

The Mulvihill Voice

Autumn 2006 Issue Number Three

The Story of St. Patrick and Ona the Archdruid

Among our very oldest family legends is one that comes down to us from the *Book of Armagh*, written from older texts in about 807AD.

It was around the year 434 AD amid the sacred groves of *Imleach-Ona*, seven km. from the royal seat of Cruachan in the territory of the Corca Achlann tribe. The noble Archdruid Ona and his brother Id dwelled here near the present day town of Elphin, Co. Roscommon. Cruachan was also the site of a Druidic College.

St. Patrick arrived and wished to establish a monastic community at *Imleach-Ona* and convert the Pagan residents to Christianity. When he asked Ona if he would trade the land for heavenly land, the Archdruid said he would much prefer gold. St. Patrick provided some gold but then chastised the noble wizard for wanting earthly riches over eternal ones. He cursed him, saying neither he nor his descendants would ever be kings of Ireland. Ona became very upset at this. St. Patrick, being a merciful saint, forgave him and then blessed Ona, saying his seed would be highly skilled in both "the arts of war and the sacred pursuits of peace" and would give great assistance to the throne. He also said his descendants would inherit the holy place.

Imleach-Ona then became *Ail-finn*, meaning "rock of the clear spring" for it was said that St. Patrick raised a rock from the spring at this spot. One can visit the rock at the ruins at Elphin. The townland of Emlagh now preserves the older name. (continued on next page)



A summer view from Sliabh Bán, ancient Mulvihill territory in County Roscommon

Bertha Mulvihill, Titanic Passenger

Bridget Elizabeth Mulvihill had always been adventurous. She left her large family in Coosan, Athlone as a very young woman, traveled across the Atlantic and moved in with her Aunt Kate in Rhode Island. Better known as Bertha, she tried her hand at various jobs in her adopted country. She soon met Henry Noon, an Englishman who worked with her brother-in-law at a local foundry, and became engaged. Henry gave her three gold treasures: a pocket watch, a bracelet and a cross on a chain.

In the summer of 1911, around the age of 22, Bertha boarded the *Lusitania* and returned to Ireland. Her sister Kitty was also engaged and planning her wedding. Bertha stayed with her folks, back in Coosan, Co. Westmeath for several seasons. Kitty married in the spring of 1912.

After the wedding, Bertha was anxious to return to her fiancé and her new life in America. She missed Henry and decided to surprise him. She secretly bought a Third Class ticket for 7 pounds, 15 shillings for the maiden voyage of the famed new "unsinkable" ship, the *Titanic*, the largest in the world. Although an English ship, it was built in Belfast and designed by an Irishman.

On April 2, 1912, the luxury liner left Belfast and picked up
(continued on p. 6)

The Mulvihill Voice

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GETTING STARTED IN GENEALOGY

By James M. Mulvihill, Chieftain

Researching your family history can be a fun and rewarding project, but it's not a short term task. Patience, perseverance and a keen attention to detail are essential attributes. I'm going to focus on the Mulvihills here, but the basics are applicable to all parts of your extended family. On one hand, as Mulvihills, we're fortunate to have a rather small pool of candidates to sort through (maybe ~6000 males living in the world at some point in the 20th century...and an equal number of folks bearing our surname as a maiden name). On the other hand, our scarcity can be frustrating when searching for historical information.

The first step is to gather all of the information possible from family members (particularly the eldest) and from documents in their possession. Your primary focus will be on collecting Birth, Marriage and Death (BMD) data, including complete names, place and dates. You can record the information in a notebook or use charts specially made for the purpose, or better yet, enter it directly into a genealogy computer program (nice versions of the latter two are available for free at www.familysearch.org...click on the Order/Download tab). And while you're at it, don't forget to record all of those anecdotal bits—the family stories, fables and all. In the end, this information will flesh out your story and add a great depth of interest to an otherwise dry compilation of statistics. A neat tip is to use one of those small, inexpensive solid-state (no tape) recorders to save details of conversations for later transcription. Leave no stone unturned...it may seem like pestering, but most people will be honored to think that you value their recollections so much. Ask to copy photographs and family records and return them promptly to their owners.

At this point you have to take a cold, hard look at what you have accumulated. It is most important that each and every fact be verified to the extent that it can be. What you have is hearsay (unless you've also uncovered copies of official BMD records). This information is the foundation of your work, and errors uncovered here can save countless hours in research time later. It is not at all unusual to have incorrect or distorted facts carried down in family history through the years.

Verification begins with obtaining official copies of the BMD documents. If you are fortunate to live within the same state that your immediate ancestors did, then a visit to the State Archives, Vital Records or Public Health Services can be very productive. With a few phone calls you can narrow down the proper people to contact for access to the records and to obtain copies of documents. Note that in the age of heightened security, access to records for dates more recent than about 1940 often requires proof of identity. For out-of-state inquiries, the process is a bit more cumbersome, as you will be conducting the research by mail, but most agencies are quite helpful in directing your requests to the proper authorities.

(continued on next page)



St. Patrick and Ona (continued from page 1)

It is said that Ona's brother took the name Maoilmhichil (Mulvihill) which means devotee of St. Michael.

The MacBranans, a branch of our family, did inherit the holy place, as they were lay abbots at Elphin until 1362.

The Mulvihill line did go on to produce many legends of being fierce warriors. Yet never were we kings; we were however often chieftains of the Corca Achlann, often allied to the nearby royal seat.

We are told that many Mulvihills have become members of the clergy, certainly a "sacred pursuit of peace". Also, many of us in modern times are peace activists.

Ona's brother Id may be the most remote ancestor we could fancy to name. Amid the sacred trees of *Imleach-Ona* may well be where our surname first blossomed. It appears that at the very juncture of the two profound spiritual traditions which comprise so much of Irish heritage, the Druid and the Christian, did the Mulvihill clan originally emerge.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

I have just received *The Mulvihill Voice* and have found it very interesting and well-written. My Mulvihill interests are from the Mantua area of Roscommon. My earliest ancestor that I can find is William Mulvihill b. cir.1801 who married Margaret Brannan. They had at least two sons, James b. 1832 (my great-grandfather) and Thomas b. 1855. They both came to Australia.

In the 1901 census William Mulvihill lived in the townland of Carrigeenacreeha, parish of Kilcolagh, barony of Frenchpark in Co. Roscommon. He was aged 100 and was a farmer/widower. He had his daughter-in-law Honoria and his grandchildren living with him. If there is anyone also researching Mulvihills from this area please pass on my details.

In the newsletter I would like to see anything on the Mulvihills from Roscommon. When the O'Connors drove most of the Mulvihills out of Roscommon, what happened to the ones who stayed behind? How were they allied to the O'Connors for them to allow them to stay? This might be an interesting article to follow up from your Corca Achlann article. Thank you again for the newsletter.

Regards,
Catherine Frendo,
Glenmore Park, NSW, Australia

Hi,

Newsletter was great...keep me informed...thanks. Trying to figure out who the oldest living relative is now...not many left. Trying to find the family of Mary Mulvihill McDermott and Thomas McDermott, their descendants last known to live in Elphin, Co. Roscommon.

Peggy Armstrong
Sublette, Illinois

Dear Editor:

I am interested in the Mulvihill newsletter. Please send me information. My line is from Frances Mulvihill from Ireland. He married Bridget Skolty from Ireland. I don't know if they were married in Ireland or Philadelphia. But all their children were born in Philadelphia.

Ellen Higgins,
Seaville, New Jersey

Dear Mary Ann:

My grandfather is Jerry Mulvihill, the Irish dancing teacher. He has a school called Mulvihill-Lynch. He is originally from Moyvane, Co. Kerry and has been in New York since 1948. I believe he went to the Ballygilton school but his sister Lizzie still lives in Glin and his brother Willie used to live in Glin. His cousin was the music teacher Martin Mulvihill. I'm so excited about getting this newsletter—my husband is over in Glin right now with his family that lives there.

Thanking you in advance,
Debbie Walshe,
Kings Park, New York

FOR OUR ALTARS AND OUR
FIRESIDES
--- Mulvihill motto

Getting Started (continued)

Many states also retain records at the local or county level, at least for more recent events. The location of records and the procedure for obtaining copies vary from state to state. A search of the particular state's website will usually provide detailed instructions.

In the next installment of this column, we'll deal with overcoming obstacles in collecting copies of records, and point out some of the surprising side benefits of going through the process. Our focus will be on Irish-Americans at first, but we'll quickly broaden out. Meanwhile, if you have any questions on Getting Started, do not hesitate to contact us at mulvihillvoice@hotmail.com.



OUR IRISH HERITAGE

In our summer issue we announced the stunning find of a medieval book of psalms that had just been accidentally unearthed. More information has since been released. Now called the *Faddan More Psalter*, named for the Tipperary bog in which it was found, the text is illuminated; its one exposed page is highly decorated and reveals red and yellow dyes and the profile of a bird. The calligraphy is of high quality and is in Latin. It is hoped that further pages prove to be as lavish. Its pages are only slightly smaller than those of the famous *Book of Kells*. The find is very rare for many reasons, one being that the book has a wrap-around leather cover with buttons and strings; very little is known about early Irish book binding. Although very damaged, it is also astounding for a book to survive in a bog for over 1,000 years. It dates from about 800AD. It is suspected that the book was hidden purposely. Within 15km from the site are six monasteries that had ancient scriptoria, the closest being Birr, founded by St. Brendan. It may be that one of the many recorded attacks on the monastery was pending and the text was deposited there to prevent its desecration and destruction.

It is hoped that over time, the text will reveal many secrets including the identity of the scribe and the location of its creation. In the meanwhile, teams of experts from around the globe work together to conserve this outstanding discovery.

GENETIC GENEALOGY 3: THE TREE OF MAN

By James M. Mulvihill, Chieftain

Imagine a family tree so accurate that it is based on secrets told only by our genes, not on just the stories passed down to us from our relatives. In our first two issues, we explored the many advantages of genetic testing for studying our ancestry and looked at some common misconceptions people have about medical issues and privacy. This fall and winter, we'll take a look at the underlying basis for the testing and its implications for the study of family history. We'll examine two time frames: the Genealogical period, which is defined as the time since the adoption of surnames (about 1100AD); and the Anthropological period, which covers the distant past, all the way back to the first migration of our species from their homeland in Africa (about 80,000BC). These two vastly different time scales use two different, but interrelated, methods for their study.

Historians and anthropologists have been using the obvious physical characteristics of groups of people for over two centuries in an attempt to establish relationships between the groups. Many of those characteristics were not useful to the effort, such as skin color which proved to be heavily influenced by environment and latitude; others were hopelessly distorted by the recombination of genes during conception. Researchers like Cavalli-Sforza in the 1980s pioneered the use of an array of biochemical markers, including Blood Type and tissue markers that were more directly tied to genetics. They drew the first family tree of man. With the unraveling of the DNA molecule over the past few years has come a far more precise and targeted procedure, capable of detailing the finest branches of the tree. The recombining process still complicates things, but fortunately, a large section of the Y chromosome was found to be inherited completely intact, and is ideal for characterizing male heredity. (continued on next page)

Genetic Genealogy (continued)

The new system makes use of the fact that DNA consists of a very long assortment of only four amino acids (abbreviated here as A,C, T, and G) and undergoes mutation very rarely and in a wholly random fashion. This specific type of mutation involves the substitution of one amino acid (called a 'base') for another. This process is called Single Nucleotide Polymorphism, or SNP mutation. For example, the partial Y-DNA segmentA, A, C, T, A, T, G, C, A, T..... may be transformed into the following by one SNP mutation:A, A, C, T, **T**, T, G, C, A, T..... A mutation of the SNP type occurs very infrequently; less than once every 10,000 generations (~300,000 years) *at any particular point along the DNA segment*. Because of this, once it occurs, it remains in the population, being passed on to every male over the history of that family. Any subsequent mutations elsewhere along the chain are additive, and thus form a record of that family.

Even though the rate of mutation is so low, the fact that there are more than 60 million bases in the Y-DNA chain, guarantees that that there will be a number of new mutations in every birth. So, a great many SNP mutations have accumulated in the nearly 3 billion males now on earth.

Some of these SNP mutations accumulate in the general population at a far greater rate than others due to the simple fact that some males are more successful than others at reproducing. Geneticists, by randomly sampling many different groups from around the world and analyzing each sample for key SNPs, have built up a picture of branches, each representing the incremental addition of one SNP added to another. So, for instance, if two people have the same mutation at the same position along the chain, but the second has an additional mutation, it is evident that the second

person has formed a branch off the first. In this way, amazingly, we are able to plot the actual geographic movements of ancient peoples as they slowly dispersed throughout the world.

Using powerful computer programs to make the billions of comparisons, geneticists have at last constructed a basic family tree for man. The primary branches are labeled A through R, with subsequent branches off each letter identified by adding an alternating combination of numbers and letters, so R, R1a, R1b, R1c, R2, R2a.... In this way, a rather substantial 'Tree' has been constructed, with new branches being added at a rate of a dozen or more each year as new SNPs are identified. I happen to be an R1b1c, by far the most common group in Ireland, and much of Western Europe.

How does this relate to Genealogy? In the next installment, I'll describe how placing yourself in one of these branches begins the process of establishing your deep ancestry. We'll look at how you can use SNPs in combination with a different kind of mutation, the STR, or Short Tandem Repeat, to explore ever finer branches until you isolate your immediate family and its relationship to other, closely related families. We'll also see how, remarkably, this information allows you to track your ancestors through a vast expanse of time and over long migrations across the globe.



Bertha Mulvihill, Titanic Passenger (continued)

passengers in Southampton, England and Cherbourg, France before the final group of passengers boarded in Cobh, Co. Cork, then known as Queenstown. Most of those embarking at the last port of call on April 11 were Irish immigrants travelling Third Class like Bertha. Boarding at Queenstown with Bertha were two of her friends, Maggie Daly from Irishtown and Eugene Daly from Athlone. Their berths were near the boilers. Like other Irish immigrants on board, they looked ahead to a more prosperous life in the new land. Above them on higher decks, hundreds of passengers vacationed in splendor aboard the brand new luxurious ship.

Captain Edward Smith had been warned about dangerous icebergs in the region, yet plowed ahead at full speed anyway. Just before midnight on April 14, about 565 kilometers southeast of Newfoundland, the ship struck an iceberg which quickly tore through its starboard hull. Bertha, Maggie and Eugene struggled through the chaos and made it up to the deck. Here they witnessed an officer shoot two men who were trying to board a lifeboat. He then shot himself. Bertha and Maggie jumped into lifeboat #15. She later likened it to jumping off the roof of a three story building. Several of her ribs were broken in the fall. Some others who also jumped landed on her and probably worsened her injuries. The lifeboat quickly became overcrowded, as there were not enough of them, but remained afloat.

By 2:30 am the unsinkable behemoth, the Titanic, had disappeared into the deep along with 1,522 lives. Bertha spent the night thirsty, nauseous, horrified, wet, freezing and in pain from her injuries. But Bertha and Maggie survived. She is said to have played mind games with “ice cakes” that floated with her lifeboat which distracted her somewhat from her extreme misery. Eugene also lived having made it into a different lifeboat.

“Dawn was just breaking when I saw a light way off in the distance,” Bertha was quoted as saying “...then two big green lights broke through the mist above...we cheered and cheered. Some cried. I just sat still and offered up a little prayer.” Just after 4 am, the Carpathia arrived and rescued the 705 survivors. The ship arrived in New York on April 18.

Meanwhile, Henry had had a feeling that she'd been on the Titanic, knowing she missed him very much and considering her adventurous nature. He and Ted Norton, the husband of Bertha's sister Mary, jumped on the train to New York after reading of the disaster in the newspaper. Here they wandered through the crowd, searching for Henry's beloved.

Back on the Carpathia, the survivors were told they would all have to go to the hospital after docking. Despite her broken ribs, Bertha snuck away from the other passengers and hid among the luggage. She then was able to disembark and slip into the crowd unseen. Finally she saw Henry and she crept up behind him, covered his eyes with her hands and said “Guess who?” Thus began their joyful reunion.

A man on the dock gave her a felt hat because she had none. It is now in a museum in Ireland, having been donated by her son. Henry and Bertha traveled that night to Providence, Rhode Island. A man on the train gave up his berth so she could sleep.

Bertha was extremely fortunate for three-quarters of Third Class passengers perished although only one third of First Class did. Dozens of Irish citizens also died who worked on the ship's crew.

Henry and Bertha married that August. He was a master molder, responsible for setting the print on large bronze plaques on statues and monuments in and around Providence. They had five children: Mary, Frances, Helen, Ruth and Henry. Mary, Frances and Henry are alive today.

According to Bertha's grandson, Mark Petteruti of Flourtown, Pennsylvania, his grandmother had a green thumb and loved plants and always created beautiful gardens around her family. He seems to have inherited this trait in abundance.

Bertha lost her trousseau in the frigid Atlantic but her prayer book and prayer beads survived the disaster. And somehow, the three gold treasures that Henry gave her for their engagement survived to this day.



Many thanks to Aiden Mulvihill, Mark Petteruti, Joe Petteruti, Frances Noon Petteruti and Mary Noon Capuano for their help with this article.

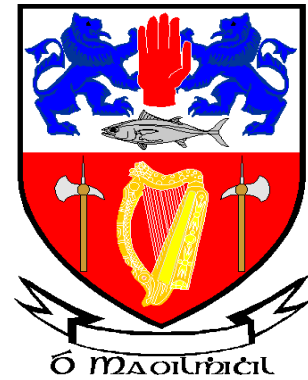
DEDICATION

Bertha Mulvihill Noon (1888-1959)

A survivor of the Titanic, Bertha was one of ten children born of Lisa (née Benson) and Martin Mulvihill of Coosan, Co. Westmeath. Bertha was related to Mulvihill Clann Secretary Aiden Mulvihill, also of Coosan, and his large family there.

Bertha married Henry Noon and had five children of her own in Rhode Island and was an avid gardener. She also loved to sing and was always ready for a party, according to her grandson Joe Petteruti, who remembers her as "Nana Noon". She was very proud of her Irish heritage and hung the Irish flag on St. Patrick's Day, recalls her daughter Mary, now 92. She loved watching her children dance in the Irish tradition in the school plays. The second home she and Henry built was on top of a hill and she said that the view of the fields below reminded her of Ireland. She was also a very religious woman and insisted her children receive a Catholic education. Bertha never returned to Ireland and never knew her youngest sibling, as this child was born around the time of the disaster. Bertha is buried in Pawtucket, R.I. at St. Francis Cemetery.

Perhaps our most famous Mulvihill, she will always be remembered as a woman of adventure, courage, stamina, good-nature and prayerfulness and as a strong human being who transcended tragedy to go on to build a full and beautiful life. It is for these qualities that we hereby dedicate our Autumn Issue to Bertha Mulvihill Noon.



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rites of passage

We happily welcome another new Mulvihill to our clann and to our world, Nolan Thomas Mulvihill born on February 15, 2006. He was born to Thomas C. and Melissa (née Matovcik) Mulvihill of Port Washington, New York. He is pictured here with his brother Kenneth Gerard, 2 1/2, and his folks. He is the second grandchild of our membership Chairman Thomas C. Mulvihill and his wife Maggie of Sarasota, Florida. May his life abound with blessings and joy.



ANCIENT ECHOES



Mulvihills enjoying the 2006 reunion at the monastic ruins of Clonmacnoise in Co. Offaly

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

Dates to be announced for next summer's
Mulvihill Clann reunion in Ireland.
Stay tuned!

Please send us your family
announcements and nominations for
dedications for future issues of **The
Mulvihill Voice**. Please send us your
traditional recipes also. Thanks!

happy harvests!!!



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Due to its healthy economy, Ireland is now experiencing very rapid growth, property development and road building. The subsequent "salvage archaeology" projects are unearthing artifacts of ancient cultures at record rates. Two hundred times the number of digs are occurring than in the early nineties, according to the *UK Times*.

A severe crisis has unfolded as there are not enough archaeologists to analyze the finds. Reports are going unpublished and storage facilities are lacking adequate money and staff to safely preserve the artifacts that await study. For instance, ancient metal items often need a silicon gel immersion to prevent oxidation but often are left open to air, hastening their degradation.

The pressure from developers to get ancient treasure out of the way in order to proceed is fueling the problem, as well as causing digs to proceed far too rapidly. A basic ethic that has always guided responsible archaeological endeavors is that of leaving a significant portion of any site intact for a future generation of more technically advanced scientists to unearth. This ethical and essential approach is being sacrificed for profit and expedience. Now once the team has done the basic emergency excavation, bulldozers may destroy deeper artifacts as road beds and foundations are prepared. Forever obliterated are countless treasures and clues to the mysteries of our ancestors' communities—how they lived, thrived, worshipped, died.

These precious artifacts and the knowledge they impart belong to us all and to our descendants yet to come. But when profits and convenience become more important than sacred ground and than knowledge and respect of our forebears, all Irish families are the ultimate losers.