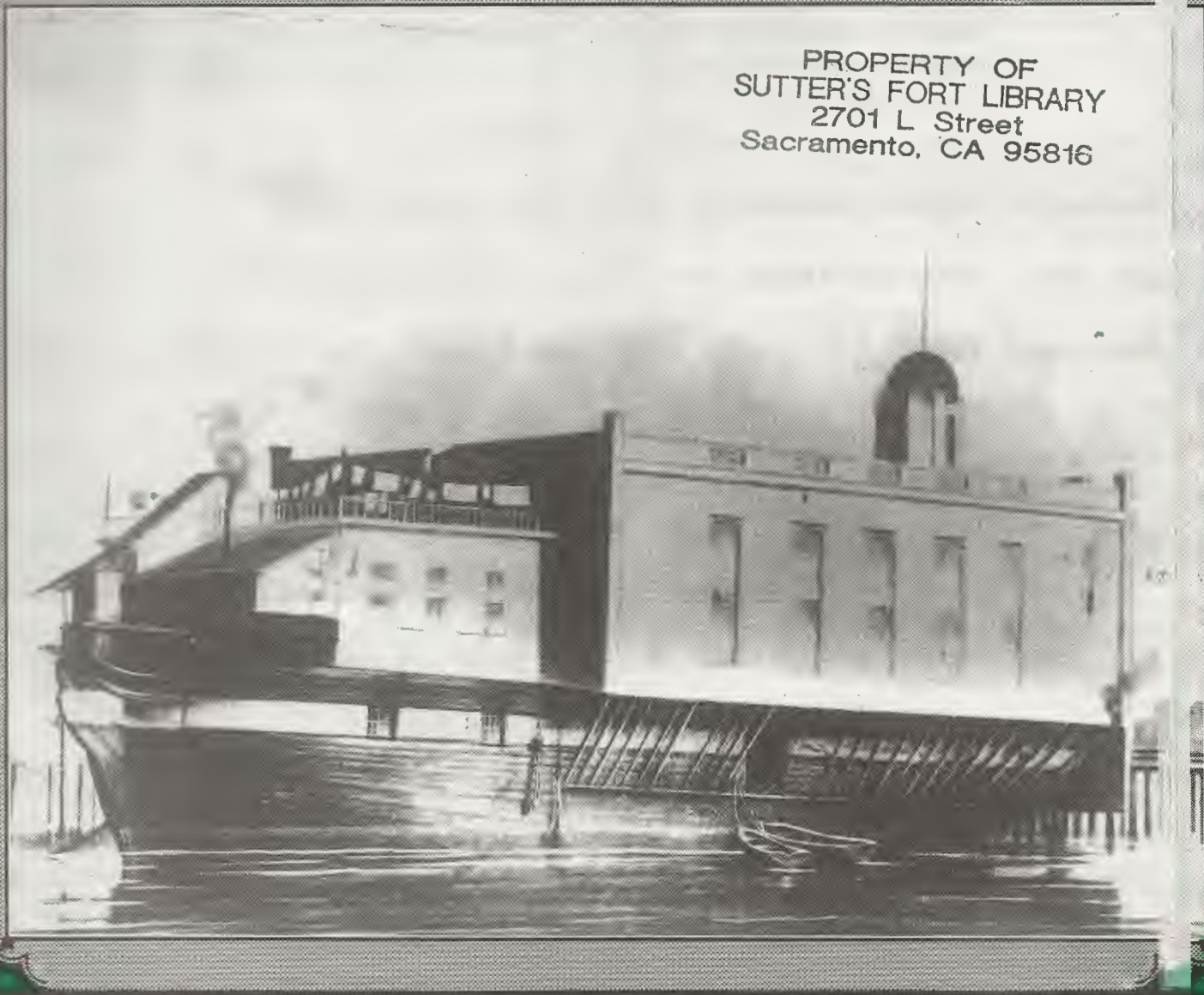




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The Fenian Brotherhood in Northern California, 1858-1875

By Frances A. Leonard Rohrbacher
With Richard W. Rohrbacher, Ph.D.

Comparatively little has been written or is generally known of the involvement of Northern California Irishmen in the 19th Century international revolutionary movement known as the Fenian Brotherhood, also known as the Irish Republican Brotherhood. For clarification purposes, the two names seem to be interchangeable by historians when referring to this revolutionary Irish movement. Between the years, 1858 and 1866, the Fenian Brotherhood was organized in Northern California with an estimated membership of two to three thousand dedicated Irishmen. The Fenian Brotherhood movement affected British, Irish, American, and Canadian politics for many decades, even down to the present time. It occupies a peculiar place in American history because it is the only non-governmental organization in the history of the United States which armed and drilled publicly, and were bent on invading Canada. Their sole purpose was to use that country as a stepping-stone for the eventual liberation of Ireland by force of arms.¹

In California, funds were collected for arms and equipment for the aforementioned invasion. The roots of this revolutionary movement penetrated deeply into the Irish communities of Northern California, especially in the San Francisco and the Mother Lode areas.

The Irish people, natives of a small island, have managed to be a thorn in the side of the British Empire since the time of the Tudors. To quote one historian:

*To describe the modern history of Ireland as unhappy might justifiably be considered another example of English understatement. For when Henry VIII, anxious to prove to the Irish that among other things the Bishop of Rome was not their monarch, summoned a parliament to meet in Dublin in June, 1541, to confirm his new title of 'King of this land of Ireland as united, annexed, and knit forever to the Imperial crown of the realm of England.' He played his role in a tragedy which saw successive generations of that island's inhabitants doomed to a life of misery.*²

From the time of the American Revolution the Irish question became more and more of a problem for the English. Wolfe Tone and his followers in the Society of United Irishmen took their lead both from the examples of the American and the French. Unfortunately, for them, the Irish revolutionists were unable to duplicate the example set by the Americans and the French.

Following the massive Irish famine of 1845-47 and even before, thousands of poor Irish were forced to emigrate to the United States and Canada. Prior to the potato famine, the native Irish person sustained themselves on a diet of potatoes. When the potato blight took hold it became a matter for tenant farmers who had no cash reserves, to either starve, emigrate or die of disease brought on by the ravages of starvation. A great hunger covered the small island. There was sufficient wheat and other foodstuffs available to relieve the suffering of the Irish people. Unfortunately, instead of distributing this available food to alleviate hunger, the English land owners opted for financial gain and exported the food. This was done legally under the protection of the English Corn Laws.³ During this period many hundreds of thousands of Irish men, women and children died of starvation and disease. It is estimated that Ireland lost over two million through death and emigration, over one quarter of her population; a drop from approximately 8 million to 6 million.⁴ Of those who did emigrate, many took with them a deep and abiding hatred of Queen Victoria and her government.

The Irish who poured into the eastern cities of New York and Boston, for the most part, lived in miserable circumstances, and they blamed their predicament on their former English rulers. It was from this group in New York that James Stephens and John O'Mahoney, the founders of the Fenian Brotherhood, received a friendly and sincere reception.⁵

In 1858, almost concurrently with emigration, the new Irish revolutionary movement was in the process of germinating. This activity began concurrently in two

parts of the world. The first being Dublin, Ireland, and the second in New York City.⁶ Fenianism was a physical-force movement designed to gain its end by means of armed insurrection. This was in direct opposition to the earlier United Irishmen and Young Irelanders which had their beginnings as constitutional movements. When the leaders of the aforementioned groups despaired at receiving redress in non-violent ways, only then did they turn to rebellion as a means of gaining freedom from the English. Fenianism was much different from all other Irish movements inasmuch as they were mostly Roman Catholic and poor. In addition it not only embraced the Irish who remained in Ireland, but those who had emigrated to Britain and the United States.⁷ The members of this militant organization were sworn and dedicated to two objectives. The first was the liberation of Ireland from the rule of Queen Victoria's government. The second was the establishment of an Irish Republic.

James Stephens and John O'Mahoney, two well educated natives of Ireland, were the founders of the Fenian Brotherhood.⁸ These two men were also avid



James Stephens



John O'Mahoney

supporters of an unsuccessful uprising in Ireland in 1848, known as the Young Irelanders. Unlike the men who would eventually make up the Fenian Brotherhood this extremist group was made up of eleven men of education and ability.⁹ They had chivalrous ideals and were involved in an open conspiracy to prepare Irishmen for rebellion. This was to be accomplished by encouraging among the peasantry the accumulation of arms, acquisition of military knowledge, and the theory of tactics. They also encouraged the organization of political clubs and secret societies.

Their revolutionary enterprise was, to say the least, a dismal failure. Four of the eleven were tried, con-

victed, and sentenced to death. Their harsh sentences were later commuted to penal transportation to the island of Tasmania off the southern tip of Australia. John O'Mahoney evaded capture and fled to France.

While in Paris, John O'Mahoney, a Trinity College graduate and a Gaelic scholar, supported himself by teaching English, Latin, Greek, and translating into English Keating's *History of Ireland* from the Gaelic. O'Mahoney, because of his extensive knowledge of the Irish language and legends, named the movement "Fiana," which translated into "Fenian" in English. The term designated an order of professional soldiers among the pagan Irish. These were soldiers maintained by the Irish kings to guard their territories and uphold their authority. The word Fiana struck a cord of recognition among the peasants. Despite the fact that they were oppressed and very poor, they had an excellent knowledge of their ancient language and folk history. This was due to a rich oral tradition, and through the hedge schools of the 18th century. In both countries, Ireland and the United States, there was an immediate positive response to the term "Fenian Brotherhood."

James Stephens was also able to elude British capture and eventually made his way to France. He and O'Mahoney, who was ten years his senior, were, for several years, co-refugees in Paris. During that time Stephens planned the formation of a secret organization which was pledged to wrest Ireland from English rule by force of arms. It was during his Paris exile that Stephens formulated the structure of the Fenian movement. Eventually he reached the United States where he planted the seeds of yet another Irish rebellion. That seed germinated and in due time took root in Ireland, the United States and parts of Canada.¹⁰

It is an axiom with all Irish affairs that the past inevitably intrudes upon the present and the future. The formation of the Fenian Brotherhood was no exception

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The Fenian Movement From Page 11

as it had its origin in the 18th century. As the Young Irelanders of 1848 was the parent of the Fenians, the United Irish Society, founded in 1791 was the grandparent. The 1798 and 1803 attempts at revolution were both failures, but they supplied two excellent martyrs for the cause of liberation. They were Wolfe Tone in 1798 and Robert Emmet in 1803.¹¹ The names of these revered martyrs were used to designate many Fenian circles.

Another Young Irishman, Terence Bellew McManus was captured in the ill fated Irish insurrection of 1848. He was sentenced to be half-hanged, then drawn and quartered by her Majesty's government.¹² Eventually, his death sentence was commuted to exile for life to Australia where he joined his fellow insurrectionists.

In 1851 McManus escaped from prison, and with the help of sympathizers sailed from Australia to San Francisco. There he received a boisterous welcome from the Irish community. His presence probably more than anything else, explains why the Fenians were established in San Francisco during the late 1850s.¹³ McManus made San Francisco his permanent home and he died at St. Mary's Hospital in 1861.¹⁴

Friends of McManus who belonged to the Irish American Benevolent Association attempted to raise funds to erect a monument over his grave. Before their plans could be completed, Jeremiah Kavanagh and Colonel M.C. Smith were chosen as part of the six member delegation of the American Fenians to attend the McManus funeral. Under Kavanagh and Smith's direction, McManus' remains were removed from San Francisco. They arranged a funeral procession across the United States to New York City. The technique of organizing public funerals for political gain was already fully developed in Ireland. This act resulted in much needed publicity for the Fenian cause throughout the Irish American communities. The Archbishop of New York City, John Hughes, gave his blessing to the proceedings. Ultimately, McManus' body was shipped to Dublin where a highly politically motivated funeral was planned. The Fenians intended to use this burial as a springboard to enhance their own popularity and thus the beginnings of modern Irish nationalism.¹⁵

The McManus funeral precipitated the outright disapproval of the Fenian movement by the Roman Catholic Archbishop Paul Cullen of Dublin. He refused to allow the McManus remains to lie in state at Dublin's

Pro-Cathedral. Father Patrick Lavelle of Tuam, County Mayo publicly disagreed with Bishop Cullen and traveled to Dublin to preach the funeral oration. The result of this clerical controversy was the largest funeral ever seen in Dublin up to that time.¹⁶ This was the beginning of a chasm between the "higher" (i.e. older) and the "lower" (i.e. younger) clergy of the Catholic church regarding the Fenians.¹⁷

In 1870 the official Roman Catholic Church, both in Ireland and the United States condemned the movement as a secret society and ordered excommunication of Catholics who remained members of the Fenians. Despite appeals to Rome by Fenian members, the ban was never lifted. This single act led to strong anti-clerical feelings among many sincere members of the Fenian Brotherhood who were patriotic, but not necessarily anti-religious.¹⁸

Although the Fenian Brotherhood was principally located and directed from the heavily populated Eastern states, the movement spread rapidly across the nation wherever Irish enclaves were located. California, for example, a continent and 3,000 miles away, was the adopted home of thousands of the 'Sons of Erin'. Beginning in 1849, they had responded to the lure of glimmering gold. In 1850 and 1852, the Irish came in droves to the gold fields.¹⁹ They represented many places, Canada, England, Ireland, Australia, and such cities on the Eastern Seaboard as Boston, New York and Philadelphia. Regardless of their place of origin, California was a long way from home. For the most part, each gold seeker had one thought in mind, to strike it rich and return home with a fortune from the California gold fields.

Initially they mined, but few made their fortune. As time passed, many settled into various occupations such as merchants, grocers, saloon keepers, carpenters, innkeepers, blacksmiths, liverymen, brick masons, lawmen, ditch tenders, common laborers, farmers, school teachers, and lawyers. Once naturalized, some were even elected to become county office holders.

In 1857, a group of Columbia Irishmen organized a chapter of the Hibernian Benevolent Society (HBS). This society, first established in the eastern cities for new immigrants, was designed to offer fraternal and material support to its members and their families in event of their demise. During the 19th century it was quite common for the Irish to emigrate together, often in kinship groups. They usually settled in enclaves or near to one another. These men joined with their fellow Irishmen from Columbia and nearby Jamestown to make up the membership of the Columbia Chapter of the HBS.²⁰ Their

preamble reads as follows:

*We, Irishmen and the descendant of Irishmen whose names are herewith annexed, desirous of associating ourselves together for the purpose of benevolence, to aid each other in sickness and adversity, cultivating a feeling of mutual respect, promoting and extending our social relations, do agree to adopt the following Constitution and by-laws for our government.*²¹

It was to these industrious Irishmen, members and non-members alike, that the Fenian Brotherhood brought their message of deliverance from English domination. Many Columbia men, along with thousands of other Irishmen in the gold fields, had suffered religious repression and extreme poverty under English rule of their homeland. They all possessed deeply ingrained and painful memories of generation upon generation of past grievances. Unlike long time inhabitants of the United States or industrial areas of England, Irish people lived in a society where one was respected for his cooperative spirit rather than for the degree to which he economically dominated others. The Irish word "comhair," translated means help or cooperation to one's kin or neighbors.²²

The level of education varied among these Irishmen, but with few exceptions, they were literate.²³ The Charter members were no doubt well educated as is evidenced by the wording of their charter and their demonstrated knowledge of parliamentary procedure.

1864 was the year that the Eastern leadership of the Fenians chose to expand in the west. That knowledge alarmed the English government, as they regarded the movement as a potential danger to the British Empire, especially their holdings in Canada. It was also the year that Fenianism was introduced into Columbia in the Mother Lode.²⁴ By 1864, Columbia and Tuolumne County were in an acute economic and population decline. In retrospect, therefore, Columbia would seem to be a poor choice for a fledgling branch of the Fenians. In reality Columbia was ripe for the movement because many of its Irish inhabitants and future Fenians had lived in San Francisco at the same time as Terrance McManus in the late 1850s.²⁵

In 1864, Jeremiah Kavanaugh, who had been chosen earlier to accompany the body of Terrence McManus to Dublin, was made an officer at large for the Fenians for the entire state of California. The following year, at the Cincinnati Convention of 1865 Kavanaugh was selected as the central organizer for California and the entire Pacific Coast.²⁶

Recruiting for the Fenian Brotherhood in the west was very difficult until after the close of the War Between the States. For example, in September of 1864 a general convention of the Fenian Brotherhood was held in San Francisco with only thirty-four members in attendance.²⁷ Once the war ended, however, thousands of Irish born soldiers were mustered out from active duty in both the United States and Confederate armies and they swelled the ranks of the Fenian Brotherhood. General Thomas Francis Meagher's original and famous Irish Brigade and the Corcoran Legion were Fenians. The 69th of New York was made up of Irish men as was approximately two thirds of the 9th Massachusetts Infantry. There were in excess of 200 thousand Irish in the Union Army. They became a ready source of trained militants who understood the cause espoused by the Fenian Brotherhood.²⁸

In 1863 three well known former residents of Columbia, Thomas Cazneau, Mortimer C. Smith, and Thomas Mulcahey filed articles of incorporation to publish an Irish national newspaper in San Francisco. These men had become Fenians, and most certainly recommended that their friends and associates in Columbia be recruited.

The principal medium of the day, the newspaper, played an important role in the organization of the Fenian movement. The Fourth Estate's major contributions were local, national and international. In addition the newspapers played a large part by dissemination of news regarding the Fenian Brotherhood and announcements of meeting times and places, and most importantly news from both Ireland and England. The large metropolitan newspapers wrote articles of national and international import which were in turn picked up by the smaller, mostly weekly newspapers. The editors/publishers of the weeklies had no compunctions in demonstrating their personal bias on both sides of all political issues. The trouble between Ireland and England was no exception.

News of Ireland was easily accessible through the Irish-American press which slanted its news selection to serve the needs and interests of their Irish readers. Few editors refrained from voicing their opinions when printing Fenian news. The result of the nationally oriented papers was a more or less united Irish population when pondering events from their homeland.

During the Civil War, Irish-American opinion came down on both sides of the issue. It is generally agreed among historians and also interesting to note that the Southern supporters saw the Civil War as the War of

The Fenian Movement From Page 55

Northern Agression, while those who came down on the side of the North referred to it as the War of Southern Rebellion.

The Saturday morning edition of Sonora's March 12, 1864, *Union Democrat*, announced that initiatory steps had been taken for the formation of the Columbia Fenian Brotherhood. Seventy five potential members signed the roll.²⁹ The men who made up the Fenian Brotherhood in Columbia, and later Copperopolis and Sonora, were a microcosm of the rural Fenian movement in California. A week later, the *Union Democrat* reported on the second meeting.

*The Fenian Brotherhood of this place met again last Saturday and elected permanent officers. John O'Brien was chosen President; Patrick Cosgrove, Secretary, M. Brady, Treasurer; William Stuart, John Griffin, John Galligan, Thomas Blanchfield, and John O'Hara as a Committee of Safety. Quite a large number joined the Society that night.*³⁰

The Fenian Brotherhood was organized in the following manner. The Circle was the local organization. It was made up of approximately fifty men, although no definite number of members was required. The number fifty appears to have been the minimum allowed. These men signed a pledge to, among other things, "...labour with earnest zeal for the liberation of Ireland from the yoke of England... The full text of the Fenian pledge will be found later in this paper. The governing board was elected by the local membership. The Centre was elected by the local members and was the presiding officer of the Circle. He derived his authority from the State Centre, a man appointed by the Head Centre, John O'Mahoney in New York. James Stephens was the Head Centre in Ireland.

Not every member of the Irish community was in agreement with their Columbia brethren. A letter to the Editor of the *Union Democrat* followed just two weeks later.

Your truly liberal course in all that interests the foreign born citizen as well as the native, prompts me to request...that you will publish the circular letter of Bishop Duggan of Chicago, used by Catholic Churches, respecting Fenian Clubs. I am induced...to trouble you because of being truly desirous to act correctly, as an Irishman and a citizen and because I am not satisfied, conscientiously, that

abetting this new attempt said against English rule in my native land is either the best that can be done...or in itself a justifiable means to accomplish the desired end in view...we are advised...in plain language, in words not to be misunderstood, when speaking of the leaders of the Fenian societies. 'They cannot surely hope to succeed in the dark plot of violence and blood whilst their real design contemplates the enjoyment of the ill directed generosity of their deluded associates.

*Signed Faugh-A-Ballah*³¹

Roughly translated the meaning of the Gaelic Faugh-A-Ballah means, "Leave things as they are!" or perhaps, a more literal translation would be "Leave [it] at home!"

A further indication of the polarized feelings for and against the Fenian Brotherhood was the February 1864 letter circulated throughout the diocese of Chicago by Bishop James Duggan, and the diocese of Philadelphia by Bishop James Wood. In their letters the Bishops condemned the Fenian Brotherhood as a secret society. They also named it, in every sense, an illegal association. Bishop Duggan, in his letter of condemnation referred to the unanimous vote of the Bishops of Ireland led by Bishop Paul Cullen, and by most Bishops in the United States before whom this matter had been brought. Bishop Duggan concluded his letter with the following warning:

*...should any prove so perverse as to become members of a body so unequivocally reprobated by the laws of the church and of civil society, or directly aid in or abet by their contributions and presence its unholy objects, they are to be excluded from the sacraments until they perform suitable penance for the scandal given by their conduct, and for the disobedience they shall prove themselves convicted. I remain, Dear Sir, faithfully yours in Christ, James, Bishop of Chicago.*³²

However, the bishops of California, including Archbishop Allemany of San Francisco, did not join their fellow United States and Irish bishops in the condemnation of the Fenian Brotherhood.³³

The charges of secrecy lodged against the Fenian Brotherhood by both clergy and other detractors doesn't seem logical. According to all reports of the time, the Fenian Brotherhood meetings were open to reporters from the local press. At the November 3, 1863 convention during a plenary session the Fenian Brotherhood

members went on record as denying charges that it was a secret society. They went so far as to publish the general pledge taken for membership in the brotherhood. Examination of the oath, other than pledging to liberate Ireland from the yoke of England, seems rather benign and certainly doesn't hint of secrecy.

I.....solely pledge my sacred word of honor as a truthful and honest man that I will labor with earnest zeal for the liberation of Ireland from the yoke of England and for the establishment of a free and independent government on Irish soil; that I will implicitly obey the commands of my superior officers in the Fenian Brotherhood, that I will faithfully discharge the duties of my membership as laid down in the constitution and bylaws thereof; that I will do my utmost to promote feelings of love, harmony, and kindly forbearance among all Irishmen; and that I will foster, defend, and propagate the aforesaid Fenian Brotherhood to the utmost of my power. ³⁴

The California Fenian movement continued unabated. With few exceptions there was no mention of any reaction, approval or disapproval, either by civilian or clerical authorities, recorded in the newspapers.

The Columbia Circle maintained a fairly low profile while continuing to recruit for the cause. Through their efforts the Wolfe Tone Circle was formed in Sonora in September 1865. Most probably they were involved in the formation of the Robert Emmet Circle in Copperopolis, Calaveras County.

Meanwhile, plans moved ahead for insurrection and the eventual overthrow of English rule in Ireland. With the American Civil War drawing to a rapid close, the Irish revolutionaries apparently had their eyes on fostering revolution in both Ireland and Canada. The following story appeared in the *Tuolumne Courier* on March 18, 1865. This story was reprinted from an Ohio paper.

The movements, objects, and character of this organization of Irishmen are not just now attracting considerable attention, not only in this country, but in England and the Canadian provinces, if the indications are not deceptive...to constitute an element of political consideration second only to the great struggle between the two sections of our country [U.S.]. The controlling purpose of this society is well understood to be the freedom of Ireland from the yoke of English tyranny and oppression and her elevation to her position of a sovereign nation. By

what manner this is to be done is yet to be developed...the call is for a grand convention of the Brotherhood at Cincinnati on the 17th of January next...the headquarters of this organization is in the United States and its members are said to exceed 150,000 including some of our best Irish generals are now in the service of the North. In England, Ireland, and the Canada's, large organizations also exist. They are said to have ample means to carry out their ends... it is believed the Fenians think the time for accomplishing their object is near at hand...let England then beware of the coming storm. The Cleveland Plain Dealer. ³⁵

The Civil War ended on April 9, 1865. For the most part the war was removed from the everyday life of Northern California citizens despite the fact that California Volunteers from Northern California still served in Arizona, Nevada, and Utah.

A member of the California Volunteers stationed at Fort Yuma wrote the following letter to his father, a part of which was printed in the *Mariposa Gazette*. Speaking of the Fenians, this youthful Civil War veteran wrote:

I see by the last papers that they are drilling, not only in squads, but in Battalions. Hurrah for the old sod! She must and shall be free for old Uncle-Sam has taken it in hand and we will carry the stars and stripes and plant them on the capital in spite of the power of England. I know that you would not only give your consent to my going, but would feel proud that you have a son who is willing to go. I hope it won't be long before a call is made for men to go and assist in the liberation of Ireland from the despotic power of England. Wouldn't it be grand to see her have a republican form of government of her

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*own, and in full enjoyment of all her rights? It pleases me to think of it...I hope God will spare me to strike for the home of my ancesters and my country.*³⁶

Throughout California there was active recruitment of new members into the Fenian ranks. In 1865 the *Pajaro Times* announced a Circle had been organized in Watsonville with P.J. Kelley as Centre. The article went on to list 26 new Circles that had been formed prior to August 1 of that year. There was even a ladies Circle formed in San Jose. "...There are seven more who have got the necessary instructions how to act, but have not yet reported."³⁷ A glaring omission was the Circle in Columbia who obviously already knew "how to act" and was busy forming new Circles in Sonora and Copperopolis.

Apparently, great hopes were held within the Fenian Movement that the American Civil War would drive a wedge between the United States and England. William D'Arcy noted in his dissertation:

*The Fenians took for granted that once the Civil War was completed, a rupture between the United States and Great Britain would occur. There is no doubt that the belief was encouraged by [U.S.] recruiting and government officials. Ill feeling and resentment toward England had grown in this country during the war. It began with the recognition of the Confederate States as a belligerent power when 'Privateers' for the south were built and outfitted in British ports despite the protests of Charles Francis Adams, American Minister to the Court of St. James. The Fenians made the natural mistake of construing the anti-English feeling as a pro-Irish sentiment.*³⁸

Albert Francisco, editor of the *Sonora Union Democrat* was an early and fervent supporter of the Fenian movement. He reported:

After an able and eloquent address from Mr. Kavanaugh who is clothed with full power to organize associations of the Brotherhood on the Pacific Coast...we observed that the wonderful progress of the Brotherhood has silenced the jeers and discord with which it was at first assailed. Even the English journals speak of it in terms of respect. Thank

*God and Fenian legions for the freedom of their native land.*³⁹

Perhaps in the eyes of Albert Francisco some English journals were respectful, but the *London Times* in the autumn of 1865 discounted any possibility of success for the Fenian cause and reported:

*"their enterprise may not be the wickedest but,...by far the wildest...yet planned by Irish agitators...is there any people under the sun more unfit for a republican form of government than the Irish? Is there any character so deficient in those political virtues which are the life of republics as the Celtic?"*⁴⁰

Such sentiments as that expressed by the *London Times* were guaranteed to infuriate and insult the entire Irish-American community. The Irishmen residing in California were certainly no exception. News of Irish-English relations traveled quickly to the West Coast through the telegraph which had been completed in 1861.

In the fall of 1865, news of an impending revolution in Ireland made its way across the United States. The Irish patriots in the homeland were supposedly poised to strike against the English. Estimates of their strength was set at 200,000. It was even suggested that demobilized officers and enlisted men from the recently concluded American Civil War were moving into Ireland. It was rumored that they intended to assume control of the operations to be inaugurated in the near future. Shortly after the conclusion of the American Civil War, Sir Thomas Larcom, British Under Secretary of State for Ireland wrote to the Viceroy of Ireland, Lord Wodehouse, with great fear and trepidation about the Irish-American soldiers who had been demobilized from the Union army.

*Fenian Brotherhood [is] noted to have members in the late [American Civil] war who each had rifle and revolver... The United States has scarcely conquered the Southern Confederacy and are not yet in a position to engage in an English war...such is the aspect of Fenianism in America...*⁴¹

In September of 1865 the English authorities headquartered at Dublin Castle, the seat of British government in Ireland, had enough evidence to raid the offices of the Fenian's newspaper, *The Irish People*. The seizure of the presses and the arrest of the staff dealt

the Fenian cause a near fatal blow. The chances of an uprising in Ireland were over for the present.⁴²

The *New York Times*, "London letter" reported the following:

*...fifty arrests have been made in Dublin, nearly as many in Cork, and a few in Liverpool,...among the rest, a few Irish-Americans...the panic at Cork and other towns in the southwest have not been diminished. There are runs upon the banks. Steamers and passenger's luggage have been searched for documents and revolvers. A gun boat cruising off Cork to intercept Yankee ships said to be on the way to Ireland with arms for the Fenians...there are rumors that a considerable portion of the [British] garrison are sworn Fenians.*⁴³

It should be noted that the *New York Times* held the Fenian Brotherhood in contempt and used every opportunity to take exception to their cause. An example printed in the July 26, 1865 issue stated:

*The natural desire of an Irishman, uneducated and youthful is to oppose somebody or something and the natural enemy of the same individual is merry England.*⁴⁴

An example of the English alarm is expressed in the cryptic dispatches of Sir Thomas Larcom, to his government.

*...large amounts of money from America...hatred of English government fostered by press...squads of Fenians sailing for Ireland with arms. Cork a hotbed...depth and extent of organization beyond previous conceptions.*⁴⁵

Perhaps Sir Thomas over estimated the amount of wealth at the disposal of American Irish when he reported to his government.

Unbeknownst to the newly formed Fenians in California the grand plan of the Fenian Brotherhood in Ireland was, for the present, doomed.

Local newspapers played a vital part in reporting and encouraging the spread of the movement during the peak years of the Fenian Brotherhood. From October 1865 on, the *Union Democrat* as well as the *Tuolumne Courier*, were filled with Fenian news. In Calaveras County, the *Copperopolis Courier* carried local news of Copperopolis' Robert Emmet Circle along with a great number of national and international stories dealing

with the Fenian movement.

In September a Fenian Brotherhood National Convention was held in Philadelphia. Under their rules one voting delegate from each circle was allowed. During the conclave, a new constitution was drafted. Also discussed were the possible directions the movement should pursue in coming months and years. There is no mention in the local press that the Circles in California were represented and it is unclear if Head Centre, John Hammill and the State Organizer Jeremiah Kavanaugh attended.

In early October a state convention of the Fenians was held in San Francisco. Each Circle of the Fenians

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was represented by one delegate or proxy. The members numbered seventy-five delegates. The proceedings were conducted behind closed doors. Reports that leaked out of the conclave indicate the proceedings were met with enthusiasm and that the members pledged to earnestly work for the accomplishment of the objects of the organization. Hammill and Kavanaugh were elected for another year of leadership.⁴⁶

On October 14, 1865 on the front page of Sonora's *Union Democrat* the following impassioned call to action appeared:

*Brothers, the hour we have so anxiously worked and prayed for has come at last. We are now called upon to give the final proof of our patriotism and devotions to our native land...we know, Brothers, what your General Council and Head Centre have promised on your behalf...[they] assessed each circle \$20. for every member as the apportionment of this FINAL CALL now made on the Fenian organization in America. What we do must be done quickly...in God's name, go to work...on our faith as men, and before God as Christians, we make this appeal to you in honesty of purpose, in the fervor of our patriotism, and in compliance with our duty. The rest we leave to you and Heaven...Signed, John O'Mahoney, Head Centre Fenian Brotherhood, W.R. Roberts, President, Central Council, Headquarters FENIAN BROTHERHOOD, New York. August 10, 1865.*⁴⁷

Obviously the Columbia Fenians were well aware of the promulgation prior to its publication as two meetings on this subject were already planned, no doubt on orders from the Head Centre. This is reported in the same issue of Sonora's *Union Democratic*.

The Fenians of Columbia will hold a mass meeting this evening at Fallon's Hall. Every friend of Ireland is invited to be present. Eminent speakers are expected to address this meeting. Let there be a full turnout as Ireland now needs the continence and support of all her friends. She is approaching a crisis in her history...Do not forget that the Friends of Ireland in Sonora meet tomorrow at 2 o'clock in Greenwood's Theatre, to take measures to aid the cause of Ireland in her noble struggle to be free. Let

*every friend of the cause be on hand.*⁴⁸

The reason for the delay between the issuance of the "Final Call" in August of 1865 and its publication in October was probably the dissension between delegates at the Philadelphia Convention regarding the direction the Fenians should take in Canada or Ireland. O'Mahoney anticipated that James Stephens in Ireland would be prepared to take action against the English when the call to arms was issued. On the other hand, William Roberts felt an invasion of Canada would expedite the eventual overthrow of the English in Ireland. British Canada was sparsely populated and British troops where the Fenians planned to engage them were ill-trained and ill-equipped to repel an organized invasion. John O'Mahoney appears to have been a sincere, but autocratic man. At best he might be called a dreamer. His leadership had been often challenged by James Stephens who castigated him for lack of funds to carry out his grandiose plans. Exaggerated reports of the amount of money which had been accumulated throughout the United States were reported in various Northern California papers. They indicated that thousands of wealthy Irishmen in the U.S. stood ready to sacrifice all of their worldly goods in the name of Irish liberty.⁴⁹ Despite these exaggerated reports of funds, the lack of money was genuine. The facts of the case proved not to come up to the hyperbole of the news reporters. Another report stated that a massed meeting of over 6,000 enthusiastic Irishmen was held in San Francisco.⁵⁰

There is ample evidence that United States Fenian Circles did their best to provide adequate funds to carry out plans to liberate Ireland where organization and proper preparation was sorely lacking. Regardless of O'Mahoney's domineering nature, which historical records attest to, he, beyond any doubt, truly believed in the struggle for Irish independence. Unfortunately, O'Mahoney was constantly besieged and challenged by lesser, self-serving men such as William Roberts in the organization.⁵¹

The following was probably a belated response to the August 10, 1865 "Final Call" of John O'Mahoney. This was no doubt clipped by the *Union Democrat's* Editor from some Eastern newspaper, although the source was not acknowledged. Albert Francisco, the editor, may have printed the article as a warning to his Fenian friends of the hopelessness of their desire to liberate Ireland.

...From all we have learned the principle object

of the order is the liberation of much abused and down trodden Ireland, from English oppression and tyranny by means of the sword. We are in favor of the fullest and freest independence to Ireland...such a people should be free and independent...The obstacles are insurmountable. The Protestants...are opposed to the movement...They were opposed...in 1798 and 1848...England has a large army...The Fenians and friends are without the means to overcome these obstacles...the deliverance of Ireland by force of arms, would be Quixotic, and [will] end in dire disaster.⁵²

The fact that American Fenians were leaving for Ireland was a development the Irish-American newspapers made little or no effort to hide. The English government knew they were coming, but had great difficulty distinguishing between the naturalized Irish-Americans who had come home for a visit and those who had shown up to help with the revolution.⁵³

According to newspaper accounts the Fenians were stirring up matters in Ireland and causing considerable excitement. The official Catholic Church was arrayed against the Fenian Brotherhood. Despite this opposition the Fenians made great headway among the common Irish people. Young men joined the order all over the country and prepared themselves by drilling in squads and larger organizations. The English authorities used paid informers to discover the movements of the Brotherhood in order to suppress them. Three encounters took place with confirmed loss of life in at least one.⁵⁴

The American Government, most especially, Secretary of State William H. Seward and President Andrew Johnson were advised of this impending military action by the Fenians. The plan was to seize and hold some portion of the British territory lying north of the Maine frontier. At the same time, an uprising in Ireland would take place. This would enlarge the northern frontier of the United States and at the same time proclaim an Irish Republic in the homeland.

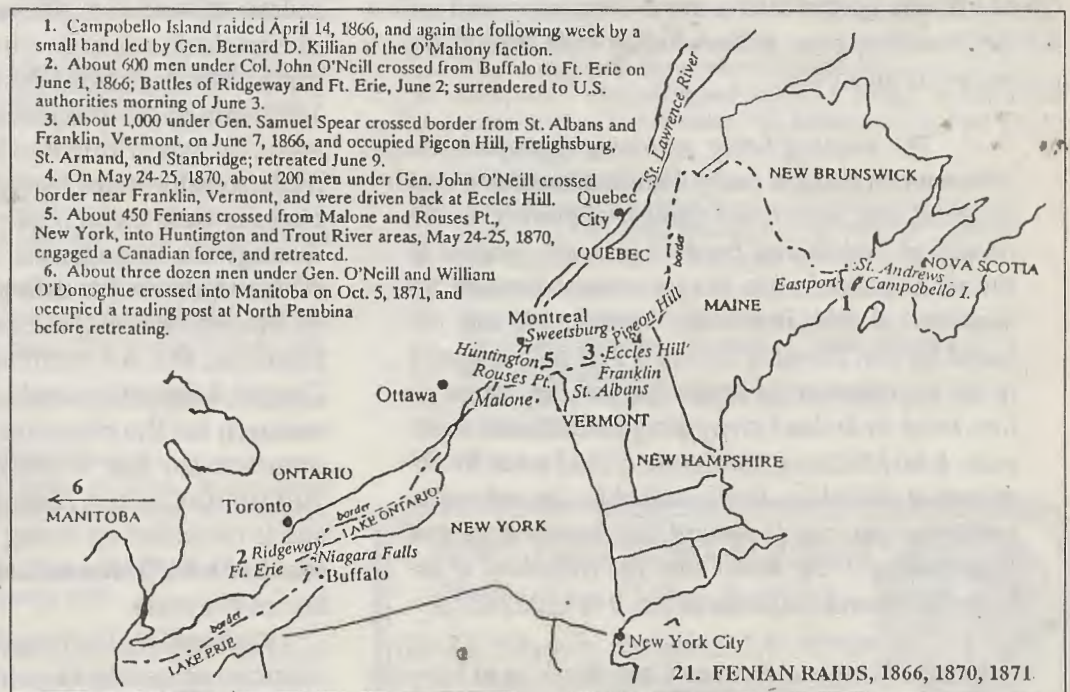
Despite protests from the English Government, the President of the United States and the Secretary of State are said to have replied to the Fenian's plan in a somewhat ambiguous way, but at the same time they gave the distinct impression, although tacitly, that once the plan was an accomplished fact it would be recognized by the United States. (See Map of Fenian Raids, 1866, 1870 & 1871).⁵⁵ Bernard Killian wrote to Secretary Seward specifying the areas the Fenians contemplated seizing. It appears that Seward was too shrewd to reply in writing as there is no written record of his reply. In fact, his office kept the English informed of Fenian activities.⁵⁶

To give an example of the enthusiasm the impending invasion of Canada brought about, the Fenian Brothers of Columbia and Sonora promptly engaged Sonora's Greenwood's Theatre for the evening of November 9, for a Grand Ball. This was to be a fund raiser for, as it was described, "a sacred purpose"⁵⁷

The Columbia Circle authorized Matt Brady to immediately receive contributions to further the movement. A total of \$731.45 was received from 173 individual donations. The largest amount received from an individual was \$30, six gave \$20 each, twelve gave \$10 each while the remaining donations were in the \$5 to fifty cent bracket.⁵⁸

On October 16th Sonora's Wolfe Tone Circle held a large and enthusiastic meeting. From this gathering came a warm and sympathetic feeling for the cause of

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Map of Fenian Raids

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Irish freedom. \$600 was raised. Considering the size of the group this sum compares well with sums collected in much larger cities.⁵⁹ Some individuals were not to be outdone by their Circles. For example, the Sonora Wolfe Tone Circle of the Fenian Brotherhood gave their sincere thanks to Mr. M. Byrne of Chinese Camp's, newly formed, Montgomery Circle, for a liberal donation of \$34.50. Of that amount \$30 was a personal donation.⁶⁰

The *Tuolumne Courier* carried a story about the recently formed Montgomery Circle in Chinese Camp. The *Union Democrat* reported:

*There was a rousing meeting of the Friends of Ireland held in the Sonora theatre on Sunday last. Eloquent addresses were made, and substantial given to the cause with a liberal hand. The Fenian movement is carrying everything before it to this state, and we rejoice at it. If it does succeed, it will not be for the want of enthusiastic workers and liberal hearted friends.*⁶¹

The Circle in Chinese Camp was short lived as were many Circles in unstable mining camps throughout Northern California.

The *Union Democrat* reported the Friends of Ireland, held a Saturday night meeting called by the Columbia Circle. It was hailed as the most 'imposing and enthusiastic' meeting ever witnessed in that area. The reporter went on to say:

*...The meeting being regularly organized, the chairman introduced Judge Galvin who made a very eloquent and emotional speech, appealing to the friends of justice and freedom to come forward to the aid of Ireland. Mr. Nugent next addressed the meeting. A very impressive speech. He was followed by Mr. Ferrel of Brown's Flat who appealed to his countryman to lend what aid they could do to those in Ireland struggling for national existence. John Mullaney, the Center of the Fenian Brotherhood of this place, loudly called for [members] to give what you can to forward this heaven approved undertaking. The result was the collection of between \$300 and 400 dollars.*⁶²

From the National Fenian Cash Book as of November 1, 1865 the amount of \$5,000 was recorded as hav-

ing been received from Jeremiah Kavanaugh and the California Fenians. Of the aforementioned \$5,000, approximately \$950 came from Tuolumne County.⁶³

An example of how well the Irish supported one another can be found in an issue of the *Union Democrat* which reported the opening of a new saloon in Sonora:

*...Dennis [Ryan] has christened his new saloon THE FENIAN and a more true hearted son of the 'old sod' than its proprietor can't be found in the country. Give him a call.*⁶⁴

News from the East indicated there was a unanimity of action between the various branches of the Fenian Brotherhood which was misleading, if not outright untruthful. The Canadian raid had already been agreed upon at the Philadelphia Convention,⁶⁵ and the Roberts faction had successfully shackled the power of O'Mahoney.⁶⁶ The Philadelphia agreement was probably ratified in secret at the San Francisco Convention.

Part 2 of "The Fenian Brotherhood in Northern California, 1858-1875" will appear in the winter issue #28 of the Dogtown Territorial Quarterly.

About the Authors:

Frances A. Leonard Rohrbacher has for many years been a student of the Irish in the Mother Lode since the Gold Rush days in California. Her roots are both in Ireland and in California. Her mother was a native of San Andreas and was born to Irish parents. Her grandfather Charles McGuirk came to Columbia in 1857, mined for the yellow metal and even traded his labor for water during the construction of the ditches that brought water from the high Sierra to the Columbia gold fields which were starved for water from May through the first rains in the fall. Frances is a native of Watsonville and is a Registered Nurse, a graduate of St. Mary's Hospital in San Francisco. Among other affiliations, she is a member of the Columbia State Park Docent Association and in that capacity has done much research for the museum. In 1995, she won honorable mention for her work on a research paper for the Tuolumne County Historical Society. At the moment, she is considering doing a book on the Fenian Movement of which this article would form parts of a number of chapters.

Richard W. Rohrbacher is the husband of Frances numbering nearly 44 years. He has been a contributor to the *Dogtown Territorial Quarterly* on two previous

occasions. The first article was entitled "Mountain Meadow Massacre" and the second was "The California That Nearly Was" which was about Father Eugene MacNamara who, in 1846, envisioned bringing two thousand Irish families to California and settling them in what is now the San Joaquin Valley. He is the author of *Yesteryear's Child, Golden Days and Summer Nights*, a book based on his mother's memories of growing up in Oroville, California 100 years ago. He is currently working on a book of his own memories of growing up in Stockton, California. The working title is *Growing Up Before the Bomb*. This book will cover the decade from 1935-45. He is also a produced playwright.

*** Dedication ***

This article on the Fenian Brotherhood is dedicated to the memory of Historian Joseph A. King. Without his encouragement this article would never have been written. May he rest in peace.

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The Fenian Brotherhood in Northern California, 1858-1875, Part 2

By Frances A. Leonard Rohrbacher
With Richard W. Rohrbacher, Ph.D.

Part 1 of "The Fenian Brotherhood in Northern California, 1858-1875" appeared in DTQ #27, Fall 1996.

The British Government occupied Ireland from the time of the Tudors, most especially Henry VIII. He, and the monarchs who followed him, cruelly suppressed by force every attempt of the Irish to throw off the yoke of heavy-handed occupation. Under the ten year rule (1649-1658) of Oliver Cromwell the Irish were not only held down, but had to answer to harsh Puritan rule. Cromwell left behind him in Ireland a name for cruelty, and the passage of three hundred years has scarcely erased it from Irish memory. During Cromwell's time, an attempt was made to stamp out all vestiges of Roman Catholicism. For example, no Roman Catholic could own land, hold public office, or vote. Priests and nuns were summarily executed.

What is now known as the Irish Potato Famine took place during the 19th Century under Queen Victoria. During the famine the population of Ireland was reduced from approximately 8 million to 6 million through death and emigration. Thousands upon thousands of Irish settled on the east coast of the United States and one piece of baggage each and every Irish person brought with them was an abiding hatred of the English.

When gold was discovered in California in 1849 the Irish came in droves to try their luck at finding the glittering yellow metal. They also brought with them their desire to once and for all remove the British from their homeland. The Fenian Brotherhood, also known as the Irish Republican Brotherhood, was active on the east coast. This movement began simultaneously in both Ireland and New York in the late 1850s. The Brotherhood was organized in northern California between 1858 and 1866 with an estimated membership of 2-3,000 dedicated Irishmen. The grandiose goal of the Fenian Brotherhood was to force the liberation of Ireland from Great Britain by invasion and occupation of Canada.

A correspondent for the *New York Herald* in Toronto, Canada reported that the Canadian Provisional Government and supporters of English rule in Canada were in a great state of agitation regarding the pros-

pect of an invasion by the Fenian Brotherhood.⁶⁷ This report and others like it confused the California Fenians as to the chances of success of their venture.

The *Copperopolis Courier* reported the successful grand New Year's ball held by the Fenians on January 1, 1866 which was held in Armory Hall in Copperopolis as a fundraiser for the Emmett Circle of the Fenian Brotherhood. A beautiful Irish flag was presented by the lady friends of the Brotherhood. The ball was a great success with nearly every town within thirty miles represented. Nineteen members of the reception committee hailed from Tuolumne County. The receipts received from admission to the ball were about \$2,000.⁶⁸

The Columbia Fenian Circle, not to be outdone by the Sonora Circle, voted to have a grand ball for the benefit of the national Fenian Brotherhood on St. Patrick's Day, 1866. They promised that this would be the grandest affair ever witnessed in Tuolumne County. They also guaranteed that everyone who was a friend of Ireland as well as those who had a desire to "...trip the light fantastic" will most certainly be present.⁶⁹

These balls were very well attended by both Irish and non-Irish men and women. It is intriguing to note that the sole purpose of these parties was to raise money to buy arms and ammunition to be used against the British. There evidently was little if any problem in the minds of the citizens that their money was going to be used for the purpose of insurrection on the part of the Irish. The *Tuolumne Courier* reported:

*The revered names of Ireland's patriots occupied the walls in large letters of green cedar twigs, and in prominent places hung the Irish and American flags in close communion. As if together they were hatching mischief for their mutual enemy. On the whole it was a lovely party and must have netted a handsome sum for the Brotherhood.*⁷⁰

In November of 1865 a new tabloid weekly news-

paper, *The Irish People*, was founded in San Francisco. Its editorial policy was devoted to the interests of the Fenian Brotherhood. There seems to be some disagreement about who was the editor of *The Irish People*. According to the November 11, 1865 issue of the *Sonora Union Democrat*, the editor was Felix O'Bryne.⁷¹ B.F. Alley (History of Tuolumne County, 1983) indicates that in 1865 Robert Ferral, a Sonora attorney, moved to San Francisco to become the editor. He had previously acquired his trade as a practical printer at the *Sonora Union Democrat* published by A.N. Francisco.⁷² To further confuse the issue, James O'Sullivan of San Francisco signed himself as the editor of *The Irish People* in March, 1866.⁷³

The *Tuolumne Courier* also took note of the publication of *The Irish People*.

*...It is a fine looking sheet, devoted to the interest of Ireland and filled with prime reading matter both original and selective. The name of the editor does not appear, but whoever he may be, his initial number proves he is no novice at the business...*⁷⁴

The same edition of the *Tuolumne Courier* carried a report of Fenian arrests in Ireland.

*The arrest of members of the Fenian Brotherhood, their examination and a commitment for trial, continues in Ireland. Documents from America are largely mixing up in the proceedings against the Fenians. The number of Fenians awaiting trial is daily augmenting.*⁷⁵

The "documents from America" referred to were the naturalization papers of some of the Fenians awaiting trial. The British Government stood fast behind their doctrine of *Indefeasibility of Allegiance*. This doctrine of the Crown, declared in effect that *once an Englishman, always an Englishman*. Lord George Clarendon, Britain's Foreign Secretary, told Henry B. Adams, the American Ambassador to the Court of St. James, "That no British born subject could ever, or under no circumstance renounce, or be resolved from his allegiance to his sovereign."⁷⁶ The British Government held that a former British citizen could never shake off his allegiance and it fastened on him again whenever he returned to the land of his nativity or any part of the United Kingdom.⁷⁷ Of course this flew in the face of the declaration of intent to become a United States citizen, which at that time read:

I _____ (Name) _____ do declare on oath, that it is bona fide my intention to become a CITIZEN OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, and renounce, forever, all allegiance and fidelity to all and any foreign Prince, Potentate, State and Sovereignty, whatever; and particularly to [Victoria, Queen of Great Britain and Ireland], whose subject I now am, so help me God.⁷⁸

This declaration was taken by any and all foreign born persons when they declared their intention to become a citizen of the United States. The British doctrine of *Indefeasibility of Allegiance* as expressed by Lord Clarendon struck at the very heart of United States sovereignty. The question of United States citizenship being recognized by Great Britain goes back to the very beginnings of this nation with regards to the impressment (forced enlistment) of American seamen. In 1806 President Madison reported on the British infingement of the rights of neutral commerce and the impressment of American seamen. The U.S. Senate resolution attacked British seizures "as an unprovoked aggression and a violation of neutral rights."⁷⁹ The British took no heed of the American position, and the peace treaty signed at Ghent, Belgium in December, 1815 ignored the issue of impressment of American seamen, even though this was one of the salient points which had brought about the War of 1812.⁸⁰ The end of the Napoleonic wars ended the pressure on the Royal Navy and the practice of impressment died out, however it was never renounced by the British as a method of obtaining sailors for their navy.

Large numbers of California Fenians had been naturalized and although they would not be directly affected unless they returned to Ireland some 6,000 miles away, they undoubtedly empathized with rela-

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The Fenian Brotherhood From Page 11

tives in the eastern United States who would be subject to imprisonment if and when they returned to Ireland.

The *Tuolumne Courier* reported that bonds were being sold for the new "Republic of Ireland." The sale of these bonds were expected to bring hundreds of thousands of dollars into Head Centre John O'Mahoney's treasury. They were issued in denominations of \$10, \$20, \$50, \$100, and \$500. On the face of the bond was Erin pointing with her left hand to a sword lying on the ground, and an American Union soldier kneeling to take the sword in preparation to departing for Ireland. In the background, a harp and Irish wolfhound complete the picture. This picture is flanked with pictures of Robert Emmett, Wolfe Tone, and other Irish heroes according to the denomination of the bonds. The pledge of payment read:

_____ Date _____ It is hereby certified that the Irish Republic is indebted to _____ Name _____ for the independence of the Irish nation with interest from the date here on inclusive at 6% per annum, payable on presentation of this bond at the treasury of the Irish Republic. ⁸¹

News of seizures and arrests in Ireland reached the Fenians and a convention in Philadelphia was held on October 16, 1865. This convention changed the government of the organization from a Central Council and Head Centre to a Senate, a House of Representatives and a President.⁸²

John O'Mahoney, who advocated rebellion in Ireland only, battled on to retain his leadership of the movement. Despite his efforts, he found himself being



John O'Mahoney

forced out of his role of authority. This was cleverly accomplished by a drastic revision of the constitution of the movement. O'Mahoney found himself on the outside looking in, and William Roberts sitting in the chair of President. The direction of the Fenian Brotherhood was now completely controlled

by the Roberts faction. They felt the invasion of Canada would expedite the eventual overthrow of the English in Ireland.⁸³

Although the San Francisco leadership cast their lot with Roberts, it is unclear how the rural circles felt about the shift in leadership. From comments in *The Irish People* it is clear that the official organ of the San Francisco Fenians had fallen in line with the eastern based Roberts faction and castigated the O'Mahoneyites among the San Francisco Fenians.⁸⁴



William R. Roberts

During the spring of 1866, Colonel Patrick Walsh, late of the Grand Confederate Army of Virginia, traveled throughout various parts of northern California giving inspirational talks to Fenian Circles.⁸⁵ In May, Col. Walsh addressed a conclave of Fenians from all over the San Francisco Bay area. Approximately 15,000 people participated in the festivities. There were five trains and the roads were filled with vehicles enroute for the Fenian picnic. About \$5,000 was collected during this occasion.⁸⁶

Nearly 100 years after the fact, William D'Arcy pointed out that Horace Greeley's *Tribune* did more to promote the Fenian cause, and incite the Irish in America to rise up against the English than almost any other newspaper. The *New York Tribune* offered all kinds of advice. The bellicose attitude of the *Tribune* is best evidenced by one of its stories reprinted in the *Copperopolis Courier* on January 20, 1866.

...What is demanded now is action. They [Fenians] should go to the frontiers. The Government of Canada is imbecile. The capital, Ottawa City, can be easily taken by a handful of determined men, who can throw up works and hold it against any force the Canadian government can or is prepared to send, until reinforced. What thrilling effects such an achievement would have throughout Europe...The British government has already declared war against them on the other side. It has sentenced one of their number to twenty years transportation, and has a tight hold upon many of others of the Brotherhood. They must now accept the gauge

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*of battle, go to Canada, take their men and money with them, and fight it out there. We say the war has commenced on the other side, now let the Fenians follow it up here, and hit England hard on a tender spot - Canada... Let the Fenians send out ten or fifteen fast steamers, well armed and manned, and if these by preying on her commerce, do not force her to grant simple justice to down-trodden Ireland, we know of nothing that will, unless the number be increased.*⁸⁷

Horace Greeley wrote a letter to a Fenian meeting in New York in which he said...

*...I have faith that the time is not far distant when Ireland shall belong to, and be governed by the Irish, and that they will be, as they ought to be, earnestly devoted to the liberty of all men, all nations, all races, here and everywhere.*⁸⁸

The *Toronto Globe* chided the press of the U.S. for filling their columns with inflammatory appeals to wage war on Great Britain.⁸⁹

St. Patrick's Day held a special place in the hearts of Fenians. In spite of a true devotion to the patron Saint of Ireland, it was a thinly veiled secret that the celebrations in his honor held great expectation of raising funds for the grand invasion of Canada and the eventual liberation of their homeland.⁹⁰ Stories ran in the local papers throughout California that the Fenian Circles were preparing for grand celebrations of St. Patrick's Day. In Tuolumne County the Irish prepared to have one of the largest celebrations ever witnessed in that county. The Columbia Circle and Sonora's Wolfe Tone Circle decided to hold a joint celebration. Plans were made for the ladies to present an Irish flag to the Wolfe Tone Circle. In Santa Cruz, the Emmett Circle for the first time ever, planned a St. Patrick celebration to be held in the Armory Hall. In San Francisco, the Brotherhood prepared for a gala celebration in Union Hall. Sonora's *Union Democrat* reported:

Attention is called to the program of the Fenian celebration of St. Patrick's Day in Sonora. Robert Ferral has been selected to deliver the oration, and we anticipate an able and entertaining address. During the day, several songs will be sung by the Hibernia glee club. Among others, the famous revo-

*lutionary ballad, "Wearing of the Green." A grand ball and supper in the evening conclude the celebration.*⁹¹

The *Copperopolis Courier* ran the following story regarding the activities of the Fenians.

*We're informed by telegraph that the Central Council of Fenians, at Union Square, New York, are in secret session, but nothing of their proceedings has been given to the public. The funds and rifles are still flooding in, both there and at the Sweeney headquarters, and it is reported that some important features are now in process of developing. It is currently reported that O'Mahoney has, within a few days, sent off an expedition of 5,000 men to some point unknown to the public. Total strength of Sweeney's force organized into regiments and battalions is given as 13,000; and it is stated that before the month passes the number will be doubled... Everybody now believes that the Fenians mean a desperate attempt to obtain Canada to use as a base, and very little dependency is placed on the American government's profession of neutrality.*⁹²

In a desperate attempt to save face, on April 14, 1866 General Bernard Killian of the O'Mahoney faction raided Campobello Island located off the New Brunswick coast. The raiders were promptly driven off the island by British forces. He attempted a second raid with the same result. This unsuccessful military action spelled the finish for O'Mahoney's leadership of the movement. He tendered his resignation to James Stephens who accepted it ungraciously.⁹³

The long awaited invasion of Canada finally took place on June 1, 1866. From that point on the papers were full of news describing this international event. Northern California editors devoted column after column to the activities of the Fenians and their goals and aspirations. For example, in a June issue the *Copperopolis Courier* reported some of the details of the ill-fated Fenian invasion of Canada. This report is obviously from the British/Canadian point of view.

Early this morning troops, Fenians...in the bushes...the column at once attacked both sides. [Canadian] Volunteers behaved splendidly, rushing at the retreating Fenians with the utmost gallantry. It is thought the volunteers will at least hold their own until several of the regular British

*regiments and artillery come up.*⁹⁴

The battle for Ft. Erie see-sawed for two days while the British regular forces aided by the Canadian volunteers finally became well enough organized to put up an orderly defense. Dispatches to the *Copperopolis Courier* reported on the invasion. It is evident from reading them that the United States Government was not in support of the Fenian invasion. Their actions were aimed at thwarting the invasion.

*The Fenians invasion at Fort Erie has terminated disastrously...it appears that reinforcements attempted to cross the Niagara River on Saturday night and were driven back by the United States patrol boats. The situation on the Canadian side was perilous from the close proximity of 3,000 British regulars under Colonel Gordon. Colonel O'Neil, commanding the Fenian invaders, attempted to retreat across the river under cover of darkness on Sunday morning and from 300 to 500 men were picked up by patrol boats. They are now on rafts anchored on the river below Buffalo under the guns of the U.S. steamer Michigan, it being thought unsafe to bring them ashore, lest a rescue might be attempted by several hundred wild Irishmen who swarm around the shore. British troops now guard the frontier and are picking up Fenian stragglers... The Fenian losses will probably not exceed 25 killed. The entire invading force did not exceed 1,000. The British loss is estimated at 50 killed and wounded.*⁹⁵

Sonora's *Union Democrat* put a different slant on the invasion by their selection of dispatches from the front. Their story talks of defeat, but does not give up hope of the cause eventually succeeding. In addition to their own story they picked up a completely different point of view from an account in an earlier edition of the *Stockton Independent*.

*...The dispatches of last week somewhat depressed the spirits of the Brotherhood, and caused a feeling of despondency to take the place of buoyant hopes; the cheering news from the front received the last days brightens the prospect again and gladdens the hearts of Irishmen who desire to see the old country redeemed from insolent England. The arrest of General Sweeney...many believe it to be a farcical show on the part of our government to enforce the neutrality laws...*⁹⁶

It is evident that all hope was not given up by the local members of the Fenians in northern California. This is evidenced by the appeal for funds in the *Stockton Independent*.

*New York, June 9, 1866, received at San Francisco June 12, 1866, Mr. Hammill [sic], we mean fight. Now send us every dollar you can, don't believe the lying reports of the newspaper. W.B. Roberts, President, Fenian Brotherhood... June 9, 1866, to John Hammill, from Pigeon Hill, Canada East. We have captured Pigeon Hill, stormed Centre Slab City and taken the British colors, and we are ready to advance again. Hurry up the ammunition. Victory or death! Growlers and cowards have gone to the rear; they will talk about our position, but don't mind them. The tired men of nerve are on the front... God bless your noble efforts in our glorious cause. Our troops are doing their work, and not withstanding a few arrests, everything goes well. Give the accompanying telegraph to San Francisco papers. There is no such word as fail. All are determined to sacrifice their lives till the work of Ireland's redemption is accomplished. Signed Edward Carey. Similar dispatches from other sources were in the hands of the Fenians in this city before the [Stockton] Independent published the above, which we trust is true.*⁹⁷

Telegraphic dispatches tended to be incoherent and conflicting when describing the progress of the invasion. Indications were that the United States Government would conveniently wink at developments in Canada. Some believed that the United States was unhappy with Her Majesty's Government for her support of the Confederate cause in the just concluded Civil War. It was reasoned that England could hardly expect the U.S. to prevent armed bodies of men from invading Canada when she made little if any effort to prevent pirate vessels sailing from her ports to attack American merchant ships during the War Between the States. It should be remembered that once the Civil War was at an end, the British Government had flatly refused to pay one penny's compensation for the damage done American commerce by pirate ships, built, manned, and supplied in English ports. It was believed that President Andrew Johnson and Secretary of State William H. Seward would tacitly approve of the actions taken by the Fenians in Canada. Of course, the great lesson to be ascertained here, and Fenians learned

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it the hard way, is that it was impossible to second guess the schemes and strategies of any United States Administration.

An example of the United States Administration's position is illustrated by a dispatch outlining a proclamation by the Attorney General of the United States in which he ordered the arrest of all the leaders and conspirators known as Fenians who have or intended to violate the neutrality laws. Warrants were issued ordering U.S. Marshals to arrest all the Fenians aboard the steamer *Michigan* at Buffalo. In the same order the marshals were ordered to bring the Fenians before U.S. Commissioners for examination prior to their trial before the U.S. District Court. The most serious charge to be lodged against them was the, "...breach of the [United State's] neutrality laws."⁹⁸

On June 11, 1866 the House of Representatives spent the entire morning debating the Fenians. A resolution was offered censoring England for her actions during the Civil War. The resolution went on to thank Irishmen for their services in the Union Army. It also expressed sympathy for their cause and their desire and efforts to free Ireland. It directed the House Committee on Foreign Affairs to report a bill repealing the Neutrality Law of 1818 under which the President's proclamation to the U.S. Marshals was issued. Another resolution was offered which requested the President of the United States to grant the same rights to the Fenians that England had granted the Confederates rebels. An expression of sympathy was offered to the Irish and recommended the U.S. Government to give them all the privileges possible under the law. The proceedings that day in the House of Representatives was noisy and decidedly favorable to the cause of the Irish. The subject of the invasion of Canada was, by an overwhelming vote, finally referred to the Foreign Affairs Committee.⁹⁹

According to the *Congressional Globe*, on June 23, 1866, the United States House of Representatives passed a petition requesting the President of the United States, Andrew Johnson, to urge the Canadian authorities (which included the British Government) to release the Fenian prisoners captured during the invasion of Canada. The House of Representatives also petitioned the President to discontinue prosecutions instituted in the United States Federal courts against the Fenians. In addition, the House proposed a change in the neutrality laws of the United States to conform with the laws in other countries. This bill passed

unanimously. The tenor of the speeches in the House show the intensity of the feelings against the British for their support of the South during the Civil War. At the same time the House passed a resolution of sympathy with Ireland. Secretary of State Seward sent copies of the petitions from the House regarding the Fenian prisoners and the Neutrality Bill to Ambassador Adams to be presented to the British Government.¹⁰⁰

On July 28, 1866 in the Plaza of the Copperopolis Hotel, a large crowd of Fenians and supporters gathered to listen to a speech by Colonel Walsh, the Inspector General of the Fenian Brotherhood. He gave an impassioned and patriotic appeal for sympathy toward the oppressed of all nations. He drew their attention to the fact that the Irish had bled and died in their struggle for freedom. Undoubtedly he brought to the attention of the crowd the plight of the unfortunate Fenians languishing in Canadian jails.¹⁰¹

The trials in Canada began in October 1866. The justice in charge of the trials was John Wilson. He was obviously not very fair minded. As an example, he allowed an entirely Protestant jury of twelve to judge the guilt or innocence of the accused. In his opening address he blamed both political parties in the United States for encouraging the Fenians to invade Canada in order to garner votes from the Irish.¹⁰²

In late October, despite the Canadian misadventure, the California Fenians, at their State Convention in San Francisco, voted to devote their purpose to one object, namely, the liberation of Ireland. As difficult as it is to believe, they also endorsed the disastrous "Roberts' Policy," which advocated the invasion of Canada to expedite the eventual overthrow of the English in Ireland. It had been adopted at Philadelphia in 1865, and ratified at Pittsburgh in February 1866.¹⁰³

British justice was swift and not always fair. Of the many Fenians captured during the ill-fated invasion of Canada, twenty-six were acquitted when brought to trial and seven of the invaders were sentenced to death by hanging. It is interesting to note the inconsistency in the British treatment of the clergy. David Lumsden, a Protestant minister, was acquitted after a long line of character witnesses appeared on his behalf. Among his many defenses, was the fact that he had a drinking problem. On the other hand, a Catholic priest by the name of Father John McMahon, who didn't have a drinking problem, was sentenced to hang on December 13th. There is no way to account for all of the prisoners taken at Fort Erie and Ridgeway.

The prisoners taken probably numbered around 200. No doubt many of them were inquisitive Buffalo residents who came over the border to see what was going on.¹⁰⁴

Two New York newspapers, the *Herald* and the *Tribune*, both pushed the idea that the annexation of Canada to the United States was just a matter of time. In fact, even as early as August, the *Herald* was urging the Fenians to once again invade Canada.¹⁰⁵

The 17th President of the United States, Andrew Johnson, a besieged politician, was looking ahead with apprehension to the Presidential and Congressional elections of 1868. He had already been castigated by his own party for attempting to carry out Lincoln's reconstruction policies. For this he would be impeached in 1868 and would be acquitted by the Senate by one vote.

In the matter concerning Canada, he was caught on twin horns of a dilemma. One was to retain diplomatic equilibrium with Great Britain and to mend the fences damaged during the Civil War. The other horn, and politically, probably the most important, was to retain the Irish-American vote.

Sonora's *Union Democrat* reported:

*Secretary Seward has addressed a note to the [British] Prime Minister...begging the British Government to use "tenderness, amnesty, [and] forgiveness" in its treatment of the Fenian prisoners in Canada. We trust...the voice of Mr. Seward will be heeded and the poor prisoners set free...*¹⁰⁶

In the same article,

*...The Fenians...50,000 [strong] met in Jones Wood, New York on the 28th [October] to hear Head Centre Stephens, it being understood that this was his last public speech before returning to Ireland...*¹⁰⁷

During the Jones Wood meeting, Stephens, disdainful of the Canadian defeat, threw down the gauntlet for the United States Government and Queen Victoria's Government in Ireland and her provisional government in Canada. He vowed:

*...a blow would be struck before the New Year. He urged the Fenians in America to renewed exertions in the aid of the Brotherhood in Ireland.*¹⁰⁸

There was no success in attempts to reunite the

Roberts' and Stephens' factions of the Fenians. Stephens stuck to his guns to liberate Ireland only. Roberts was resolved to carry out his own designs and was determined to re-invade Canada in February 1867.¹⁰⁹

In an address, Colonel Roberts called upon the Fenians to form themselves into military companies at once. He castigated the United States Government:

*...Neutrality laws cannot prevent them and British influence will no longer be allowed to rule this country to your injury and Ireland's shame. Strange events are in the near future and you know not how soon you may be called upon to strike again for Ireland. Let not the occasion or call find you unprepared. He entreats them to work. Instructions regarding secrecy will be sent to the Circles.*¹¹⁰

By March, according to the *New York Herald*, the Roberts' "Grand Plan" called for the Fenian miners who were working in the gold fields of California's Sierra, to give up their "geological exploration" and to make their way to Vancouver Island. There they would be expected to subdue the handful of British soldiers, and clear out the Indians on that island. He was said to have planned to have an invasion army move from Buffalo to Chicago. The press reported that 3,000 men from the mining districts of California were ready to move on Vancouver Island. In all, the press reported 30,000 men would be involved in the operation.¹¹¹ It is unclear where Roberts obtained this information regarding the participation of the California Irish. Either he was grasping at straws, or he had been misled by some over zealous San Francisco Fenian leaders! At that time there were six Irish military associations in San Francisco.¹¹²

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John Charles Fremont, Character as Destiny

By Andrew Rolle

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Meanwhile, in Ireland, Stephens set forth on an ill-conceived and disastrous attempt to wrest control of his homeland from the British. The first of many actions took place in 1867. The Fenian plans included simultaneous attacks in the English homeland in London and Liverpool by use of explosives. Unfortunately, the Fenians were short of arms and ammunition and each encounter resulted in defeat for the insurgents.

An unsigned editorial in the March 16, 1867 *Copperopolis Courier*, reported the significance of the uprising in Ireland.

...An uprising of a most serious character has occurred in Ireland... The Irish people are unanimous in this, their last effort to throw off the cruel yoke they have born for the last 600 years... There are large numbers of Americans there in league with the Fenians, who are just fresh from the victorious battlefields of their land, ready and willing again to battle or the just... The next news by cable will be anxiously looked for, and will no doubt be replete with items of thrilling interest gathered from the battlefields and moted castles of the Emerald Isle... The excitement among the members of the Order and their sympathizing friends on this side of the water is intense. The different Circles all over the country have been in session since the receipt of the news, and a movement is on foot in New York for the raising of funds sufficient to fit out a fleet of war vessels. A committee of prominent Fenians are now in Washington urging Congress to acknowledge their rights as belligerents, to which the Committee on Foreign Affairs will no doubt respond favorably. Here's to the Republic of Ireland.¹¹³

Two days later, another dispatch from the *New York Herald* read:

The Herald's correspondent, dated London, March 6, was taken by surprise by the Fenian rising. The Fenian plans embraced simultaneous outbreaks in London and Liverpool, with conflagrations by means of nitroglycerin. There is no question it was led by men ashamed of previous failures. Accounts published in the Cork Examiner and Freeman's Journal show that the skirmishes occurred at Taillight Bridge, Glen Colin, Dragheda, Castle Martyr, Adair, Limerick City, Kill Mallock,

Limerick Junction, and other places. The Fenians are very deficient in arms, ammunitions, and were easily dispersed each time. The uprising was evidently more serious than the telegrams represented. It would seem however, that they were premature.¹¹⁴

The basic conclusion to be drawn from the above was that the liberation of Ireland by armed insurrection at present was an impossibility.

The *New York Herald* reported on March 18,

No cable dispatches are coming. There is a break in the Irish Land Alliance. Nothing public is known as to the cause, whether it is the work of the Fenians or a storm. The Herald's Dublin correspondent of the 6th, states that it is the Fenians intention to send their own news through the cable... Interview of Fenians with the President [US] recognition of the Irish Republic [is] possible.

In Ireland the ill-fated uprising was jinxed from the beginning. An informer by the name of Corydon had betrayed the plans. In addition the weather took a disastrous turn when an unusual twelve day snow storm disrupted all communications, and made the movement of men and materials nearly impossible.¹¹⁵

About this time, the *Union Democrat* reported a meeting in Washington, D.C. between delegates of the Fenians and President Andrew Johnson.

Two representatives of the Irish Republic had an interview with the President yesterday, soliciting the recognition of belligerent rights by the American government. [They] asked that the Irish Republic be respected as a government de facto by the United States, and that the American Government insist on it that their belligerent rights be respected by Great Britain according to the rules of nations in time of war... [Johnson] assured the question should receive all the consideration necessary. The delegation asked for prompt interference on behalf of naturalized American citizens, for prisoners in the hands of England. The President said measures had been taken for the relief of several naturalized citizens. The other cause would receive attention.¹¹⁶

Unbeknownst to the northern California Fenians, Stephens' much vaunted organization found, to their

dismay, that almost no help was forthcoming from the United States. On the appointed day of the rising, Easter Sunday, 1867, a blizzard swept over Ireland and all communications ground to a halt... Only in Kerry and Limerick was there even the barest appearance of revolt. The chief suspects were quickly rounded up and thrown in jail. This fiasco resulted in the complete disgrace of James Stephens as a leader of the movement.¹¹⁷

However the *Sonora Herald* reported on March 23rd the St. Patrick's Day Celebration.

*The different Circles [Fenians] met and formed in procession at the head of Washington Street under the supervision of Marshall Barry, aided by Mr. McBride, and proceeded up Main Street until they met their friends from Columbia. They then marched through town, preceded by the Stars and Stripes of America, in juxtaposition with the Harp and Sunburst of Ireland, the band discoursing the lively airs of the native land. They proceeded to the [St. Patrick's] Catholic Church where High Mass was celebrated after which they marched to Greenwood's Theatre which was even densely crowded with Fenians and citizens.*¹¹⁸

The *Union Democrat* reported on March 23rd the following:

*The Fenians made a fine display last Monday. The delegation from Columbia attracting popular attention to their soldierly bearing... The celebration passed off quietly and to the entire satisfaction of the Fenians and those who sympathize with their cause.*¹¹⁹

Similar celebrations, anticipating positive results, were held in San Francisco, Santa Cruz County, and Copperopolis. Lamentably this was to be the last St. Patrick's Day celebration for the Copperopolis Emmett Circle as the town burned to the ground later that same year.¹²⁰

Once the uprising in Ireland had been suppressed, the British saw fit to send some of the Fenians to Manchester, England. The Fenians learned of the transfer of the prisoners and determined to free them.

...In an attempt to rescue them a guard was killed. Three young Irishmen who had taken part in the raid, William Allen, Michael Larkin, and Michael O'Brien, an American who had fought as

a Lieutenant in the Union Army, were arrested. Although none was proved to have fired the fatal shot...all three were hanged in Manchester before an enormous jeering mob, drawn from the dregs of the city's slums... The hanging of the Manchester Martyrs...wrought the people into a frenzy of rage. Huge protest meetings were held in Dublin, Cork, and many other cities. All Ireland suddenly found itself mourning the death of three hitherto unknown individuals... It had been reported that when sentenced to death, each of the three had cried out "God Save Ireland"... "God Save Ireland" became almost a national anthem, endowed with

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*power to generate a high degree of mass emotion.*¹²¹

These three men became known as the Manchester Martyrs, and were the first to be executed in public since the death sentence of Robert Emmett was carried out in 1803. Also, the Fenians hold the questionable honor of being the last persons to be hanged in public in England.

In deference to the Manchester Martyrs St. Patrick's Day was celebrated in California in a respectful manner. In San Francisco the six Circles combined to give a grand military and civic ball. The proceeds of the affair were designated for the relief of the families of Fenians held in prison in Ireland and the families of the patriots recently executed in Manchester.¹²²

In July of 1867, the Pioneer Emmett Circle in San Francisco sent \$1,000 for the aid of Fenian prisoners in England.¹²³

St. Patrick's Day in 1868 was the last time Sonora's Wolfe Tone Circle sponsored the festivities. St. Patrick's celebrations did continue unabated until 1875 with many of the organizers well recognized within Fenian circles. On numerous occasions "God Save Ireland" was used at many of the functions both in Sonora and San Francisco. Sonora's *Union Democrat* of March 21st of that year quoted from the sermon at St. Patrick's Church by Fr. Larkin. This oration obviously referred to the rage held by the Irish men, women, and Fenians over the execution of the Manchester Martyrs.

*...It was an able and eloquent discourse... The reverend Gentleman...gave his countrymen some excellent advice in beautiful and appropriate language. He spoke of the problem of human nature to desire revenge for injuries, but advised them not to seek it; that belonged to heaven. "Vengeance is mine...said the Lord."*¹²⁴

In San Francisco there was dissension within the ranks of the leadership. A new radical faction, the Savage Wing, vied with Hammill for the office of Head Centre. The Savage Wing was named for John Savage, a national Fenian executive who, among other things, advocated violence, bombings, and other acts of revolution against the British homeland, on their own soil, to bring about change in Ireland.

In May, 1868 it was reported that 8-10 thousand

Savage Wing Fenian members went on a picnic in Belmont Park by rail "...headed by three or four engines, puffing and blowing like so many thousand savage Fenians, eager for the fray." As late as May, 1870 as many as twelve thousand, including John Savage, attended a Fenian demonstration in San Mateo County.¹²⁵ The attendance and purpose of the outing were no doubt exaggerated by the press and in reality were probably attended by many Irish supporters more as a social event than a political one.¹²⁶

For two years after the first Canadian invasion, the Eastern Fenians, supported by many northern California Fenians, planned a second invasion of Canada. Then the national leadership passed from William Roberts to John O'Neill, who allied himself with the Savage Wing of the movement, to the great consternation of Fenians in northern California, especially in the San Francisco Circles. This caused such a split in the northern California Circles that by 1870 the Fenian movement in northern California was no longer united and the splintered groups lost their effectiveness. Roberts left the Fenians and was twice elected to Congress from Brooklyn, and was appointed Minister to Chile by President Cleveland.¹²⁷

The second and third invasions of Canada took place in 1870 and 1871. The second was staged in two places, Vermont and New York, where the troops crossed into Canada and they were easily driven back across the border. The second invasion was into Manitoba Province by three dozen men. (See map of Fenian raids in DTQ #27, page 61) Obviously this was a stupid and futile attempt to wrest Canada from English control. It also ended any further attempts by the Fenians or anyone else to make Canada a part of the United States.¹²⁸ Historians tend to agree that the efforts of the Fenians, especially in 1866, did more than anything



John O'Neill

else to bring about the Confederation of Canada.

John O'Neill was acquitted in the U.S. for violating the Neutrality Laws. He retired from active military projects and became a land developer in Nebraska. He had been interested in rural projects for years and helped settle many Irish from the East on cheap and often free land on the barren prairie. A town in Nebraska is named after him. He died in 1878 at the age of forty-three.¹²⁹

As preposterous as the Fenian scheme appears in hindsight, there is little doubt that the rank and file membership in the Irish communities, both in northern California, and throughout the United States, were sincere, though misguided men. They were misled and actually betrayed by their own leader's military incompetence and ineptitude of leadership. The media (local and national), the President of the United States, his government's officers, and members of Congress added to the confusion.

They had the backing and support of Horace Greeley's *Tribune*, the *New York Herald*, and the Irish press in the U.S.A. who encouraged the Fenian Brotherhood by use of hyperbole to believe it was possible to take up arms to defeat the British in Canada, and by doing so, liberate their homeland.

In Tuolumne and Calaveras counties, the *Union Democrat*, the *Tuolumne Courier*, the *Sonora Herald*, and the *Copperopolis Courier* were sympathetic to the Irish people's quest for freedom. The *Alta California* was at first very supportive of the Fenian Brotherhood but, by 1867 was skeptical of the purposes of the movement. The *Alta* wrote:

*How desperate that cause is need not now be argued; but every true friend of Ireland will be glad when their futile organizations and exhaustive schemes are abandoned, and Irish-Americans become a plastic element in the Great Republic.*¹³⁰

The non-Irish citizens of the above communities, according to written accounts of that time, appear to have been favorable to the Fenian's cause and joined in with their fund raising celebrations.

It is evident that this great Irish movement for the liberation of Ireland ended in failure. However, some success can be traced back to this ill-fated thrust for freedom. Within two years the Church of England, in Ireland, was disestablished, and within three years the Land Act for the protection of tenants was made law. Most historians are in agreement that British Prime

Minister Gladstone later confessed it was the Fenian movement which forced him to lighten the yoke on the shoulders of the Irish people.

The Fenian movement in northern California, to all intents and purposes, by 1870 appears to have ended, although historians differ as to the exact year of its demise. There was at least one positive outcome of the Fenian Brotherhood movement, although they were still thought of as hyphenated Americans, the Irish were well on their way to being assimilated into the "melting pot" of the United States.

The northern California Irish community enjoyed the freedoms guaranteed by the United States Constitution. Most importantly, these were religion, speech, and assembly. Once they were naturalized, by their votes they showed appreciation for their newly acquired freedoms. Despite the fact they were the poorest members of their communities, they gave generously of their time and money to worthy causes. The Irish women were also supportive of the movement with their contributions of talents, time, and money.

Despite the problems with Roman Catholic hierarchy elsewhere, it appears there was no conflict between the northern California clergy and the Fenian Brotherhood. The clergy always figured prominently in Fenian functions, although it is doubtful that any of the northern California Catholic priests actually joined the movement.

The Irish in America alone, were fully committed to furthering the cause of Irish national independence. This was not true of the Irish in Canada, New Zealand, Australia, or other far-flung areas of the world. This was probably due to the fact that within the boundaries of the U.S.A., the Irish had the freedom to practice their religion, organize, raise money for arms, and in general to support their brothers and sisters in the homeland. The Fenians in Ireland, without a doubt, regarded Irish living in the United States as citizens of the Great Irish Nation. In their opinion they were Irish flesh and blood, nothing more, or less. One might say, they did not think of the United States as a foreign country, and any and all support of their quest for freedom from British rule was gladly accepted. In the minds of the Irish leaders of the 19th century, any action against the British, taken anywhere in the world, was action against a common enemy.¹³¹

The British finally recognized the right of naturalization for Irish-Americans in the Anglo-American Treaty of 1870 and grudgingly gave up their time honored tradition of "Once an Englishman, always an

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Englishman."¹³²

On the Monday following Easter Sunday, 1916, approximately 1,500 poorly armed and equipped Irish volunteers occupied the Government Post Office and other buildings in the heart of Dublin. Among the insurgents was Eamonn DeValera who commanded the revolutionaries at Boland Mills. The British rushed in troops which eventually totalled 50,000 men. They were armed with machine guns, light artillery, and mortars. After six days of house to house and building to building fighting, the center of Dublin was partially destroyed. The seige, known as the Easter Rising, lasted six days, during which time the Irish flag flew proudly over the Post Office. The fighting ended with all of the leaders killed or captured. Those who signed the Proclamation of the Provisional Government of the Irish Republic, written by Patrick Pearse, including Thomas J. Clarke, Sean MacDiarmada, Thomas MacDonage, P.H. Pearse, Eamonn Ceannt, James Connolly, and Joseph Plunkett, were tried and shot within three weeks. DeValera, not one of the signers, lived to become a president of Ireland from 1932-48. The Easter Rising was the first revolution of the Twentieth Century, albiet unsuccessful, against a major European power.¹³³

The 1916 Easter Rising eventually led to a bloody civil war, and within six years, the beginnings of the creation of the Republic of Ireland, less the six counties in the north. This event was a partial fulfillment of the Fenian Movement of the 19th Century. One might even extrapolate to the present troubles that now exist in northern Ireland's six counties still under the rule of the British government and under the economic heel of the Protestant Orangemen who are, to this day, tenaciously loyal to the continuation of English domination in that part of Ireland.

About the Authors:

Frances A. Leonard Rohrbacher has for many years been a student of the Irish in the Mother Lode. Her roots are both in Ireland and California. Her mother was a native of San Andreas and was born to Irish parents. Her grandfather Charles McGuirk came to Columbia in 1857, mined for the yellow metal and even traded his labor for water during the construction of the ditches that brought water from the high Sierra to the Columbia gold fields which were starved

for water from May through the first rains in the fall. Frances is a native of Watsonville and is a Registered Nurse, a graduate of St. Mary's Hospital in San Francisco. Among other affiliations, she is a member of the Columbia State Park Docent Association and in that capacity has done much research for the museum. In 1995, she won honorable mention for her work on a research paper for the Tuolumne Historical Society. At the moment, she is considering doing a book on the Fenian Movement, of which this article would form parts of a number of chapters.

Richard W. Rohrbacher is the husband of Frances numbering nearly 44 years. He has been a contributor to the *Dogtown Territorial Quarterly* on two previous occasions. The first article was entitled "Mountain Meadows Massacre" and the second was "The California That Nearly Was" which was about Father Eugene MacNamara who, in 1846, envisioned bringing two thousand Irish families to California and settling them in what is now the San Joaquin Valley. He is the author of *Yesteryear's Child, Golden Days and Summer Nights*, a book based on his mother's memories of growing up in Oroville, California 100 years ago. He is currently working on a book of his own memories of growing up in Stockton, California. The working title is *Growing Up Before the Bomb*. This book will cover the decade from 1935-45. He is also a produced playwright.

Dedication

This article on the Fenian Brotherhood is dedicated to the memory of Historian Joseph A. King. Without his encouragement this article would never have been written. May he rest in peace.

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We would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the wonderful people who have made the *Dogtown Territorial Quarterly* possible over the past seven years. From the Authors who contribute their research and writing skills, to our Historical Advisors who review every manuscript for accuracy, and to the Historic Groups who share their historic resources; we thank each and every one of you for your help!

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