



# Mayo Society of New York

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Founded 1879; incorporated 1891 as Mayo Men's Benefit, Patriot and Social Association of the City of New York; later as Mayo Men's P & B Association and in 1985, gender neutral as the Mayo Society, Inc. of the City of New York.

*Vol.157*

*Newsletter*

*May 2020*

**Regular Meeting**      **Cancelled due to COVID-19**  
**Where:**                **St. Sebastian Parish Center**  
                              **39-60 57th Street**  
                              **Woodside, NY 11377**  
**Time:**                **7:30 P.M. Sharp**

## Our President's Note

Dear Members and Friends,

I hope everyone had a blessed Easter.

There will be no meeting in May, I will keep you informed as I get updates regarding the June meeting.

We mourn the loss of our members;

Mike Moffatt, Eileen Cuff and Tilda McHale:

**Mike Moffatt** was from Dervin, Lahardane Co Mayo. He immigrated to the USA in 1946 at age 18. From 1950 to 1952 he served as a corporal in the US Army stationed in Japan during the Korean War. He married the love of his life Alice McArdle R.I.P. in January 1959. He was a staunch Mayo man. He served as President in 1965, and then assumed the office of treasurer for the next 40 plus years. Mike was a true gentleman who shared his knowledge, wisdom and generosity with so many, not just the Mayo Society but the wider Irish diaspora in the US.

**Eileen Cuff** was a graduate of Fordham University school of Education. A school principal, educator, mentor, and friend to her many students. Everyone's favorite aunt. She recently joined the Society. Her roots are from Tourmakeady. She will be solely missed by all of us.

**Tilda McHale** was born in the village of Rathlacken, a village that is approximately 7-8 miles from the towns of Killala and Ballycastle in County Mayo. Tilda came to New York in 1964. Shortly after arriving she joined the Mayo Ladies Auxiliary. She joined Mayo Association when the Mayo Ladies Auxiliary and the Mayo Men's Association became one association in 1988. Tilda was also very active in her Parish, St. Sebastian's in Woodside, Queens and the Legion of Mary in Saint Sebastian Parish. Tilda was held in very high esteem by a large number of friends.

On a happier note, Congratulations to our chaplain **Fr Kevin Sweeney** who was elevated to Bishop Designate of Patterson NJ. Fr Kevin is one of the youngest priests to be made a Bishop, at age 50. We wish him God's blessings as he continues his Vocation.

We would normally be planning our annual trip to Our Lady of Knock in East Durham, August 21st, but this year we may not be able to go due to the social distancing guidelines.

Our dance has been rescheduled to **October 02, 2020**. I look forward to us getting together and celebrating our wonderful honorees: **Bill Lynn and Rita Lydon Lenz**.

The UICANY has joined with the NYGAA, the EIIC, the Aisling Irish Community Center and the New York Irish Center in a fundraising effort entitled '**Sláinte 2020**' which will assist individuals and families in the Irish communities in the tri-state area during the COVID-19 pandemic. This assistance is intended to help meet essential needs such as rent and food.

Website: [www.Slainte2020.org](http://www.Slainte2020.org)

Mailing Address: Sláinte 2020-COVID-19 Fund,

990 McLean Avenue, Yonkers, N.Y. 10704.

Country Bank:    Account number: 201 0000 7771

Routing Number: 021911369

Please continue to practice social distancing, reach out to your family at the Society and pray for our first responders and service employees.

Keep our dearly departed and sick in your prayers

God Bless,

Noreen

## The Amazing Irish Fenian Prison Escape Or the Story of The Catalpa

On 9 January 1868 The HMS Hougoumont landed in Fremantle. This was the last convict ship transport to Western Australia. It carried 62 prisoners, of whom 16 were Military Fenians; Irishmen who were serving in the British Army that had sworn allegiance to the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB). They included: John Boyle O'Reilly, Martin Hogan, James Wilson, Thomas Hassett, Michael Harrington, Robert Cranston, and Thomas Darragh.

O'Reilly escaped in 1869, befriending a whaler named Henry Hathaway on the way. He settled in Boston, where he became an editor of *The Pilot*, a catholic newspaper. Pardons were issued to most of the Fenian prisoners in 1869 and 1871, but not the military Fenians. Thomas McCarthy Fennell was among the Fenians in Fremantle who was pardoned. He settled in Connecticut in 1872.

Fenians in British prisons were released and exiled to New York; John Devoy, Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa, among others. The Fenian Brotherhood, then the US branch of the IRB was split in factions. The new sister organization would become Clan na Gael, which Devoy would soon lead.

Devoy got a smuggled letter from James Wilson in 1873 describing the miserable conditions in Fremantle and asking his help to escape. He got another such letter from Martin Hogan. O'Reilly's escape had inspired them. Devoy approached O'Reilly and Fennell. Fennell suggested that a ship be purchased, laden with a legitimate cargo, and sailed to Western Australia. Devoy got the Clann Na Gael to fund a rescue.

O'Reilly's friend Henry Hathaway, now a police captain in New Bedford, MA led them to whaling agent John T. Richardson, who led them to his son-in-law, whaling captain George Anthony, who agreed to help.

Clan na Gael member James Reynolds purchased a three-mast whaling bark ship called *Catalpa* under his name for \$5,500. Anthony recruited 22 crewmen and The *Catalpa* set sail from New Bedford, MA on 29 April 1875.

By coincidence, after passing the Cape of Good Hope; *Catalpa* met another ship called *The Ocean Beauty*, whose Captain Cozens had been the captain of the *Hougoumont*. He gave Anthony the very same charts he had used to transport the prisoners eight years earlier.

In November 1875, two Fenian agents sent by Devoy arrived in Fremantle to prepare the escape. John J. Breslin posed as an American Millionaire investor. He made contact with William Foley, a Fenian ex-prisoner in Fremantle, and used him to contact James Wilson. He was able to communicate directly with Wilson in January 1876 and through him to the others. The prisoners were instructed to cause no suspicion and do nothing to earn punishment lest they have to be left behind. The other agent Tom Desmond recruited five local Irishmen to cut the telegraph lines from Perth to Albany on the day of the escape.

The *Catalpa* landed, just south of Fremantle on 27 March 1876. Anthony and Breslin met. Anthony would keep The *Catalpa* ten to twelve miles offshore, in international/neutral waters.

On 17 April, the telegraph wires were cut, and Breslin and Desmond met the six escapees as arranged and each carried three of the men in two horse-drawn carriages. The men boarded the whaleboat with Captain Anthony aboard and stowed themselves in as tight spaces as possible to give room to the oarsmen and to conceal their presence.

The whaleboat sailed furiously through a storm, which had lasted a day and brought down the mast, looking for The *Catalpa*. They were evading a steamer named The *Georgette*, which had been armed and commandeered by the British Navy to search for the escapees. The *Georgette* approached The *Catalpa*.

The First Mate refused to allow the police to board the ship as they demanded. They were in neutral waters in which the British and Australian authorities had no jurisdiction. The *Georgette*, being a steamer had to return to Fremantle anyway for coal after chasing The *Catalpa*.

A police cutter with 30-40 armed men then raced furiously with the whaleboat; which reached The *Catalpa* just before the cutter pulled alongside, lingered, then left without their prey.

Next morning, The *Georgette* came alongside The *Catalpa*. Captain Stone demanded the surrender of the prisoners. *Georgette* fired a warning shot from a 12-pounder cannon. Captain Anthony then ordered the American flag to be flown. He warned them that to fire on a ship flying the "Stars and Stripes" was an act of war against the USA. The *Georgette* backed off. The *Catalpa* slipped into the Indian Ocean and westward to freedom.

The *Catalpa* arrived in New York on 19 August 1876 and the "Fremantle Six" were greeted by a cheering crowd of thousands of Irish and sympathetic Americans. Devoy, Breslin and Anthony were hailed as heroes. Captain Anthony was an American Protestant with no blood ties to Ireland. He said it was "the right thing to do."

**Kevin Rooney**

