

A Thread In Time

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**Newsletter of the
National Association of Textile Workers of America, Inc.**

President's Message

Happy New Year! This is the start of our fourth year as a hereditary society. What a wonderful three years we have had. The Society was officially incorporated as of January 1, 2007. There were three people with a vision. It took nearly the entire year to get all of the official papers and numbers together. We were granted 501©(3) status.

Our second year, 2008, saw a growth in membership and the beginnings of realizing our Mission. We now had eleven members, four officers and our first year book. The snowball was rolling.

Last year, 2009, we grew to twenty members with three additional applications expected any time. We awarded our first scholarship, initiated a website (www.textileworker.com) with the expertise of Webmaster Tracy Crocker, defined a new life membership category and made our first donation to the endowment fund of the Windham Textile and History Museum. In addition, a banner was developed and it's inaugural presentation was at the Connecticut Massing of the Colors. The Hereditary Society Community has recognized our Society and we are listed on their web site (www.hereditary.us).

What's ahead? We are looking forward to continued growth in membership, increasing the scholarship(s), the publication of more newsletters, determining how to organize subchapters of our National Society, an insignia pin, and perhaps some fundraising. These are a few of the goals for 2010, but we are not limited by this list. Please mention your ideas and let's get started working on them.

Thank you for your continued support of NSDTWA and I look forward to working with you on the various committees as they develop.

I invite you all to contribute to our newsletter. Please send me your articles, information, bulletins, etc.

Regards,
Mary Brown

1.

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If, as the 1870 Census indicates, Cornelius was 23 then, he would have been born in 1847. That year in Irish history is known as Black 47, the worst year of the “Irish Famine.” So it would be plausible to infer that parish birth records might go missing, when death was taking up so much of everyone’s time and so many lives.

By the way, it bears repeating that the so called Famine occurred when there was plenty of food sitting in British warehouses in Ireland. That food, however, was not available to the starving Irish peasants. Those cash crops were, with some few exceptions, shipped to England. There they were at the exclusive disposal of the British royalty and ruling class.

Could it be that Cornelius and Catherine were the only survivors of another famished family in Ireland? What happened to Father William and his sons John, William and Eugene?

Another fly in the ointment: Cornelius’ Death Certificate is from 1892. If he was born in 1847, that would have made his age at his time of death as 46, 3 or 4 years older than the 41 or 42 his 1870 Census record indicates. But its common knowledge records in those days were not as accurate as we think ours are today.

Another intriguing find in the course of my research was revealed when I obtained Mary Ann Tammany Donahue’s (barefoot) brother Owen’s Death Certificate from the Manchester Town Hall. This showed that both of their parents, Patrick and Mary Ann, were from Armagh in the North of Ireland, a fact previously unknown to Midge or her siblings. In addition, the document indicated that Mary Ann the elder’s maiden name was Cassidy. So who knows, we may be related to Neal Cassady of the Beats or Jack Cassidy of the Jefferson Airplane and Hot Tuna.

What a trip!

In the end, I never was able to pinpoint where Cornelius came from to the satisfaction of Irish regulations for granting dual citizenship. But it turns out that wouldn’t have mattered anyway, in terms of David and I getting Irish citizenship passed on to us if Midge had obtained hers. Because, I found out, Mom could only have passed it on to kids she gave birth to *after* she’d been granted Irish citizenship. Which wasn’t very likely for a 70 something grandmother.

I guess Lou had the last laugh there!

In Search of Cornelius

By Michael Steinberg

My mother (Midge) had always told us that her grandfather, Cornelius Donahue, had come to this country from Ireland, but exactly where in Ireland was murky. Maybe County Cork, maybe not.

At a certain point, my brother (David) and I became interested in obtaining dual US/Irish citizenship for ourselves and for our mother. But in order to do this, first of all we had to document where in Ireland Cornelius came from.

So began my quest, “In Search of Cornelius.”

I enlisted Midge’s help in this, as she seemed to know the full and complete history of even the most obscure relation as far back as she or anyone else could recall. Besides which, the idea of gaining Irish citizenship intrigued her. Mom told me Dad wanted no part of it though. When she informed him the dual citizenship status would only apply to her, he was relieved. Born a first generation US citizen on the Fourth of July, Lou wanted nothing but to be an All American guy.

So, at my request, one day Mom took me to St. Agnes Cemetery in Manchester, CT. There she showed me Cornelius and Mary Ann’s tombstones, one next to the other. His said he was from Ireland, but not specifically where. I noticed that on the back of Mary Anne’s stone was an inscription for Owen Tammany and remembered her maiden name was the same. When I looked at Mom for guidance, she responded instantly, “Oh that’s Mary Ann’s brother. He liked to go barefoot.”

To the right of Cornelius’ stone, but not directly, was another, even older gravestone. The inscription said it was for Catherine Donahoe (a variant of Donahue). It said she was from G_____ in County Limerick, Ireland. The rest of the letters after the G were too worn away for me to make out what municipality Catherine came from. Family lore tells us Cornelius was from County Cork, but Cork and Limerick share a border.

“Who’s that?” I asked Midge. For once she was stumped.

As with the other gravestones we visited that day, I took a snapshot of it.

Mom led me to another part of the cemetery, and showed me where her mother and father were buried, side by side like Mary Ann and Cornelius. I was relieved to see that no one else's information was carved into the other side of either tombstone.

Midge also told me, for the first time, the story of how her father had to bury her stillborn sister Mary Ellen nearby, but beyond, the cemetery grounds, because the dogma of the time decreed that the child did not yet have an immortal soul, and so was denied admission into the official dead club's premises.

That day Midge also took me to Buckland, where she showed me the house on Adams Street where three generations of Donahues had lived, hers being the last, as well as the house next door where her father's older brother Bill and his family had lived. We took a little drive down Adams Street next, and Mom pointed out the paper mill where Cornelius had worked, now the Paper Mill Restaurant. A little further down the road we took a right over a small bridge, and then came upon the former woolen mill where 14 year old Pa had been working in 1900 along with Bill. The old mill was now being used as a furniture warehouse, but still had a plaque on it stating that blankets for the War of 1812 had been made there.

On the way to the cemetery that day we'd stopped for lunch at the Shady Glen Restaurant, not far from where our old house on Glenwood Drive in Manchester, and the strawberry field where I'd tried to evade kindergarten. We were both tired after traipsing around St. Agnes Cemetery and then the old home place in Buckland, but on the way back Midge insisted we stop at the Shady Glen again.

"But we just ate there!" I grouched.

"We didn't have dessert," Midge replied. "It's a family tradition here of long standing."

So I reluctantly pulled into the parking lot one more time. I learned again that you should always listen to your mother, and it turned out to be a delicious suggestion.

At the same time all this family history interest had been taking hold of me, a woman named Sue Way in Manchester, CT, had been putting out a newsletter called "The Buckland Times," recounting the history of the area. In one article she ran a feature story, "The Donahues of Adams Street." In her story she reported much of the family history Midge and I had investigated in between our stops at the Shady Glen. 3.

I contacted Sue Way with a bunch of questions, and told her of my mission to uncover Cornelius' place of origin. She agreed to send me copies of the old census records and other historical document, like death certificates, that she'd obtained. This information gave me a bunch more clues in pursuit of Cornelius' town of birth, as well as a better understanding of Mom's family history.

Cornelius Donahue first appeared in the 1870 Census as living on Adams Street in Buckland. He was then 23, from Ireland and "works in a paper mill." Also listed in the household, with "?" written in the name space, was a female aged 62, also from Ireland. Catherine Donahoe's tombstone in St. Agnes Cemetery, next to Cornelius', listed her age at her death in 1875 as 64. Not a perfect match with the census info, but nearly so.

In Sue Way's info packet Cornelius' Death Certificate indicated he was in his early 40s when he died of "Consumption," now known as tuberculosis. Mom had told me he died from destroyed lungs due to exposure to dyes in the paper mill. His parents were listed on his Death Certificate as Bill and Kate Donahue from Ireland, exact towns of origin left blank. So was Catherine Cornelius' mother, Mom's great-grandmother and my great-great-grandmother?

I sent some of the documents to the County Limerick Genealogy Office in Ireland, requesting that they research exactly where Cornelius was born. They wrote back fairly soon to let me know that they needed more information before they could proceed with their investigation. So I sent more info, including the snapshots from Midge's and my visit to St. Agnes cemetery.

Soon I heard back. The snapshots had helped a lot. They had identified the town starting with G on Catherine Donahoe's tombstone as Garvahy, in a region not far from the County Cork border, and known for its paper mills. The office had also found a William and Catherine, or Kate, Donahue from the region, who had three sons: John, William and Eugene. They were born in 1834, 1841 and 1845, respectively. They couldn't find a son named Cornelius. However, they reported that the parish records (which included births), for the period during which Cornelius would have been born, had been lost.

Calendar of Events

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May 16, 2010 - Annual Meeting 1 p.m.
Windham Textile and History Museum
Willimantic, CT

October 24, 2010 – Massing of the Colors 3 p.m.
Procession line up 2:30
First Congregational Church
Lebanon, CT

What is the Massing of the Colors? It is a gathering of hereditary and patriotic societies. The flags of each group are presented and displayed. The speaker talks about a subject germane to history, America, patriotism, etc. This year, the speaker will talk about Governor Jonathan Trumbull on the occasion of his 300th birthday. Some patriotic music, a drum beat for the procession and a brief prayer for everyone's continued health and longevity add to the celebration. The celebrants then recess to the church hall for refreshments and socialization. This colorful event is accompanied by many period outfits of the participants. Please plan to attend and support NSDTWA.

Membership Notice:

The opportunity to enjoy life membership is now offered at
Under age 50 – 30 times the annual dues
Age 50 and older – 20 times the annual dues
Currently, the annual dues are \$10. We know that we can't keep them at that level for long, so it may behoove you to purchase a life membership now. If you have already paid your 2010 dues, deduct them from your life membership check. Checks should be made out to NSDTWA and mailed to Gail Rebello, treasurer.

