

The Reinventions of John Mullaly: Irishman, Inventor, Politician, & Publisher

BY KATE FEIGHERY

John Mullaly was born in Ireland 1835 or 1836.¹ Although the Mullaly family was originally from around Tuam in Galway, most contemporary sources about John and his sister Mary indicate that they were born in Belfast.² There was some connection to the Galway branch of the family, however, as an 1895 publication

of the *Genealogical History of Irish Families* notes one of the most famous members as “Mr. John Mullaly of New York, the well known journalist and author.”³ Although some biographies mention Mullaly had a career with McKenzie distillery in Belfast before emigrating to America, by his own statement he emigrated a child, and was definitely in America, and publishing, by his early teenage years.⁴

Additionally, the distillery of McKenzie & Co. in Belfast was known as the James Shaw distillery until the 1840s, at which point Mullaly was already in the United States.⁵ Information on the exact date of his emigration is not known, and almost no information exists about his father, but by 1860 he, along with his two sisters and mother, were living in New York, and the family was

wealthy enough to have an Irish-born domestic living with them.⁶

EARLY CAREER

Mullaly was involved with the publishing industry almost as soon as he arrived in New York, first as an office boy, working his way up to reporter, teaching himself shorthand along the way.⁷ In 1853, when he was still in his teens, he made an “exhaustive” investigation into the “swill” milk trade in New York City.⁸ His publication, *The Milk Trade in New York and Vicinity*, was described as “one of the most important pioneer descriptions of the sale of adulterated milk” and “a landmark in the history of food sanitation in New York City.”⁹ At the time, “swill milk” was a major public health issue in urban areas, causing illness and

death, particularly in children. This milk was from cows that were kept in poor conditions and fed solely on the waste from distilleries. Sellers of milk also watered it down and added whitening agents such as chalk.¹⁰ Although much of the credit for the reform of the swill milk trade is attributed to a May 1858 article that appeared in *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated*

Illustration: The “swill-milk scandal” arose in New York and Brooklyn early in the 1850s as public awareness grew about sales of adulterated milk and malnourished children. Swill milk, sold by unscrupulous vendors, was produced by feeding cows (typically held in unsanitary conditions) the swill left from distilling alcohol. John Mullaly, as a young reporter, was among the first journalists to investigate the practice and to report on it. Courtesy of Sciencesource.com.





Illustration:

In 1854 Harper's Weekly published this drawing as part of its coverage for the laying of the transatlantic telegraph cable between the United States and England. In the same year, John Mullaly joined the project as a correspondent for the New York Herald. A complex project, it was administered by the American Telegraph Company. The undertaking was regarded by some supporters as important for the global spread of Christianity. Courtesy of Library of Congress.

Newspaper, Mullaly's work appeared almost five years earlier and went into detail on the harmful practices, and included evidence from physicians detailing the number of children killed each year by tainted milk. At the time of publication, reviews credited Mullaly for revealing "the dishonest and murderous means which are resorted to in our large cities for purposes of gain," although real reform would still be many years away.¹¹

As a reporter, Mullaly first worked for the *Tribune* and *Evening Post*, and then for six years at the *Herald*.¹² It was through the *Herald* that he made the connection that would launch the next phase of his career. In 1854, as a correspondent for the paper, he joined the Atlantic telegraph project, which aimed to have an underwater cable connecting Europe and America laid by 1858. He published his account of the failed 1855 expedition in *A Trip to Newfoundland; Its Sceneries and Fisheries with an Account of the Laying of the Submarine Telegraph*. He remained connected with the project, and sailed again with the 1857 and 1858 *Niagara* expeditions. Because the Navy no longer allowed newspaper reporters on board, in 1857 Mullaly signed on as Samuel Morse's secretary, and then as secretary to Cyrus Field on both 1858 expeditions, while continuing to send reports back to the

Herald.¹³ He eventually became the official historian for the expedition, publishing *The Laying of the Cable, or the Ocean Telegraph*, a detailed account of the expeditions of 1857 and 1858, based on his columns for the *Herald*.¹⁴ Morse himself promoted the volume, which he claimed contained "the fullest account of all these expeditions which has been given to the public."¹⁵

It is unknown how Mullaly first connected with New York's Catholic Archbishop John Hughes, but most evidence points to this work on the transatlantic cable. Archbishop Hughes was one of the first, and largest, subscribers to the American Cable Company,¹⁶ and the connection of Cyrus Field with Hughes goes back to at least April of 1849, when Hughes wrote a letter of introduction for Field and his wife to Paul Cullen, then Archbishop of Armagh. Hughes specifically asked Cullen to welcome the couple and to "present them in person...to his Holiness Pius IX," a request made infrequently in other letters of introduction Hughes sent Cullen at the time.¹⁷ At the time, the connection of a Catholic prelate with a scientific project was not uncommon, as many clergy held the belief that the cable was a representation of the Christian connection between Europe and America, and the scientists behind the project the "agents" of Christ, working to spread Christianity.¹⁸

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Field's cable project was gaining momentum alongside with Hughes' life-work: the construction of a new St. Patrick's Cathedral on Fifth Avenue. At some point, Field had promised Hughes that, should the cable be completed successfully, Hughes would be able to send a message to Pope Pius IX.¹⁹ Hughes was so grateful for this that he supposedly buried a

to him in December 1858, "no matter, the glory of having laid it in the depths of the ocean is yours."²²

But prior to either project's completion, Hughes and Field had an earlier interaction, in St. John's, Newfoundland, where the cable was due to come ashore. In September 1855, both were in St. John's: Hughes for a cornerstone ceremony at the new church of St.

Photo:
Cyrus Field
was a successful
New York business-
man who, with
other entrepreneurs,
created the
American Telegraph
Company and saw
creation of the
Atlantic undersea
telegraph cable in
1858. The son of a
Massachusetts
Congregationalist
minister, Field may
have first met
Archbishop John
Hughes in
New York though
Hughes's early and
generous support for
the cable project.
Field is shown here
with a globe, a
rolled map or docu-
ment, and a piece of
telegraph cable.
Courtesy of
National Portrait
Gallery,
Smithsonian
Institution.



note of thanks to Field in the cornerstone of the Cathedral.²⁰ Upon the project's completion, Hughes wrote to Field, "Under the blessing of Almighty God you have accomplished the work."²¹ Within a few months, however, it was clear that the cable was not working as intended, the project was a failure, and the stockholders would not see a return on their investment. Despite this, Hughes continued to support Field, writing

Patrick in River Head, and Field for the first cable attempt. Field had personally contributed one thousand pounds to the construction of the church, more than likely facilitated by Hughes, and attended the church ceremony.²³ Accompanying Field, and possibly making his first connection with New York's Archbishop, was a young man named John Mullaly.

THE *RECORD* AND THE QUESTION OF SLAVERY

By late 1858, the cable project was complete and Mullaly was back in New York planning a new Catholic newspaper. Hughes was on the verge of breaking with James McMaster, the editor of the Catholic *Freeman's Journal*, which had acted as official publication for the archdiocese, over the question of slavery.²⁴ The time was ripe for a new Catholic paper for the Archdiocese of New York, and Mullaly was ready. By the time he returned from the Atlantic expedition in 1858, the plans were already in place, and by December Mullaly and Hughes were corresponding about fundraising for the new venture.²⁵ The first issue of *The Metropolitan Record* was published on January 29, 1859, and one year later Archbishop Hughes officially declared it the "official organ" of the archdiocese.

Unlike the editors of most Catholic papers at the time, Mullaly actually had experience with both the publishing and newspaper businesses.²⁶ The majority of other editors had a strong Catholic faith as their major qualification—in fact, most were members of the cler-

gy.²⁷ As a young, ambitious layman, Mullaly was certainly the odd man out, but was on the early side of a new trend in Catholic publishing. As the century went on, religious leaders realized the importance of a strong religious press, and its role in spreading the church's mission,²⁸ and more and more laymen began to run diocesan papers.

A remarkable part of Mullaly's story was how much he accomplished at a young age. He was only twenty-four when he began the *Record*, and had already published three books and worked as a reporter for about seven years.²⁹ The *Record* quickly rose in prominence, in both New York and Catholic circles due, in no small part, to Hughes' patronage. By 1861, Mullaly received the right to print public documents in his paper, which brought in a significant amount of revenue.³⁰ Hughes himself was dedicated to the success of the paper, advising Mullaly on good times to publish various items, and often anonymously writing articles for the paper.³¹ These articles were a well-known habit of the archbishop, dating back to his days as a seminarian and young priest in Maryland and Philadelphia.



Photo:
St. Patrick's Church in St. John's, Newfoundland. The laying of the cornerstone for the church in 1855 brought together Archbishop Hughes and Cyrus Field, who had donated a thousand pounds toward completion of the building. The cornerstone ceremony may have also brought together—for the first time—Hughes and John Mullaly. The church was designed by James Joseph McCarthy, the prominent Irish architect. Courtesy of Virtualglobetrotting.com.

Illustration:
This advertisement for the Metropolitan Record lists John Mullaly as editor, publisher, and sole proprietor for the newspaper. But exchanges between Mullaly and Archbishop Hughes were important for emergence of the Record in January, 1859. One of the paper's objectives was to "supply the Catholic portion of the community with all the important and interesting news of the Catholic World...[and] the progress of events in the secular as well as the religious world." In March 1863, Hughes withdrew his patronage for the Record, largely because of the Mullaly's positions, stated in the Record, against Lincoln's policies and the Union cause. Courtesy of Archives of the Diocese of the Archdiocese of New York.

METROPOLITAN RECORD.

JOHN MULLALY, Editor and Proprietor.

OFFICE, 419 BROADWAY.

It is the object of this Journal to supply the Catholic portion of the community with all the important and interesting news of the Catholic world, and particularly with information in regard to events and occurrences connected with the Church in the United States. Its readers are also duly informed of the progress of events in the secular as well as in the religious world.

Due care and attention is given to the Literary Department, and new publications reviewed or noticed, as their character and pretensions deserve.

The Editorial columns are devoted to a discussion of the prominent topics of the day, and all other subjects that properly come within the scope of such a journal.

The Business Department is carried on with that strict attention to all its details, without which no paper can expect to succeed, no matter how liberally supported, or how ably conducted; and all the business transactions of the establishment are conducted on a cash basis.

This Journal is published weekly at No. 419 Broadway, and delivered to city and mail subscribers on the following terms:

Price per year served by carrier.....	\$3 00
Price per year served by mail.....	2 50
Price per year, for six copies or more.....	2 00

To Canadian subscribers THE RECORD is served for \$3 per year, as there is an advance of fifty cents in the postage; while to subscribers in Ireland it will be \$3 50, for the same reason.


The advertising rates are as follows:

To transient advertisers.....	12½ cents per line.
To yearly advertisers.....	5 cents per line.

No paper will be sent till the receipt of the subscription.

Clubs of six or more will be supplied with the Record at two dollars a year to each subscriber.

All orders and communications should be addressed to the Editor, No. 419 Broadway.

 This paper is published solely by JOHN MULLALY, Editor and Proprietor.

The one point on which Hughes was adamant was that the paper remain above the political fray. Tensions were high in the country at the time, and Hughes believed that Catholics should remain politically neutral. In his circular letter declaring the paper his "the official organ" he noted that it was under the condition that the paper "shall not at any time identify itself with any political party in the United States." From the beginning though, the paper did cover politics: European politics, particularly those of Rome and Ireland, with a decidedly pro-Irish stance.³² Following the model of the *Freeman's Journal*, which James McMaster had successfully reworked to appeal to the New York's Irish Catholic community, the *Record* used news of interest to the Irish in New York to reinforce the connection between

the Irish and the Church.³³ Later in the century, Patrick Ford's popular *Irish World* would build on these models.

Despite the paper's early success, it ran into trouble as the Civil War became a reality. Early issues of the paper, even after the start of the Civil War, followed the well-known policies of Archbishop Hughes: full support for the Lincoln administration and the Union, including the administration's hesitation on the issue of abolition.³⁴ Hughes believed that emancipation was not needed to end the conflict and, like many Catholic bishops at the time, viewed slavery as more of a political issue than a moral one.³⁵ Catholic clergy were able to justify the institution of slavery, once it was established in a country, as the alternative would be the subversion of "the existing legal and peaceful

order.”³⁶ Hughes trod a fine line: although he publically stated his belief that abolition was a danger to the “property rights” of Southern landowners, he also denied that he was a defender of slavery.³⁷ Archbishop John Purcell of Cincinnati was one of the few in the Catholic hierarchy willing to use his voice to address the inhumanity of slavery.³⁸ As Hughes grew more prominent during the 1840s and 50s, he believed it necessary to appear politically neutral. Even as early as 1857, when anti-slavery activists asked Archbishop Hughes to lend the weight of his opinion to their cause, he demurred, writing back, “Catholics vote as individuals in the exercise of their franchise, with no direction from their clergy.”³⁹ He believed that one of the easiest paths to assimilation for his heavily Irish flock was to avoid being seen as a religious block in political terms.⁴⁰ Of course, Hughes also maintained a friendship with William Seward, Lincoln’s Secretary of State, and traveled to Europe on a diplomatic mission at the behest of the president during the height of the Civil War.

The Emancipation Proclamation would prove to be the breaking point for Mullaly, with both the Lincoln administration and his patron, Archbishop Hughes, and in March 1863, Hughes formally withdrew all support from the *Record*.⁴¹ Although the break was due to Mullaly’s increasing condemnation of the Lincoln administration and the Union cause, he and his supporters painted it as coming from Mullaly after Hughes’ “political and war-like mission” in Europe in 1862.⁴² The paper’s trend after its break with Hughes was widely criticized, with the *New York Times* describing its editorials as “outspoken treason” and calling the paper “copperhead journalism.”⁴³

Mullaly’s editorials and articles, however, soon went beyond criticism into out-and-out racism, reflecting the views of many of his contemporaries. Many Irish Catholics linked the abolition movement with Protestants, and, according to Cyprian Davis, “the anti-Catholic attitudes of most of the leading Abolitionists certainly helped turn pre-Civil War white Catholics against the Abolitionists.”⁴⁴ Abolition was also linked with the Republican party,

which many Catholics associated with nativism and anti-immigrant policies.⁴⁵ Although some Irish Catholic heroes like Daniel O’Connell were abolitionists, and often drew parallels between slavery in America and British rule over Ireland, the working class in New York saw blacks as economic competition.⁴⁶ Many Irish Catholic immigrants viewed emancipation and the expected influx of free African Americans to northern cities as a “threat to [their] economic well-being.”⁴⁷ In the Spring of 1863, New York’s shipyards had brought in African-American workers to break a strike by longshoremen, which to many was a premonition of the job loss that would follow emancipation.⁴⁸

Later that year, in July 1863, the beginning of the draft in New York City exploded into three days of rioting and violence, much stemming directly from racist sentiment and fear over the economic changes an influx of free blacks would have on the city’s working class Irish Catholic community.⁴⁹ Mullaly’s blistering editorials and commentary at public meetings led some to hold him directly responsible for violence and destruction, and several New York newspapers specifically criticized the *Record* for feeding the anger, fear, and racism driving the rioters.⁵⁰ There were also accusations that the Catholic Church shared the blame, as many still considered the paper to be the archdiocese’s official mouthpiece. One paper even went so far as to accuse Mullaly of “tricking” readers into thinking his editorials on the draft came directly from the Archbishop.⁵¹ Hughes finally had to call a public meeting at his residence to try to quell the violence, and make the Church’s stance clear.

As the war went on, the condemnation of Mullaly’s paper grew, as his views became more extreme. There was a petition put to the Postmaster General to ban the *Record* from use of the mail system, and the commander of the Union troops in Missouri forbid the circulation of the paper, calling it “incendiary, disloyal, and traitorous.”⁵² The most extreme response to Mullaly’s dangerous rhetoric came in August, 1864, when he was arrested on charge of inciting resistance to the draft. The

case, however, was eventually dropped as there was concern that Mullaly would be held up as a Democratic hero in already tense political

oppose emancipation: he was joined by the likes of the *Boston Pilot* and the *Freeman's Journal*.⁵⁸ These editors did not see any benefit

Photo:

This statue of Archbishop John Hughes stands on the Rose Hill campus of Fordham University. Hughes was directly responsible for the creation of Fordham beginning with his purchase of 100 acres from property owned by the Rose Hill Manor. On the property, St. John's college and seminary were opened in the 1840s. The college (precursor to today's Fordham) was granted a university charter and was sold to the Jesuits in 1846. Despite the break that occurred between John Mullaly and the Archbishop in 1863, Mullaly remained loyal to Hughes and was largely responsible for creation of this statue in his honor. Courtesy of the author.



times.⁵³ Although he had vocal support from Southern sympathizers, Northern subscriptions and advertisers dropped.⁵⁴

Mullaly increasingly supported "peace at any price" as the war went on, even if it meant the Union cause would lose, and identified as a "peace" Democrat, using the columns of the *Record* to promote his cause.⁵⁵ He believed the only way to end the war was to prevent the reelection of Lincoln, and put a Democrat in the White House in 1864, but publically announced that he would not support the Democratic nominee for president, George McClellan, because McClellan wouldn't guarantee an end to the war.⁵⁶ He spoke at a public rally for Peace Democrats in May 1863, calling the war an "abolitionist crusade."⁵⁷ Mullaly was not the only Catholic newspaper editor to

for Catholics in the war effort, and just wanted the war to end.⁵⁹ By the summer of 1863, only one Catholic paper, *The Cincinnati Telegraph*, had publically come out in favor of abolition.⁶⁰

The Democrats were also the most anti-British of the American political parties of the time, and were embraced by the Irish-born working class, who didn't see a home with Lincoln's anti-immigrant Republican party.⁶¹ Even Archbishop Hughes acknowledged this reluctance on the part of his faithful to support abolition, writing to Secretary of War Cameron, that Catholics "whether of native or foreign birth, are willing to fight to the death for the support of the constitution, the Government, and the laws of the country. But if they thought they were fighting for the abolition of slavery, then they will turn away in

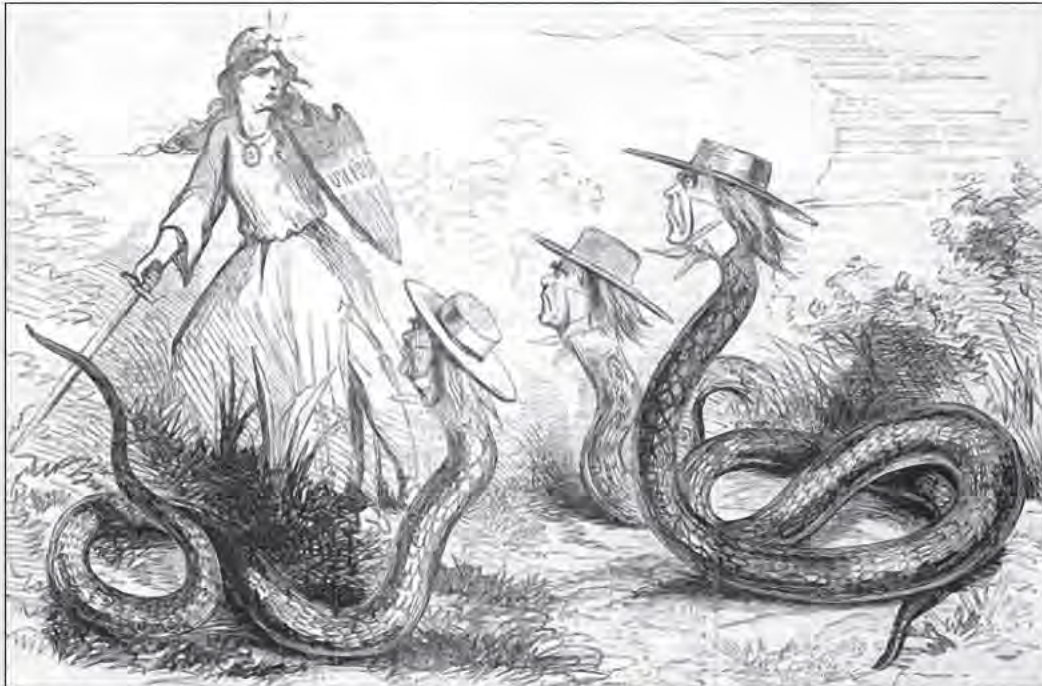


Illustration:
This drawing from Harper's Weekly during the Civil War shows "copperheads" (a pejorative term for peace Democrats or any anti-war northerner) attacking Columbia, the female symbol of the United States who carries a shield labeled "Union." Copperheads opposed the Civil War, the policies of Lincoln, and the draft. They advocated making concessions to the Confederacy. Mullaly considered himself a copperhead and strongly stated copperhead positions in the *Metropolitan Record*. Courtesy of Dcc.Newberry.org.

disgust from the discharge of what would otherwise be a patriotic duty."⁶² For many Catholics the fear of the return of antebellum Known-nothing nativism colored how they viewed the war and the Lincoln administration.⁶³

This concern proved true, as anti-Catholic nativism persisted after the war, despite the patriotic participation of many Irish Catholics in the Union cause. To Mullaly, it seemed to prove his point that the great loss of Irish life to the war effort wouldn't guarantee better treatment of the nation's Catholics.⁶⁴ Democrats continued to endear themselves to immigrants after the end of the war, touting policies which supported the rights of both immigrants and non-Protestants and advocated for these groups in the larger political sphere.⁶⁵

Despite its wartime editorials, the *Record* never lost its Irish tilt. While focusing mainly on Catholic church events in America, it had a wider lens for news from Ireland. Like other papers directed at Irish Americans, including the "News from Ireland" in *Irish America Weekly* and "The Irish World Abroad" in *Irish World*, the *Metropolitan Record* offered a full page of information from Ireland. The section, called *Irish Miscellany*, broke out news by

county, and also reprinted any item of interest from Irish papers. Additionally the paper focused heavily on the Irish contribution to American society, stretching back to revolutionary times. Mullaly was a prolific public speaker, and many of his addresses reflected similar themes. He often connected the Irish struggle for freedom with the American revolution, using examples of Irishmen who "stood alongside the patriots of the Revolution," and emphasizing that now Americans needed to support the Irish in their own struggle against the British.⁶⁶ The paper remained popular after the war. In 1869, it had a circulation estimated at 10,000 and in 1872 about at 30,000. The paper went out of circulation in 1873.⁶⁷

A POLITICAL LIFE

As Mullaly's politics turned more Democratic, he also began to make forays into a personal political career. He was speaking publically at mass political rallies throughout the 1860s, building on connections made during his newspaper career, and in 1861 was elected to the council of the Twenty-first Ward.⁶⁸ In 1870, he was appointed commissioner of health for one term, at a salary of \$5,000 per year, to the board of assessors for two terms, and in

1875 was Commissioner of Taxes.⁶⁹ His connection with Tammany Hall stretched back to the early days of the *Metropolitan Record*, when his license to print public documents

Illustration:
Headlines from the New York Times on August 25, 1864. Mullaly was arrested for examination in connection with charges that, through articles published in the Record, he urged young men not to appear for the draft and advised the governor of New York State to withhold support for the draft. The case against Mullaly was dropped, but subscribers and advertising for the Metropolitan Record also dropped. Courtesy of the New York Times.

Examination of John Mullaly, Charged with Inciting Resistance to the Draft--Mr. Charles O'Connor's Remarks on the Motive for bringing the Case.; UNITED STATES COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE.

came through a Tammany connection.⁷⁰ Mullaly's Tammany loyalty was also tied to his Irish Catholic roots—many Catholics at the time threw their support for Tammany as they saw it as their only path to a voice in New York City politics.⁷¹

During the war and immediately after, Mullaly went on a speaking tour of several Southern cities. Describing himself as a “copperhead,” he was routed as a “courageous and brilliant” advocate of the rights of Southern states, and continued to support Democratic politics.⁷² An October 1866 ad for the paper described it “a truthful and unswerving exponent of States Rights, and...opposed to the anti-Democratic policy of consolidation.... It shall never cease to advocate the supremacy of Civil Authority, and to denounce and condemn the pretensions and usurpations of the Military Power.”⁷³

THE ARCHDIOCESE OF NEW YORK

Despite his very public break with Hughes over the content of the newspaper, Mullaly remained devoted to the man and his memory.

In the 1890s, he spearheaded the fundraising effort for a bronze statue in Hughes' memory on Fordham's campus, soliciting donations from alumni of Fordham University as well as other Catholics. He also maintained his connection with the Church in New York, and Hughes' successors continued to call on Mullaly whenever they needed his particular skills. He was particularly close to Hughes' successor, Cardinal John McCloskey, and was even one of the last visitors to the man on his deathbed.

In 1878, Mullaly returned to the newspaper business to assist Cardinal McCloskey in completing Hughes' dreamed of Cathedral. By the fall of 1878, work on the Cathedral was almost complete, but still needed about \$500,000, so Cardinal McCloskey launched an ambitious fundraising fair.⁷⁴ Mullaly took charge of a new daily paper, *The Journal of the Fair*, which was intended as a “record of the progress of the Fair.” The Fair was a massive event, with over 21,000 people attending on opening day. Each of the tables had various items for raffle or purchase, ranging from statuary and furniture to clothing, jewelry and silverware, to more extravagant items, like ivory cabinets, pianos and organs, and sewing machines. There were also monetary prizes like gold coins and bonds. An average of 7,000 visitors attended the Fair each day, and the total raised from the Fair was \$172,625.48. This paper, despite its limited print run and a much more specific focus than the *Record*, reinforced Mullaly's usefulness to New York's Catholic Church.

A few years later, the church again turned to Mullaly to assist in fundraising for another massive building project: Archbishop Corrigan's construction of a new seminary in Yonkers. On Corrigan's behalf, Mullaly created *The Seminary*, a monthly publication that ran from 1892 until August 1896, when the semi-

nary opened. The goal of the monthly was to keep the seminary project in the forefront of the minds of the city's Catholics, and a large percentage of the funds raised were attributed to the paper.⁷⁵ Mullaly survived four archbishops of what was, at that point, one of the largest dioceses in the country, and, as the nineteenth century wore on, came to be seen as an elder statesman in the Catholic New York. In 1893, Archbishop Corrigan appointed him a representative of the archdiocese to the Columbian Catholic Congress, and in 1900 he was honored for his work on behalf of the Catholic Church and awarded an honorary doctorate of law from Fordham University.⁷⁶

MULLALY AND NEW YORK'S IRISH

John Mullaly was also heavily involved in New York's Irish community, particularly in the various movements for Irish freedom throughout the nineteenth century, and was often called on as a speaker at both public and private events.⁷⁷ His advocacy stretched back

ers at a public fundraising meeting.⁷⁸ Mullaly was often on the speaker list for meetings for both Irish causes and Tammany political causes.⁷⁹ He also served on a litany of organizations in Irish New York: he was on the Executive Committee of the Irish National Land League for the United States, worked alongside John Devoy, O'Donovan Rossa, and Mrs. Charles Parnell for the Irish National League, was one of the founding members of the Irish Parliamentary Fund, was member and president of the Knights of St. Patrick, and served as secretary of the Nineteenth Ward Irish Relief Fund to raise money for the poor and suffering in Ireland.⁸⁰ He was close enough to John Mitchel that, when Mitchel died, Mullaly was the one to break the news to his son, and served on the board of the John Mitchel Memorial Fund.⁸¹

In 1875, when the "Cuba Five" were traveling to their new life of exile in the United States, Mullaly as a member of the Knights of St. Patrick, got word that General Grant was going to try to block the ship from entering New York



to the rebellion of 1848, and later in his life recalled attending a fundraising meeting in Vauxhall Gardens, where Hughes was present and personally contributed \$500. Although Mullaly was only a teenager at that meeting, by the time Charles Stewart Parnell was advocating Home Rule in the 1880s, Mullaly had achieved enough prominence in Irish American circles that he was one of the speak-

ers at a public fundraising meeting.⁷⁸ Mullaly was often on the speaker list for meetings for both Irish causes and Tammany political causes.⁷⁹ He also served on a litany of organizations in Irish New York: he was on the Executive Committee of the Irish National Land League for the United States, worked alongside John Devoy, O'Donovan Rossa, and Mrs. Charles Parnell for the Irish National League, was one of the founding members of the Irish Parliamentary Fund, was member and president of the Knights of St. Patrick, and served as secretary of the Nineteenth Ward Irish Relief Fund to raise money for the poor and suffering in Ireland.⁸⁰ He was close enough to John Mitchel that, when Mitchel died, Mullaly was the one to break the news to his son, and served on the board of the John Mitchel Memorial Fund.⁸¹

John was not the only Mullaly to

Illustration:

A scene from the St. Patrick's Fair held in the Cathedral during Fall 1878 to help raise funds for completion of the building. John Mullaly undertook responsibility for each volume of the Fair's journal, an important fund-raising instrument. The journal listed subscribers, provided supportive statements from well-known religious and secular leaders, and printed advertisements from commercial businesses. The Cathedral was finally dedicated on May 25, 1879 by Cardinal John McCloskey. Courtesy of St. Patrick's Cathedral.

Photo:
 John Mullaly was important in ensuring the safe arrival of the "Cuba Five," pictured here, in New York City following their release from British prisons in 1871. Entry of their ship into New York harbor was opposed by some American leaders, including Ulysses Grant, but the huge level of public support for the exiled Fenians overcame opposition. Boarding the S.S. Cuba off Staten Island from a small boat, Mullaly was one of the first Americans to greet the five rebels. Courtesy of Stair na h-Eireann.



become involved in New York's Irish community. While not much is known about his sister, Ann, his other sister, Mary, was a prolific writer in her own right. She was known to have assisted her brother with most of his editorial projects, including *The Metropolitan Record* and *The Journal of the Fair*. In fact, one of her poems appears on the first page of the first edition of the journal. She also wrote a novel, "Ernest Gray," and numerous minor stories and translations from the French, as well as many poems. She was well-known in the Irish-American literary community, and was included on the list of proposed contributors for "An American Cyclopedia of Irish Poets," and was also listed in "Poets of Ireland" and the "Household Library of Irish Poets."⁸³

THE INVENTOR

In addition to his political and editorial careers, Mullaly was also a somewhat prolific inventor. He took out several patents throughout the course of his life, including several that focused on snow removal from city streets and railroad tracks.⁸⁴ His invention, filed in 1876, for clearing the railroad tracks was built and tested, and worked successfully, but it was eventually found that the cost of fuel needed to generate the steam to melt the snow would be greater than the cost to just shovel the snow and remove it in carts.⁸⁵ He later proposed a boat that would have devices to shoot heated steam into canals, to prevent them from icing over.⁸⁶

By the end of the century, he had come up with a new method for using aluminum plates for lithography. In 1894 he set up the

United States Aluminum Printing Company to own and control the patents issued to him. By the early twentieth century he was director and president of the Aluminum Press Co. and director of the Aluminum Printing Plate Co. and the Timmis Lithotype Co.⁸⁷

THE FATHER OF BRONX PARKS

In addition to his published articles and speeches, his legacy can be found in New York City's public parks. In the 1880s, he noted that New York, in comparison to other major cities, both in the United States and abroad, had much less land devoted to public parks. Paris had an acre of parkland for every 13 residents, and Chicago and Boston had one acre for every 100 people. In New York, it was more like one acre for every 1,500 people.⁸⁸ In November 1881 Mullaly organized a meeting of prominent New Yorkers whom he felt would be sympathetic to the cause, and founded the New York Park Association, while also drawing on his newspaper experience to write articles advocating for advancing the parks system. Mullaly argued that DeWitt Clinton, one of New York's earliest mayors, had planned for one acre of parkland for every 160 residents when he laid out his city plan in 1807. He distributed over ten thousand copies of the pamphlet outlining his arguments, while his partner, Luther Marsh, wrote a bill for the City Council about how the parks should be funded.⁸⁹

By the end of the nineteenth century, much of the land in the Bronx was transition-

ing from rural estates and farms, and was for sale at cheap prices. Although the Bronx was not yet part of New York City, Mullaly encouraged that the city take advantage of these low prices, advocating for the purchase of almost four thousand acres of land to be set aside for parks.⁹⁰ In 1887 he wrote a book, *The New Parks beyond the Harlem*, using his "intimate personal connection" to give a history of the movement to add almost 4,000 acres of parkland to the city's system.

Although Mullaly's legacy will forever be tarnished over his views of slavery and emancipation, the work he did on behalf of the Catholic Church in New York cannot be denied. His efforts led to the successful completion of two of the most important buildings in the Archdiocese: its Cathedral and its seminary. However, his lasting legacy, more so than his inventions, his publications, and his politics, is the park system in the Bronx. Today the Bronx is the only borough of New York City that has anywhere close to an adequate amount of parkland for its residents, and that is thanks to John Mullaly's tireless work in advocating for the cause. In April 1913, the Bronx Society of Arts and Sciences presented six commemorative bronze tablets to the City of New York on the thirtieth anniversary of the legislation authorizing the acquisition of the parks system for the borough. John Mullaly was introduced at the ceremony, as the only surviving man whose name appeared on the tablets.⁹¹ Once known as the "Father of the



Photo:

A scene from Mullaly Park in the Highbridge section of the Bronx. Named to honor John Mullaly's work in creating a public park system in the borough, in recent years there have been calls to change the Park's designation in light of Mullaly's racism. In June 2021, local officials announced that the Park will be renamed to honor Reverend Wendell Foster, a civil-rights activist and the first African-American member of the City Council. Courtesy of New York City Dept. of Parks & Recreation.

Bronx Parks,” in 1932, Mullaly Park in the Highbridge neighborhood of the Bronx was named after him.

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