

THE MULVIHILL VOICE

Winter 2009 /2010 Issue Number Sixteen

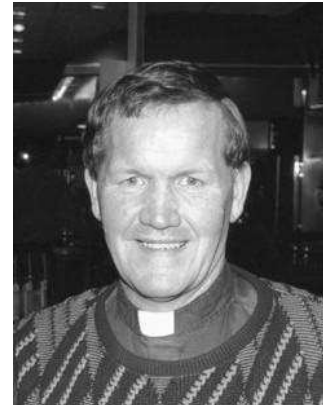
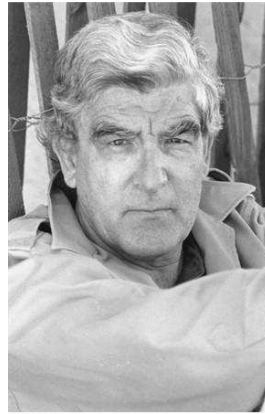
History of the Mulvihill Clan Reunions ~ A Dream Realized

If it were not for the ideas and dreams of two men, an Irish priest and a writer from Long Island, our Clan would not be at all what it is today.

William Patrick Mulvihill was always proud of his Irish heritage. Both of his parents were of Irish descent and his hometown of Sag Harbor, New York was rich with Irish influences. His mother, Anna McDonough, played the fiddle and dreamed of going to Ireland. Bill and his large extended family especially loved the St. Patrick's Night celebrations in the village which featured a talent show and much music and dance.

After helping to liberate Europe in WWII, serving in Germany in the U.S. Army, Bill taught history and creative writing on Long Island and wrote novels and essays. He finally took his first trip to Ireland in 1979. He soon learned that Ireland was granting Irish citizenship to anyone who could prove that their grandparent was Irish-born. He set out to do just that and to attain dual citizenship. He felt strongly that he should acquire this since he was eligible and had such a strong love of Ireland. It wasn't as easy as he imagined.

His grandfather Patrick emigrated to America as a teenager in 1863 and immediately joined the Union Army. When Bill located his Civil War records, it seemed that Patrick had fudged his birth date, presumably in order to be eligible. Complicating matters further, he used the pseudonym Patrick Melvin to evade an aunt in Connecticut, according to his son Daniel, Bill's father. Next he attempted to retrieve Patrick's marriage records, as he knew that he married Harriet Ratchford at St. Stephen's Church in New York City in 1868. Bill soon wrote that he was devastated to learn that a fire had destroyed the parish records.



He next turned to Irish sources. He contacted the Woodford Heritage Center in Co. Galway. In addition to gaining much very useful information including records of Patrick's parents, Michael and Bridget Arbarton, a fortuitous friendship was born.

Father Cathal Stanley of Loughrea began corresponding with Bill. Fr. Stanley had long been associated with the Heritage Center, as a writer and researcher, publishing compilations of local history, gleaned from many sources. Many of Fr. Stanley's cousins are Mulvihills. His mother's sister married a local Mulvihill not far from Clonmoylan, where Patrick was born. Fr. Stanley was very generous with his time and assisted Bill with putting enough genealogical pieces together in order to finally complete his application for Irish citizenship.

Bill proudly became a dual citizen, at last receiving his Irish passport on November 12, 1996.

The two men shared an interest in family histories and particularly in Mulvihill genealogy. During visits in Co. Galway and on Long Island, the concept of a Mulvihill Clan reunion was born. They spoke and wrote of this many times.

(continued on page 6)

The Mulvihill Voice

Editor: Mary Ann Mulvihill-Decker,
Deputy Chieftain for North America
Assistant Editor: James M. Mulvihill,
Chieftain, Mulvihill Clan

*Printed and electronic copies of back issues are available upon request; also available on the Mulvihill Clan website—
e-mail for details*

To contact us please write or e-mail to:

Tánaiste
Box 2772
Sag Harbor, NY 11963 USA

mulvihillvoice@hotmail.com

**We invite you to join the Mulvihill Clan now!
Meet distant relatives and discover your roots!**

**Please send your contact info to:
Thomas C. Mulvihill, Membership**

8821 Misty Creek Drive
Sarasota, Florida 34141
mm2000@comcast.net
941-929-9093



Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; site of the Mulvihill clan reunion last October.
Photo by Clan Officer Tom Mulvihill

SACRED WATERS~ THE HOLY WELLS OF IRELAND

Dawn breaks gently over the ancient stones and the pilgrims awaken after a long chilly night upon the hill. Clockwise, they circle the old well nine times, then add pebbles to a cairn on the hill above. Barefoot, they recite the Rosary as they circle a ruin where long ago stood a small church. They move silently, reverently through several more stations, as their ancestors did, around the cherished waters. They tie colored strips of cloth on the crooked ash tree which has seen a hundred pattern days come and go, honoring the parish patron saint. As the holy day progresses, they will play music and games on the green hill and celebrate with neighbors, friends and perhaps a visitor or two from far away. Many seek a blessing or a cure through the intercession of the associated saint. Others come to give thanks for that having been given.

Most parishes in Ireland have at least one documented well deemed holy by generations past and most have several. A multitude of them are hidden under brambles, forgotten but by the most local of residents who still honor them by leaving medals, coins or cloths and cleaning them out from time to time. Yet many springs attract hundreds, even several thousands of devotees who gather on certain days of the year known as pattern days and move through the prescribed stations, usually to honor a saint.

Wells visited on the Saint's Days of St. Patrick, St. Brigit, St. Columcille, St. Mary and St. John the Baptist are widespread. The events at the larger gatherings often begin at sundown on the eve of the Saint's Day, last throughout the next day and can become like festivals. In earlier times, they were sometimes even the sites of faction fights. In contrast, a well may see a gentle trickle of people throughout the day who quietly perform the stations, pray, fill bottles with water, leave offerings.

Countless wells are believed to have healing waters; many are thought to especially cure maladies of the eyes or of the stomach, some to assist in fertility, others to bring peace to the home. Many were thought to bring poetic and artistic talents or a deeper connection to spiritual wisdom. Some were thought to have particular properties for keeping animals healthy and safe. The healing power of the water is considered more potent on the holy day.

There is no telling how old some of these rites are. It is believed they far pre-date the Christian faith in Ireland, water having been venerated since the distant past. Water has been considered sacred and feminine by cultures in every corner of the world. Water—the sustainer of life, the bringer of vigor to plant and animal alike, flows out of the earth herself, pure and elemental.

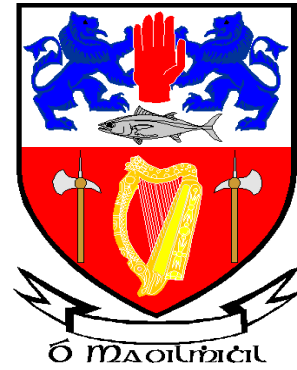
We know that our Irish ancestors in the time of Druidic religion honored the sacredness of nature and of trees and springs particularly. Their sacred groves, their holy springs were places of power and ritual and were some of the very places the Christians co-opted when they arrived, building small churches and shrines upon and around them. Churchyards are rich with ancient yew and oak trees and many have springs. What seems to have been considered sacred to the Goddess Brigid and honored at Imbolc (which translates as ‘the milk of sheep’), February 2, became a well of St. Brigit, whose pattern day is now February 1. Similarly, countless wells traditionally visited on Lughnasa (August 1) such as St. Ciarán’s at Castlekeernan near Kells, Co. Meath, are now visited around the same date in late summer. The cross-quarter days of Imbolc, Beltaine, Lughnasa and Samhain were also celebrated by our ancestors beginning on the eve before the holy day.

Like many things in Ireland, the practices at wells are a fascinating amalgam of Christian and pre-Christian influences. Indeed, the church has had mixed reactions over the centuries to the wells. Many patterns include prehistoric standing stones. Yet many bishops actively encourage participation at wells on pattern days and the vast majority of people who visit holy wells in Ireland are Christian.

Many of the wells have been restored and made park-like, inviting greater numbers of visitors. In the Millennium Jubilee year of 2000, many wells were revived in an attempt to renew interest in early Christian settlements and pilgrimage routes. A resurgence of interest in the 1980s brought many others back into use by local communities. St. Patrick’s Well at the Hill of Tara in Co. Meath, also still known by its older name, Well of the White Cow, was documented in very ancient times. Also known in antiquity as The Physician, this well was restored in recent times by modern Druids.

Other wells have never stopped attracting pilgrims over many centuries such as St. Moling’s Well at St. Mullins, Co. Carlow and at Mulhuddart in Co. Dublin. Yet other wells are being totally lost to development or simply lost in the landscape, forgotten, their offerings hidden in the wet earth, their rich and colorful history disappearing in the mists.

One famous well, *Tobar Ogulla* or *Clebach*, is very near the ancestral territory of the Mulvihill tribe, near Elphin and just east of the ancient royal city of Cruachan in Co. Roscommon. It is at Tulsk and is considered sacred to St. Patrick. Legend has it that he came here around the year 434 and baptized the king’s two Pagan daughters, Etna and Fidelma. Hundreds of visitors arrive annually to partake of its reputed healing waters. (continued on page 8)



Clann Mulvihill Officers 2010

Chieftain: James M. Mulvihill, USA
Deputy Chieftain, Mary Ann
North America: Mulvihill-Decker, USA
**Deputy Chieftain, Europe
and Secretary:** Aiden Mulvihill, IRL
Vice Chairperson: Joseph Mulvihill, IRL
Treasurer and Membership: Thomas Mulvihill, USA
Public Relations Officer: Carolyn Mulvihill, IRL
**Genealogist and
DNA Project Director:** James M. Mulvihill, USA
Linguist: Seán Mulvihill, IRL
Founder: Rev. Cathal Stanley, IRL
Webmaster: James Mulvihill, Jr., USA
Music Director: Jerry Mulvihill, IRL



Carolyn Mulvihill of Dublin, our Public Relations Officer, entertains her clansfolk at the Fifth Annual Mulvihill Clan reunion last October in Philadelphia. Carolyn is also the cousin of founder Fr. Cathal Stanley of Co. Galway.

Rites of Passage



Congratulations to Amie Kirkpatrick, of Thornhill, Dumfriesshire, Scotland, granddaughter of Michael Joseph and Elizabeth Mulvihill. In November 2009, Amie progressed from the junior band Kodetta to the local senior band, Koda. Amie is the lead singer. It is a traditional band, complete with accordions, bagpipes, keyboards and fiddles.

Amie is descended from Mulvihills originally from Co. Roscommon. Her great-grandparents were Edward Mulvihill and the former Pauline Deegan from Loughrea, Co. Galway. Edward and Pauline moved from Ireland to Scotland when Amie's grandfather Michael was three. Amie is the great-grand-niece of Joseph Mulvihill, our Clan's Vice Chairperson, who lives in Co. Longford, Ireland.



Amie is 15 and attends the Wallacehall Academy in Thornhill. She has a younger brother and sister. We are told Amie lives for singing and drama and sings constantly. She also plays tambourine and is learning to play keyboard. We hope that someday she will sing and play at one of our reunions!

Captain David M. Mitchell received the Bronze Star for his recent mobilization to Afghanistan. He retires from the United States Navy on February 1 after thirty-one years. Dave received this decoration during a ceremony in September. He tells us that he has traveled all over the world with the Navy, deploying many times and while it has been hard, it has been rewarding.

Dave recently learned that his ancestor, Henry Mitchell, fought in the War of 1812 after arriving in the New World in 1801. Dave feels it was his destiny to serve. He is looking forward to spending time with his wife Darcey and daughter Kerianna. Dave is from Ohio.

Congratulations to our clansman on this great honor and all the best wishes for a long and healthy retirement.



Note: The Bronze Star is awarded by the United States Armed Forces to service people who, while in imminent danger, have distinguished themselves by acts of unusual bravery, heroism or meritorious conduct.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



Dear MaryAnn:

Hi! My name is Guillermo Ismael Mulvihill. I'm 25 years old, I'm from Argentina, and I made contact with James Mulvihill, who sent me your email. It is a pleasure to get in touch with other Mulvihills. I would like, if possible, to subscribe to the newsletter. Thank you very much, with kind regards.

A big hug.

Guillermo Ismael Mulvihill

Thanks, Mary Ann, for sending this on. [The Autumn 2009 newsletter] It's a beautifully produced issue...and aren't they all, coming from you! I especially appreciated the coverage of the big reunion in Philly and also the story, with photo, of Mulvihill hero: Edward Mulvihill. What a story is that!

Maureen E. Mulvihill
Brooklyn, New York

Hi Mary Ann,

We were sorry to miss you at the reunion! We heard how much you do for the clan -- and how much your father did to get it started -- and I just wanted to tell you how much we appreciate it.

We are all from Middletown, New York originally. My sister Brooke lives with her husband in White Plains, NY and my sister Kim lives in Middletown, NY.

Background info -- We have a little brother Matthew who is 19 and is currently enrolled in the Army ROTC on a full scholarship at Niagara University. My parents, John and Elizabeth Mulvihill live in Middletown, NY and my father has been an FDNY firefighter for more than 20 years and currently works in the Bronx. (He's also my hero :)

I hope to meet you at the next gathering!

Jessica Mulvihill
Hoboken, New Jersey

[\(Jessica is pictured with her sisters on the cover of our Autumn 2009 issue\)](#)

Thank you Mary Ann

We live about 45 minutes south of Atlanta, Georgia. I was born and raised in Cincinnati, Ohio but have lived in Georgia for the last 30 years where my wife and I raised our family. I love genealogy but still need some more proofs in my Mulvihill line as we always do in every line. All of the new answers really just provide for another question.

John C. Meiller
Senoia, Georgia

My grandfather was Jeremiah Mulvihill married to Sarah Clancy - she was from Limerick but they lived in Listowel. My great-grandfather was Cornelius Mulvihill from near Moyvane who was disinherited when he married Annie Slattery from Waterford. (He was 40 and she was 16). They had 14 children, my grandfather being the only one to stay in Ireland. I have no knowledge of how they fared during the famine, but certainly in my great-grandfather's time (early 1900s and before), they were huge landowners out in Moyvane or Ballylongford or where they lived. Did they profit from the deaths of their neighbours? I am not sure. They may have always owned that land, because I know some Cunningham people returned from the States before the famine so maybe they had bought the land way back.

Thanks and take care,

Elizabeth Stack
Co. Kerry and New York City



History of the Mulvihill Clan Reunions (continued from p. 1)

Fr. Stanley had acquired much information about the origins of the Mulvihill name in Co. Roscommon. He studied its gradual migration down the Shannon and elsewhere. Bill and Fr. Stanley dreamed of Mulvihills from far and wide gathering together near the birthplace of the family name.

Bill suddenly took ill and died in September 2004 of pancreatic cancer. On June 25 of the following year, on what would have been his 82nd birthday, dozens of Mulvihills gathered in Strokestown, Co. Roscommon for the First Annual Mulvihill Clan Reunion. Fr. Stanley had organized an amazing weekend, complete with bus tours of historic sites, speakers and Mulvihill musicians. There were Mulvihills from Australia and from all over Ireland. Bill's daughter Mary Ann Mulvihill-Decker and her husband Daniel came from the U.S., very sadly but proudly representing him.

By the end of the weekend, a Chieftain had been unanimously elected. James M. Mulvihill, a genealogist from Delaware, arrived and stunned everyone with his wealth of knowledge of the family, based on years of Mulvihill research. Jim is the world's foremost authority on Mulvihill history, with a specialty in Genetic Genealogy. Bill's other daughter, Nancy Mulvihill, had corresponded with Jim online, told him about the reunion and strongly encouraged him to go to Ireland for the event.

In subsequent months, other Clan officers were appointed. Fr. Cathal served as Chairperson for several years before stepping down. Mary Ann accepted the post of Deputy Chieftain for North America, or Tánaiste. She soon after agreed to design, write, print and distribute a Clan newsletter. *The Mulvihill Voice* is now distributed to Australia, Taiwan, Argentina, England, Japan, Canada, Scotland, Kenya, France, many counties in Ireland and to over two dozen states in the U.S. including Alaska and Hawaii. Sixteen quarterly issues have now been published.

Meanwhile, Jim's Mulvihill Clan website is thriving with a large number of kinsfolk participating. It seems like every week more Mulvihills sign up.

Every single year since the first poignant gathering in Strokestown on Bill's birthday, the Mulvihills have gathered. Bill would be very, very happy about that.



DEDICATION

Our Winter 2009/2010 issue is hereby dedicated to **Sister Julia Mulvihill** of the Order of St. Francis of Philadelphia.

Sister Julia is in her sixth year of ministry at Nyumbani Children's Home in Karen, Nairobi, Kenya. Nyumbani is home to 107 HIV positive orphans. She is the international volunteer coordinator and the children's activity coordinator. She journeys with the sick and dying to hospitals in many locations, within as well as outside of Africa. She has achieved such things as helping a boy regain his hearing by getting a cochlear implant in the States and assisting a boy to learn to walk again. With expert and loving care, good nutrition and anti-retroviral drugs, many of the children are doing exceptionally well. Not one child died in 2009. "Sister Julie is such a gift to Nyumbani," says Erin Kennedy, U.S. Board Administrator. "She loves the kids unconditionally, loves them for who they are." Nyumbani exists totally on donations and has boards in the U.S., Ireland, Italy, Spain and the U.K. Nyumbani means 'home' in Swahili. Nyumbani Village also houses many elderly people who have been left alone due to the deaths of their children to AIDS. See www.nyumbani.org for more information on their amazing work.

Sister Julia was formerly a hospital administrator in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. She also previously ministered as a foster parent for AIDS babies in the Franciscan AIDS Baby Home in Germantown, Pennsylvania.

Raised in Philadelphia, Sister Julia was one of eleven children. Eight are living. Two of her sisters attended the Mulvihill Clan reunion this past fall. Her parents were Julia Ann Carroll Mulvihill and John Timothy Mulvihill. Sister Julia's grandparents were Mary Ann Mulvihill and John Mulvihill; her great-grandparents were Michael Mulvihill and Ellen Kelleher Mulvihill. It is thought that Michael came to America around 1870 from Co. Roscommon. His parents were John Mulvihill and Sarah Stretch Mulvihill.

We are very moved by Sister Julia's selfless and tireless dedication in the care of HIV positive orphans in Africa. Her loving care and expertise has brought comfort, hope and well-being to countless human beings.

CONCERT REVIEW

Cherish the Ladies A Celtic Christmas

If there's one thing to add to your list for next fall, it's trying to catch the Celtic Christmas tour of the phenomenal band *Cherish the Ladies*. All daughters of musicians, the ensemble celebrated their 25-year anniversary this January and continues to play internationally to packed houses.

This fall's tour showcased their captivating new CD - *A Star in the East*. This December, Sag Harbor's Bay Street Theatre was filled to capacity for the show. Traditional reels highlighted the flutes and whistles of founder Joannie Madden of New York. The stunningly tender vocals of Michelle Burke, of Ballynoe, Co. Cork, the band's newest member, made for very moving versions of ancient carols. *Cherish the Ladies*, named for a traditional Irish jig, also features Mirella Murphy of Connemara on accordion, Mary Coogan of New York on guitar and mandolin, Roisín Dillon of Belfast on fiddle and Kathleen Boyle of Glasgow on piano.

In addition to writing original compositions, the band interprets very old versions of songs and introduces us to others they have gleaned from many countries. Numerous songs showed off the group's highly trained harmony vocals. Canadian as well as regional step-dancers, all adults, came on and off stage, greatly adding to the raucous and festive atmosphere.

All in all, a joyful concert that beautifully enhanced our Christmas season here on eastern Long Island.

Clan Treasurer's Report

as of December 31, 2009, in dollars

Beginning Balance	\$0.00
Income	
Reunion Registrations	\$1,950.00
Raffle Income	\$665.00
Sales Income ¹	\$4,842.70
Total Income	\$7,457.70
Expenses	
Reunion ²	\$7,260.78
Newsletter ³	\$1,606.00
Total expenses	\$8,866.78
Subtotal	\$1,409.08

1 Shirts, pins, calendars (includes music and newsletter donations)

2 Ace Conference charges, shirts, pins, calendars, postage, flags, ink, loose-leaf books, paper, music etc.

3 Paper, ink, mailers and postage

Note: The deficit is being met by waiving reimbursement of expenses to the following officers:

Jim Mulvihill	\$531.00
Mary Ann Mulvihill-Decker	\$506.00
Tom Mulvihill	\$512.00

Ending Balance **\$139.92**

OUR IRISH HERITAGE

Our ancient treasures are again imperiled in Co. Meath. The UN designated World Heritage site of **Newgrange**, Ireland's most well-known prehistoric passage tomb and ritual complex, was built roughly 5,000 years ago and is astronomically aligned to the Winter Solstice. Newgrange and its associated sites, Knowth and Dowth, see many thousands of visitors from around the world each year. A proposed by-pass of the nearby village of Slane, would bring the highway within 500 meters of the tomb at Newgrange. As you may recall, the ancient sites of Lismullen and Baronstown were recently completely destroyed by the M3 motorway that was illegally bulldozed through the ancient Tara-Skryne valley not far from Slane. The countryside surrounding Newgrange is as rich with antiquities as that surrounding Tara. Thank you to our ancient allies, the Lawler clan, for this alert. Stay tuned.



Kathy Emery Mulvihill and her daughter Erin at the Fifth Annual Mulvihill Clan reunion, October 2009.

Mass is celebrated here on one Sunday in June. (See Issue Number 3, Autumn 2006, of *The Mulvihill Voice* to read the oldest known Mulvihill legend which tells the story of St. Patrick and Ona, our Archdruid ancestor, at Elphin.)

The stunning monastic site of Clonmacnoise, keeper of the earliest known slabs inscribed with our surname, has very old wells dedicated to St. Finian and to St. Ciarán. Visited in September, there is a very elaborate pattern of stations that pilgrims have performed for centuries at these two wells.

To Clan Chieftain Jim's list of *Mulvihill Mysteries* as noted in our Autumn 2009 issue, I add another. During the Mulvihill Clan reunion of 2007, we took a long and beautiful bus ride up to Doonmulvihill in Co. Clare. We visited the graveyard near the ruins of Doon Castle. Supposedly, there is a holy well up the road, 10-12 feet from a rock wall. The constraints of time and the presence of a large group prohibited the adventure of finding this well. Interviewing the neighbors would be the first logical step (wearing your Wellies of course!) The land surrounding the site is hilly, with farms, trees and lakes. I would bet that well is still there. If anyone knows of this well, which probably was honored by the Mulvihills who once briefly inhabited the small castle there, please let me know. This is a well that should be rescued from obscurity or damage, if it has disappeared into the landscape. It is a part of our Mulvihill heritage.

Note: Many holy wells are still marked on Ordnance Survey Maps, of the Discovery Series. *Tobar* is the Irish word for well.

While the customs surrounding holy wells are still thriving and countless are beloved to the Irish people, more and more wells are being lost. Groups such as Sláine are dedicated to finding old wells, documenting them, cleaning them, clearing their channels so they may flow freely again and restoring them for future generations.

As more and more of the rural customs of our ancestors fade into history, as more archaeological treasures are destroyed for building roads across ancient landscapes, we mourn. For although much change is healthy and necessary, some is very short-sighted. We are losing priceless treasures and the ability to learn from those treasures about our heritage, both scientifically and spiritually. Archaeological exploration around wells can yield dramatic finds and enrich our knowledge of our ancestors. Sitting quietly at an ancient Irish well may connect us with a sense of unity with generations past, with our spiritual heritage, with the earth and the elements and if so inclined and blessed, with the Divine.



The Well of the White Cow at the Hill of Tara in Co. Meath. In recent centuries it has been known as St. Patrick's Well. Flowers and offerings adorn the well after hundreds gathered on the hill to honor the Summer Solstice and greet the dawn. There are seven holy wells at Tara according to ancient texts; only six are known today. Tara was the seat of royal power in Ireland until around the sixth century, where over one hundred and forty-two kings reigned for over twenty-five centuries. It is also a mythological landscape, as many of Ireland's oldest legends take place here. The Hill of Tara is now preserved by the OPW (Office of Public Works) which runs a small visitor center and walking tours there.

Request from the Editor: Please write me and tell me of your experiences and customs regarding holy wells. Do you go to wells on your parish's pattern day? What were your grandparents' customs? Also, if you know of any holy wells that are associated with Mulvihill land, please let me know. These are wells we want to know more about.

As Mulvihill means Devotee of St. Michael, it may be of interest to note that September 29 is the traditional feast day of St. Michael the Archangel. We would expect to find wells dedicated to him on hills and mountaintops. Please let us know of any wells you know of that are dedicated to St. Michael.