The Munroes

of Galway and Delaware

My grandfather, Martin Munroe, had a wild streak. He gave way to it in Ireland and the escapade that followed led him to leave his native land and to abandon his wife and three children. In America his responsibilities forced him to settle down and provide for a family that more than doubled in size. (There were eventually eight children.) But he was a domestic tyrant. His blows – sometimes intercepted by his wife – drove some of his children from the home.

The Irish home that Martin Munroe came from, in the town of Headford, County Galway, was apparently one of a family in middling circumstances for the Ireland of that day. At least two of his brothers were sent away to school in Dublin. [1] Martin seems to have turned his back on advanced schooling, taking up the rural trades of his neighborhood, probably as herdsman and butcher. [2] Martin may have been the black sheep in his family.

Still, he seems to have made an impressive figure – a straight, stocky, red-haired and red-mustachioed man – as he rode his horse to court the young Bridget McCabe. To her family, however, he was not impressive. He was too old for Bridget, they thought, and perhaps there were other objections.

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Bridget herself is a somewhat mysterious figure. We do not know where her home was or the names of her parents. That she came from somewhere other than Headford seems clear. One granddaughter (Sarah Brown) insisted that Bridget was Scotch-Irish, though her first name seems to refute this story, which, however, though second-hand, does come indirectly from my Aunt Mary, Bridget's oldest child, one who remembered Ireland. But Bridget is said to have had an uncle (perhaps it was a great uncle) who was a bishop at Tuam, and this too appears to make the story of a Scotch-Irish origin unlikely.

Born in 1848, Bridget was left an orphan after her parents' early death and was reared, together with a brother and sister, by her grandparents. [3] They paid thirty-five cents a week to send her to a school, kept in the teacher's home, and it is said to have been due to a gift from her family that she and her husband lived on a 12-acre farm before he left Ireland. My father said they had a brick house and a pony to ride and that his brother Willie remembered the old home, however vaguely. [4]

Not all of Bridget's family spurned Martin Munroe. Her sister's husband, a journalist (my father thought he might have been named O'Brien, but my father's memory for names was notably poor, though often highly imaginative), joined Martin in a rebel gesture early in the 1870s. The two drove an Englishman's cattle across the countryside, breaking down walls and dispersing the cattle as an act of defiance of Ireland's rulers. Possibly the two men had joined the Fenians, the major nationalistic group of that day.

Bridget's brother-in-law was caught and for the crime was sentenced to transportation to Australia. He wound up in South Australia which was not a penal colony, but how that came about is unknown. Martin escaped detection, but because of the dispersal of cattle (and perhaps for other reasons) he decided he should leave the

country. It was a decision that could not have been taken lightly by a man with a wife and three children. His brother-in-law, who was now raising sheep, wrote Martin, urging him to come to Adelaide, where he had settled. This is what Martin determined to do when he deposited his wife and children in the Episcopal palace at Tuam (where the housekeeper was disgruntled at their arrival) and set off for Dublin and, presumably, a ship to Australia.

The Tuam incident in the life of Bridget and her children – Mary, Willie, and Pat – is interesting particularly because the current archbishop, John MacHale, said to be Bridget's uncle (more likely her great-uncle, from his age), was a man of distinction in the history of Ireland. Born in County Mayo in 1891, MacHale became a bishop in 1825 as coadjutor in Killaly and in 1834 moved to Tuam, one of four Irish archbishoprics. Scholar (he translated some of Thomas Moore's poems and the Iliad into Irish, among other literary works) and nationalist (he became known as "the Lion of the West" for his staunch advocacy of things Irish, the language, the church, the people) his life story is repeated in many sources, including the Dictionary of National Biography and a two-volume eulogistic life by Bernard O'Reilly (New York, 1890). (The exact connection of MacHale to McCabes is not known, but my father's stories were very positive in mentioning Tuam, and it is not a name he would have produced from his fertile imagination.) [5]

In Dublin Martin met a friend who persuaded him not to go to Australia, but to embark for the United States. New York was closer to Ireland than Adelaide by far, and Martin had blood relatives in America, including two brothers, William and Patrick (whose names, incidentally, were those he had given his first two sons). [6]

Did Martin let Bridget know where he was going before he left Ireland, or did it come as a shock to her to find her husband in America rather than with her brother-in-law (and, presumably, her sister) in Australia? Thrown on the charity of her uncle, John of Tuam, as he signed himself, she escaped his unfriendly housekeeper by moving to the home of the Munroes in Headford. (My father thought she moved because her uncle died, but John of Tuam lived on five years after she left Ireland, so this cannot be.) So much that we do not know might have been revealed to us had my father not made a bonfire of his father's (Martin's) papers when he and his sister Sadie were moving out of the family home after his father's death.[7]

The news from America soon brought Bridget a tale of further misadventures. Things had started brightly. Martin found a coin (I have it) as he walked through Battery Park after his arrival at Castle Garden (he was in the pre-Ellis Island immigration), and for a moment he was inclined to believe the myth that this New World was paved with – well, money, if not gold. But soon discouragement set in. His brothers got Martin a job with a New York wholesaler, but before long he broke his ankle. (The accident suggests his work was more muscular than mental.) Helpless as far as work was concerned, he spent his days while the ankle was healing sitting in the park at the foot of Manhattan watching Irish immigrants enter the land of hope. Many of them found jobs on the Brooklyn Bridge, then under construction. Too often they squandered their pay as soon as they had it in one of the saloons that thronged the city. Many, he told my father, soon became bums.

As soon as his ankle healed Martin took a job on a railroad being built in Indiana. My cousin Catherine thinks he may have gone to Kentucky too, because she remembers

some southern mannerisms of speech she was told he had picked up there. (She was a very little girl when she met her grandfather.)

The railroad Martin worked on went broke and the employees were paid off in flour. Perhaps he might have stayed in the Middle West, but the mistress of his boarding house refused to let him pay his bill in flour, and he had to be rescued. By this time he had two younger sisters in America, as well as the two brothers, and it was one of the sisters, the unmarried Mary, who now came to Indiana to rescue Martin and bring him back to New York. It was another relative, a cousin, Jimmy Burns, a shoemaker, who drew him to Wilmington, Delaware. Martin wrote to Jimmy, who lived in Wilmington at Railroad and Water Streets, near the Christina, and soon went to visit this cousin, probably in hope of settling down and bringing his family to America. Jimmy took him to city council to meet a politician who was superintendent in a morocco (leather) shop. This man gave Martin a job, and Jimmy arranged the rental of a house (near his own, I believe) to which Martin could bring his family.

Bridget came to America in 1876, bringing with her the middle child, Willie, because he was the frailest. The other two children, Mary and Pat, came by themselves in 1879.[8] It is not clear how long Martin had been in Wilmington before Bridget rejoined him, but probably only a short time. It can be assumed that Martin's American brothers and sisters would have helped him raise the small sum needed to transport his wife and child from Ireland.

Before his mother left him, the youngest child, Pat, was taken to stay with relatives of hers up in the mountains, probably in Mayo or the western section of County Galway. Mary stayed in the home of her uncle Michael Munroe, who had a 37-acre farm on the outskirts of Headford. Here she enjoyed the companionship of Michael's daughter

Jennie, of about the same age. Jennie (who later married a Forde) became Mary's lifelong friend and correspondent.

Across the road, facing the Munroe house, a wall surrounded the demesne of a rich landlord (a St. Clair?). Climbing on to the wall one day, Mary reached out to clasp a butterfly that had settled on a nearby tree or high bush. Unfortunately she lost her footing and fell, breaking her hip. It was set poorly and ever after she limped, more pronouncedly as she grew old.

My grandmother Bridget waited in America three years before the family could afford to bring Mary and Pat from Ireland. Mary later told of going to the mountains accompanied by her Uncle Michael, Jennie's father, to fetch Pat. She remembered being taken for a ride there in a basket on the side of a donkey.

On the ocean voyage, Pat, a wily, husky boy, became a great favorite of the sailors. When they arrived in New York on August 2, 1879, Pat was reluctant to leave the ship. Uncle Patrick, who had come to meet the children, had to go aboard the ship to persuade Pat to leave his friends.

Before Pat and Mary arrived in America there had been a further addition to the family. Bridget had come to Wilmington, according to notes left by Pat, on June 15, 1876, and on April 22, 1877, by her fourth child, Margaret (Maggie), was born there. My father thought it possible there might have been other children born in Ireland who died in infancy. However, the idea survives only as speculation.

Within a few years there were more American-born than Irish-born children in Martin Munroe's family. Four more followed Maggie, the first native American. Michael John, my father, was born September 27, 1879; Catherine (Katie) on March 15, 1882; Sarah (Sadie) on July 15, 1884; and a second Martin (Marty) on August 13, 1886.

Eight children were a weighty responsibility for a penniless immigrant. Martin had some advantages, of course. He was educated in the English language, though from my father's tales it is evident that my grandfather had at least a smattering of Irish. (My father knew a few stock phrases, such as what sounded to me like "Kathe wiltho" for "good morning" and a response that I remember as "Kathe wilthou wan," and of course the patriotic slogan, "Erin go bragh." However, when I reflect how garbled the German sayings and prayers that my mother taught me as a child turned out to be when I studied German in college and realized what I was saying, I am doubtful of my memory of these few Irish phrases.) Part of County Galway is in the Gaeltacht, where the Irish language survives. But Martin's work in Ireland had little carry-over value in America, since, like most Irish immigrants, he settled in a city and not in the agricultural, stock-raising culture from which he had come.

It was the availability of work, of comradeship, and of the church in which he was raised that led Martin, like most Irish men, to settle in a city in this new land. As to the church, it is my belief that Martin and Bridget were loyal Catholics who reared their children in the faith. As to comradeship, there was plenty to be found in Wilmington. Delaware's largest city had 42,478 people by the census of 1880, the first one after the arrival of the Martin Munroes. This represented a growth of 38 per cent in ten years, and by 1890, when the youngest of the Munroe children had been born, the population of Wilmington had risen by another 45 per cent, to 61,431 (not much different from what it is in 1987, as I am writing). Among the newcomers to Wilmington, the largest foreign contingent was the Irish, of whom there were 4,253 in Wilmington in 1890 who were immigrants, and more than that born in this country of immigrant parents. I believe my

grandfather belonged to the Ancient Order of Hibernians (the A. O. H.), a lodge where he would have had the company of many men with a background like his.

There were also relatives to supply fellowship. Jimmy Burns is the only one I know of in Wilmington, but Martin had two brothers and two sisters in America and later five children of another sister came to this country.[9] (If any of Bridget's family came to the New World the Martin Munroes seem to have known nothing of them. Since it was a rare Irish family that did not send members to America, it seems likely that her family's disapproval of the marriage to Martin continued even after the transplantation to the New World.)[10]

The great-uncles and great-aunts of the Munroe children were personally unknown to me, but Aunt Mary (my Aunt Mary), at least, kept in touch with them. I have heard, incidentally, that my grandfather quarreled with his brothers about the spelling of the family name after they had been away to school in Dublin. I don't know whether they wanted to spell the name Monroe or Munro. All of the names have a long and intermixed history (as I have heard from the chief of the Scottish clan, Sir Patrick Munro of Foulis). Martin Munroe, my father said, was the traditionalist holding to the manner of spelling the name in which it had come to him. (Munroe, incidentally, was the most common way of spelling the name in the early American censuses, but after James Monroe became president, his manner of spelling the name, which was not that of his first immigrant ancestors, became the most common.)[11]

The brothers William and Patrick Munroe came to America shortly after the end of the Civil War. Whether they came singly or together is not known. Perhaps they came first to Boston, but soon William set off peddling through the South while Patrick worked in New York. William's stock came to be composed mainly of furniture, and

Patrick became his partner, buying goods in New York and forwarding them to William. The brothers offered Martin a job peddling in the South, but he turned it down.

At some unknown time William settled down in Wilmington, North Carolina, where he opened a store in the name of the Munroe brothers. In Wilmington he married the daughter of a mayor of the city, a woman who became known to Martin's children as Aunt Maggie. Patrick moved to Washington and opened a furniture store there. His wife, a Cullinan (not clear – possibly Cavinan) from New York, became known to the children as Aunt Anna.

The two brothers were very different, both in appearance and in manner. William was thin and seemed to my father (then just a boy) to be grouchy. He talked fast and looked to the boy like a businessman. Patrick, on the other hand, was stocky, built like my grandfather. He was grandiloquent in manner, neat, well dressed, and generous.

Each of them gave Martin ten dollars at Christmas time, and their sister Mary contributed another ten dollars. Through these gifts each of Martin's children was assured a new outfit, costing about $2.50 per child. The brothers would stop in Delaware to see Martin as they traveled by train north to New York to buy stock for their stores. On one occasion in my father's boyhood he was loafing on Front Street in Wilmington (Delaware) when the two men came up the street from the railroad depot. Without any sign of recognition William hailed him, "Here, boy, can you tell me where the Munroes live?" As my father led them toward his home, probably on Tatnall Street, his Uncle William, still without recognizing the guide, prodded him to make him move along. Patrick was apparently still living in New York when Mary and young pat arrived in 1879. It was there that Uncle Patrick must have met his wife, who came from a sporty,

hard-drinking family. At least one brother-in-law followed Patrick to Washington after he set up business there – to his misfortune.

Patrick shortly became ill and had to leave the business to the care of his brother-in-law. His business had been separated from his brother's store in North Carolina and in Patrick's enforced absence from care of it, it suffered. Debts mounted steadily, and creditors foreclosed. Patrick, who seemed to be recovering his health, moved his family to Philadelphia and started out in business again. But in a short time another catastrophe occurred. William died, and at his funeral Patrick is said to have caught cold, developing an illness that soon proved fatal.

On the way back from William's funeral, however, Patrick had visited Martin and explained that although William had bequeathed him a small legacy, it had to be used for William's family, which was left in poor circumstances. After Patrick's death his survivors in Philadelphia remained for many years in contact with the Munroes in Delaware. I remember that one male member of the family worked as a salesman in Gimbel's store. A daughter named Mary married a man named Willie De May, and their daughter married Pat Stanton, once a prominent radio announcer in Philadelphia. For a while he was best known as a sports announcer; when I last heard of him (in the late 1950s) he managed a radio station that featured Irish music. He and his wife traveled to Ireland and visited our cousins on the Munroe farm at Headford. To the best of my knowledge they were the first American relatives to do so until I visited there in 1962. (Young James Collins and his wife Elaine were there several years later when he came back from the Vietnam War.)

William's widow and children moved from North Carolina to Washington, where another branch of the family had meanwhile been established. A sister of Martin,

William, and Patrick had been married in Ireland to a man named Cannon. She died, and he remarried – twice, if the story I heard is true. Eventually he died too in Ireland, on a British government pension, but four of his children, all sons by his first wife, came to America. All of them settled in Washington.

Willie Cannon was the first of them to come. He arrived at the time of Cleveland's panic (1893), when no jobs were to be had. On immigrating, he was supposed to have an appointment in Washington with someone who could help him. But Willie could not locate this man, and he was forced to appeal, being penniless, to his Uncle Patrick. This story comes in some detail from my father because at just that time my grandfather happened to be visiting his brother Patrick. My grandfather gave Willie Cannon his first dollar – not that Martin was so Rich, but as an obligation to a nephew in order that Willie might do his share of treating as they visited saloons, the clubs of the Irish immigrants.

Saloons were thick in Washington in those days – as many as seven on one block. Patrick got Willie a job unloading coal at the gas works three days a week, but soon Willie was set up in a more congenial occupation, as a barkeep. Before long he bought out a Frenchwoman and had a saloon of his own. Successful in business, Willie acquired other real estate, converting houses into apartments. He brought three brothers to America, starting them out as bartenders and in time setting two of them up in the saloon business. The remaining brother, preferring another business, operated a grocery store in Georgetown. According to my father's account (which must have come from his father), Willie gave no help to Uncle Patrick when he went bankrupt.

I once visited the Cannons in Washington with my parents. I was about fourteen, I think, and it was my first visit to the capital. We went on a one-day excursion by train

(my mother was fond of such excursions, which were the only trips she could afford then), and we did some sightseeing, but the only building I remember visiting was the Library of Congress. I suppose we took a trolley to the Cannons' house; I think it was Willie Cannon's but I cannot be sure. There was a girl in the family younger than I was.

Washington eventually became the home of one of my grandfather's younger sisters. Two of them, Mary and Sarah, had come to America. Sarah married a man named Thomas Garrity and lived in Brooklyn. Either her son or her husband was a policeman, I believe. My mother and father, on their honeymoon in November 1912, visited the Garritys, but I know of no further contact with them on the part of my parents. I believe my Aunt Mary and some of her children may have exchanged visits with them. I have heard of Florence Garrity introducing her Wilmington cousins to the meaning of the word "stoop" for the front appendage of a house.

The second sister, Mary, who was never married, worked for many years as laundress for a wealthy New York family named Jones. At one period Martin's oldest child, my Aunt Mary, went to New York and took jobs her aunt arranged for her as child's nurse with some Jewish families. Martin's sister Mary was apparently quite loyal to the family. She was generous to Martin and his children at Christmas, as I have already written, and she gave up her job in New York in order to go to Washington and help take care of a nephew's family. When she asked for a letter of recommendation on leaving, she found her employers for the last twenty years did not know her last name.

My grandfather's older brother Michael stayed in Ireland, living out his life on the family farm at Headford. His daughter Jennie, girlhood friend of my Aunt Mary, did come to America, however. She married a school teacher named Forde in New York, but she was living in Washington in 1902, when her son Augustine was born. (I saw

Augustine's birth certificate.) Shortly thereafter Jennie's mother died, and her father urged her to return with her family and keep house for him. If she did he would leave her the family farm.

She did, and he did. Whether any other of Jennie Forde's children were born in America, I do not know. When I visited Ireland in 1962 I met four of them: Augustine; Vera (Mrs. Dominick O'Halloran), who lives in Galway City and is said to have once had a shop in Tuam; Annie (Mrs. Dolan), who lived in Clontarf, a suburb of Dublin; and the youngest in the family, Father Sylvius, a charming Franciscan priest, who when I visited was pastor of a grand Dublin church right on the Liffey, a church that was known commonly as Adam and Eve's because in the days when Catholics suffered disabilities from practicing their faith freely they entered a church on this site (it could hardly have been the splendid edifice I saw) clandestinely through the doors of a neighboring tavern sporting a sign showing Adam and Eve.

Jennie had at least one other son, Patrick, called P. J., who happened not to be home when I knocked on his door. And there was at least one other daughter, Mamie (Mrs. Curley). Only Mamie Curley and Vera O'Halloran are alive at the time of this writing.

Martin and Bridget Munroe did not have an easy life in America. Indeed for them things were better in the old country. The first steps for Martin in Wilmington, Delaware, were relatively easy. The sizable Irish element in the city and its importance to the Democratic party (which it supported almost unanimously) assured assistance to a newcomer in acquiring citizenship—and the right to vote—in minimal time. (The Republican party in Wilmington, as in many other East Coast cities, had little appeal to the Irish, probably in part because it inherited some of the prejudices and the reputation

of the Know-Nothing party, which had been both anti-immigrant and anti-Catholic in its flourishing period, the 1850s.)

A political connection, a Wilmington city councilman, secured Martin his first job here and the same man may also have found him a home. I have no idea which morocco shop Martin worked in. There were several such shops in Wilmington, where they remained an odoriferous feature of the urban landscape into the mid-twentieth century. In these shops goat skins, largely imported, were turned into serviceable leather. The odor that permeated the shops and several blocks of the neighborhood outside was dreadful.

It was too much for my grandfather, who soon left this job for one in Pusey and Jones's Machine shop. When he was laid off there, he started working at Lobdell's, an iron foundry on the Christina River in South Wilmington, and he worked at this foundry for the rest of his life. The dates for these events remain uncertain, but Martin was at Lobdell's at least by the year 1882-1883, when the city directory identifies him as a laborer there. George Lobdell was the founder of this family firm, which had its foundry just upstream from the present Wilmington Marine Terminal. It had two main products, wheels for railroad cars and large iron rolls used in paper mills. The top operatives were iron moulders, who served a seven-year apprenticeship to learn their trade, beginning as teen-age boys. My grandfather, of course, had no such vocational training. He is listed in city directories as a laborer, but to the best of my knowledge he worked at Lobdell's as a sub-contractor, breaking up old car wheels and other scrap iron so it could be used over again. When he grew old, in the absence of any schem for retirement, he was shifted to a job as a watchman. Lobdell's was an old-line family firm that paid low wages, gave no vacations, but tried to take care of employees for life.

At home, Martin was in command. He did no work there, my father said, he just gave orders. Bridget did not sit at the table at dinner but kept busy serving the food to her husband and their numerous progeny. With so many to feed, the children were told the gravy was the best part of a meat dish, along with the meat clinging to the bone. If a child left the table for any reason, he could not return. Otherwise, my father said, the children could have eaten the family out of house and home.

Home must have been a somber place. There were no books in it, but they did get a daily newspaper. Lacking central heating, the children undressed in winter by the kitchen stove and ran upstairs to the warmth of their beds. They washed outside in the back yard before entering the house. My father said he never washed inside the house until he moved to his sister's, after his father's death. As a boy he ran barefoot in summer, but if he went to bed without washing his legs his father beat him with a razor strop. Bridget never whipped the children; indeed she tried to protect them from their father's anger. Expensive toys, like bicycles, were unknown to the Munroe children unless they were able to acquire a second or third-hand one on their own. The boys went without haircuts all winter. In the spring when a man came to clip the horses of the Liberty Fire Company, boys of the neighborhood would line up and after he was done with the horses he would clip the boys' hair.

The girls were not permitted to have callers, and there were seldom guests in the house. Dancing and singing in the home was unknown (quite different from the situation in my mother's home when she was a girl). My father's sisters were required to be in early, usually at 8 but sometimes they were allowed out until 9. When Kate once stayed out at a dance her father locked her out.

Kate, however, was a match for her father and his temper. When he once began to beat her, she ran into the backyard screaming bloody murder so loud that neighbors came from their houses to see what was the matter. Martin was ashamed and cowed by the attention. To the end of his life he remained a little afraid of Kate. He never struck her again.

Despite these stories that he told, my father, it is clear to me, loved his father. His mother he thought was a saint, and he did not think that of his father, but he respected the man and they got along. My father was a good steady worker after he grew up, and he never missed a day's work, however ill he might feel, if he could drag himself out of the house in the morning. Being male, he was allowed privileges, particularly as he grew up and became, as he did, the financial mainstay of the family in his father's old age.

The two men talked a lot apparently, since my stories of Martin came mainly from my father. After all, for twelve years, from Bridget's death in 1898 to Martin's in 1910, they lived together, the only two men in the house, though there was always at least one girl there as housekeeper—Kate, until her marriage, and Sadie throughout this period.

Only occasionally did a story regarding Martin's temper slip from my father, as, for example, on an occasion when my son Stephen made a remark I considered insolent and I raised my hand to strike him. "Don't do that, John," my father interrupted. "The boy is too big for that. My father hit Pat and he ran away."

My father was reported to have a bad temper too if crossed by men of his own station in life, and I saw a very few examples of it at home. But he never struck me. I never remember being whipped by him even when I was small; indeed he comforted me

when my mother delivered a deserved chastising, possibly a spanking, but more often, frequently indeed, a severe scolding.

Though he may have been something of a lion at work, according to the tales I heard, he was ordinarily a lamb at home, and his tender feelings extended beyond his immediate family to all his brothers and sisters and nieces and nephews. He loved them all and rarely found even the slightest fault in them. And as to his father, it was an everlasting consolation to him that he had been present when his father died and had held him in his arms.

Most of the children left the Munroe home. Mary, the eldest child, went with the Lobdell family as a child's nurse when my father was only four or five. As related earlier, she left the Lobdells when she was still young to join her Aunt Mary in New York, making "big money" (in my father's words) taking care of children there. Returning to Delaware, she moved to the home of Mrs. Emma Lobdell Allmond and her husband, Dr. Charles M. Allmond. They lived in Newark and paid Mary one dollar and a half a week besides her keep. Residence in Newark, where Dr. Allmond was at one time mayor, explains her marriage to Reuben Brown, son of the leading tinner and roofer, with a shop on Main Street. The shop was on the south side of Main where the University campus crosses the street today.

My father did not remember Mary living at home. The first time he recalled seeing her in the house was at a children's party. It was one of the few festive occasions in the house that my father remembered. He was only a young boy, and the party was mainly composed of his sister Maggie (two years older than he was) and her friends. His memory of his first visit to the Brandywine Park was also connected with Maggie, since she took him there, to Tatnall's woods. Otherwise he had very little to say about this

sister. The first home my father remembered was on Tatnall Street between First and Second, and he believed that this was where he was born on September 27, 1879. By my time this was a rough area, either part of or next to a run-down neighborhood called Bloodfield. It was undoubtedly the home of poor folk, but not as bad when my father lived there as it became later. According to a block directory for 1886 the next door neighbors were named Lawless and Knotts, which agrees with my father's recollection of Johnny Knotts as one of his earliest friends.

City directories, in fact, agree very well with my father's recollections of these early days. The first directory to list Martin Munroe is the one for 1877-1878, which would be the year after Bridget's arrival in Amewrica, and the address given is 115 Tatnall Street. The family lived there until approximately 1880 (through the year when my father was born, 1879). The Munroes moved then to 113 Washington Street, but by 1885-1886 they were back on Tatnall Street, at 113, next door to their former home. It seems clear that they were renting, never homeowners. (Incidentally, the name is sometimes spelled Munroe and sometimes Monroe, even Monrow, in the directories; sometimes it is given two ways in the same book.) One of the few stories I remember my father telling of those days is that an old Irish woman gave him a coin to put in his pocket for good luck the first day he appeared on the street in pants, which suggests that children were kept in dresses a long time.

His parents, my father said, had decided to name him John, but when they took him to church to be baptized the priest suggested that, particularly because the baby was weak, he should be named Michael, this being [Authors note: September 28, the day before] St. Michael's Day (Michaelmas). And so the baby was named Michael John, but I have heard longtime acquaintances call him Johnny, apparently a name used in his

boyhood. He gained strength and became a remarkably healthy man, and a strong one, living to be ninety. Probably he would have lived longer had his spirit not been crushed after the death of my mother, when he was eighty-six.

In 1888 Martin Munroe moved his family "over the bridge" to South Silmington. The new location was more convenient than Tatnall Street to his job at Lobdell's foundry. My father became nine in Spetember 1888, and as long as his father lived he remained a "Bridger," as people were called who lived across the Christina in the area connected to the rest of Wilmington by Third Street Bridge. According to my father the Bridgers were a feisty group, often at odds with city kids. One group would sometimes wait for the other to cross the bridge and then attack them as interlopers into enemy territory.

The Munroes had several different addresses over the bridge, according to the city directories. The first address (in the 1889 directory) was 206 Heald Street. In a year they had moved to 1109 Lobdell Street, where they apparently stayed for three years. In 1893 they were at 1125 Apple Street, but after another three years they moved again, this time to 4 New Castle Avenue. Martin Munroe was generally identified in the directory as a laborer, but in 1898 he was called a watchman, and in 1899 a foreman, always at Lobdell's.

The frail son William's name appears for the first time in the 1890 directory. A few years later he is listed as a driver, and then in 1899 as a teamster for H. Lowe, who had a livery stable. William, who had suffered from St. Vitus's dance as a child, could not do hard work and was not very spirited. This displeased his father who found it hard to put up with those who did not work hard. Consequently, according to my father,

William spent much of his time at the livery stable and very little at home, thus avoiding his father's wrath.

My father's name first appears in the 1899 directory, where Katie, too, is listed, Michael being described as an employee of the Munroes had moved again, to 204 South Heald Street, still "over the bridge." In this year Michael is listed as a moulder, indicating his seven-year apprenticeship was over. Katie disappeared from the directory listing after 1899 until 1904 when she reappeared as "Catherine," the wife of John Collins, a morocco worker of 603 West Third Street.

Only my father and his youngest sister, Sarah, were now left with their father in the house on Heald Street, where he lived until his death in November 1910. From at least 1906, however, the oldest of Martin's children, Mary, was living only two doors from her father, at 200 South Heald Street. She and her husband Reuben Brown had previously lived in Newark, where most of their children were born.

In 1905 the Wilmington directory mistakenly lists two moulders in that house, Michael and Peter, but both names refer to my father who had been called Pete by many of his friends ever since he went to work at Lobdell's. As he explained the name to me, it originated at the foundry where his brother Pat had once worked (as an adolescent). When my father appeared (and he bore a resemblance to Pat), he was called Little Pat, or Pete. The name stuck to him for life. My mother was first introduced to him as Pete Munroe, and she and her family always called him by this name.

Pat's name was never in the directory because he ran away from home so early—in approximately 1892. Actually he left home twice. The first time he returned, with money he had made and gave to his mother. The second time he stayed away for 45

years. No word is known to have come from him, and no one knew where he was, though he eventually settled at no immense distance, in western Pennsylvania.

Pat was a strong boy and a good worker, according to my father who sang his praises to me as I was growing up. It was his father's harsh treatment that drove Pat away, and in his renunciation of his home ties—in anger, possibly—he changed his name to Frank P. Monroe. Adopting a different spelling for the last name may not have taken much thought because it was more difficult to insist on Munroe as the spelling than to surrender to the spelling President Monroe used, a spelling perpetuated in street names and in other place names everywhere. Not always, but usually, Monroe was the spelling used for the family in Wilmington city directories.

Frank Monroe, as I will hereafter call him, married twice. He had one child, Frank, of whom I know almost nothing, by his first wife, and four children (Willis, John, Margaret, and Mary Louise) by his second wife, Bertha Majors. She was a Lutheran, like my mother, and Frank, unlike my father, became a Protestant—perhaps an additional act of renunciation of the harsh father he was leaving.

William and Maggie also left home. William, who lacked vigor, did not move far. He had "loafed" (as my father put it) at a livery stable at Front and Tatnall for years but was still listed at his father's home in the 1899 directory. Beginning in 1905, however, he is known to have been resident at 722 King Street, probably employed there as a handyman and driver by a funeral director named Fisher.

Maggie's fate is mysterious. My mother suspected a scandal since she was never spoken of. After the death of my parents, my cousin Sarah Brown told me Maggie had married a Jew and had now been dead for a long time, probably at least fifty years. According to Sarah my father went to the funeral, which was in New Jersey, and told

Aunt Mary about it when he came home. It is strange that my mother seemed to know nothing about Maggie's fate. She could keep secrets, but my father could not. I suspect it was someone else who attended Maggie's funeral and told Aunt Mary about it. Since my father did not mention Maggie's fate to me, I share my mother's suspicions. Marriage to a Jew, in my opinion, would not, in itself, have been enough to account for this silence. My mother's older sister married a Jew, and through this shocked her German immigrant mother, her siblings rallied to her defense. Since there was much talk of this marriage in the family, it is strange if such an alliance by his sister was sufficient to seal my father's mouth.

Maggie was very blond, he told me, "blonder even than your wife." And this is the only personal comment I recall his ever making of a sister who was just two years his elder.

The youngest child, Marty, suffered from what my father called "membranes croup" and died at 11. He was a great pet in the family, and was always dressed well, I was told. There was no remedy for his disease, my father said, though the unfortunate little boy was held over vapor arising from steeped lime in an effort to cut the congestion that clogged his lungs or throat.

Willie and Marty excepted (and Maggie unknown), the Munroe children were uncommonly healthy. When only nine, Pat carried water for laborers constructing a canal at Lobdell's. Pat, my father said, was the wildest, but he was a good worker. None of them was ever arrested, though there were many temptations in the street about them.

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To hear my father tell of it, his life as a boy was a happy one, and it grew better every year up to the time he got married and took on family responsibilities. He was

inclined to be a singularly cheerful person, who was not given to preparing for the morrow. He worried about little except the well-being of his wife and son. I have also known him to come home worried about his work—not about keeping his job but whether one of the large iron rolls (for paper-making) that he had cast might be defective. But the boy deserves attention before the concerns of the husband and father. Not that he ever ceased being a boy at heart.

Footnotes

1. To the university, my father said. Unless otherwise attributed, the data in this family history comes from my father. Some of it is recorded in notes I took when talking with him in the last ten years of his long life.

2. He may also have had a "bake shop" before he came to America.

3. According to notes left by her son Pat, Bridget was fifty when she died in 1898, which is the basis for estimating the date of her birth. But she may have been younger at her death. She is said to have been married at sixteen, and her first child, Mary, was born in about 1870. There may, of course, have been earlier births of children who did not survive.

4. When Martin left for America he sold the pony to people named Kilhoon, whose son Archy was known to my father in Wilmington.

5. I am uneasy about claiming relationship to the renowned Archbishop MacHale, chiefly because I know so little of my grandmother's ancestry that I cannot know whether there could be a MacHale connection. But another problem is my father's

story that the death of the bishop obliged her to move the home of her husband's brother in Headford. Archbishop MacHale, though very old, did not die until 1881, five years after Bridget came to America. There were two contemporary bishops bearing Bridget's maiden name. One, Edward Cardinal McCabe, archbishop of Dublin, 1867-1885, seems to be clearly not the bishop of my family story. The other, Cornelius (Nigel) McCabe, bishop of Ardagh and Clonmacnois, 1867-1871, fits better, except that his death seems to have preceded Martin's departure from Ireland—and it is Tuam, not Ardagh, that was mentioned to me. I have, unfortunately, no information as yet about this Bishop McCabe.

There was also a Protestant (Church of Ireland) bishop of Tuam, but the contemporary holder of this title (in fact it was "Bishop of Tuam, Killala and Achonry"), Charles Broderick Bernard, 1867-1890, does not fit the family story. For data on the hierarchy I am indebted to my son-in-law, András Riedlmayer, who used the Hierarchia Catholica Medii et Recentioris Aevi, vol. 8 (1846-1903) (Padua, 1978). Additional information regarding Archbishop MacHale was supplied by my cousin Rorán Dolan, of Dublin.

6. According to my father, Martin's Brothers helped him emigrate, but if he had a house and farm to sell the help may not have been necessary.

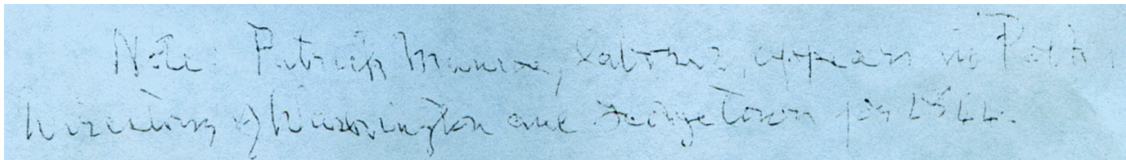
7. Martin's Letters from his brothers, his passport, and his naturalization papers were all destroyed in this fire.

8. The children arrived on August 2, 1879. I believe Mary was eight years old when she arrived and Pat was probably five.

9 My father thought Martin was the oldest in his family, but he may have been speaking only of the brothers and sisters who came to America.

10. My father mentions only one letter received by his mother, and it was from her sister in Australia. He did not specifically say there were none from Ireland.

11. I could find no Munroes under any variant of the spelling in the telephone books I examined in Ireland in 1962. The name is very common in Scotland, where it is usually spelled “Munro.” Sir Patrick Munro of Foulis, chief of the clan, told me (in about 1978) that they migrated from Ireland to Scotland in the Middle Ages. The center of their settlement came near to be near Dingwall, in eastern Ross, which is in the north of Scotland, above Inverness. Sir Patrick found the name spelled several ways in a single document.



[The original document had a hand written comment that read:
“Note: Patrick Munroe labors appear in Both [sic]
directory of Washington and Georgetown for 1844”]

▲ YOUNG BOYS WORE loose-fitting dresses until they were five or six. Then they began to dress exactly like their fathers.

▲ YOUNG GIRLS dressed just like their mothers. Wealthy young ladies began wearing stays at an early age. These were under-garments stiffened with whalebone and laced tightly to give a fashion-able figure.

[The copy of this history that my father gave to me had this magazine image taped to the inside of the front cover. j.m.m.]