

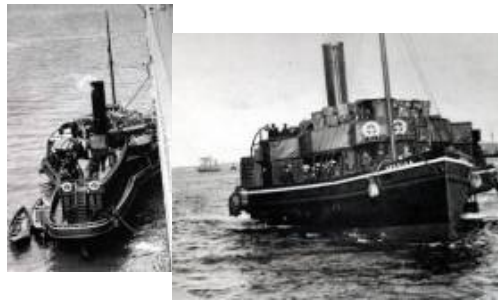
A Tender Named America

by Senan Molony

Titanic Research

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A tale of the ship that brought Irish immigrants to the Titanic.



The *America* at the Titanic's side, left, and outward bound in 1912, right.

FROM ELEVEN-thirty on Thursday, April the eleventh, the usual tramp of third class passengers reverberated outside the offices of James Scott & Company, shipping agents, Queenstown, Ireland.

The clerks at work inside worked on; for the din without had become a commonplace and there was no distraction. Just the background noise of another herd of emigrants taking to the boats.

But not for any ship. And therefore not just any crowd among Ireland's outgoing thousands.

These were native passengers for the RMS Titanic at her last port of call.

They were still largely a collection of individuals and had not yet become a distinctive group. Shy eyes under a straw hat peered upwards to the red swallowtail flag, lusty on the breeze. Thursday was one of the White Star days. The Cunard lion, by turns, climbed a rival flagpole on another wharf.

The only slightly different note to this industry of exodus was the bunting of signal flags - not there for the passengers' benefit, but to show to the Gentlemen of the Press that today was a special occasion. The inauguration of a magnificent new vessel which would doubtless take high honours over the coming season, exalting White Star in the cutthroat battle for human livestock.



The Titanic tenders tied up at the White Star wharf, which was en fete on April 11, 1912.

From colourised contemporary postcards supplied by the author.

"The new White Star Liner, Titanic, the largest in the world, arrived yesterday in Cork Harbour in the course of her maiden transatlantic voyage to New York. She dropped anchor at 11.55am about a mile outside Roche's Point..."

The press dabbed their lips, finishing refreshments on the balcony of the James Scott building, and were ushered through the throng and along the jetty, boarding the PS *There* they waited impatiently for the processing of the paying customers who would board the tender inboard of themselves, the PS *America*.

These were the vessels of the Clyde Shipping Company, paddle-steamers first built in 1891 and registered at Glasgow. They had become the indispensable workhorses of the emigrant trade.

The surprised the journalists and ten Titanic cabin passengers aboard by casting off while the *America* was still filling. It cruised a few hundred yards to lie alongside Deepwater Quay where the railway station was. She began taking on the 1,385 sacks of the American mails

The soon followed, weighed down by scores of third-class ticketholders, segregated even in the matter of the tender they could use. She hove astern of the moored *Ireland* and came to rest. The train from Cork had just arrived with a few late passengers - detained by the tardy departure of a mainline service from Limerick city.

It was here Cork Examiner photographer Thomas Barker disembarked the *Ireland* and climbed aboard the third class vessel instead, using the *America's* height to gain a vantage point on the paddle box for a perfect study of the ahead.



The tender *Ireland* at Deepwater Quay, Queenstown, Co Cork, on Titanic sailing day.

He snapped his shutter, preserving the tranquil scene for posterity. Caught in the lower right hand corner of his image were a score of would-be Titanic steerage. It remains the only photograph in existence of

passengers about to join the ship that shaped history.



Detail from Mr Barker's main study: Irish steerage passengers aboard *America*.

The passengers may not have noticed Barker - who had to dash for his proper conveyance as an *Ireland* crewman began casting off - but some of them were starting to notice Eugene Daly. Or at least his pipes.

Barker's photograph shows a well-built young man in the centre of the *America*'s bows, glancing to where the bellows bag of the traditional uilleann pipes is stowed at Daly's feet. The bag is unseen, but the drone pipes reach up Daly's side, the last one ending just below his left ear.

The *America* is about to leave the quay and there is evident cheerfulness among the steerage. A conversation is about to strike up that will lead to Eugene Daly, a 29-year-old weaver from Athlone, striking up himself. Soon the skirl of pipes will bring a smile to every face.

"Mr Daly is a well-known performer on the war-pipes; he had a set with him on the Titanic, and as the tender on which he left Queenstown cast off, he played up "A Nation Once Again," his performance being received with delight and applause by his fellow-travellers.

He played many native airs on board the tender, and as the latter moved away from the liner, the pipes were heard once more giving forth "A Nation Once Again." Those who were on board the tender that day heard with extreme pleasure of his being amongst the survivors."
(Cork Examiner, May 9, 1912)

A NATION ONCE AGAIN

When boyhood's fire was in my blood
I read of ancient free-men
For Greece and Rome, who bravely stood
Three hundred men and three men.
And then I prayed I yet might see
Our fetters rent in twain
And Ireland, long a province, be
A Nation once again.

A Nation once again! A Nation once again,
And Ireland, long a province, be
A Nation once again.

Eugene Daly, like very many of the emigrating Irish, was a Nationalist opposed to British rule in the

country of his birth. He was a member of a variety of societies focussing on the Irish identity and political agitation for change. They included the Gaelic League and the Irish National Foresters. Many of his fellows aboard the *America* belonged to the United Irish League, a pressure group in favour of Irish Home Rule.

The Home Rule Bill was being read before the House of Commons that very day and all were aware of it. The added irony of Daly's rebel tunes brought forth a conspiratorial and giddy gaiety. There must have been many who joined in the likes of "Boo-lavogue" as soon as they caught the trend of the first few bars:

At Boo-lavogue, as the sun was setting
O'er bright May meadows... of Shel-ma-lier
A rebel hand - set the heather blazing;
And brought the neighbours, from far and near.
Then Father Murphy, from old Kil-cor-mack
Spurred up the rocks with a warning cry.
'Arm, arm,' he cried, 'For I've come to lead you
For Ireland's freedom, we fight or die...'

The 600-ton *America* had turned through 180 degrees and sat off for a moment, allowing the *Ireland* to come around and renew the lead, jealous faces gazing on the musical feast. The tenders chugged back along the waterfront of Queenstown, named for an English monarch who came ashore in 1849.

They again passed the White Star wharf and the pulling flag, enjoying the view of the south transept of St Colman's cathedral where a different Queen had been honoured. Some blessed themselves at the sight, whether they knew or not that the statue of Our Lady, Star of the Sea, had been set facing the harbour, paid for by the grateful complement of the Great Eastern. who limped into sanctuary here from a hell-blasting storm in September 1861.

He led us 'gainst the coming soliders
And the cowardly Yeomen were put to flight
'Twas at the Barrow, the boys of Wexford
Showed Bookey's regiment how men could fight.

The *America* rounded the Spit light as Daly finished to roars of approval and some feminine handclaps. The Spit Bank lighthouse had been designed by a blind man, Alexander Mitchell... its beacon warned deep-drawing vessels that they could proceed no further. The *America* levelled up after her gradual starboard turn, and entered the Whitegate Roads.

This was the inner anchorage where the usual ships made fast. They were not bound for the usual ships today. Having enjoyed a brief break to drink in the beauty of the journey, Eugene Daly hoisted his instrument again and bit down on the mouthpiece. Bearded Frank Dwan in front of him grinned encouragement. "Whisht now!", said the athletic man, enjoining silence.

SPANCIL HILL

Last night as I lay dream-ing; of pleasant days gone by

Me mind bein' bent on ram-bling, to Ireland I did fly
I stepped a-board a vi-sion, and followed with my will
'Til next I came to anchor at, the cross near Spancil Hill.

The cliffs rose giddily on the port side as the *America* churned her way ever outward, skylarking seagulls overhead. Queenstown's handsome terraces had receded now, lost to the turn of the channel. High above them to the left loomed Fort Carlisle, one of the guardian garrisons at the mouth of the harbour

Some of the women dropped their chins and seemed saddened. The slower pace of the music matched their mood exactly as realisation dawned that they were leaving their native shores practically forever. A male finger stroked a cheek. Other men grew quiet, or shifted uncomfortably.

Daly seemed to sense the change. He was helped in breaking off the dirge as Captain Tobin and Captain McVeigh in the tender ahead exchanged playful whistle blasts. They were bearing to port on a blind corner, to come through the gap between Fort Carlisle and Ford Camden on the far bank. Fort Camden, built in 1798, the same year as the bloody rebellion commemorated in Boolavogue, protected the western side of the harbour mouth.

Eugene Daly put some pep back into proceedings. The ballad of Muirsheen Durkin, little dark Mary, gave battle with the gulls:-

In the days I went a-courtin', I was never tired resortin'
To the ale house and the playhouse; and many a house beside
But I told my brother Seamus, I'll be off now and grow famous
And before I come home again, I'll roam the world wide.

Oh, I courted girls in Blarney, in Kanturk and in Killarney,
In Passage and in Queenstown, I mean the Cove of Cork
But I'm tired of all this pleasure, so now I'll take my leisure
And the next that you will hear of me - a letter from New York!

The *America* brought her nose to the open water beyond, and a gasp arose on every side! Necks craned at the sight of the great goliath sitting on the sea in front of them. Still two miles away from the *America*, the RMS was the most simply the most majestic creation man's hand had ever wrought.

There she lay in the Ringabella estuary, off Roche's Point lighthouse, a black-hulled supremacy. The crooning of folk songs had given way to exclamations of delight or the indrawn breath of wonder. Daly was amongst the crowd contesting for a better look.

So too was John Kennedy of Limerick, one of the late-train arrivals along with Limerick girl Nellie O'Dwyer, although they did not know each other. There at someone's shoulder, peering into the midday sparkle, was William Doherty, the Cork barman who had gambled on a fresh start and had bought his ticket from one James Moran and was travelling in that name.

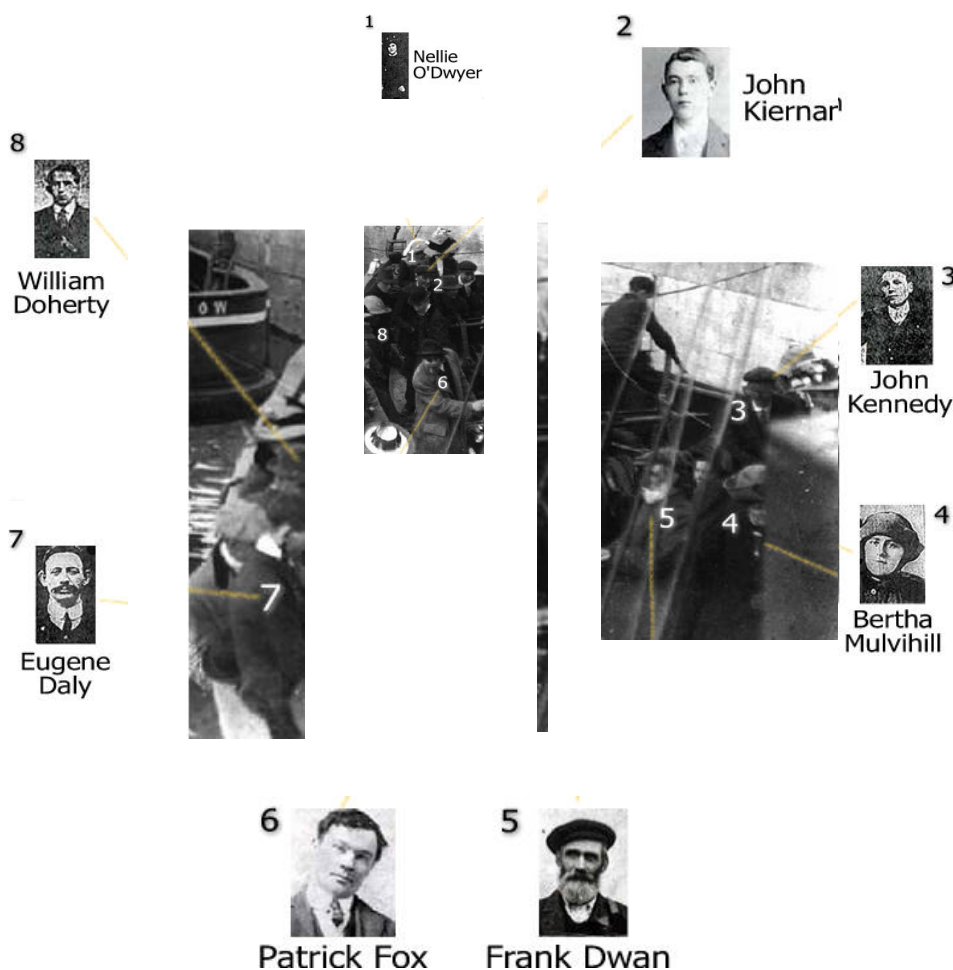
Here was the group united in fascination, 113 third class Irish men and women, gazing at the sleek yet towering vessel that would convey them all, and thousands beside, to a land of everlasting plenty. A land

of freedom. And still the *America* made her fitful progress.

They draw nearer... and they draw nearer... and yet the happy scene recedes !... further and further, nearer and further, nearer and never nearer , fading yet; until the moment that existed in time is passed and gone and can never be seen again.

And yet, the legacy of Cork Examiner photographer Thomas Barker allows us to imagine it still. And to probe the faces that remain.

Who are these people? Definitive identities have only been placed on the bearded man in the foreground - Frank Dwan of Bonmahon, Co Wexford - and the irrepressible piper, Eugene Daly. The rest remain elusive but the focus of research.



At best, at this juncture, one might make mostly ignorant guesses. The pictures offered here are mostly spare images that never made my book, *The Irish Aboard Titanic*. With 113 passengers to guess from, at least half of whom have never yielded up another photographic trace, it may even be a likelihood that all these suggestions are wrong.

The girl in the bows might, at a pinch, be Nellie O'Dwyer. It might also be diminutive Delia Henry from Athlone. Both were lost. The smiling man at the upper centre could be John Kiernan, with his younger brother Phillip alongside, to the viewer's left. Both were lost.

Any man might do to represent John Kennedy, whose own story is tragic indeed, surviving the Titanic disaster to die of anthrax poisoning in a US Army boot camp at the time of the First World War. Bertha

Mulvihill and the woman picture at lower left had a similar hat - so much for that.

The athletic, well-built man, appearing to shake Frank Dwan's hand may not in fact be doing so. Dwan had no fellow Wexford men aboard, no matter how the boys of Wexford were hailed in Boolavogue. If this man is Patrick Fox, from Mullingar, they would at least be a match in height and build. Fox was a champion athlete, but it didn't save him. He and Frank Dwan were both lost. And so too was Doherty, whose fatal mistake was to buy another man's ticket.

These are the people of the tender *America*. No matter who they are, the majority of them were drowned in the North Atlantic on their way to a new life. Eugene Daly, wet through and shivering with cold, pulled himself up on Collapsible B.

He lost his pipes beneath the waves, but lived to play a different set. This magical snapshot of Irish optimism, of men and women taking their leave, is essentially about what has been lost and yet mysteriously preserved. The viewer hears - and so obviously sees - a nation once again.

And from that time, through wildest woe
That hope has shone a far light
Nor could love's bright summer glow
Outshine that solemn starlight.
It seemed to watch above my head
In forum, field and fane
Its angel voice sang round my bed
'A Nation once again.'

A Nation once again! A Nation once again,
And Ireland, long a province, be
A Nation once again.



**Flags half-masted at Queenstown, April 19, 1912.
The *America* and *Ireland* are tied up at Admiralty pier.**

The writer is a member of the National Union of Journalists and international equivalents. Pictures of Nellie O'Dwyer, William Doherty, John Kennedy and Bertha Mulvihill obtained by author from the Irish national and provincial press of 1912. Pictures of John Kiernan and Frank Dwan given to same by descendant families and acknowledged with gratitude. Images of Patrick Fox and Eugene Daly sourced by author from glass plate negative or extant photographic heritage in the public domain. All rights to the above article and images strictly reserved. Pictures of Kiernan, Dwan and Fox previously appeared in *The Irish Aboard Titanic* by Senan Molony, Wolfhound Press, 2000. ISBN 0-86327-805-1.

A second edition of *The Irish Aboard Titanic* will soon be available from the Wolfhound Press, 68 Mountjoy Square, Dublin 1(353-1-8740354) www.wolfhoundpress.ie Wolfhound Press are also publishers

of Fr Browne's Titanic Album, ISBN 0-863276-598-2.

Courtesy of Senan Molony

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