune*. [↑](#footnote-ref-243)
243. Although I have found no other mention of the St. Louis INB after the Cincinnati Congress, the Buffalo INB club formed three months after the convention in December of 1870 was still in existence in February of 1871 (*MS 18030(5),* Devoy Papers) and this may indicate it was an Irish Confederation Club rather than a Clan-na-Gael Camp. [↑](#footnote-ref-244)
244. *Irish American,* September 17, 1870, *New York Times,* August 24 1870. Note that in the *New York Times* article several names were misspelled (Daniel O. Madigan, John Griffen, and T.R. Banerton); McGee, *IRB,* p.179, where the author states that that in the 1880s the name “Irish National Brotherhood” designated the Sullivan-Boland-Feeley or “Triangle” faction of the Clan-na-Gael. [↑](#footnote-ref-245)
245. Nicholson, the secretary of Camp D55, was secretary of the Clan-na-Gael since its founding; John Goff founded Clan-na-Gael Camp D25 in 1868 in New York; Michael Boland was a Senior Guardian in Camp D59 in Louisville and later a delegate to the 1874 UB Convention and Chairman of the Clan-na-Gael Executive Body after 1881; Thomas Sheedy was the secretary of Camp D10 in Cincinnati and was later a delegate at the 1877 UB Convention; Timothy Hanley was Senior Guardian of Camp D105 in New York, and later led the fight against funding a prisoner rescue at the 1974 UB Convention; P.W. Dunne was a member of Camp D110 in 1871 in Peoria (MS9,824) and later a member of the Chicago Clan-na-Gael Guards, and at Camp D82 in Chicago; *Gaelic American*, December 27, 1924, where Devoy states Dunne was expelled [from Camp D82] by Alexander Sullivan when Sullivan became Executive Body Chairman in 1881. [↑](#footnote-ref-246)
246. James W. Fitzgerald was the director of the Clan-na-Gael in Cincinnati in 1886 (*New York Times*, April 5, 1886). On August 24, 1889 the *Irish American* lists James W. Fitzgerald as a speaker at a “Triangle” picnic. *Chicago Tribune,* November 17, 1889, p.29, James W. Fitzgerald, after attending a session of the Cronin trial, was interviewed by a *Chicago* *Tribune* reporter who obviously felt Fitzgerald had intimate knowledge of a range of information likely only known by a Clan-na-Gael member. In 1922, his 28-year-old son joined the Wolfe Tone Club, Camp D7 at the time, but originally founded in 1868 as Camp D10 (D7 Camp minutes in possession of Andy Sweeny and MS8,824). [↑](#footnote-ref-247)
247. *The* *Irish American,* September 17, 1870. [↑](#footnote-ref-248)
248. *Irish American,* September 3, 1970. [↑](#footnote-ref-249)
249. “O’Donovan Rossa Papers” Catholic University of America, “Committee of Union Report” and agreement with O’Neill, dated September 7, 1870. [↑](#footnote-ref-250)
250. It is important to note there are several men named Fitzgerald who were or would become Clan-na-Gael members: James W. Fitzgerald, a Fenian Senator, later a judge in Cincinnati, and director of the Cincinnati Clan-na-Gael; James Fitzgerald, of New York, a Goff associate, later a justice of the New York Supreme Court and a New York Clan-na-Gael member; and there was also John Fitzgerald, (brother to James W. Fitzgerald), who was a Clan-na-Gael member who was elected President of the Clan-na-Gael-controlled Irish National League in 1886. [↑](#footnote-ref-251)
251. “Address of General O’Neill in prison at Windsor, Vermont, October, 1870,” Box 6, “O’Donovan Rossa Papers” at the Catholic University Archives in Washington, DC, the “secret, sworn” organization O’Neill refers to is the Clan-na-Gael and, as both branches of the Fenian Brotherhood had numerous members who belonged to the Clan-na-Gael, including O’Mahony and W.R. Roberts, it was unlikely such a ban would occur. In his address, O’Neill mentions that Fitzgerald joined with Senate Fenian John Mulroy of Tennessee to form a new organization. The organization appears to have been James W. Fitzgerald’s Irish Republican Convention, mentioned above, and John S. Mullin [John S. Mullen] from Tennessee listed in the *NY Times* article (a Senate Wing member from Nashville, see: *Irish American,* January 6, 1866) may have been the John Mulroy that O’Neill referred to in his speech. [↑](#footnote-ref-252)
252. “Address of General O’Neill in Prison at Windsor, Vermont, October, 1870,” the bracketed words were semi-illegible in the document. The words underlined were underlined in the original [↑](#footnote-ref-253)
253. John Devoy, Passport Application, NARA P.P. Applications Roll 2602, Ancestry.com search: Display Plate 522/736 Certificate 458701 dated 15 Jul 1924. [↑](#footnote-ref-254)
254. John Devoy, *Recollections of an Irish Rebel* p.26; Terrence Dooley, *The Greatest of the Fenians*, Wolfhound Press (Dublin, 2003), p.30. [↑](#footnote-ref-255)
255. Devoy, Recollections of an Irish Rebel, p.386. [↑](#footnote-ref-256)
256. Terry Golway, *Irish Rebel,* St Martin’s Press (NY, 1988) p.43; Dooley, *The Greatest of the Fenians*, p.32, Dooley states Devoy “resigned”; some historians have claimed that Devoy deserted, but evidence given by Dooley shows that Devoy was officially “sent back ahead of time” under an officer’s signature. [↑](#footnote-ref-257)
257. Dooley, *The Greatest of the Fenians,* p.18f, this book covers the genealogy and early life of Devoy and makes extensive use of Devoy’s personal letters to his family found in the Devoy Papers at NLI. [↑](#footnote-ref-258)
258. *Gaelic American,* August 27, 1904, “Notes on the Catalpa,” letter from Stephens to Devoy. [↑](#footnote-ref-259)
259. Seán ÓLúing, *Fremantle Mission,* Anvil Books, (Tralee, 1965), p.24 and A. J. Semple, “The Fenian Infiltration of the British Army” in *Army Historical Research,* Vol. LII, #211. [↑](#footnote-ref-260)
260. Ryan, *The Phoenix Flame*. Without disclosing a source Ryan states that Devoy’s agreement with the British government was for only four years: see footnote to the section entitled *Exiles* in this book. [↑](#footnote-ref-261)
261. The amnestied prisoners were called the “Exiles” by the newspapers in order to differentiate them from Irish American citizens already living in the United States; I have done the same here. [↑](#footnote-ref-262)
262. *DPB,* Vol. I, p.15, R.P. Gorman to the Exiles, 23 February 1871. [↑](#footnote-ref-263)
263. *The Irish World,* April 4, 1875. [↑](#footnote-ref-264)
264. *DPB,* Vol I, p.9. The letter stated that it originated from “ON BOARD THE “CUBA” and was dated January 19, 1871. [↑](#footnote-ref-265)
265. *The Irish World,* January 28, 1871. [↑](#footnote-ref-266)
266. *DPB,* Vol. I, pp.17-18. Letter and reply: Boston committee to the Exiles. [↑](#footnote-ref-267)
267. *DPB,* Vol. I, p.31. Letter John Boyle O’Reilly to John Devoy February 13, 1871; underline emphasis in the original. [↑](#footnote-ref-268)
268. O’Neill’s Pembina raid is not covered in much detail in U.S. historical sources so I elected to amplify the coverage here. [↑](#footnote-ref-269)
269. John P. Pritchett, “The So-called Fenian Raid On Manitoba in 1871,” *Canadian Historical Review,* Volume X, March, 1929, p.37. O’Donoghue had tried on January 28, 1871, to enlist President Grant in the annexation of the Red River area and the Northwest Territories but was politely rebuffed; Joseph Kinsey Howard, *Strange Empire*, Minnesota Historical Press (St Paul, 1994), a reprint of a Morrow edition (New York,1952), p.60. Louis Riel’s ancestry has been traced, and perhaps his perfidy also, back to a “Limerick rake” named Jack O’Reilly in the 1700s; John O’Farrell, *“*Irish Families in Ancient Quebec Records” Éire – Ireland (Winter, 1967), p.22. [↑](#footnote-ref-270)
270. This plan may have been new to some on the Savage Wing council, but the fundamentals of such an attack being viable had been discussed in Senate Wing correspondence as early as 1868: Letter John Wilkeson to F.B. Gallagher, 17 April 1868, *Document FB299/4*, PAHRC Fenian Records. [↑](#footnote-ref-271)
271. Howard, *Strange Empire*, Minnesota Historical Press (St Paul, 1994) p. 218, a reprint of a Morrow edition (New York, 1952). *Fenianism In North America* by W. S. Neidhardt, p.126, Penn State University Press (Pennsylvania, 1975). [↑](#footnote-ref-272)
272. Le Caron, Twenty-Five Years in the Secret Service, p.98. [↑](#footnote-ref-273)
273. *South Dakota Department of History Collections* Volume VI, Will A. Beach Printing (Sioux Falls, 1912), p.118, “Report of General Hancock,” October 23, 1871 from the Department of Dakota. [↑](#footnote-ref-274)
274. H.B. Wilson, *Life of Lord Strathcona and Mount Royal*, “A Plan for Union of British North America and the United States in The Mississippi Valley,” *Historical Review* Vol. 4, No. 4 (March, 1918) pp.470-483. “Hardly do Canadians of this generation recognize by what narrow margin of chance Manitoba and indeed a large portion of the fertile belt in Rupert’s Land was saved to Canada and the Empire.” [↑](#footnote-ref-275)
275. *South Dakota Department of History Collections* Volume VI, p.121. An abundance of Irishmen among the railroaders and settlers of this part of the United States probably contributed to the reluctance to try the men involved. [↑](#footnote-ref-276)
276. Report No. 2, Historical Section, Canadian Forces Headquarters, paragraph 25 (letter Fish to Belnap January 5, 1972),

     http://www.cmp-cpm.forces.gc.ca/dhh-dhp/his/rep-rap/doc/cfhq/cfhq002.pdf [retreived 06June2015]. [↑](#footnote-ref-277)
277. “The Kilkenny Cats” refers to an old story told in Kilkenny about two cats that fought each other ferociously until nothing was left of them but their tails. [↑](#footnote-ref-278)
278. A ginger group is primarily a British-English term for a formal or informal group within an organization that attempts to direct policies toward their objectives but within the structure of the organization. [↑](#footnote-ref-279)
279. *MS 18,031* (2), Devoy Papers,draft letter dated February 8, 1871 from John McClure to W.J. Nicholson asking if the United Irishmen would support a convention; *MS* *18,031* (1), Devoy Papers,letter dated February 9, 1871 to Exile John McClure from United Irishmen signed by W.J. Nicholson agreeing to abide by what the Exiles decided but recommending against a convention; Circular dated February 18, 1871 to members of the United Irishmen giving control to the Exiles signed by James W. Fitzgerald, Chairman (also in *DPB,* Vol. I, p.32); *MS 18,031* (3), Devoy Papers,where can be found opinions of various Exiles concerning the Irish Confederation structure and objectives, including the memo by John Devoy dated February 7, 1871, “Notes on Organization.” [↑](#footnote-ref-280)
280. See the section of this book presented later “A New Departure,” where once again Devoy attempts to unite diverse factions by cooperating with the broad-based constitutional approach prevalent in public organizations while in secret the Clan-na-Gael actively plans for a violent revolution. [↑](#footnote-ref-281)
281. *New York Herald,* February 16, 1871. [↑](#footnote-ref-282)
282. *DPB,* Vol. I, p.32. [↑](#footnote-ref-283)
283. *Chicago Tribune,* 23 March 1871. [↑](#footnote-ref-284)
284. *New York Herald*, May 20, 1872. [↑](#footnote-ref-285)
285. *New York Times,* March 25, 187l, p.1, unity council idea agreed to by Fenian Brotherhood; *DPB,* Vol. I*,* p.44, 8 December 1871, General William Halpin, Allied Council, to the IC Directory; D’Arcy, *The Fenian Movement in the United States 1858-1886*, pp.372, 378, and 383; *New York Herald,* May 20, 1872, “Irish Confederation: Dissolved The Union*.*” Funchion, *Irish American Voluntary Organizations*, p.167, where Funchion notes that the Allied Council was set up in August, 1871 and, although discussions were held between the two organizations, it “. . . never amounted to anything.” [↑](#footnote-ref-286)
286. *MS 18,031*(5), Devoy papers, “Meeting of the Directory,” July 27, [1871], the UIB was a rival to the Clan-na-Gael and was based in Boston and New Jersey. John Joseph Breslin was a member of this society before joining the Clan-na-Gael. [↑](#footnote-ref-287)
287. *New York Times*, February 5, 1871. *DPB,* Vol. I, p.20. [↑](#footnote-ref-288)
288. *New York Herald*, December 4, 1871, from an article entitled “The Internationals,*”* p.10; also see Golway, *Irish Rebel*, p.73; *DPB,* Vol. I, p.42, where Sorge reminds Devoy of a meeting of the IWA, showing that Devoy joined early after his arrival in America. [↑](#footnote-ref-289)
289. David Montgomery, *Beyond Equality*, Illinois University Press (Chicago, 1981) in reprint Knopf (1967), p.375. [↑](#footnote-ref-290)
290. *DPB,* Vol. I, p.20-22, and p.42. The editors of the DPB books apparently did not encounter the above-mentioned reporter’s article(*New York* *Herald*, December 4, 1871), and they state incorrectly that “[t]here is, however, no evidence of” [Devoy being a member]. The editors in the anti-communist atmosphere of 1948, as Irish nationalists themselves, may have been reticent to connect Devoy to the socialist movement. [↑](#footnote-ref-291)
291. I have puzzled over the identity of the “disgusted Irishman” wondering if it was a way to disguise a quote from Devoy made off-record or was the reporter quoting Nicholson, the only other nationalist mentioned, or was there a third Irishman present, perhaps O’Donovan Rossa or John McClure, who had an affection for some of the French republicans who championed amnesty for the IRB prisoners. Who the disgusted Irishman was and why he wasn’t named, at least for now, remains a mystery. John McClure’s fraternal answer to an IWA invitation is published in *DPB,* Vol. I, p.23. [↑](#footnote-ref-292)
292. *DPB,* Vol. I, p.19, quoting Jeremiah O’Donovan Rossa’s June 24, 1871 letter in the *Irishman*. [↑](#footnote-ref-293)
293. *DPB,* Vol. I, p.42. [↑](#footnote-ref-294)
294. *New York Times,* September 22, 1871. After the 1870 invasion, several unsuccessful attempts were made by some members of the Savage Wing to reinstate James Stephens as a “unity” leader. Stephens was in exile in Europe until September, 1871 and thereafter in America until June, 1874, working for a Wine Merchant (Román, *A Provisional Dictator*, p.237). The Savage Wing administered the *coup de grâce* to whatever tiny spirit of cooperation might have lingered on from the Allied Council of the FB and IC mentioned above, when they courted James Stephens. [↑](#footnote-ref-295)
295. Bourke, *John O’Leary*, p.145; The *Irish American* on various occasionsmentions a society in Philadelphia called the “Keystone Club” which called itself part of the Irish Confederation into 1874, but the phrase “Irish Confederation” was in quotes (quotation marks were not used by the *Irish American* and other newspapers while the organization still existed) and the “spring of 1873” date given in Bourke’s *O’Leary* should be accepted. [↑](#footnote-ref-296)
296. *DPB,* Vol. I, p.46. [↑](#footnote-ref-297)
297. I encountered several such shifts from Fenian Brotherhood Circles to United Irishmen clubs in my research and there is no reason to suppose that any Irish Confederation club might, with members’ consent, make the same conversion to a Clan-na-Gael Camp, if the rituals and the constitution of the Clan-na-Gael Association were accepted by the prospective membership. [↑](#footnote-ref-298)
298. *The Irish World,* May 20, 1871. [↑](#footnote-ref-299)
299. Le Caron, *Twenty-Five Years in the Secret Service*, pp.107-108; MS9824 Devoy Papers. P.K. Walsh was a member of Cleveland Clan-na-Gael Camp D9 founded in 1868 with P. O’Marah as Senior Guardian and P.K. Walsh as Camp Secretary. The uncertainty of Le Caron’s information on the early Clan-na-Gael structure is a good indicator that the secrecy requirement between Camps and members was at least effective in keeping outsiders from discovering the network and even seems to have befuddled the members themselves. E.G. Jenkinson, “Memorandum on the Organization of the United Brotherhood or Clan-na-Gael in the United States,” dated January 22, 1885, CAB37/14/4, British National Archives “Dublin Castle-Home Rule Crisis,” p.224, where Jenkinson uses Le Caron’s erroneous information in his report. It is from Le Caron’s information that E.G. Jenkinson incorrectly writes that the Clan-na-Gael itself was called the Knights of the Inner Circle. A similar Camp designation is the Red Branch Knights, which was the name of a Clan-na-Gael Camp in San Francisco (*San Francisco Chronicle*, October 24, 1910), and was also the name of an organization John Goff belonged to in New York, although the latter needs proof to be shown to be a Clan-na-Gael Camp. John Devoy writes in his *Gaelic American* “Story of the Clan-na-Gael” articles that Le Caron did not join the Clan-na-Gael until “more than two years” after the *Catalpa* rescue, therefore somewhere after 1878 (*Gaelic American,* July 23,1904). Note: There was also a prominent Clan-na-Gael member in San Francisco with the name P.F. Walsh. [↑](#footnote-ref-300)
300. *Gaelic American,* July 23, 1904. Le Caron became a member two years after the *Catalpa* rescue, according to John Devoy in this article. This is plausible as his “patron” Alexander Sullivan was becoming a force in the Clan-na-Gael by 1878 and took it over in 1881. [↑](#footnote-ref-301)
301. Jerome’s middle initial ‘J’ is sometimes shown standing for “Janus” but Amy Johnson-Nossum, a descendant, possesses documents showing “James” was his middle name and that Jerome Collins was born in Cork City, not Dumanway as given in Seán ÓLúing, *Fremantle Mission*,p.44. [↑](#footnote-ref-302)
302. *The Story of the Clan-na-Gael* by John Devoy in the *Gaelic American*, November 19 and 29, 1924. [↑](#footnote-ref-303)
303. *The Irish World,* October 7, 1871. [↑](#footnote-ref-304)
304. *New York Herald,* May 6, 1882, p.4. He was well known for his ability to track storms heading toward Europe. Initially there was criticism of his theories on storm tracks across the Atlantic, but his accuracy in forecasting finally won over the scientific community and Collins’ theories were received with acclamation in 1878 at the Paris Meteorological Conference. [↑](#footnote-ref-305)
305. *MS 18044*, Devoy Papers. [↑](#footnote-ref-306)
306. *The Irish Nation*, May 13, 1882. Front page under “Arctic Martyrs.” Jerome J. Collins perished on October 30, 1881 on the Jeannette Polar Expedition. Events in the life of Jerome Collins are found in *The Irish Nation,* May 13, 1882, and see the *Gaelic American,* November 29, 1924, also ÓLúing, *Freemantle Mission,* p.45, and Francis G. McManamin, *The American Years of John* *Boyle O’Reilly*, Catholic University Press (Washington DC, 1959), p.54. The burial is covered in the *Cork Examiner,* March 10, 1884. [↑](#footnote-ref-307)
307. *Gaelic American*, 29 November 1924; E.G. Jenkinson “Memorandum on the Organization of the United Brotherhood or Clan-na-Gael in the United States,” p.222, where a Michael Steady of New York is listed as a Clan-na-Gael leader in 1870. *The Brooklyn Eagle*, 5 May 1883, where the name of the man whose house was used was given as Michael Sheady instead of James Sheedy. Michael Sheady was perhaps called James Sheedy in error many years later by Devoy in 1924. In seems logical that all these iterations refer to the same man. Although the 1924 articles imply that Wolfe Tone’s birthday was chosen, in an earlier article, on the life of Jerome Collins (*Gaelic American*, December 29, 1906, p.1), Devoy states that the founding of the Napper Tandy Club on Tone’s birthday was just a coincidence that the founders learned about afterward. [↑](#footnote-ref-308)
308. *New York Herald*, May 4, 1872. Under the newspaper’s column “Died” a man named James Preston was listed and Napper Tandy was referred to as a club of the “Clana Gaile” Association. [↑](#footnote-ref-309)
309. ÓLúing, *Fremantle Mission*, p.45. [↑](#footnote-ref-310)
310. *Gaelic American*, November 29, 1924, Camp D19 is the “Lawrence Camp,” listed in the UB Convention of 1877. [↑](#footnote-ref-311)
311. *New York Times,* February 4, 1870. [↑](#footnote-ref-312)
312. *Gaelic American*, November 29, 1924. [↑](#footnote-ref-313)
313. *New York Times,* September 13, 1869. [↑](#footnote-ref-314)
314. Devoy, *History of the Clan-na-Gael* in the *Gaelic American*, November 29, 1924, where Devoy states that the Clan-na-Gael “originated” in the plan to kidnap Prince Arthur. If Devoy referred to the founding date of the Napper Tandy Club, we would have to discount Devoy’s statement. The visit of Prince Arthur wasn’t known until after the date given for the Clan-na-Gael founding. The time frame for Prince Arthur’s visit to the United States, announced June 16, 1869 and occurring in February, 1870 does not support Devoy’s account. Based on *New York Times* reports published during Prince Arthur’s visit, the most likely date for the kidnap attempt was February 3, 1870 when the *New York* *Times* recounted that Prince Arthur took a boat ride in the harbor. In an earlier article written about Jerome Collins, Devoy states that the kidnapping plan fell through for lack of “adequate means” (*Gaelic American*, December 29, 1906, p.1). [↑](#footnote-ref-315)
315. Funchion, *Chicago’s Irish Nationalists, 1881-1890*, p.55. “In Chicago, as throughout the nation, the failure and factionalism destroyed the Fenians, and there, as elsewhere, the Clan-na-Gael began to fill the void.” [↑](#footnote-ref-316)
316. Barry Kennerk, *Shadow of the Brotherhood*, Kindle Location 1,772 and Appendix 2 Rank and File, item 15, (Mercier Press, Cork 2010 [Kindle Edition]. Kennerk cites police records that show the police thought George Clarke’s killer was a Peter Mullen as pointed out by an informer Alfred Aylward. Thomas Francis is also mentioned as “possibly being involved.” But see the next endnote where Devoy and Ryan assert the killer was Sam Cavanagh. It is unknown whether Peter Mullen was an alias or the Sam Cavanagh story is apocryphal. [↑](#footnote-ref-317)
317. *Gaelic American*, November 29, 1924. The IRB trial and assassination of Clark is recounted in Ryan’s *Phoenix Flame*, pp.219-222. According to John Devoy, “Clan-na-Gael” was “not the correct Gaelic spelling.” The Clan-na-Gael spelled it in Gaelic as “Clann na nGaedheal” on a Calvary Cemetery marker in New York (*Irish American*, May 21, 1892). In an unpublished manuscript, Brian Sayers,“Revolutionary and Scholar: The Life and Thought of John O’Mahony,” p.264, Sayers, a scholar writing a biography of O’Mahony, shows that John O’Mahony often used the term *Clanna Gaedhail* to refer to the Irish race. It is probable that the use of the term Clan-na-Gael, in its various spellings, was a commonly accepted descriptive of the Irish race. [↑](#footnote-ref-318)
318. Sir Robert Anderson, *Sidelights on the Home Rule Movement*, E.P. Dutton and Company (New York, 1906), p.84. [↑](#footnote-ref-319)
319. *Irish American*, February 4, 1871. [↑](#footnote-ref-320)
320. *DPB,* Vol. I, p.54. O’Kelly to Devoy, August 22, 1872. Emphasis was in the original. [↑](#footnote-ref-321)
321. *The Brooklyn Eagle*, August 9, 1885. Jeremiah O’Donovan Rossa states that the Clan-na-Gael expelled any member who belonged to another Irish revolutionary society and had expelled him for belonging to the Fenian Brotherhood. This is not true. Rossa was President of the Fenian Brotherhood in 1877 and also member of the Clan-na-Gael. O’Donovan Rossa was not expelled until 1880 when he formed his own organization called *United Irishmen* in direct opposition to the Clan-na-Gael with the objective of regaining control of the “Skirmishing Fund.” [↑](#footnote-ref-322)
322. *Gaelic American*, November 19, 1924. “The Story of the Clan-na-Gael” by John Devoy. [↑](#footnote-ref-323)
323. *Gaelic American*, July 16, 1904. [↑](#footnote-ref-324)
324. *MS 18017(1)*, Devoy Papers. In a Clan-na-Gael Executive Body circular dated June 4, 1874, *DPB,* Vol. I, p.77, on September 7, 1874, McClure mentions he served “for the past term” without mentioning the position. [↑](#footnote-ref-325)
325. *DPB,* Vol. I, p.88. [↑](#footnote-ref-326)
326. *The Irish World*, July 31, 1875. [↑](#footnote-ref-327)
327. *DPB,* Vol. I, p.136. Carroll to Devoy, February 15, 1876. D48 is a Clan-na-Gael Camp designation and “SG,” or Senior Guardian, is the equivalent of the senior Camp leader. [↑](#footnote-ref-328)
328. In this book there are several men named O’Connor which can cause confusion: (1) T.P. O’Connor Member of Parliament for County Tipperary; (2) John O’Connor Power, Home Rule advocate, President [1882-1891] of the IRB Supreme Council, and Member of Parliament for County Mayo, he made a bad impression on Devoy; (3) James O’Connor of Dublin, who at the age of 15 helped John Devoy during the prison rescue of James Stephens in 1865 and served prison time with Devoy. James was a welcome IRB envoy to the Clan-na-Gael in 1869 and later served as Member of Parliament for County Wicklow; (4) John O’Connor of Dublin, James’ brother, for a time lived in New York and was Senior Guardian of the Napper Tandy Club from 1869 to 1872 (McGee, IRB, p. 57), in 1872 he was sent to Ireland as and envoy to the IRB, and, again, in 1876, he was sent as an envoy and, this time, he remained serving as Secretary of the IRB Supreme Council; (5) Michael O’Connor a member of Michael Doheny’s Irish Republican Union; (6) John O ‘Connor of New York who volunteered to serve on the Catalpa, may have been one of the O’Connor brothers mentioned above; (7) “Long John” O’Connor mentioned in connection with sending men to Australia from England at the same time as the Catalpa expedition was in progress, was a Member of Parliament for County Tipperary and later for County Kildare. [↑](#footnote-ref-329)
329. *The Irish World,* August 19, 1871; *Irish American,* August 17, 1872. [↑](#footnote-ref-330)
330. *The* *Irish American,* January 25, 1873. [↑](#footnote-ref-331)
331. The *Chicago Tribune,* February 1, 1874. [↑](#footnote-ref-332)
332. *Cincinnati Enquirer,* August 13, and August 20, 1876 article and paid announcement in classifieds. [↑](#footnote-ref-333)
333. *London Times,* August 8, 1881 and *Hansard Reports, House of Commons*: HC Debates 16 February 1882 vol. 266 cc795-878. Rossa states that “the scattered Clan Na Gael” would wreak vengeance on landlords who evict tenants. Rossa had been a member of the Clan-na-Gael so the use of the phase would have had significance for those familiar with the American organization. Cullen’s letter was quoted by the *London Times* on May 24, 1883, seven years after it was written. [↑](#footnote-ref-334)
334. *London Times,* August 17, 1883. [↑](#footnote-ref-335)
335. Le Caron, Twenty-Five Years in the Secret Service, p.129. [↑](#footnote-ref-336)
336. ‘Jsfmboe’ is code for Ireland in the cipher used by the Clan-na-Gael. [↑](#footnote-ref-337)
337. John T. McEnnis, *The Clan-na-Gael and the Murder of Dr. Cronin,* no publisher named (Chicago, 1889), pp.81-95. Ennis was a member of the Clan-na-Gael. [↑](#footnote-ref-338)
338. A footnote above discusses the possibility that this may be a person named Michael Sheady. [↑](#footnote-ref-339)
339. *DPB,* Vol. I, p.53; *Gaelic American*, November 29, 1924; ÓLúing, *Fremantle Mission,* p.44. A James Sheedy was president of an Irish Confederation club in New York and there is no reason to suppose he is not the same James Sheedy of whom Devoy speaks, *The Irish World,* April 29, 1871. [↑](#footnote-ref-340)
340. *Gaelic American,* November 29, 1924. [↑](#footnote-ref-341)
341. Collins was reinstated as we find him later as an important emissary to the IRB in *DPB,* Vol. I, p.339 and p.425. [↑](#footnote-ref-342)
342. *DPB,* Vol. I, p.53. [↑](#footnote-ref-343)
343. James McGurrin, “John W. Goff,” p.274 in *The Journal of the American Irish Historical Society,* Vol. XXIV. [↑](#footnote-ref-344)
344. *Gaelic American,* November 22, 1924. *Passing of John W. Goff*; also see *DPB,* Vol. I, p.93 and ÓLúing, *Fremantle Mission,* p.61. Devoy states that Goff’s County Recorder position was part of a political “agreement” for his being a counsel on the Lexow Committee, but no other sources mention this. [↑](#footnote-ref-345)
345. In the state of New York, unlike in most other states, what is called the “Superior Court” is called the Supreme Court, a judge is called a “justice,” and assigned to civil or criminal cases. [↑](#footnote-ref-346)
346. McGurrin, “John W. Goff” p.275; also, Newman Levy, *My Double Life,* Doubleday, (New York, 1958), p.222. [↑](#footnote-ref-347)
347. *The Irish American*, October 10, 1868. [↑](#footnote-ref-348)
348. *The Irish American*, January 30, 1869. Goff was elected as secretary when James H. Sullivan resigned. Note that Goff’s name is spelled “Gough” in Irish American articles and announcements. [↑](#footnote-ref-349)
349. *Irish American,* March 26, 1870. [↑](#footnote-ref-350)
350. *Irish American*, April 2, 1870. [↑](#footnote-ref-351)
351. *New York Times*, May 15, 1871. [↑](#footnote-ref-352)
352. *Irish World,* September 21, 1872. It is possible the shakeup in the General Sheridan Circle created the impetus for Goff and Fitzgerald to form the Hamilton Rowan Clan-na-Gael Camp, which would make the date 1870 instead of 1869, which is the date John Devoy gives us. Richard McCloud was also a Clan-na-Gael member: “I am friendly to the Camp here [Hartford] and elsewhere, but since leaving New York in 1872, I have not been in harness.”(*DPB,* Vol. I, p.510). McCloud was treasurer of the United Irishmen (*DPB,* Vol. I, p.56) and left the Clan-na-Gael leadership when he left New York in 1872. [↑](#footnote-ref-353)
353. *The Irish World,* September 2, 1871. [↑](#footnote-ref-354)
354. *The Irish World,* June 15, 1872. The General Sheridan Club either became part of the Irish Confederation at the time the United Irishmen formed in Cincinnati or when the United Irishmen turned themselves over to the Exiles. The club is shown on the list of Irish Confederation clubs in the *Irish American*, July 29, 1871. [↑](#footnote-ref-355)
355. *Irish American*, September 24, 1870, under headline “*THE UNITED IRISHMEN.*” [↑](#footnote-ref-356)
356. *Gaelic American*, November 22, 1924. Alexander Hamilton Rowan was a Protestant Irish nationalist during the rebellion of 1798. The Hamilton Rowan Club is probably Clan-na-Gael Camp D15 which shows J. Fitzgerald as Senior Guardian (MS9824, Devoy Papers). Goff is later shown as Senior Guardian of D25. It is interesting to note that a Fenian Circle of the same name existed in 1867 in New York (*New York Times*, November 29, 1867, “The Fenian Funeral”) which could indicate that the Hamilton Rowan Camp of Goff and Fitzgerald was a converted Fenian Circle. [↑](#footnote-ref-357)
357. *The* *Irish World,* August 9, 1873, November 22, 1873, March 14, 1874, and March 28, 1874; *The New York Times*, March 18, 1895, March 3, 1896, February 24, 1900, March 5, 1900; *Irish American*, April 4, 1874. The Red Branch Knights of New York was sometimes called the Knights of the Red Branch. At least one other Red Branch Knight member, James Fitzgerald, was also a member of the Clan-na-Gael, so it might be a front name for a Clan-na-Gael Camp, but this is uncertain. At least one other Clan-na-Gael Camp had the same name. Thomas Desmond (*Catalpa* rescue team) called his San Francisco Camp by a similar name, the “Knights of the Red Branch” (*San Francisco Chronicle*, October 24, 1910, “Desmond Called by Death,” page 12). Le Caron says the Clan-na-Gael was originally called the “Knights of the Inner Circle,” which may or may not suggest a Clan-na-Gael naming convention (Le Caron, *Twenty-Five Years in the Secret Service*, pp.107-108). [↑](#footnote-ref-358)
358. ÓLúing, Fremantle Mission, p.58. [↑](#footnote-ref-359)
359. *Gaelic American,* November 29, 1924. [↑](#footnote-ref-360)
360. *DPB,* Vol. I, p.81, and *Gaelic American,* July 16, 1904. [↑](#footnote-ref-361)
361. Martin Hogan in a letter written May 20, 1871 to Peter Curran in New York, reproduced in ÓLúing, *Fremantle Mission,* p.51. [↑](#footnote-ref-362)
362. Devoy, “The Story of the Catalpa,” *Gaelic American*, July 16, 1875. [↑](#footnote-ref-363)
363. *Gaelic American*, July 16, 1904. [↑](#footnote-ref-364)
364. *DPB,* Vol. I, p.81; “sixth annual” indicates the first United Brotherhood Convention was held in 1869. [↑](#footnote-ref-365)
365. *Gaelic American*, July 23, 1904; p.60. Devoy writes that the letter was read but without mentioning Hogan’s name or a note at the bottom, asking for replies to come to Father McCabe, a priest in Fremantle. It is just as well, Father Patrick McCabe, who had helped John Boyle O’Reilly escape in May of 1875 was transferred to a distant parish in Australia and was no longer in contact with the prisoners: *New Hibernia Review*, Vol. 9, No. 1, Spring, 2005, p.77, *History Into Myth – The Catalpa’s Long Voyage*, by Philip A. Fennel. See also: McManamin, *The American Years of John Boyle O’Reilly*, p.54, and *Fremantle Mission* by Seán Ó Lúing. [↑](#footnote-ref-366)
366. Devoy, *Recollections of an Irish Rebel,* p.253; MS. 9,824, Devoy Papers, NLI, Dublin. Hanley is also spelled Hanly. [↑](#footnote-ref-367)
367. Bourke was active in the Savage Wing of the Fenian Brotherhood as well. [↑](#footnote-ref-368)
368. John Devoy, “The Story of the Clan-na-Gael” in *The Gaelic American*, November 29, 1924. [↑](#footnote-ref-369)
369. Devoy, Recollections of an Irish Rebel, p.75. [↑](#footnote-ref-370)
370. Devoy quoting T.F. Bourke in *Gaelic American* July 16, 1904. See also *Gaelic American,* 29 November 1924 where Devoy repeats Bourke’s comments in *Story of the Clan-na-Gael*. [↑](#footnote-ref-371)
371. *DPB,* Vol. I, p.73. Col. Timothy Hanley was supervisor, and John Goff, secretary of the ill-fated United Irishmen of New York District 6. It is not hard to suspect that Goff was involved in Hanley’s campaign. Goff, although not at the convention, was selected to serve on the APR Committee, perhaps as a sop to Hanley or Goff or both. [↑](#footnote-ref-372)
372. *DPB,* Vol. I, p.82. “The Story of the Catalpa,” by John Devoy, *Gaelic American*, July 23, 1904. [↑](#footnote-ref-373)
373. *New Hibernia Review,* Spring, 2005, p.91; *History into Myth,* by Philip Fennell, fn. 79: Edward Archibald to Derby, 30 March, 1876, *PRO, FO5, 1336*. [↑](#footnote-ref-374)
374. John Devoy in his *Catalpa Rescue* articles in the *Gaelic American* states that an IRB official came to America while preparations for the *Catalpa* rescue were being carried out and was made privy to the planned mission. When this person returned to Ireland he did not tell the IRB about the Clan-na-Gael plans but instead pushed the IRB to move quickly forward in a separate rescue attempt. As will be shown later in this book, the two rescue parties in Fremantle, each working without knowledge of the other’s existence, might have inadvertently exposed the rescue operation. According to Sean O’Lúing (*Fremantle Mission,* p.107) this man was “Long John” O’Connor-Power. It is interesting that O’Connor-Power in 1874 tried to form a second IRB in Ireland called, significantly, the United Brotherhood, but was roundly rebuffed by John Goff and John Devoy (*Story of the Clan-na-Gael* in *Gaelic American,* November 29, 1924). It may be that O’Connor-Power was the founder of the UIB organization in Massachusetts (the “rival organization” mentioned by Thomas Brennan in his 1877 statements to the Clan-na-Gael Convention) where John Breslin and his brothers were members before Breslin signed on with the Clan-na-Gael in order to take part in the rescue. It is also fortunate for the rescue mission that the British Spy Henri Le Caron, who provided documentation at the *London Times* Commission Trial concerning Clan-na-Gael activities up through the 1880s, wasn’t a Clan-na-Gael member until 1878, two years after the rescue. - [↑](#footnote-ref-375)
375. The Fenians in Australia, pp.225-229. [↑](#footnote-ref-376)
376. *UB Convention*, p.62. An expense item shows in the Clan-na-Gael finances: “By Expense Garrahy Family - $69.10” (*Gaelic American,* October 1, 1904). See an earlier note: Furniture was awarded Mrs. Garrahy. [↑](#footnote-ref-377)
377. “The Story of the Catalpa,” by John Devoy, *Gaelic American*, July 24, 1904. [↑](#footnote-ref-378)
378. *The Irish World*, July 18, 1874. Emphasis in the original. [↑](#footnote-ref-379)
379. *Irish World*, October 10, 1874. [↑](#footnote-ref-380)
380. *Irish World*, September 19. 1874, quoted in *Attitudes*, *etc*., by Gibson, p.329. [↑](#footnote-ref-381)
381. *Irish World*, October 10, 1874, quoted in *Attitudes*, *etc*., by Gibson, p.330. The meaning of “skirmishing” comes from military language used during the Civil War. Skirmishers were small groups of soldiers sent ahead of a main body of troops or posted around an entrenched position to ascertain the enemy’s whereabouts and strength, and by having a small fight with the enemy at a distance, they allowed time for the main body of troops to react. Ford grabbed the word “skirmish” used in Rossa’s speech and used it as a symbol for “projects” to be carried out by Irish American nationalists against British targets before the final rising would be attempted. [↑](#footnote-ref-382)
382. *Irish World*, December 4, 1875, quoted in *Attitudes, etc*., by Gibson, p.330. [↑](#footnote-ref-383)
383. White was a member of Clan-na-Gael Camp D144: (*MS. 9,824),* Devoy Papers; White’s letter to *Irish World* of November 12, 1874 was published on November, 28, 1874. [↑](#footnote-ref-384)
384. *Irish World*, March 4, 1876. [↑](#footnote-ref-385)
385. *Irish World*, March 25, 1876. [↑](#footnote-ref-386)
386. *DPB,* Vol. I, p.143. [↑](#footnote-ref-387)
387. *MS 18135 (2)*, NLI, Letter Devoy to [James L.] White who was a Clan-na-Gael member in Denver, March 1, 1876 (also in *DPB,* Vol. I, p.143.) [↑](#footnote-ref-388)
388. *London Times,* June 26, 1876. [↑](#footnote-ref-389)
389. *Gaelic American*, December 6, 1924, in the Devoy article, “The story of the Clan-na-Gael;” McGee, *IRB*, pp.38-65 where there is a good account of the problems faced by the IRB in Ireland at that time. [↑](#footnote-ref-390)
390. *DPB,* Vol. I, *p.70*. May 7, 1874. Letter: M. W. Stackpool to John McClure. An Exile, McClure was on the Clan-na-Gael Executive Body (perhaps as secretary or chairman) during 1873. See *DPB,* Vol. I, p.77, letter McClure to Devoy requesting that the Executive Body relieve him of the “property of the organization.” [↑](#footnote-ref-391)
391. *DPB,* Vol. I, p.114. Letter Charles G. Doran to John Devoy, June, 1875. [↑](#footnote-ref-392)
392. Devoy, Recollections of an Irish Rebel, p.239. [↑](#footnote-ref-393)
393. It is possible that since the book was published posthumously that Devoy did not have a chance see the differences in the Burke article in the *Gaelic American* and his own story of the Clan-na-Gael [↑](#footnote-ref-394)
394. D’Arcy, The Fenian Movement in the United States 1858-1886, p. 260. [↑](#footnote-ref-395)
395. *DPB,* Vol. I, p.132. [↑](#footnote-ref-396)
396. *DPB,* Vol. I, p.136. [↑](#footnote-ref-397)
397. *DPB,* Vol. I, p.207. [↑](#footnote-ref-398)
398. *DPB,* Vol. I, p.212. See also U.S. Federal Census 1880, Tallahassee, Leon County, Florida, District 18, Enumeration. District 89, p.40. [↑](#footnote-ref-399)
399. *DPB,* Vol. I, p.96. Letter from Devoy to Reynolds. [↑](#footnote-ref-400)
400. “The Story of the Clan-na-Gael,” by John Devoy, *Gaelic American,* November 29, 1924. [↑](#footnote-ref-401)
401. *The Brooklyn Eagle*, December 11, 1865, “The Fenian Trouble.” [↑](#footnote-ref-402)
402. “The Story of the Clan-na-Gael,” by John Devoy, *Gaelic American,* November 29, 1924. [↑](#footnote-ref-403)
403. “The Story of the Clan-na-Gael,” by John Devoy, *Gaelic American,* November 29, 1924. [↑](#footnote-ref-404)
404. There is a letter found in *DPB,* Vol. I, p. 71, to John Devoy from F. P. O’Shea, dated August 17, 1874, detailing Shea’s attempt to get control of W.J. Nicholson’s Clan-na-Gael-related papers and books. See also *Gaelic American,* November 29, 1875. Nicholson had served without pay for three years. According to Devoy, Nicholson was more sinned against than sinning and would have been forgiven and voted the amount as a salary, if he had not attempted to cover up the problem. [↑](#footnote-ref-405)
405. *General Circular No. 2* dated January 15, 1875 *MS 18,015*(1), Devoy Papers, “Circulars issued by the Clan-na-Gael 1874-1927.” To officers and members of the VC [code for “UB” or United Brotherhood]. [↑](#footnote-ref-406)
406. ÓLúing, *Fremantle Mission*, p.61; Philip Fennell and Marie King, Eds, *John Devoy’s Catalpa Expedition*, p. 42. [↑](#footnote-ref-407)
407. DPB Vol I, p. 125 [↑](#footnote-ref-408)
408. “U.S. Census of 1880, Philadelphia District 676,” p.17. William Carroll, age 40, doctor, is living with his brother, Edgar age 25, also a doctor. He listed his birthplace as Pennsylvania; however, most sources show his birthplace to be County Donegal in Ireland. In the 1900 U.S. Census, we find William Carroll with his wife, born in Pennsylvania. They had at least two children, one named Mitchel and one named Franklin. [↑](#footnote-ref-409)
409. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania certificate of death, File No. 51303 (found on Ancestry.com) [↑](#footnote-ref-410)
410. E.G. Jenkinson, “Memorandum on the Organization of the United Brotherhood or Clan-na-Gael in the United States,” dated January 22, 1885, CAB37/14/4, British National Archives “Dublin Castle-Home Rule Crisis,” p.222; *Gaelic American,* July 30, 1924, John Devoy confirms Carroll’s early Clan-na-Gael membership when he mentions that Carroll was a long-time member before 1874. [↑](#footnote-ref-411)
411. *Fenian Memories,* by Dr. Mark Ryan, p.92. MH Gill (Dublin, 1946); *Twenty-Five Years in the Secret Service*, by Henri Le Caron, p.103; *DPB,* Vol. II, p.28, John O’Leary to Devoy, December 28, 1880. [↑](#footnote-ref-412)
412. Twenty-Five Years in the Secret Service, p.103. [↑](#footnote-ref-413)
413. DPB, Vol. II, p.27-28, O’Leary to Devoy December 28, 1880. [↑](#footnote-ref-414)
414. UB Convention, p.10 and *DPB,* Vol I, p.99. [↑](#footnote-ref-415)
415. *DPB,* Vol. I, p.99 and Devoy, *Recollections of an Irish Rebel,* p.298-299. [↑](#footnote-ref-416)
416. *Fremantle Mission,* p.66; John Devoy, *Gaelic American*, July 23, 1904. [↑](#footnote-ref-417)
417. James Jeffery Roche, *John Boyle O’Reilly*, Mershon Publishers (New York, 1891), p.132. [↑](#footnote-ref-418)
418. Devoy, Recollections of an Irish Rebel, p.159. [↑](#footnote-ref-419)
419. Devoy, *Recollections of an Irish Rebel,* p.159, and Roche, *John Boyle O’Reilly,* p.157. O’Reilly’s commitment to the Irish nationalist cause in spite of acceding to the bishop’s anti-Clan-na-Gael edict is illustrated when in November of 1878 when Devoy presented his plan “the New Departure,” O’Reilly put all his affairs in order, offered himself up for immediate action as a cavalryman and was disappointed when Devoy pointed out that military action might not come for several years. (*DPB,* Vol. I, p.380). [↑](#footnote-ref-420)
420. Roche, John Boyle O’Reilly, p.91. [↑](#footnote-ref-421)
421. Probably Clan-na-Gael Camp D5. See *UB Convention,* p.2. [↑](#footnote-ref-422)
422. Relevant to these men being in the newspaper business is the fact that O’Reilly and Cashman were part of a group of prisoners on board the ship *Hougoumont,* that published a “newspaper” called the *Wild Goose* during their transportation to Australia and Fremantle Prison. This magazine’s issues were bound and are held at the New South Wales State Library in Sydney, Australia. [↑](#footnote-ref-423)
423. Pease, Catalpa Expedition, p.41. [↑](#footnote-ref-424)
424. *Gaelic American*, July 24, 1904; see also *Fremantle Mission,* p.68, and *DPB,* Vol. I, p.88. [↑](#footnote-ref-425)
425. ÓLúing, *Fremantle Mission*, p.68. [↑](#footnote-ref-426)
426. Pease, Catalpa Expedition, p.73. [↑](#footnote-ref-427)
427. Pease, Catalpa Expedition, p.74. [↑](#footnote-ref-428)
428. Pease, Catalpa Expedition, p.76. [↑](#footnote-ref-429)
429. Alexander Starbuck, *History of The American Whale Fishery*, Castle (Seacaucus, 1989), p.492, p.534, p.616, and p.650. *Gaelic American*, July 16, 1904. [↑](#footnote-ref-430)
430. MS 18034 (4) [↑](#footnote-ref-431)
431. Devoy, Recollections of an Irish Rebel, p.298. [↑](#footnote-ref-432)
432. *Gaelic American,* July 23, 1904, in his article *The Story of the Catalpa Rescue*, Part III, Devoy, where he states that he chose the orator for the Mitchel memorial celebration, refers to Goff as “another unknown man” who wanted to be orator, however, elsewhere in the article Devoy mentions Goff by name. [↑](#footnote-ref-433)
433. The Phoenix Flame, p.228. [↑](#footnote-ref-434)
434. *New York Herald*, 24 March 1875. AFC is code for Chairman of the Executive Body which pretends that Devoy is the author. [↑](#footnote-ref-435)
435. *New York Times,* 26 March 1875. [↑](#footnote-ref-436)
436. *Gaelic American*, 22 November 1924, p.3: *The Passing of John Goff*; *DPB,* Vol. I, pp.99-101, The *DPB* editors, going along with Devoy, call the memorial was a “great success,” but apparently a larger turnout was expected since the *New York Times* on 19 April 1875 it states that, at the most, only half the expected crowd showed up at the Hippodrome (the old Madison Square Garden) that had a seating capacity of 20,000. [↑](#footnote-ref-437)
437. *London Times,* August 7, 1876, stated explicitly what might happen to those left behind. [↑](#footnote-ref-438)
438. *DPB,* Vol. I, p.100-101. [↑](#footnote-ref-439)
439. *DPB,* Vol. I, p.101. [↑](#footnote-ref-440)
440. *DPB,* Vol. I, p.108. [↑](#footnote-ref-441)
441. *Gaelic American*, September 3, 1904. John Devoy is referring to Goff and his crony, Miles O’Brien, and others from Goff’s New York Camp. [↑](#footnote-ref-442)
442. *MS 18,037*, Devoy papers, a Folder containing letters from Goff, O’Brien, Burns, and Fitzgerald [NY]. [↑](#footnote-ref-443)
443. *DPB,* Vol. I, p.113. Letter John Devoy to James Reynolds, June 10, 1875. [↑](#footnote-ref-444)
444. D’Arcy, The Fenian Movement in the United States 1858-1886, p.50 fn. [↑](#footnote-ref-445)
445. T. R. Bannerman replaced the disgraced and purged Clan-na-Gael Secretary, W. J. Nicholson in 1874. John McCarthy in 1874 would logically have been on hand with T. R. Bannerman during the transfer of the Clan-na-Gael financial records obtained from Nicholson. Devoy mentions in *The Report* (Incomplete) *Presented to the 1875 Convention of the United Brotherhood,* that John Ryan (outgoing Chairman of the Executive Body), John McClure, and Daniel Hayes, representing the Executive Body of 1873, were summoned to turn over Clan-na-Gael documents to the new Executive Body, and that “we called upon Messrs. McCarthy and [T.R.] Bannerman and requested them to turn over all property belonging to the organization in their possession.” In a letter to John Devoy, F.P. O’Shea, who was assigned to obtain all Clan-na-Gael documents from W.J. Nicholson, refers several times to the fact that Nicholson turned over documents to “McC” and that “McC” promised to give back all property important to the Clan-na-Gael and would not return any Clan-na-Gael documents to Nicholson. This “McC” is assuredly the John M. McCarthy mentioned above, the Clan-na-Gael ex-treasurer who served as Secretary along with John Goff on the United Irishmen Directory for the New York District. [↑](#footnote-ref-446)
446. *Gaelic American*, December 6, 1924. Devoy states that in 1872 he used to meet John McCarthy “almost every day” and McCarthy kept complaining of the bad communication between the IRB Supreme Council and the Clan. Devoy calling McCarthy “a very fine type of man” goes on to state that he influenced McCarthy to send John O’Connor, James O’Connor’s brother, then living in New York, as an envoy to the IRB and that solved the communication problem. John O’Connor relocated to Ireland after 1876 and became Secretary of the IRB Supreme Council. [↑](#footnote-ref-447)
447. The Fremantle Mission, p.83. [↑](#footnote-ref-448)
448. UB Convention, p.11, and *DPB,* Vol. I, p.180. [↑](#footnote-ref-449)
449. *DPB,* Vol. I, p.104. [↑](#footnote-ref-450)
450. Fremantle Mission, p.84. [↑](#footnote-ref-451)
451. *Gaelic American*, August 20, 1904, “The Story of the Catalpa Rescue, part V.” Devoy emphasizes that Anthony had the authority to accept or refuse to board Brennan in the Azores. Devoy, *Recollections of an Irish Rebel*, p.255, states emphatically “. . . Captain Anthony refused to ship him.” [↑](#footnote-ref-452)
452. *DPB,* Vol. I,p.96, letter from O'Reilly to Devoy dated March 4, 1875. Emphasis in the original. [↑](#footnote-ref-453)
453. Crew List made out by Anthony included on the microfilm of the *Catalpa* logbook at the New Bedford Whaling Museum. [↑](#footnote-ref-454)
454. Pease, Catalpa Expedition, p.94. [↑](#footnote-ref-455)
455. Pease, Catalpa Expedition, p.45. [↑](#footnote-ref-456)
456. *DPB,* Vol. I, p.108. [↑](#footnote-ref-457)
457. *DPB,* Vol. I, p.101. [↑](#footnote-ref-458)
458. *UB Convention,* pp.11-12. “Thomas Hawley” given by Brennan in an interview in the *New York Times,* 2 November 1890 p.9. A ship manifest of the ship *Durham* at Ancestry.com shows that on March 17, 1876 a Thomas Hawley age 40 arrived in Melbourne. During the questioning at the UB Convention Brennan indicates he arrived from London to Melbourne booked a ship to Adelaide and booked the Georgette arriving at Bunbury and this arrival on the Georgette is confirmed by Breslin in his report read during the UB Convention. [↑](#footnote-ref-459)
459. *Gaelic American*, August 20, 1904, “The Story of the Catalpa Rescue, part V.” [↑](#footnote-ref-460)
460. Devoy mentions this “grudge” in his *Catalpa Story* articles in the *Gaelic Am*erican but never clarifies the cause of O’Brien’s animosity. [↑](#footnote-ref-461)
461. “The Story of the Clan-na-Gael,” by John Devoy, *Gaelic American*, November 29, 1924. [↑](#footnote-ref-462)
462. *DPB,* Vol. I, p.116. [↑](#footnote-ref-463)
463. See above “The IRB Joins the Clan” [↑](#footnote-ref-464)
464. Z.W. Pease, (chosen by Anthony to write the story), *Catalpa Expedition*, Captain George S. Anthony, publisher (New Bedford, 1897). Pease had Captain Anthony, the *Catalpa* logbook and Anthony’s notes in front of him to reconstruct the story. The page numbers given for Pease’s *Catalpa Expedition* in this book correspond to a republished (2002) edition by Hesperian Press, Carlyle, Western Australia, 2002. [↑](#footnote-ref-465)
465. The *Catalpa* Route Map, where the actual logbook reckonings were used to plot the voyage, is located in the appendix. [↑](#footnote-ref-466)
466. A logbook entry for July 10, 1876, for instance, describes weather and events from noon on July 9, 1876 until noon on July 10, 1876. Location reckonings are made at noon at the division of the logbook days and represent the ship’s location at the logbook date given which is also the calendar date for the reckoning. When recounting this section of the voyage, I rely almost exclusively on the logbook, with occasional input from Anthony’s book by Pease., In the interest of minimizing footnotes and spelling or manuscript interpretation clutter, footnotes are not given to the events or quotations, unless sources other than the logbook are used, or a specific point is being made. Further, I do not use “sic” in the case of misspellings or to point out the many spelling variations, especially in names used by First Mate Smith in the logbook unless it is important to the understanding of the events. [↑](#footnote-ref-467)
467. Looking forward on a ship “starboard” is the right side and “port” is left side. [↑](#footnote-ref-468)
468. Pease, Catalpa Expedition, p.45. [↑](#footnote-ref-469)
469. *DPB,* Vol. I, p.105. [↑](#footnote-ref-470)
470. Pease, Catalpa Expedition, p.55. [↑](#footnote-ref-471)
471. *Catalpa* logbook entry for Saturday, October 16, 1875: First Mate Smith refers to Duggan as “cooper” (barrel maker) in the description of Duggan being hauled aboard after having a few too many in the Azores; see also: *UB Convention*, p.55. [↑](#footnote-ref-472)
472. Clifford W. Ashley, *The Yankee Whaler*, Dover (Mineola, 1991), p.97. [↑](#footnote-ref-473)
473. Ashley, The Yankee Whaler, p.4. [↑](#footnote-ref-474)
474. Pease, Catalpa Expedition, p.46. [↑](#footnote-ref-475)
475. John Devoy,“The Story of the Catalpa Rescue,” Part XI, *Gaelic American,* October 1, 1904. It is unknown exactly what Hathaway told Devoy to expect from the voyage. As whaling men, Hathaway or Richardson would have estimated around 550 barrels as a successful trip, based on the size of the vessel and crew; 550 barrels *was* the number used here to calculate what the ship should have harvested after the voyage was over. [↑](#footnote-ref-476)
476. “Luffed to the wind”: the ship was faced into the wind with the sails furled, a stable position if the captain wanted to remain in one place for an extended time. [↑](#footnote-ref-477)
477. ÓLúing, *Fremantle Mission*, p.95: ÓLúing in his book prints a letter from Hathaway to Devoy, where Hathaway quotes from a letter that R[ichardson] had received from A[nthony] “dated May 8th, nine days from home:” seven days out, he killed four whales but could only bring one alongside the ship. Hathaway states it is a “first-rate commencement” to the voyage. However, when we go to the logbook entry for this incident we find that they chased two whales on May 5 and didn’t catch them, and the next morning, May 6 at 11:00 AM, they killed two whales but lost one whale because the waist boat iron strap parted. The total oil taken as stated in the logbook entry for May 10 is 12 barrels stowed; Pease, *Catalpa Expedition*, p.50, Pease says that one whale was taken and 20 barrels stowed. Anthony’s letter which Hathaway used to write to Devoy was apparently sent into port on the ship *Florence Annapolis*,encountered on May 30, 1875. [↑](#footnote-ref-478)
478. *MS 18,135,* Devoy Papers, Devoy to Reynolds May 5, 1875. [↑](#footnote-ref-479)
479. *Gaelic American,* September 3, 1904. [↑](#footnote-ref-480)
480. Entry from the logbook of the *Catalpa,* Monday, June 14, 1875. “Case” and “junk” are two areas in the sperm whale’s head containing the fine spermaceti oil for which the sperm whale is named. [↑](#footnote-ref-481)
481. “Gam” is sailor’s jargon for a gossiping party wherein two or more ship crews meet on one ship for swapping tales and exchanging the latest news from their respective ports. [↑](#footnote-ref-482)
482. Should be spelled *Hadley*. [↑](#footnote-ref-483)
483. Starbuck, *History of the American Whale Fishery,* by Alexander Starbuck, p.651. The *General Scott*’s logbook, on microfilm at the New Bedford Whaling Museum, gives Charles Robbins’ middle initial as “H” and states the *General Scott* was rendering oil at the time of the visit (gam). [↑](#footnote-ref-484)
484. Logbook of the *General Scott*, New Bedford Whaling Museum, Wednesday 25, August, 1875. [↑](#footnote-ref-485)
485. The whale split with the *General Scott* shows 40 barrels, not 65, when the ships reached the Azores as is discussed below in the main text. [↑](#footnote-ref-486)
486. Starbuck, *History of American Whale Fishery,* p.155. Captain Briggs would report later in his voyage killing a sperm whale which yielded a record for one whale of 162 barrels of oil. The *Wave* returned to port in October, 1876 with 700 barrels of oil. [↑](#footnote-ref-487)
487. Pease, Catalpa Expedition, p.46. [↑](#footnote-ref-488)
488. Pease, Catalpa Expedition, p.52. [↑](#footnote-ref-489)
489. “Fresh breezes” does not mean “good weather” but rather the force of the wind. According to the Beaufort Scale and Smith’s usage, “fresh breezes” would be three to four on a scale of eight between calm and a hurricane. [↑](#footnote-ref-490)
490. If this is Ponta Delgada then the ship is north between Corvo and Flores. [↑](#footnote-ref-491)
491. A “lighter” was a low draft vessel used in ports to ferry supplies to high draft vessels anchored off-shore in deeper water. [↑](#footnote-ref-492)
492. Cyrus S. Heill or Hill spelled both ways in the logbook. I have left the spellings as in the documents. [↑](#footnote-ref-493)
493. Third Mate George Bolles was demoted to a regular sailor because of his attempted desertion. [↑](#footnote-ref-494)
494. This note may have been an afterthought to account for the number of crewmen actually left on the ship. [↑](#footnote-ref-495)
495. MS. 18,017(3), Supplemental Report of Chairman of FC dated September 3, 1877, Devoy Papers, circulars issued by the Clan-na-Gael 1874-1927. [FC= Executive Body of the United Brotherhood]; also see Finances of the *Catalpa* in the *Gaelic American,* October 1, 1904. 265 barrels would be required on each leg of the voyage based on 530 barrels for the entire voyage. [↑](#footnote-ref-496)
496. *New York Herald*, November 14, and November 29, 1875, Captain Robbins of the *General Scott* reported 40 barrels off loaded in the Azores. [↑](#footnote-ref-497)
497. Starbuck, *History of the American Whale Fishery*, p.650. (There are about 32 gallons in a barrel, Ibid p.147.) If we subtract 39 barrels apparently accumulated during the rest of the voyage (see *Catalpa* *Finances* in the *Gaelic American* article) from Starbuck’s total of 250 it would give 211 barrels off-loaded at Fayal. There is a problem when you add up the barrels shown as rendered from the logbook where 250 barrels of oil are shown stowed and, even if the 40 barrels rendered subsequent to the first “mated” catch with the *General Scott* were also divided up between the two ships, there are still 230 barrels according to the logbook stowing entries, I stuck with the Azores off-loaded numbers given by Anthony and Devoy, since these numbers are the basis for the financial accounts for the voyage. It should be noted here that George Anthony is quoted saying in an interview (*Boston Globe*, August 21, 1876, p.1) that he turned in 310 barrels in the Azores. 100 barrels is a significant difference and Anthony either exaggerated it or it’s a reporting error by the *Boston Globe* reporter. [↑](#footnote-ref-498)
498. Pease, Catalpa Expedition, p.56. [↑](#footnote-ref-499)
499. Pease, Catalpa Expedition, p.58. [↑](#footnote-ref-500)
500. *MS 18,017* (3) Devoy Papers. Chairman’s supplement to the UB1877 Meeting, Carroll states specifically that Anthony “decided not to” allow Brennan on board; Pease, *Catalpa Expedition,* p.54. Z.W. Pease states Anthony sailed out of Fayal in a hurry to avoid Brennan. [↑](#footnote-ref-501)
501. UB Convention, p.12; Pease, *Catalpa Expedition*, p.55. Brennan’s statement about leaving Fayal without water is countered by Anthony in his book published in 1897 in which Anthony stated they intended to get more water at Tenerife because “The water at Fayal was taken from wells near the shore and was brackish, while that at Tenerife is much sought after by Whalers.” [↑](#footnote-ref-502)
502. *MS 18,017* (3) Devoy Papers. Chairman’s supplement to the UB1877 Meeting, Carroll [↑](#footnote-ref-503)
503. UB Convention, p.12. [↑](#footnote-ref-504)
504. UB Convention, p.13. Brennan’s account of Goff’s response. [↑](#footnote-ref-505)
505. *MS 18,017* (3) Devoy Papers. Chairman’s supplement to the UB1877 Meeting. [↑](#footnote-ref-506)
506. Dollar value of Brennan’s receipt of 28 pounds is $156 versus the $125 given by the APRC difference is suspected to be in cost to get the money to the Azores, http://www.measuringworth.com/exchangeglobal/(acsessed 5/29/2015). [↑](#footnote-ref-507)
507. *MS 18,017* (3) Devoy Papers. Chairman’s supplement to the UB1877 Meeting. [↑](#footnote-ref-508)
508. Pease, *Catalpa Expedition,* p.60, states the *Platina* was out of New Bedford. Pease writes that the *Platina* had “left home but recently” and then says she was “four months out,” but the logbook says she was the *Plataina*, 42 months out. Starbuck, *History of the American Whale Fishery*, p.652 calls her the *Platina* and states she left for the Indian Ocean in October of 1875 and that conforms to 4 months out. [↑](#footnote-ref-509)
509. Amos, Fenians in Australia, p.101. [↑](#footnote-ref-510)
510. *John Devoy’s Catalpa* *Expedition,* Philip Fennell and Marie King, eds., NYU Press (NY, 2006), p.23, footnote 48. [↑](#footnote-ref-511)
511. “George Durgin” is probably George Duigan and “Harry Duggin” might be Joseph H. Dutton. These men were among the eight men picked up in the Azores and Tenerife, based on comparing the *Gaelic American*, October 10, 1904 “Crew Settlement’ with the original “List of Persons Composing Crew” from the New Bedford Museum microfilm. Joseph McCarty was picked up in Tenerife but was not allowed back on board in Bunbury and doesn’t show up in either crew list. The accounting as best I can reconstruct it, is: of the original crew, Edward Gleason, Caleb Cushing, and Robert Ceil deserted in Fayal; John Ross, John Rosmund, and Zempa Malay were left sick in Fayal. Two men died at sea: Robert Kanaka on the outward leg and Antoine Farnham on the return leg. Added to the crew were Frank Perry, Manuel Antoine, Louis Toaquin, Antoine Manuel, George Duigan, and Joseph H. Dutton, who were taken aboard ship in Fayal. Antoine Silva (Silvester) and McCarty were picked up in Tenerife. [↑](#footnote-ref-512)
512. Mollie Bentley, *Thomas Edwards of Beverly*, p.12, “Ticket of Leave man” a prisoner, on good behavior, who was not locked up but was allowed to seek private employment as long as he reported all changes in status faithfully to the police. [↑](#footnote-ref-513)
513. *Western Australia Times*, April 21, 1876. McDonald was put back in the Fremantle jail for twelve months. [↑](#footnote-ref-514)
514. *DPB,* Vol. I, p.109. [↑](#footnote-ref-515)
515. The UIB may have been an organization formed by John O’Connor Power as mentioned in an earlier footnote in this book. [↑](#footnote-ref-516)
516. Gaelic American, August 27, 1904; also see The Fenians in Australia, p.218. [↑](#footnote-ref-517)
517. *The Irish World,* September 2, 1876. [↑](#footnote-ref-518)
518. UB Convention, p.30. [↑](#footnote-ref-519)
519. Desmond was later elected sheriff of San Francisco City and County for two years, 1880-1881. He died in 1910 and is buried in Colma, California in Holy Cross cemetery. [↑](#footnote-ref-520)
520. UB Convention, p.30. [↑](#footnote-ref-521)
521. *DPB,* Vol. I, p.113. [↑](#footnote-ref-522)
522. *DPB,* Vol. I, p.113. [↑](#footnote-ref-523)
523. Dr. William Carroll, the Senior Guardian of Camp D15 of Philadelphia, borrowed a total of $1200 ($500 from William Cusack, and $300 from his brother in law, Mr. Ryan, and $200 each from two other brothers), until the Clan-na-Gael could pay the Camp back. See William Carroll letters: *DPB,* Vol. I, p.118 and p.184. Note: $1200 in 1850 represents about $24,000 modern dollars. This is not an insignificant amount from Camp D15. [↑](#footnote-ref-524)
524. UB Convention, p.30. [↑](#footnote-ref-525)
525. *DPB,* Vol I, p.117; UB Convention, p.31. [↑](#footnote-ref-526)
526. Breslin and Desmond’s arrival date in Australia was noted in Breslin’s report to the UB Convention as 25 October 1875, but was given in Devoy’s “Clan-na-Gael Story” in the *Gaelic American* and confirmed from the original ship manifest as 15 October 1875 in Cowan: *Mary Tondut – The Woman in the Catalpa Story* a to-be-published manuscript dated 27 Feb 2007) [self-published by Cowan June, 2008] [↑](#footnote-ref-527)
527. Richard Cowan, *Mary Tondut – The Woman in the Catalpa Story,* self-published (Waverton, 2008), p.5. [↑](#footnote-ref-528)
528. “O’Donovan Rossa Papers,” Kelly to Rossa, April 8, 1876. [↑](#footnote-ref-529)
529. John Savage, *Fenian Heroes and Martyrs*, Patrick Donahoe (Boston, 1868), p.269-270. [↑](#footnote-ref-530)
530. Amos, The Fenians in Australia, p.190. [↑](#footnote-ref-531)
531. *MS 18,016*, Devoy Papers, a two-page manuscript that is a tantalizing scrap of evidence showing that ex-IRB men in Australia were involved in helping collect money for released prisoners previous to the arrival of Breslin and Desmond but that they had no links to the IRB in Ireland or England. The ease with which the Australian group came up with cash to aid in the *Catalpa* rescue must have led to Clan-na-Gael and IRB interest in forming a link to the Australians. The memo, from its format, was part of preparations to convince Clan-na-Gael membership to include the Australian IRB as a representative on the Revolutionary directory. [↑](#footnote-ref-532)
532. UB Convention, p.31. [↑](#footnote-ref-533)
533. Cody’s trip is mentioned in David Gill, *The Lion and the Wolfhound* Grantham House (New Zealand, 1990), p.149. This book is an interesting account of a “riot” occurring between “Fenians” and “Orangemen” in New Zealand in 1868. [↑](#footnote-ref-534)
534. The £554 the Australian IRB gave Breslin, based on an exchange rate of 5 to 1 in 1876, represented $2770.00 ($55,000 today), an astounding amount, even if *not* compared to the $1200 ($24,000 today) the Clan-na-Gael gave Breslin and Desmond for expenses. The conversions made throughout this book are based on the calculators at “www.measuringworth.com.” [↑](#footnote-ref-535)
535. “O’Donovan Rossa Papers.” Letter from John Edward Kelly to Jeremiah O’Donovan Rossa, April 8, 1876. [↑](#footnote-ref-536)
536. Amos, The Fenians in Australia, p.220. [↑](#footnote-ref-537)
537. UB Convention, p.33; Amos, *The Fenians in Australia,* p.221. [↑](#footnote-ref-538)
538. *Irish Times,* February 6, 1889, p.5. It was Patrick Egan, treasurer of the IRB in 1875, and later a member of the Clan-na-Gael and president of the Irish American Land League, who sent McCarthy and Walsh over to Australia to attempt to free the prisoners, according to the testimony of the British spy, Thomas Beach, during his deposition at the *Times* Commission trial. [↑](#footnote-ref-539)
539. “Report of John King,” *Gaelic American*, October 15, 1904, quoted in ÓLúing, *Fremantle Mission,* p.106 and *DPB,* Vol. I, p.220. [↑](#footnote-ref-540)
540. Roche, *John Boyle O’Reilly,* p.168. Roche says that there were seven military-prisoners, the seventh being known to the others as an informer. Amos, *The Fenians in Australia*, p. 230, identifies James Keilly as the informer and states there were eight, the last being one Thomas Delaney, who was confined inside the prison for repeated drunkenness; therefore, not accessible and, obviously, a potential risk. Thomas Delaney was in prison for a new offence having served his original term; Philip Fennell, author and *Catalpa* rescue lecturer, provided the Delaney information to this author. Author Keith Amos in his *Fenians in Australia*, p.247, includes two more “ticket of leave” Fenians still under sentence, John Shine and James McCoy, who were arrested after the rescue by police worried they would be rescued next. Why these last two men aren’t mentioned in any other account is not known. [↑](#footnote-ref-541)
541. *San Francisco Chronicle*, July14, 1899. M. Cooney might be a fictitious name or Clan-na-Gael man close to John Kenealy, since Kenealy and Talbot were the only men in California who should have been aware of the *Catalpa* rescue operation. The writer mentions contacting “John C.T.” [John C. Talbot]. There is an Attorney Michael Cooney listed in the 1871 *San Francisco City Directory*, p.175, and a Judge Michael Cooney who is apparently in the Clan-na-Gael in 1899 who remarks intimately knowing Devoy, Cronin, Sullivan, and Desmond, it is probable both of these are the same man and the author of the letter. [↑](#footnote-ref-542)
542. *DPB,* Vol I, p.17. The letter went on in the same urgent vein for several paragraphs and clearly says the men in Australia feared something had happened to the rescue ship. The letter “Cooney” received from Australia was written only two days before the *Catalpa* docked at Bunbury, setting the rescue in motion. [↑](#footnote-ref-543)
543. Pease, *Catalpa Expedition*, p.71. It is interesting that the man who introduced Breslin and Anthony was called a meat marketer, whereas in an interview with a *Boston Globe* (August 21, 1876, p.1) reporter, Anthony stated the man was the proprietor of the hotel. [↑](#footnote-ref-544)
544. *Logbook of the Bark Catalpa*, entry for Saturday, October 16, [1875]; UB Convention, p.55, Breslin writes that the incident took place at Fayal but the logbook entry occurred while the ship was off Flores and that logbook entry is the only one that would correlate to Breslin’s report. The logbook mentions “the cooper” and Denis Duggan was the cooper aboard ship. [↑](#footnote-ref-545)
545. MS. 18,017(3), Devoy Papers, “Circulars issued by the Clan-na-Gael 1874-1927.” “Supplement Report of Chairman of FC” dated September 3, 1877; [FC= Executive Body of the United Brotherhood] see the investigation into Duggan and Breslin’s actions aboard ship within the Supplement Report. [↑](#footnote-ref-546)
546. UB Convention, pp.13-14, pp.33-34 and pp.57-59. It should be noted that Breslin’s UB Report is in two parts. In the first part, Breslin recounts his role in the rescue and for the most part it conforms to the Breslin narratives printed in *The* *Irish World* and elsewhere. The second part of Breslin’s UB report is meant for the Clan-na-Gael convention delegates only and outlines the problems Breslin had with Duggan, Brennan, and the prisoners; Pease, *Catalpa Expedition* p.71-72: Anthony states that he and Breslin were coming from an inspection of the *Catalpa* and heading for the *Georgette* when they encountered Brennan. Anthony does not mention the uncomfortable meeting between Breslin and Brennan at Spencer’s Hotel that evening. [↑](#footnote-ref-547)
547. Birth registration number 12864, Western Australian archives, February 1, 1871, the child was named Jane Louisa Tonduit; the name is spelled Tondut on Mary’s birth record. [↑](#footnote-ref-548)
548. Richard Cowan, *Mary Tondut*, (Waverton, NSW, 2008); Amos, *Fenians in Australia*, p.249; Western Australia archives, birth registration number 2210, December 31, 1853. [↑](#footnote-ref-549)
549. Durand, Brock & Ozane, eds. *Elizabeth College Register 1824-1873*, p. 181, Frederick Clarke (Guernsey, 1898) [↑](#footnote-ref-550)
550. Pease, *Catalpa Expedition* p. 72 -74, the author, Pease, writes “north end” but the passage is at the south end of Garden Island. [↑](#footnote-ref-551)
551. Pease, *Catalpa Expedition*, pp.76-77. [↑](#footnote-ref-552)
552. There is no one listed as Tobey on the crew roster. One of the men recruited at Fayal, Antoine Manuel, appears be the one chosen as boatsteerer to replace Robert Kanacker, the man who had died. Perhaps “Tobey” was his nickname. Antoine “Silvester” is listed elsewhere as Antoine Silva. [↑](#footnote-ref-553)
553. Pease, Catalpa Expedition, p.82. [↑](#footnote-ref-554)
554. Keith Amos in *The Fenians in Australia,* says “John” Bell, but V.G. Fall in his book on the history of Rockingham, *The Sea and the Forest*, states that he was James Bell, who jumped off the ship *HMS Driver* in 1845 at age 22 and homesteaded in Rockingham. The newspaper reports only mention a “Bell,” but says he was a settler in Rockingham. The Western Australian archives show that James Bell of Rockingham and his wife Jane Green had two sons James Jr. and George. James Sr. would have been 44 at the time of the rescue. His son James Jr. was born in 1857 and would have been twenty at the time so either man is possible. There was only one J. Bell listed in the 1877 *Herald Almanack and Directory* for Rockingham and this would be most likely James Sr. as head of a family. It was reported in the newspaper that Bell was leader of a Jarrah Timber Company lumber crew. Keith Amos quotes another witness, Fred Rule, who reminisced 30 years later that “a chap named Bell” was a “timber getter” who talked to the whaleboat crew on the beach but he does not give the first name. The *New York Herald Tribune* of August 21, 1876 quotes Thomas Desmond, the California Clan-na-Gael member who accompanied Breslin, as saying that Bell was a “British officer” but Desmond was not present during the encounter with Bell. [↑](#footnote-ref-555)
555. Pease, Catalpa Expedition, p.88. [↑](#footnote-ref-556)
556. *Western Australia Times*, April 21, 1876; Perth Herald, April 22, 1876; Pease, *Catalpa Expedition*, p.89. Professor Richard Cowan of the University of Sydney, (op cit., author of *Mary Tondut – The Woman in the Catalpa Story*), in comments to the author, pointed out that Bell, on his way out of Rockingham, most likely encountered the group of policemen from Fremantle chasing the escapees and directed them to the Jarrah Timber jetty, thereby allowing the police to arrive at the jetty much earlier than they would have if they had had to search for the location themselves. It was an hour and ten-minute ride at a fast pace from Rockingham to Fremantle, and the policemen, who left at 10:00 AM, were seen on shore at the Jarrah Timber jetty by Anthony in the whaleboat as it pulled away just after 11:00 AM, showing that the police went directly to the jetty. Bell then rode on, perhaps at the behest of the arriving policemen, to inform the Water Police in Fremantle. [↑](#footnote-ref-557)
557. UB Convention, p.43. Breslin’s complete report of the Australian Prisoner Rescue expedition was read into the minutes of the UB convention. See also Pease, *The Catalpa Expedition*, p.90 for George Anthony’s version, only differing in brevity and tone from Breslin’s account. [↑](#footnote-ref-558)
558. *The Fenians in Australia,* p.234 and *Perth Herald*, Australia, April 22, 1876. [↑](#footnote-ref-559)
559. *Western Australia Times*, April 28, 1876, “off shore of Murray River” places the *Catalpa* 15 miles south of Rockingham Beach a good three-hour row by an experienced whaleboat crew. The *WA Times* states it was 11:00 AM but the *Catalpa* logbook records that the encounter was at 8:00 AM. [↑](#footnote-ref-560)
560. *London Times,* August 7, 1876. [↑](#footnote-ref-561)
561. *Australia Perth Herald*, April 22, 1876 and the *Western Australia Times* of April 21, 1876. The *WA Times* noted there was a shortage of wood in Bunbury because the *Catalpa*, along with several other ships, loaded firewood and timbers, a fact which one might speculate contributed to the *Georgette* being forced to return to Fremantle before the whaleboat from Rockingham arrived. [↑](#footnote-ref-562)
562. *Perth Herald*, Australia April 22, 1876 and the *Western Australia Times* April 21, 1876. Amos, *Fenians in Australia*, p. 240. Pease, *Catalpa Expedition*, p. 96, Pease writes that a “Colonel Harvest” with the “trappings of a British Army officer” was in charge. The Western Australia Times states Police Superintendent Finnerty in charge. I have relied on Keith Amos, who researched in depth the aftermath of the escape, to sort out who commanded the *Georgette*. Amos agrees with the Perth *Herald* that it was John F. Stone who was in charge and goes on to state that a Major Charles Finnerty of the Army Pensioner Volunteers was on the *Georgette* in charge of the Pensioners. Perhaps it was Finnerty that Pease called “Colonel Harvest” [↑](#footnote-ref-563)
563. *Perth* *Herald*, Australia, April 22, 1876. [↑](#footnote-ref-564)
564. UB Convention, p.45. [↑](#footnote-ref-565)
565. *Perth Herald*, Australia, April 22, 1876; UB Convention, p.45; *New York Commercial Advertiser*, August 19, 1876. [↑](#footnote-ref-566)
566. *New York Herald,* June 7, 1876. [↑](#footnote-ref-567)
567. *DPB,* Vol. I, p.169. [↑](#footnote-ref-568)
568. John Denvir, *Life Story of an Old Rebel,* p.144, Irish University Press (reprint of 1910 edition) (Dublin, 1972). [↑](#footnote-ref-569)
569. The only reference I could locate in the New York newspapers that mentioned the cable going silent was in the *Commercial Advertiser* of April 27, 1876 which was an article on transatlantic cables and their problems unrelated to the *Catalpa* which mentioned that the Darwin-Java cable had broken. [↑](#footnote-ref-570)
570. Devoy, *Recollections of an Irish Rebel,* p.80, there is another less flattering view of the *Catalpa* rescue by John Stephen Walsh, the England IRB man assigned by Breslin to cut the telegraph wires during the rescue. In a report dated December 21, 1876, and quoted in *DPB,* p.221, Walsh, under the name “Hanrahan,” gives his version of the *Catalpa* rescue. He overstates the impact of his role and then claims the rescue was helped more by dumb luck and British stupidity than by clever planning. We must give Walsh some credit for his view. As is pointed out by Keith Amos in his book *The Fenians in Australia*, pp.225-229, that, although the British authorities at Fremantle had been warned of a rescue attempt by the English IRB in January, 1876, the authorities at Fremantle did not inform the prison guards for fear that that might alert the prisoners of any potential rescuers that they had been discovered. [↑](#footnote-ref-571)
571. UB Convention, pp.21-25. [↑](#footnote-ref-572)
572. “UIB” is the United Irish Brotherhood, a group that had separated from the Clan-na-Gael. Breslin belonged to the Boston UIB Club before he moved back to New York shortly before the rescue plans began to be formed. [↑](#footnote-ref-573)
573. UB Convention, p.20. [↑](#footnote-ref-574)
574. *DPB,* Vol. I, p.106. [↑](#footnote-ref-575)
575. Pease, Catalpa Expedition, p.99. [↑](#footnote-ref-576)
576. MS. 18,017(3), Devoy Papers, “Circulars issued by the Clan-na-Gael 1874-1927.” “Supplement Report of Chairman of FC” dated September 3, 1877. [↑](#footnote-ref-577)
577. *DPB,* Vol. I, p.151, *Gaelic American,* August 27, 1904. [↑](#footnote-ref-578)
578. *Logbook of the Bark Catalpa* entries July 23-28, 1876. A plot of the latitude and longitude reckonings taken for these days shows the ship turning toward the Atlantic western whaling grounds. [↑](#footnote-ref-579)
579. Pease, Catalpa Expedition, p.102. [↑](#footnote-ref-580)
580. UB Convention, p.26. Breslin said he didn’t use the phrase, but Thomas Brennan said Breslin used it in reference to the Clan-na-Gael. Breslin claims he said “green men.” [↑](#footnote-ref-581)
581. *Perth Herald,* 22 April 1876, gives an extensive look at the international repercussions. [↑](#footnote-ref-582)
582. Abraham Lincoln was supposed to have remarked, “One war at a time” to Secretary Seward when he gave the order to return Slidell and Mason. [↑](#footnote-ref-583)
583. Pease, *Catalpa Expedition,* p.100; Hamilton Fish, *Papers of Hamilton Fish, 1732-1914*, Archival Manuscript Material, Library of Congress (Microfilm 17, 634-6N-6P) in a diary excerpt written November 16, 1873, (kindly provided me by Philip Fennel). Fish recounts a conversation between himself and British Minister Thornton discussing an analogous event, the Spanish capture on the high seas of the ship *Virginius* flying American colors on October 30, 1873 during the *Virginius*’ attempt to aid a rebellion in Cuba. The diary states that the U.S. and Britain were in agreement that a vessel violating the municipal laws of a country, when no blockade exists, is not liable to seizure and is protected by its national colors. This consensus would mean that international law would forbid British seizure of the *Catalpa* if it were legitimately flying the American colors in international waters, despite the act of filibustering carried out by Captain Anthony. Fennell’s theory is that Thornton could have recalled this discussion in 1876 and it may have affected Britain’s willingness to capture the *Catalpa* on the high seas. That said, Britain and the United States had the propensity to bend international law depending on their sovereign interests. [↑](#footnote-ref-584)
584. Logbook of the Bark *Catalpa*, logbook entries for July 26-28, 1876. Perhaps Breslin didn’t actually have someone take a new reckoning but calculated what the reckoning ought to be, but erred in subtracting instead of adding. [↑](#footnote-ref-585)
585. UB Convention, p.50. [↑](#footnote-ref-586)
586. UB Convention, p.49. [↑](#footnote-ref-587)
587. UB Convention, p.50. [↑](#footnote-ref-588)
588. *DPB,* Vol. I, p.136. [↑](#footnote-ref-589)
589. *DPB,* Vol. I, p.146. [↑](#footnote-ref-590)
590. *Gaelic American*, December 13, 1924. Foran’s remarks occurred at the 1876 Convention and at that time Devoy was elected Chairman of New York District A, which was the position John Goff had held in 1875. Within that district was Camp D25; Carroll to Devoy *DPB,* Vol. I, p.259, this 50% for funding the IRB through the Revolutionary Directory is not to be confused with a new increase from 3% to 5% of each Camp’s monthly receipts to fund the Executive Body. [↑](#footnote-ref-591)
591. *MS 18,135 (2),* Devoy Papers. Letter from John Devoy to Jim Reynolds, April 24, 1877. [↑](#footnote-ref-592)
592. *MS 18,017 (3)*, Devoy Papers; *Gaelic American,* September 24, 1904. Devoy states the sender was Denis O’Donovan, Jeremiah O’Donovan Rossa’s eldest son. [↑](#footnote-ref-593)
593. Barry Kennerk, “Fenianism and Assassination: Its influences, objects and methodologies (1858 – 1868)” a presentation made at “The Black Hand of Irish Republicanism: Fenians and History” a conference held in Belfast, Ireland, June 21-22, 2008, in the latter part of 1867 Patrick Lennon was the no-nonsense leader of the Dublin “Assassination Circle” whose job it was to eliminate informers. [↑](#footnote-ref-594)
594. *DPB,* Vol. I, p.148. [↑](#footnote-ref-595)
595. *Gaelic American,* September 24, 1904, “The Story of the Catalpa Rescue,” Part X, by John Devoy. Miles O’Brien could have been the “so and so” in the party listed as greeting the prisoners at the dock before they left to Rossa’s hotel (*The Irish American,* August 26, 1876 and *The Commercial Advertiser* [NY] August 19, 1876); but Devoy’s indication that Brennan introduced the prisoners to “so and so” at the dock along with Devoy’s characterization in the article points to John W. Goff being “so and so.” Devoy’s story is omitted by *The* *Irish American* version. The *Irish American* states that [Miles] O’Brien, along with Jeremiah O’Donovan Rossa, Thomas Mooney, Hugh Dunphy, and Dennis Egan were in the boat that conveyed the prisoners to the dock where the “kidnap” attempt took place. Since *The Irish American* tended to ignore Irish American infighting and John Goff was still alive to refute Devoy’s version, should he have desired, one should accept, although perhaps embellished a bit, that Devoy’s account is based on fact. [↑](#footnote-ref-596)
596. *Irish World,* July 29, 1876. [↑](#footnote-ref-597)
597. *DPB,* Vol. I, p.231. [↑](#footnote-ref-598)
598. *DPB,* Vol. I, p.204. [↑](#footnote-ref-599)
599. *Chicago* *Sunday Times,* August 27, 1876. [↑](#footnote-ref-600)
600. *The Irish World,* August 26, 1876. [↑](#footnote-ref-601)
601. *The Irish World,* September 9, 1876. [↑](#footnote-ref-602)
602. *MS 18034* (6), Devoy Papers. [↑](#footnote-ref-603)
603. *MS 18,017* (3), NLI, Devoy Papers, “Report of the Chairman of FC”[Dr. Carroll]September 3, 1877. The *United Brotherhood Convention Report* in the archives at Catholic University [partially quoted in Fennell & King, Eds., *John Devoy’s Catalpa Expedition*] [↑](#footnote-ref-604)
604. *DPB,* Vol. I, p.225. [↑](#footnote-ref-605)
605. MS. 18,017(3), Devoy Papers, “Circulars issued by the Clan-na-Gael 1874-1927.” “Supplement Report of Chairman of FC” dated September 3, 1877. [↑](#footnote-ref-606)
606. “Report of the Eighth Annual Convention” held at Cleveland, Ohio, September 4-8, 1877 to be found in the *Fenian Brotherhood Records* *and* *Personal Papers of O'Donovan Rossa*, box 6, The American Catholic History Research Center and University Archives, The Catholic University of America, Washington, DC. Note that the rest of the quotations given during Brennan’s questioning are from the transcribed minutes of the convention and footnotes are not placed unless the facts come from another source. A couple of years after I wrote this chapter, Philip Fennell and his wife, Marie King, Eds., published *John Devoy’s Catalpa Expedition* which was an edited republishing of John Devoy’s *Gaelic American* articles. The editors included a large extract of the actual UB Convention report in this book which is as an excellent source for the *Catalpa* story. [↑](#footnote-ref-607)
607. *Gaelic American*, 20 August 1904. [↑](#footnote-ref-608)
608. Unfortunately for researchers, the minutes taken in the UB convention do not contain the actual testimony from the Trial Committee. [↑](#footnote-ref-609)
609. MS. 18,017(3), Devoy Papers, “Circulars issued by the Clan-na-Gael 1874-1927.” “Supplement Report of Chairman of FC” dated September 3, 1877; [FC= Executive Body of the United Brotherhood]. [↑](#footnote-ref-610)
610. UB Convention, p.2. This would be P.J. Connolly. [↑](#footnote-ref-611)
611. Clan-na-Gael policy was that only the Camp Senior Guardians and the delegates actually chosen were informed where the meeting was to be held with the objective of maintaining the location secret from the other members and in hopes of preventing leaks to the press by limiting the number of persons with knowledge that a convention was to be held. It was a violation of their word if a delegate mentioned the convention. Based on human nature Brennan may have been correct in his assessment that many besides the SG and the delegates were aware of the Convention’s location. [↑](#footnote-ref-612)
612. *Gaelic American*, 20 August 1904. John Devoy gave Brennan explicit instructions from the Executive Body stipulating that Brennan should abide by Captain Anthony’s decision in the Azores, assuming that Brennan would then return to New York. Since Anthony sailed away without contacting Brennan, no specific refusal to allow Brennan aboard was actually made. As was shown earlier, Goff took advantage of the confusion and opened the door for Brennan to continue his quest and join the expedition at Bunbury. [↑](#footnote-ref-613)
613. ÓLúing, Fremantle Mission, p.87. [↑](#footnote-ref-614)
614. UB Convention, p.60. [↑](#footnote-ref-615)
615. “Catalpa Jim” Reynolds of Connecticut mentioned above in this book. [↑](#footnote-ref-616)
616. This may be William Cannon of Lawrence Massachusetts, who was a delegate to the 1877 convention. [↑](#footnote-ref-617)
617. *Ms. 18,017 (3)*, Devoy Papers. The report of the FC negotiating team sent to New Bedford (Devoy, Reynolds, and Cannon) admits the mutiny also in a legal sense. [↑](#footnote-ref-618)
618. Devoy, Recollections of an Irish Rebel, p.255. [↑](#footnote-ref-619)
619. *MS 18,037*, Devoy Papers. Denis Burns to James A. Branegan. Burns, who was expelled with John Goff, says that Devoy got Patrick Mahon elected [re-elected on the APR committee] by a “parliamentary trick” at the 1875 Providence convention. Burns also states that he believes Mahon allowed “others to steal” money from the APRC funds. [↑](#footnote-ref-620)
620. Thomas R. Bannerman was selected temporarily as secretary of the Executive Body to replace William Nicholson. [↑](#footnote-ref-621)
621. *New York Times,* November 2, 1890. [↑](#footnote-ref-622)
622. “The True Story of the Catalpa Rescue” by John Devoy, *Chicago Tribune*, September 29, 1895. [↑](#footnote-ref-623)
623. UB Convention, p.59. [↑](#footnote-ref-624)
624. *Gaelic American,* July 16, 1904, Devoy quoting T.F. Bourke. [↑](#footnote-ref-625)
625. *Brooklyn Eagle,* March 10, 1877. [↑](#footnote-ref-626)
626. *DPB* Vol I, p. 268. “Shields” is named O’Connor Power in *DPB,* Vol. I, p.198. However, according to McGee in *The IRB*, p.55, Carroll was negotiating with C.G. Doran. O’Connor Power was anathema to the majority of the Supreme Council for his Home Rule activities and swearing allegiance to the Queen. O’Connor Power was expelled from the IRB in 1877. One may recall the problems caused by O’Connor Power when he met with Devoy, looking for money at a time O’Connor Power was using IRB funds to finance his MP election campaign. McGee states that Doran was in command of the IRB at the time and “Shields” might be better seen as representing the Supreme Council and C.G. Doran rather than John O’Connor Power. *Gaelic American*, December 6, 1924, “Story of the Clan-na-Gael.” Devoy also accused O’Connor Power in this issue of attempting to set up a rival organization in Hoboken and it is probably this organization, the UIB, to which John Joseph Breslin belonged before his admittance into the Clan-na-Gael. [↑](#footnote-ref-627)
627. *DPB,* Vol. I, p. 209,insurrections in Herzegovina and Montenegro spread to Serbia and Bulgaria bringing war between Turkey and Russia with the possibility of England becoming involved; *DPB,* Vol. I, p.207, William Carroll wrote a letter October 19, 1876 to Devoy wherein he suggested that they “. . . immediately prepare a plan of operations. 10,000 men should be enlisted and drilled here. . .. We could then send in [into Ireland] our men by detachments as “friends returning to see their relatives.” [↑](#footnote-ref-628)
628. *London Times,* May 22, 1878. [↑](#footnote-ref-629)
629. *DPB,* Vol. I, p.209. [↑](#footnote-ref-630)
630. *DPB,* Vol. I, p.127, see also Catherine Wynne, “Mollies, Fenians, and Arthur Conan Doyle,” Jouvert: Journal of Postcolonial Studies, “Ireland 2000” [Special Irish Issue], 4, 1 Oxford University, (Fall, 1999). [↑](#footnote-ref-631)
631. ÓLúing, *Fremantle Mission*, p.178; *Gaelic American*, October 1, 1904, “The Finances of the Catalpa.” *New York Herald*, March 21, 1877 and April 26, 1877, the *Catalpa* put out to sea whaling again under Howland in 1877. [↑](#footnote-ref-632)
632. *MS 18,135* (2) Devoy Papers. Letter from John Devoy to Jim Reynolds, April 24, 1877. The manuscript appears to read 50 [fifty] percent; the call was for 5 [five] percent, according to Carroll (see *DPB,* Vol. I, p.259). [↑](#footnote-ref-633)
633. *MS 18,135* (2*)* Devoy Papers. “Letters from John Devoy to James Reynolds.” Letter dated April 24, 1877. [↑](#footnote-ref-634)
634. *DPB,* Vol. I, p.259. John Goff was later reinstated in the Clan-na-Gael as a result of supporting John Devoy and Patrick H. Cronin in a fight to regain control of the Clan-na-Gael from Alexander Sullivan, a Chicago Clan-na-Gael member. [↑](#footnote-ref-635)
635. *New York Times*, 2 November 1890, p. 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-636)
636. *New York Times*, 5 March 1895, and 3 March 1900, where John Goff addressed Clan-na-Gael-sponsored activities. [↑](#footnote-ref-637)
637. *New York* Times, 19 May 1918, p.19. [↑](#footnote-ref-638)
638. McGee, *IRB*, p.52. [↑](#footnote-ref-639)
639. McGee, *IRB*, p.63. [↑](#footnote-ref-640)
640. *New York Herald,* October 25, 1878. [↑](#footnote-ref-641)
641. Carla King, Ed., *Michael Davitt* *by John Devoy*, University College of Dublin Press (Dublin, 2008), pp.44-46. Devoy explains the New Departure in this recently published compilation of a series of articles on Michael Davitt first seen in 1906 in Devoy’s New York newspaper the *Gaelic American*. [↑](#footnote-ref-642)
642. *New York Herald,* October 25, 1878; *Dublin Freeman* December 11, 1878 as reprinted in *The Irish World* November 26, 1881; *DPB,* Vol. I, pp. 370-372. [↑](#footnote-ref-643)
643. T.D. Sullivan, Recollections of Troubled Times in Irish Politics (Dublin, 1905), p.163. [↑](#footnote-ref-644)
644. *The Moderisation of Irish Society* by Joseph Lee Macmillan (New York, 1989)*,* p.72. [↑](#footnote-ref-645)
645. Carla King, Ed., *Michael Davitt*, by John Devoy, p. 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-646)
646. *Fenian Memories* by Dr. Mark F. Ryan, (McGill, Dublin, 1946) p.65. [↑](#footnote-ref-647)
647. Morgan: Through American and Irish Wars, p.111. [↑](#footnote-ref-648)
648. http://www.history.navy.mil/danfs/i2/intellig.htm (retrieved 28 March 2012). [↑](#footnote-ref-649)
649. *The Submarine in Peace and War,* by Simon Lake, pp.155-158, JB Lippincott & Company (Philadelphia, 1918). I would be remiss not to mention that Jack Morgan (General Thomas Sweeny’s biographer for *Through American and Irish Wars* (IAP, Dublin, 2005)) was the one who pointed out Sweeny’s part in the Intelligent Whale naval report and kindly supplied me with his sources. [↑](#footnote-ref-650)
650. *DPB,* Vol. I, p.514. John Devoy’s deposition to *Irish World* lawyers in 1923. [↑](#footnote-ref-651)
651. Holland then turned to the U.S. Navy where, after enduring a period of frustration due to governmental inertia, Holland was finally able to commence, once again, the development of his submarine concept. The “Holland II” 1881 version of the Fenian Ram is on display at the Paterson Museum in Paterson, New Jersey. [↑](#footnote-ref-652)
652. *MS 18,017* (5), NLI, Devoy Papers, a messy copy of Proceedings of the 9th General Convention of the V.C. [United Brotherhood], 1879. [↑](#footnote-ref-653)
653. *Gaelic American*, December 27, 1924 [↑](#footnote-ref-654)
654. *MS 18,036*, NLI, Devoy Papers: Devoy’s report on his recent visit to Ireland. [↑](#footnote-ref-655)
655. *London Times,* 22 December 1877; “ticket of leave” is similar to a parole board release in the United States. [↑](#footnote-ref-656)
656. Griffith’s land valuations had taken place immediately after the famine of 1848 and were much lower than in 1879. [↑](#footnote-ref-657)
657. *Davitt and Irish Revolution 1846-82*, by T.W. Moody, Clarendon, Oxford (reprint 1984), p.449; Carla King, ed., *Jottings in Solitary,* by Michael Davitt, UCD Press, (Dublin, 2003), p. x.; Michael Davitt, *The* *Fall of Feudalism in Ireland*, Harper Brothers (London, 1904), p.304. [↑](#footnote-ref-658)
658. National Library of Ireland website: https://catalogue.nli.ie/Record/vtls000569914. Letter From Dr. William Carroll to John Devoy in Which He Has Modified His Resignation at the Request of Devoy Who Found His Earlier Letters Laced With Sarcasm. Dated June 4, 1880. [↑](#footnote-ref-659)
659. *The Greatest of the Fenians*, pp.122-123. Dr. Carroll lobbied the Clan-na-Gael in opposition to Devoy against Parnell and the Land League. Carroll had a friend named John Murdoch of Scotland who was an advocate of Irish land reform. Carroll apparently became insulted when Parnell wouldn’t meet with Murdoch when Carroll asked him to. Devoy, as he sometimes does, got a bit vindictive and in a letter to James Reynolds he stated that Parnell’s slight of Murdoch miffed Carroll and that was the main reason that Carroll resigned. This is disingenuous of Devoy since Dr. Carroll backed the IRB Supreme Council’s concept of Parnell as an opportunist who would never aid the nationalist’s achieve an independent republic. Apparently as a result of Parnell’s snub, John Murdoch came out against the Fenians [Clan-na-Gael] in his magazine, *The Highlander,* which resulted in a series of letters republished in *Celtic Magazine* that stirred up problems with supporters of the Land League. (*DPB,* Vol. I, p.533; *Celtic Magazine*, p.474, Vol. VI, 1881, p.474, (Inverness, 1881). [↑](#footnote-ref-660)
660. The IRB, p.73. [↑](#footnote-ref-661)
661. Special Commission Act 1888 Vol 5 p.145 [↑](#footnote-ref-662)
662. Funchion, *Chicago’s Irish Nationalists*, p.136. Funchion is quoting a letter published in *Devoy’s Postbag*. [↑](#footnote-ref-663)
663. *Gaelic American*, December 20, 1924. [↑](#footnote-ref-664)
664. The three de facto members were referred to later as “The Triangle,” which came from their use of that symbol on Clan-na-Gael correspondence to signify Executive Body approval. The triangle symbol also emphasized the disenfranchisement of the two Devoy men on the Executive Body. [↑](#footnote-ref-665)
665. *The Dynamite War*, by K.R.M. Short, p.50, Gill and McMillian (Dublin, 1979). [↑](#footnote-ref-666)
666. Chicago’s Irish Nationalists, p.176. [↑](#footnote-ref-667)
667. *Gaelic American*, December 23, 1924. [↑](#footnote-ref-668)
668. *The IRB*, p.202. [↑](#footnote-ref-669)
669. Devoy, *Recollections of an Irish Rebel*, p.212. Lomasney operated as a loner and Devoy says he was not connected to the later bombings of Sullivan and Boland. Lomasney blew himself up accidentally while setting a dynamite charge on the London Bridge. [↑](#footnote-ref-670)
670. *Gaelic American*, January 19, 1924; *The IRA* by Tim Pat Coogan, p.104, Palgrave (New York, 2002). Dillon went on a mission into Canada to blow up the Welland Canal locks in 1900 and spent 14 years in a Canadian prison under an assumed named. He returned and reentered the Clan-na-Gael in McGarrity’s Philadelphia Camp in 1914 at age 65. He died in 1930. [↑](#footnote-ref-671)
671. *Gaelic American*, November 10, 1923. The article tells how the Secretary of the Supreme Council, John O’Connor, went to Chicago to find out what was going on and why he hadn’t been invited to the 1884 Boston UB Convention and was told by Sullivan that the Revolutionary Directory had been dissolved. Boland admitted at this meeting to pilfering Revolutionary Directory Funds; see also *The IRB*, p.124. [↑](#footnote-ref-672)
672. *The IRB*, p.124. [↑](#footnote-ref-673)
673. *Gaelic American*, November 17, 1923. [↑](#footnote-ref-674)
674. It is plausible that this “TH” or United Irishmen organization was an amalgam with O’Donovan Rossa’s UI organization (formed in 1881) that emerged from the general chaos that ensued in the Clan-na-Gael organization after the murder of Cronin. [↑](#footnote-ref-675)
675. *The IRB*, p. 02. [↑](#footnote-ref-676)
676. *The IRB*, p.105 and pp.119-24; Funchion, *Chicago’s Irish Nationalists,* p.179. Funchion mentions several informers, and claims that Le Caron didn’t know the exact plans, but does not address Devoy’s claim that Boland was a spy. [↑](#footnote-ref-677)
677. *The IRB*, pp.184-185. [↑](#footnote-ref-678)
678. Story of the Clan-na-Gael, *Gaelic American*, December 20, 1924. [↑](#footnote-ref-679)
679. *Gaelic American*, November 17, 1923, Chicago’s Irish Nationalists, p.196. [↑](#footnote-ref-680)
680. *The IRB*, p.179; of interest is that this same name was used earlier by Daniel O’Madigan and the Clan-na-Gael front group that attempted to wrest the leadership role away from the Senate at the 1870 Cincinnati United Irishmen Congress. [↑](#footnote-ref-681)
681. *Gaelic American*, March 14 and March 21, 1925. Devoy insinuates that Alexander Sullivan was a British agent in these two issues in his *Story of the Clan-na-Gael* from various unconvincing bits of circumstantial evidence. Devoy speaks of Sullivan as the man behind Boland until Boland’s expulsion in 1888. However, Devoy’s evidence that Alexander Sullivan was the origin of the rumor that Dr. Patrick Henry Cronin was a British agent, which then led to Cronin’s murder, is much more convincing and backed up by alternative sources. Alexander Sullivan died August 21, 1913. [↑](#footnote-ref-682)
682. For a detailed, well researched book covering the events leading up to the murder of Doctor Patrick H Cronin and the subsequent so-called “Trial of the Century” see *Blood Runs Green*, by Gillian O’Brien, University of Chicago Press (Chicago, 2015). [↑](#footnote-ref-683)
683. *Gaelic American*, March 7, 1925. [↑](#footnote-ref-684)
684. Sara Bornemann’s Master’s Thesis “Political Resistance and Activism in Irish America: The Clan na Gael 1912-1916” presented in 2018 at the Department of History, University of Louisville, Louisville, Kentucky gives a detailed account of Clan-na-Gael activity in the lead up to the Easter Rising in 1916. Anyone interested in this period will find the coverage excellent, inciteful and fully sourced. [↑](#footnote-ref-685)
685. *Gaelic American*, March 28, 1925. [↑](#footnote-ref-686)
686. *Gaelic American*, March 21, 1925. [↑](#footnote-ref-687)
687. *Gaelic American*, *The Story of the Clan-na-Gael*, in weekly articles from March 28, 1925 to June 13, 1925. [↑](#footnote-ref-688)
688. *Gaelic American*, April 18, 1925. [↑](#footnote-ref-689)
689. *Gaelic American*, May 2, 1925. [↑](#footnote-ref-690)
690. *Gaelic American*, May 30, 1925, Devoy points out several Sullivanite members of the unified group, including Patrick Egan and John Finerty, and makes it plain he doesn’t trust them. See also McGee, *IRB*, p.123, pp.184-5. McGee does an excellent job of covering the history of the IRB and the Clan-na-Gael from 1881 to 1900 from an Ireland-centric perspective. [↑](#footnote-ref-691)
691. Doorley, FOIF 1915-1935, p.127-129, an example of Irish American planks which have been part of American politics since the revolution. [↑](#footnote-ref-692)
692. R.F. Foster, *Modern Ireland 1600-1972*, Allen Lane, then Penguin Books (London, 1988-1989), p.393. [↑](#footnote-ref-693)
693. Dooley, *The Greatest of the Fenians*, p.193; John Devoy Passport Application: NARA, Washington D.C., *NARA Series M1490, Roll #2602*. [↑](#footnote-ref-694)
694. T.W. Moody, *Davitt and Irish Revolution 1846-82*, Oxford (London, reprint, 1984), p.136. [↑](#footnote-ref-695)
695. Quoted in ÓLúing, *Fremantle Mission,* p.176. [↑](#footnote-ref-696)
696. “Spoons” Butler got his nickname for pilfering silverware from Southern mansions while commanding the Union forces occupying New Orleans. [↑](#footnote-ref-697)
697. *Gaelic American*, January 19, 1924; *New York Times*, July 27, 1887, *“The Canadian Seizures*;*”* Elisha Benjamin Andrews, *History of the United States* (6 Vols.), Charles Scribner’s Sons (New York, 1895), Vol. IV, p.268. Note: corroboration may be inferred by another incident in Massachusetts’ Governor Butler’s interesting career as detailed in the article “Canadian Schooner, shrouded in secrecy and mystery” by Jay Underwood, Sail-World.com News: http://www.sail-world.com/index.cfm?nid=105555 (retrieved May 4, 2013). [↑](#footnote-ref-698)
698. *Gaelic American*, January 12, 1924 to March 8, 1925. “Anglo-American Treaties” where Devoy details the Clan-na-Gael’s part in fighting to defeat Anglo-American treaties. [↑](#footnote-ref-699)
699. H.A.L. Fisher, *James Bryce: Viscount Bryce of Dechmont*, (2 Vols.), MacMillan (New York, 1927), Vol. II, pp.68-72. [↑](#footnote-ref-700)
700. *Gaelic American*, March 1, 1925. [↑](#footnote-ref-701)
701. James Reidy, “John Devoy,” Journal of The American Irish Historical Society Vol. XXVII, New York 1928, p.421; Ryan, *The Phoenix Flame,* p.285; *Gaelic American*, March 1, 1925. [↑](#footnote-ref-702)
702. Cronin, *McGarrity Papers*, Anvil Books (Tralee, 1972), pp.63-68. [↑](#footnote-ref-703)
703. Cronin, *McGarrity Papers*, p.36. [↑](#footnote-ref-704)
704. Cronin, *McGarrity Papers*, pp.40-43. [↑](#footnote-ref-705)
705. Warre[n] Bradley Wells, (pamphlet),“An Irish Apologia” Maunsel Ltd. (Dublin, 1917), p.65. [↑](#footnote-ref-706)
706. Wells, An Irish Apologia, p.66. [↑](#footnote-ref-707)
707. Wells, An Irish Apologia, p.70. [↑](#footnote-ref-708)
708. Cronin, *McGarrity Papers*, p.66, also quoted in Michael Doorley, *Irish American Diaspora Nationalism: The Friends of Irish Freedom 1915-1935*, Four Courts Press (Dublin, 2005) (hereafter cited as Doorley, FOIF 1915-1935), p.92. Note: McGarrity is Joseph McGarrity introduced further on in this section. [↑](#footnote-ref-709)
709. Robert Kee, *Ourselves Alone,* Penguin Books (London, 1989), p.18; also see Wells, *An Irish Apologia*, p.48. [↑](#footnote-ref-710)
710. Michael Collins, quoted in Kee, *Ourselves Alone*, p.23. [↑](#footnote-ref-711)
711. Kee, *Ourselves Alone*, p.143. [↑](#footnote-ref-712)
712. Doorley, FOIF 1915-1935, p.148. Doorley quotes the *Gaelic American* issues of July 8 and September 30, 1922, where de Valera is compared to Pancho Villa, the Mexican renegade, by Archbishop Michael J. Curley of Baltimore after de Valera joined the Republicans during the Irish civil war. [↑](#footnote-ref-713)
713. A very perceptive discussion of this problem is found in P.S. O’Hegarty, *The Victory of Sinn Féin*, UCD Press (1924: reprinted Dublin, 1998) Appendix I-B “Ireland and America,” p.135. [↑](#footnote-ref-714)
714. Doorley, FOIF 1915-1935, p.107. [↑](#footnote-ref-715)
715. Doorley, FOIF 1915-1935, p.92. [↑](#footnote-ref-716)
716. Dave Hannigan, *De Valera in America,* Palgrave Macmillan (NY, 2010) p.69 and 124. [↑](#footnote-ref-717)
717. Doorley, FOIF1915-1935, p. 96-97; the Dáil in April of 1919 agreed to join a League of Nations provided Ireland was a member nation. [↑](#footnote-ref-718)
718. Villanova Archives: “McGarrity Papers.” Statement by Rt Rev M.J. Gallagher, president of the FOIF page 8, pub 1921: http://digital.library.villanova.edu/Item/vudl:136695 (retrieved May 9, 2004). [↑](#footnote-ref-719)
719. American Association for the Recognition of the Irish Republic. [↑](#footnote-ref-720)
720. Doorley, FOIF 1915-1935, p.135. [↑](#footnote-ref-721)
721. Diarmaid Ferriter, *Judging Dev,* Royal Irish Academy (Dublin, 2007), p.70, where Ferriter expounds on this theme and produces newly released documents that showing that de Valera was willing to stop the fighting and resort to arbitration to end the war with partition still in place. [↑](#footnote-ref-722)
722. Francis Carroll “America and the Making of an Independent Ireland” NYU Press 2021. [↑](#footnote-ref-723)
723. Ed Moloney, http://www.nuzhound.com/articles/mal10-41.htm (retrieved May 9, 2006). [↑](#footnote-ref-724)
724. Liam Barry, *Voices From the Tomb,* National Gaelic Publications (Australind, WA, 2006), where Barry gives three separate dates for the prisoners of the *Baringa* which must be manifest listing dates for a single sailing; *New York Times*, January 27, 1870; the *New York Times* in error called the ship the *Beringer*. [↑](#footnote-ref-725)
725. Barry, Voices from the Tomb. [↑](#footnote-ref-726)
726. Barry, Voices from the Tomb. [↑](#footnote-ref-727)
727. Marie King and Philip Fennell, Eds., *The Voyage of the Hougoumont,* Publ. by the Editors (NY, 2000). [↑](#footnote-ref-728)
728. James Jeffery Roche, *John Boyle O’Reilly,* Mershon Publishing (New York, 1891). [↑](#footnote-ref-729)
729. *Gaelic American*, November 19, 1924 and November 29, 1924, “The Story of the Clan-na-Gael” by John Devoy, [↑](#footnote-ref-730)
730. Session 1871, House of Commons paper 144, Vol 58-1, p. 461 dated 17 February 1871; *Fenian Heroes and Martyrs*, page 209 [↑](#footnote-ref-731)
731. Mary C. Lynch and Seamus O’Donoghue, *O’Sullivan Burke: Fenian* (Cork, 1999) pp.208-219. [↑](#footnote-ref-732)
732. Marcus Bourke, *A Study in Irish Separatism,* University of Georgia Press (Athens, 1967), p.130. [↑](#footnote-ref-733)
733. Barry, Voices from the Tomb, p.46 [↑](#footnote-ref-734)