

Michael McCarthy: The Family History of a Hero

BY GAVIN REILLY, O.F.M.CAP.



I had wandered down to Gouverneur Slip beside the old hospital at the edge of the East River. And in a shaded parking lot I found what I calculated to be the location of the first of several saloons owned by the McCarthys, forebears on my mother's side. I encountered an elderly Jewish man with his yarmulke on, comfortably seated and reading a book. I greeted him with: "You'll never guess where you are sitting. His friendly reply: "No, where?" With a smile on my face, I answered: "In the very spot where my great-grandfather had his first saloon. The perceptive man gave me a classical reply: "It makes me thirsty just to think of it."

I never took the opportunity to tell him about Michael O'Connor McCarthy, the one true hero of my family who, on March 27, 1902—only a few feet from where we were talking—gave up his life trying to save a woman and her baby from the waters of the East River. Michael McCarthy's full story resides, of course, deep within his family history.

When it comes to family history, there are many things that cannot be found in documents. The recollections of older family members are

most important. In December, 1965, I sat at the kitchen table with my mother, Margaret McCarthy Reilly, and asked her to tell me about her family background. (Family members called her "Elephant Memory" because of her exact recall of events.) I had in front of me the envelope from a Christmas card from my aunt Viola. I still have it. On that envelope, I jotted down some of the facts that my mother told me. We spoke of her "grandma," Mary O'Connor McCarthy, and of her grandfather, Michael McCarthy, Sr., the father of Michael who was to become a hero.

My mother used to visit her grandmother on Avenue A and Nineteenth Street where Mary O'Connor McCarthy lived with her daughter Nell (who kept her money, I was told, at the Emigrant Savings Bank on Forty-second Street). As a teenager, mother would take the ferry from Williamsburg with Thomas, her younger brother who was to be my uncle and godfather, in tow.

But her grandmother did not refer to herself as Mary O'Connor McCarthy! She called herself Mary Sheehan O'Mara. "There was another marriage or something," my mother added. When I asked if that was spelled "O'Mara"

Photo:

An early twentieth-century view of the East River looking north from Brooklyn Bridge. Gouverneur Street, where Michael McCarthy's heroic act occurred, is to the left just before the bend in the river. Courtesy of Library of Congress.

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Illustration:
The ship *Mechanics Own*, an example of wind-powered ships that crossed oceans in the 1850s. Michael McCarthy, Sr., probably emigrated from Liverpool on a vessel like this one sometime around mid-century. Courtesy of Library of Congress.

or "O'Meara," mother gave a crisp reply: "I wouldn't know." Grandma, she recalled, was a cook in the Tombs, the city jail downtown.¹ My mother then ticked off the names of the McCarthy children: John, Peggy, Mary, Michael, Jr. (called Mick by his mother), Nell, Tom, and Jim (known as Dikes McCarthy, who died in 1930 and had connections on South Street with prohibition rum-runners). Grandma, according to my mother, lived to about ninety and had a sister who lived at Union Square.

THE DEATH OF MARY O'CONNOR MCCARTHY

In later research, I discovered according to her death certificate that Mary O'Connor McCarthy (she who called herself Mary Sheehan O'Mara) had died at 304 Avenue A on November 10, 1924 of "accidental illuminating gas poisoning." My guess is she dozed while making a cup of tea and did not realize the jet had gone out. The certificate gives her age as eighty-seven. And importantly, the names of her parents were given: John O'Connor and Mary O'Brien. The same document gives her birthplace as "Ireland." My mother had told me: "Grandma said that she came from Limerick." I confirmed that county later on with her daughter Nell's baptismal

record. My mother could not specify the town or townland in Limerick.

My mother had scanty recollections of her grandfather, Michael McCarthy, Sr.: "He was an orphan from London or someplace." Before his marriage to Mary O'Connor he had a tavern on Cherry Street. He had died twenty years before my mother's birth in 1899, so since my mother never knew her grandfather, her information, though significant, was meager. That conversation in 1965 gave me important leads in my future research and in revealing the story of Michael McCarthy, Jr.

THE MARRIAGE AT ST. GABRIEL'S

Among important documents I subsequently located was the marriage certificate of my great-grandparents, the McCarthys. Under the names Michael McCarthy and Mary O'Connor the couple wed at St. Gabriel's Chapel on 306 East Thirty-seventh Street on April 10, 1846. The Civil War was about to end. The maid of honor was Mary's sister Ellen O'Brien O'Connor, and the best man was a John Sheehan (probably John Coleman Sheehan cousin of the bride, though possibly John (=Carmody) Sheehan, friend of the groom).² The reason why the confirmation of

the O'Connor name assumed importance was, of course, that Mary O'Connor McCarthy identified herself as Mary Sheehan O'Mara according to my mother. Some insight into this identification came from an analysis of the baptismal records of her children. (Fortunately, as a priest, I had more professional access to church records than most genealogists!) Among the godparents of the McCarthy children, there were three O'Connors and seven Sheehans.

THE O'CONNOR GODPARENTS

Clearly, the O'Connor godparents, all women, were sisters of Mary O'Brien O'Connor, mother of the hero, Michael McCarthy, Jr. I discovered these ladies, Michael's aunts, in the 1860 national census living together apart from the Sheehans in division one of Manhattan's Fourteenth Ward. The oldest, Ellen, aged thirty, kept house while younger sisters Margaret and Bridget worked as umbrella makers.

Michael McCarthy's mother is listed in the 1860/61 city directory under the name Mary Connor as living downtown at 8 Vandewater Street, a few blocks from the Tombs and working as an umbrella maker like her sisters. Mary was the youngest of the sisters, about age twenty-three in 1860. In that kitchen table conversation of 1965, my mother had mentioned that her grandmother had worked as a cook in the Tombs. Possibly, during her Vandewater days, Mary O'Connor also did her stint as a cook in the Tombs. This tough environment may have prepared her well for the two years that she ran her husband's tavern, after his death, at Gouverneur's Slip on the East River.

CORRECTING A FALSE GUESS

In attempting to determine why Mary O'Brien O'Connor called herself Mary Sheehan, I had formed a guess. The potato famine covered the years 1845 to 1851. In 1845 the O'Connor girls would have ranged from eight to fifteen years of age. If their father, John O'Connor, died during that scourge, Mary O'Brien, their mother, might have married a widower Sheehan. The Sheehan godmothers would have been adopted sisters. But that guess collapsed with information on the marriage of John Coleman Sheehan.

John Coleman Sheehan, one of the godfathers to the McCarthy O'Connor children and most likely the best man at Mary O'Connor's marriage to Michael McCarthy, Sr., married a Mary O'Brien Murphy at St. Gabriel's Church in 1867. This was the same church at which the McCarthy O'Connor marriage had taken place three years earlier. In between the two marriages, New York City in 1866 required registration of all marriages. Information on the registration of the 1867 wedding showed that John's father was a Patrick Sheehan and his mother a Catherine Coleman, not a Mary O'Brien as I had guessed. I was disappointed that my hypothesis did not work out. I even rechecked the matter with the City and contrary to policy was given a copy of

the original document.



Illustration: 1868 print of an umbrella street salesman. Michael McCarthy's mother and two of his aunts were employed as umbrella makers at about this time. Courtesy of New York Public Library.

It contained the "X" (or "his mark") of John's best man, his brother, Michael. And the civil document carried the signature of the maid of honor with her new married name, Mary McCarthy (poignantly for me that of my great grandmother and Michael, Jr.'s mother.) The resultant conclusion determined that the Sheehan godparents at the baptism of the McCarthy O'Connor children were the children of a Patrick Sheehan and a Catherine Coleman. They were not half brothers and half sisters of



Mary O'Connor McCarthy.

THE SHEEHANS IN THE 1860 NATIONAL CENSUS

Any further doubt was removed when I stumbled upon Catherine Coleman Sheehan and her four daughters, whose names matched the godmothers of the children of Mary and Michael McCarthy, Sr., in the 4th Division of Manhattan's Sixteenth Ward of the 1860 national census. Catherine, aged fifty-seven, appears with her daughters, Catherine aged twenty-seven, Ellen aged twenty-five, Mary aged twenty-two, Margaret aged twenty-one. The last three were listed as silver burnishers.

I also discovered the older McCarthy O'Connor godfathers, Cornelius and Michael Sheehan, listed as living together in the 1850 and 1871 national censuses. According to tradition, Cornelius, married to Honorah, named the oldest of his three children after his father, Patrick. Michael, married to Mary, has no children listed. Cornelius and Michael shared the same trade, butcher. The age range of all Sheehan children fit the childbearing period (1819–1840) of the mother, Catherine Coleman Sheehan.

My conclusion is that it is probable that the Patrick Coleman Sheehan family were cousins who adopted the O'Connor girls at the death of their mother and perhaps their father. For this reason Mary O'Connor called herself Mary Sheehan. O'Mara, dead at a young age, was perhaps a first husband to Mary O'Connor. She was twenty-seven at her marriage to Michael McCarty, an age that would allow a previous husband. So far, I have no documentary solution to the O'Mara question.

THE FAMILY OF MICHAEL MCCARTHY'S FATHER

At the kitchen table in 1965, my mother recalled incidents in the life of her grandfather, the father of hero, Michael McCarthy, Jr. At the time of his wedding, Michael McCarthy, Sr., had a saloon on Cherry Street. Her characterization of him as an orphan from "London or someplace" was obviously vague. However, if he were an orphan, whose home was originally in Ireland, perhaps Liverpool would be a more likely place for him to have been picked up by Bridget Flavin, the woman with whom he came into New York in 1864. Living conditions in Liverpool were such that deaths of Irish emigrants (perhaps Michael's parents) were not uncommon.

Liverpool was one of the busiest ports in the world.³ Its yards, squares of water, were bordered by massive brick building at which ships could be serviced and which are well-preserved even today with boutiques and an extraordinary maritime museum. The ascendancy of the city as a port resulted from her participation from 1700 on in the triangular slave trade (Europe to Africa to the New World and back). By 1750,

Illustration:

View of the Tombs bordered by Franklin and Leonard Streets in Manhattan. This version of the prison closed in 1902. Courtesy of Library of Congress.

Liverpool had surpassed Bristol and London in the nefarious business until its legal closure in 1808. Liverpool maintained commercial supremacy to the time of the famine (1845–1851). Therefore, it is very probable that Michael McCarthy, whether an orphan or not, passed through Liverpool as one of the seventy-five percent of Irish immigrants who came to New York City.

MICHAEL MCCARTHY AND PETER AND BRIDGET FLAVIN

The 1855 state census covering Manhattan offers significant details in the immigrant history of the father of Michael McCarthy, Jr. Michael, Sr. is recorded at age twelve living at 323 Front Street, a few doors away from his future 304 Front Street tavern, under his own name, Michael McCarthy, with a “Bridget,” aged forty, and Peter Flavin, sugar refiner, aged thirty. Bridget and Michael had come into the country nine years earlier (1846), separately from Peter Flavin who arrived only six years earlier (1849).

Did Peter and Bridget marry in Ireland or in this country? Could Bridget have married a now deceased McCarthy in Ireland, making her Michael’s true mother? Or did Bridget pick up Michael, an orphan, along the way here and marry Peter Flavin later on? To date, research has not resolved these questions. The central fact is clear: Michael McCarthy, Sr., lives, as indicated in census records, from 1855 on with Peter and Bridget Flavin, but always under his own name.

ENTER THE JOHN SHEEHAN FAMILY

Two years later, in 1857, when Michael McCarthy, Sr., is fourteen, Peter and Bridget Flavin come into contact with a certain John Sheehan, an Eastside butcher. Once again the name “Sheehan” enters the scene! On May 7, 1857, at the church of St. Stephen on East



Illustration:
Butchers bringing in holiday fare in the 1880s at the Washington Market on the Westside of Manhattan. Courtesy of Robert N. Dennis Collection, New York Public Library.

Twenty-eighth Street this new John Sheehan marries a Mary Carmody and proceeds to have a family of seven children: John (1858), Mary (1861), Catti (1863), Ella (1864), William (1866), James (1867), and Mary T. (1869). The life of John Sheehan was cut short by a stroke at the end of the decade on June 22, 1870 between the two enumerations (June and January) of the 1870/71 national census. John Sheehan was then buried from the church of his marriage with a solemn high Mass. His obituary states that he was born in Loohil (corruption of Loughill), County Limerick, Ireland.⁴

There are several significant facts associated with the life of the Eastside butcher, facts that have relevance to the life of Michael McCarthy, Jr.

1. best man chosen for the Sheehan/Carmody wedding: Peter Flavin
2. godfather for the first child of John (= Carmody) Sheehan: Peter Flavin
3. godparents for Catti, the third child of John (= Carmody) Sheehan: Ellen O'Brien O'Connor and Cornelius Coleman

Sheehan

4. Irish origin of John (= Carmody) Sheehan: town of Loohill (Loughhill), on the River Shannon, County Limerick

5. burial site (1879) of Bridget Flavin: in the plot of John (= Carmody) Sheehan and some sixteen other Sheehans.

The above facts seem to indicate that Bridget Flavin was herself a Sheehan before marriage, probably the sister of John (= Carmody) Sheehan. Her husband, Peter Flavin, the proposed brother-in-law of John (= Carmody) Sheehan was chosen as best man at the Sheehan/Carmody wedding as well as the godfather of John (= Carmody) Sheehan's first child. Bridget Flavin was buried with the John (= Carmody) Sheehan family, when normally a husband (Peter Flavin) would buy a separate plot for his wife and for his own future burial.

Particularly significant is the choice of godparents for the third child of John (= Carmody) Sheehan, Catti in 1863. The John Sheehan family is thereby connected to the Patrick Coleman Sheehans by the choice of Cornelius Coleman Sheehan (a Westside butcher) and to the O'Brien O'Connor family by the choice of Ellen O'Brien O'Connor who is the older sister of Mary O'Connor McCarthy.

The rather general origin of the O'Brien/O'Connor Family in County Limerick is narrowed down, because of family connections, to the area of Loohill (Loughhill) on the river Shannon, where John (= Carmody) Sheehan was born.⁵

John (= Carmody) Sheehan was an Eastside butcher. Likewise, Cornelius and Michael Coleman Sheehan were butchers, but from the Westside. A common family occupation is indicated.

The Sheehan connections, Coleman and Carmody, seem to have been the point of contact for the future marriage of Mary O'Brien O'Connor (Coleman Sheehans) and Michael McCarthy, Sr. (= Carmody Sheehans).

LATER YEARS OF MICHAEL MCCARTHY, SR., After marriage to Mary O'Brien O'Connor in 1864, Michael McCarthy, Sr., was naturalized on October 21, 1865 toward the end of the

Civil War.⁶ He had a tavern on Cherry Street, according to my mother, at the time of his marriage. He continued to work as a bar-keep in the area of the East River during the time when he was having his family of seven children: Both of his later taverns were on the corner of Gouverneur Street, the first from 1873 to 1876 at 304 Front Street and the second from 1876 till his death in 1879 at 620 Water Street, down the block from the family's tenement apartment at 632 Water Street. As indicated previously, Michael Jr.'s mother continued to manage for two years the last saloon with her oldest son, John, after her husband's death until 1881.

EARLY YEARS OF MICHAEL MCCARTHY, JR.

Michael McCarthy, Jr. was born at 693 Water Street in the area of Corlear's Hook on the East River on September 11, 1869. Unlike the other McCarthy children who were baptized at St. Mary's on Grand Street, Michael, Jr. (on September 19, 1869) and his sister, Nell, were brought to the new church, St. Rose of Lima on Cannon Street. His baptism followed the first Mass in the parish in February 1868, but before the cornerstone was laid.⁷ At the baptism, Michael's godparents were Mary and Cornelius Coleman Sheehan, children of Patrick and Catherine Coleman Sheehan, cousins apparently who had taken in Michael's mother, Mary O'Brien O'Connor and her three sisters at the death of their parents in County Limerick, Ireland.

Michael is recorded as a two-year-old infant still at 693 Water Street in both the June and January enumerations of the 1870/71 national census.⁸ In the 1880 census, the year after his father's death, Michael, living at 71 Gouverneur Street, is designated as a boy of eleven years of age "at school." The occupation of his mother is "saloon," and his oldest brother, John, "bar-keep." In the 1890 Police Census, Michael was twenty years of age and living with his mother and two younger brothers at 415 Cherry Street with no further information in the record. He has yet to be discovered in the 1900 national census.

THE SIBLINGS OF MICHAEL MCCARTHY, JR.

The family size had dwindled before 1890. John, the oldest son, still working as a bar tender, had passed away in 1889 of the disease found in so many death records of the time. It was so common that physicians often scrawled the name across death certificates as “phthisis” (i.e., tuberculosis). He was married, but no historical trace of his wife remains. Michael’s sister Peggy had also succumbed phthisis in 1882. The next sister in line, Mary, had died of scarlet fever much earlier, in 1872, at age four.

Nell, after marrying a Henry Trown, outlived all her siblings, passing away in 1937. My mother called her aunt Nell “Mrs. Trown.” In 1915, Nell had buried her husband, Henry, with his former wife, Mary Ryan, in beautiful Green-Wood Cemetery in Brooklyn. In a strange twist, Nell buried her brother, James, in 1930 and provided for her own burial in 1937 in a Brooklyn Lutheran cemetery through a deed she inherited from a neighbor near her apartment on Avenue A.

My grandmother, Julia Sullivan McCarthy, born in 1875 in Caherciveen, County Kerry,

should be mentioned as a source of family history for her brother-in-law, Michael McCarthy, Jr. About the time of his heroic episode, Julia had married Michael’s brother, Thomas McCarthy, at St. Alphonsus Church in 1899. Many years later, living in the second-floor front room of our home in East New York, Brooklyn, she told me of Michael McCarthy’s younger brother, her husband. Thomas O’Connor McCarthy, Michael’s younger brother, had a milk route on the Lower Eastside. (Our family still has a picture of my grandfather, Thomas O’Connor McCarthy in front of his horse and wagon at the milk depot of William H. Mays at 4 Albany Street on the Lower Westside of Manhattan.) My grandmother told me that her husband used to deliver milk to Rose Hawthorne Lathrop, the daughter of Nathaniel Hawthorne, at the time when Rose had her cancer home at 668 Water and 353 Cherry Streets. He would place the milk in a turnstile and from inside would come a voice asking: “Mr. McCarthy, did you go to Mass on Sunday?”^{9,10}

James O’Connor McCarthy, Michael’s younger brother, never married but had some-

Photo:

Thomas McCarthy, Michael’s younger brother, with his milk-delivery horse and wagon, on Albany Street in Manhattan c.1899. Courtesy of Gavin Reilly.





Photo: Terraced buildings constructed as part of Gouverneur Hospital at Gouverneur Slip around the turn of the nineteenth century, not long before Michael McCarthy went into the nearby East River. In the last decade of the twentieth century, the buildings were converted to apartments for homeless people. Courtesy of Gavin Reilly.

what of a colorful career. My mother told me that he was known as "Dikes McCarthy," because of his association with the East River waterfront. Also born on Water Street, no. 632, James, the youngest of the boys, was the last of the sons to pass away (on June 5, 1930), but not before having had some connection with "rum-running" in the days of Prohibition. My mother's knowledge of her uncle's involvement in "rum-running" was rather vague; perhaps some things need to be left with God.¹¹

MICHAEL MCCARTHY'S HEROIC DEATH

On March 27, 1902 the body of Michael McCarthy, Jr. was viewed by the New York City coroner at 439 Grand Street. The cause of death was described as "asphyxiation by drowning." The place of death was noted: foot of Gouverneur Street. The balconies of the newly constructed (1898) Gouverneur Hospital peered over South Street at Gouverneur Slip. One block to the rear of South Street, at 304 Front Street, was the first saloon (1873–1876) run by Michael's father. One block further back, at 620 Water Street, was the second saloon (1876–1881) of the McCarthy family.

Some members of the family later trying to

fathom the circumstances of Michael's demise, opined that the nearness—March 27—to the revelries of St. Patrick's Day might offer an explanation. Others said that violence might be a better one. Was not his brother known as Dikes McCarthy, a name evoking images of waterfront gangs.

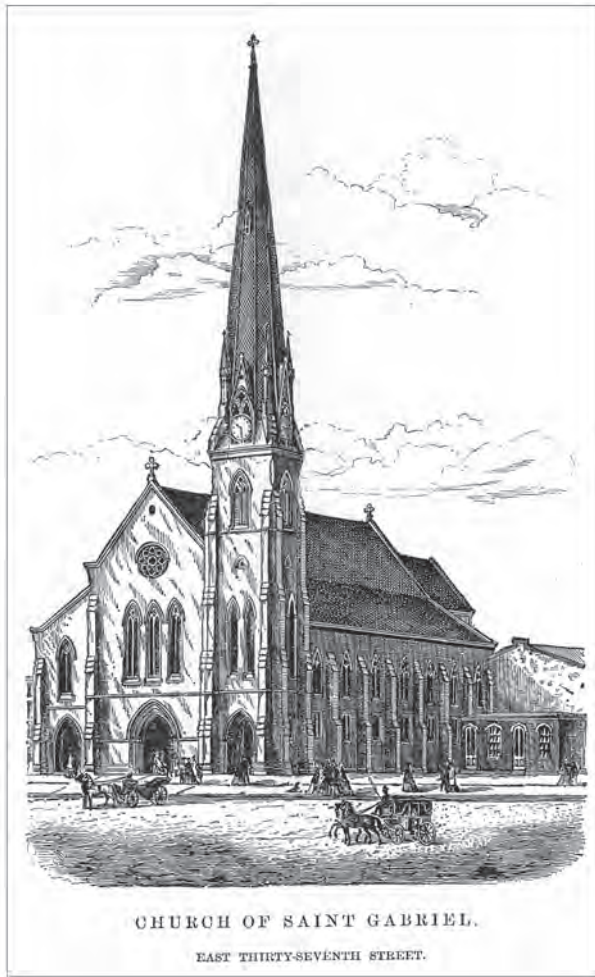
But a true account appeared on the front page of one contemporary newspaper. Mrs. Ida Isason, wife of the tailor, Joseph, from 43 Clinton Street and mother of five children had left her home about ten o'clock in the evening with her seven-week-old infant daughter, Goldie, in her arms. Distraught, she went down to the East River piers at Gouverneur Slip where a group of longshoremen, including Michael McCarthy, were standing nearby. Previously known to have been suicidal (she had taken poison), Ida threw herself and her child into the quick flowing current. Michael immediately went to her aid from the pier with the help of a boathook. Leaning out to save her, Michael was pulled into the river and drowned with the mother and child. His body and Ida's were recovered from the waters. The baby, Goldie, was never found. The report in the *New York Herald* for March 27, 1902, reads as follows:

ONE TRIES SUICIDE; THREE ARE DROWNED

Worried by her hard struggle for existence, and the rearing of her five young children, Mrs. Ida Isason of 43 Clinton Street leaped into the... [East] River at Gouverneur Slip last night with her youngest child [seven weeks old Goldie] in her arms[,] together with a man described as Michael McCarthy who had tried to rescue her.

Her husband had kept as close a watch on her as he could and had several times before dissuaded her from rashness, but the thing had gained such control over her that her husband said last night she had feared it was only a question of time when she would carry out her purpose

She left home at about ten o'clock



last night in the absence of her husband. Returning after an evening's work, he had found that she had gone and, fearful that he would never see her again, he started out in search of her.

Meanwhile, the woman had found her way to the river. She wandered a while along the docks and finally stepped out on the bulkhead of Gouverneur Slip.

McCarthy saw her as she was about to leap into the water. He called to her, begging her not throw herself in, but it was too late.

Without a word, clutching her baby to her breast, she plunged in, and the waters closed over her head.

Rushing to the spot where she had gone down, McCarthy, who found a boathook lying nearby, tried to reach her body as it

lay on the surface just out his reach.

Further and further he leaned out until he lost his balance, and, with a cry of warning on his lips, splashed down beside the mother and child.

Several persons heard McCarthy's cry, and ran to his aid. They were able to recover his body and that of the mother, but that of the child could not be found.

But accounts in other papers of the day vary. The *New York Times* gives in spare details the story as given above. But the *New York World* dramatizes the event:

McCarthy hastened to the river, and without an instant hesitation dived into the water at the spot where the woman and the child had disappeared.

It then describes McCarthy as twice appearing with the victims in his grip, going down before a boat launched from the bulkhead could reach them in the chilling water.

Michael, at thirty-two, was buried on March 27, 1902 in Old Calvary Cemetery by the undertaker John Crumblish of 439 Grand Street. Seven members of his family were in attendance. Single, his occupation was that of laborer. His last place of residence was that listed for his mother in the 1900 national census—363 Cherry Street. The obituary for Michael McCarthy in the *New York Herald* on August 29, 1902 reads as follows:

McCarthy. On Friday, August 29th, Michael McCarthy on the 37 [d. c. 32nd] year of his age. The relatives and friends of the family are requested to attend the funeral from his residence at 620 Water Street on Sunday, August 31st at 2:00 p.m.

To the members of the New York Young Men's Roman Catholic Benevolent Association: You will meet at 620 Water Street on this day (Sunday) August 31st, at 2:00 p.m. for the purpose of attending the funeral of our late brother, Michael McCarthy. P.H. Strain, President.

Illustration:
The Church of St. Gabriel on East Thirty-seventh Street, started in 1859 and closed in 1939 for construction of the Midtown Tunnel. Michael McCarthy, Sr. and Mary O'Connor wed there in 1864. Courtesy of Gavin Reilly.

Notes

- 1 The first of four such structures, the Tombs of that period (1838–1902) was a gigantic stone building modeled by the architect, John Haviland, after an Egyptian tomb, and placed on a huge wooden raft over an ancient pond, the Collect of the Dutch period. Bordered by Franklin and Leonard Streets (north and south) and Elm and Center Streets (west and east), the building held the Halls of Justice and the House of Detention. Because of political and social corruption, voices clamored for its closure.
- 2 I frequently use the designation (= Carmody) which means “married to Carmody” to distinguish this John Sheehan from John Coleman Sheehan. Also note: Throughout the paper, I use the most common spelling of the name found in the sources: Sheehan. The butchers of the west side consistently use a different spelling in the City Directories of the time: Sheahan.
 I later discovered that the Church of St. Gabriel had been started in 1859 under Archbishop Hughes, when a convert to the faith, Professor of Mathematics and Trustee of Columbia University, Henry J. Anderson, donated eight lots at 310 East Thirty-seventh Street to the parish. With the Civil War raging, it took five years to complete church building (dedicated by Archbishop McCloskey on November 12, 1865). Meanwhile services were held in the first floor chapel of the Boys’ School where, presumably, the O’Connor/McCarthy wedding took place in 1864. The church was closed in 1939 for the construction of the Queens Midtown Tunnel, which opened in 1940. The church of St. Gabriel had two noteworthy priests until the year 1895: John Gleeson Hayes and his pastor, John Murphy Farley, both of whom later became Cardinals of the Archdiocese of New York.
- 3 During the potato famine, 1845 to 1851, only a third of the Irish left from Irish ports whose “coffin ships” were slower and less safe than ships sailing from England. The trip from Dublin to Liverpool took but a few hours; from Cork it was a day’s passage. American packets, which left from Liverpool on a regular basis, were wide-hulled vessels carrying both merchandise and passengers. (Clipper ships, more narrow and faster, were particularly suited to carrying spoilable goods like tea rather than passengers.) Although they were sailing vessels, packets made the western voyage (the eastern voyage was regularly shorter) in rapid time, although not fast enough for immigrants crowded in steerage! As a typical example, the packet *Patrick Henry* over a period of years (1839–1852) had an average western voyage of thirty-four days (shortest time twenty-six days, the longest forty-one days). That particular ship had nineteen cabins for the more wealthy and space for some three-hundred people in steerage. Record trips westward (e.g., the packet *Yorkshire* in November 1846) covered the distance in sixteen days. The first steamship to cross the Atlantic, the *Savannah*, in 1808, was a hybrid sail and steam vessel that used steam only fourteen percent of the time. Hybrids of sail and steam and full steam vessels were still experimental during the late 1840s and early 1850s. By the middle 1850s U. S. mail steamers had twice a month runs to and from Liverpool. But sail driven packets were the vessels of choice during the famine period. (Sources: Carolan, Michael, “An Irish Passenger, An American Family, and Their Time 1847–2010” at <http://webpages.charter.net/mcarolan/ThomasCarolan.html>; “Clipper Ship *Yorkshire*” at http://Ship25bsa.org/Clipper_Yorkshire.html.)
- 4 I had guessed that “Loohil,” not found in documents, was a phonetic corruption of “Loughill.” My guess was confirmed in the 1901 Irish National Census recently posted on the internet (www.census.nationalarchives.ie). In the village of Loughill there is listed a Patrick Sheahan, aged sixty-six (born in 1835) who was a butcher. This could be another son of Patrick (=Coleman) Sheahan remaining in Loughill when other sons – Cornelius, Michael, and John, also butchers – came to New York City. The birth date (1836), the first name (Patrick), and the surname (Sheahan in city directory spelling) fit squarely into the family pattern.
- 5 Parish records for Loughill before 1855 are found in the neighboring parish of Glin.
- 6 It is interesting to note that Tammany Hall early in the War had urged the Irish to become citizens in order to increase its voting power. These citizens suddenly found themselves subject to conscription under the Draft Law passed in 1863. Perhaps Michael Sr. was less involved in the Draft Riots of 1863 since, not yet a citizen, he was not liable to military draft.
- 7 The cornerstone was laid in 1870 by the Vicar General, William Starrs, and the dedication was in 1871 by Archbishop McCloskey who had just returned from the First Vatican Council in Rome. Before the baptism, on May 10, 1869, the insertion of the golden spike at Promontory Point, Utah, had completed the railroad connection between the Atlantic and Pacific coasts. In the month following Michael’s baptism,

October, the editor of *The New York Herald* was directing Henry Stanley to find David Livingston in Africa (which he did in 1871.)

- 8 While living at 632 Water Street in the early 1870s, Michael's family had as neighbors living next door (1874/75) at 634 Water Street, the family of a John McCarthy who was born in Barreron (perhaps a misspelling of Bar Haven or Barrahourin), County Cork. Perhaps this family, of the McCarthy clan, gives an inkling of where Michael McCarthy's family might have come from
- 9 Rose Hawthorne had married George Lathrop, an aspiring writer and a son of a New York City physician, on September 11, 1871. In November 1876, their son, Francis, was born. But at age five, he succumbed to diphtheria. The couple was received into the Catholic Church (perhaps a chance childhood blessing of Rose by Pope Pius IX had helped) on March 19, 1891. Alcoholism interfered with the career of George, who had been a literary critic for the *Atlantic Monthly*, and their marriage failed. They separated amicably two years after entering the Church. Thus Rose was free to pursue a new spiritual adventure, and she moved to the Seventh Ward on the Lower East Side, the scene of Michael's heroic episode. When a close friend, Emma Lazarus (author of the Statue of Liberty tribute, "Give me your tired...."), died of cancer, Rose determined to care for cancer victims, and from March 1897 to May 1899 did so at 668 Water Street down the block from where Michael (no. 693) and Thomas (no. 664) were born. Thomas and Julia Sullivan McCarthy were married in January, 1899, while Rose was still at 668 Water. Perhaps the "turnstile incident" occurred there or at Rose Hawthorne's next address (beginning in May 1899) at 426 Cherry Street. This was the site of her new hospice until 1911. The 1900 national census locates Mary O'Connor McCarthy, Michael's mother, living alone at 353 Cherry Street. In her diary, Rose Hawthorne mentions a visit of comfort that she paid to a Mrs. McCarthy living alone in the area. Could that have been Michael's mother, living on Cherry Street alone at that point?
- 10 With the formation of her religious community (the Dominican Sisters) in 1900, Rose Hawthorne Lathrop took the name Mother Alphonsa. A Capuchin priest from Our Lady of Sorrows Church, Fr. Joseph Wald, said the first Mass at her Cherry Street Home on December

25, 1899. My father sent her a small donation in 1918 and, addressing him as Bernard Joseph, Esquire, Sr. Alphonsa sent pictures of patients, bandages and all, in their Hawthorne, N.Y. home. I became a chaplain at their 685 Water Street home in the 1990s. Rose Hawthorne has since been declared by the Pope a "Venerable Servant of God."

- 11 Prohibition began on January 16, 1920 and lasted to December 5, 1933. Until 1924, larger ships, the rum-runners, brought liquor from the Caribbean area to the edge of the three-mile limit (the "rum line") where they were out of Coast Guard control. Smaller boats, as time went on, were outfitted with faster motors to escape capture on the way to the piers (called "rum row") along the shore. In 1924, Congress established a twelve-mile limit to make capture by the Coast Guard easier. But profit kept the rum-running going. At times as many as sixty ships could be seen off the New York and Jersey coasts. Captains of the larger vessels could earn a couple of hundred thousand dollars a year. In comparison, the commander of a Coast Guard cutter might earn some \$6000 a year. One of the captains of a larger vessel, the *Tomoka*, was William S. McCoy. Whereas other captains diluted whiskey with water, McCoy was known to be honest. Undiluted whiskey became known as the "real McCoy." (Source: "Rum running" at <http://an.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Rum-running>.)

Photo:
Coast Guardsmen
aboard the U.S.S.
Seneca stop a fast boat
running for "rum row"
during Prohibition.
Courtesy of Library of
Congress.

