

Death of noted Cork Gael

26/1/79

THE death of Mr. Cornelius "Connie" Neenan at his home, College Road, Cork, yesterday has severed a long link with Gaelic affairs. He was in his 87th year. He emigrated to the USA in the early 'twenties and became a father-figure with many Irish associations.

An Taoiseach, Mr. Jack Lynch, has paid a fine tribute to him, saying "he had spent his life in the service of his country".

'Connie' Neenan was a man of many parts, but essentially he was warm-hearted and outgoing, ready to listen to those who sought his aid—and they were many—and to give that help quietly and unobtrusively. How many he aided directly or through his connections has never been recorded, at least not in this world.

He was a Lough Parish man, proud of it and ready to help its people as shall be related here later. He grew up in Croaghtamore and attended Glasheen National School before becoming an apprentice in the Eagle Printing Company.

While still in his teens, he joined the Volunteers, soon becoming one of the most active members of the Cork City Battalion at a time when Tomas Mac Curtain and Terence MacSwiney, both to become Lord Mayors of Cork and Brigade Commandants, were building up the movement

which distinguished itself in the War of Independence. Neenan eventually rose to become Commandant of one of the city's two battalions, was a member of Cork Corporation around that time too and was interned for a period in Cork and Brixton prisons.

In those days too his love of national games blossomed. He first joined the Fr. O'Leary T.A. Hall hurling team in his native parish, and was one of those responsible for the amalgamation of that team with the more famous St. Finbarr's Hurling Club in 1919. He played hurling with the Barrs and football with Lees, and never lost interest in these famous old clubs for the next 60-odd years. He won county hurling and football honours with them, earned junior All-Ireland hurling medals with Cork, and represented his native county in senior hurling, but he counted as the greatest honour his inclusion in the Barrs team which defeated the Rockies (Blackrock) in the 1919 county final.

EMIGRATED

In 1926 he, like many others, took ship for the United States from Cobh, and in a completely strange environment soon began to make his mark developing several independent businesses. Later in life he became one of the principal representative of Waterford Glass in the United States, and an important agent for



among the best of any club in any code in Cork. At the time of his death he was president of the club.

Mr. Neenan, who was unmarried, is survived by a brother, Jack; nephews, Dr. Barry Collins, Neil Collins, John, Billy, Finbarr and 'Connie' Neenan; nieces, Miss Maura Collins, and Mrs. Mary Holohan.

The Taoiseach, Mr. Lynch, yesterday issued the following statement about the late "Connie" Neenan:

"'Connie' Neenan spent his life in the service of his country, first as a young man in the struggle for political independence and in later years in the fight for economic independence.

"His work for Ireland in the United States was intense though unobtrusive. In my early days as Minister for Industry and Commerce his help in making business contacts for me on visits to the United States was invaluable.

"His love for Ireland and for his native games was equally intense. His contribution to the GAA and especially to his home club, St. Finbarr's, was immeasurable. The Barrs club complex at Toghier is a permanent monument to this loveable, big-hearted Corkman who in all his wanderings abroad, never lost contact with his native place or his own people.

"Suaimhneas siorrai da anam dilis."

the Irish Hospitals' Trust Sweepstake. He was a close friend of two other prominent Irishmen, Mr. Joe McGrath, and Mr. John A. Mulcahy, and to the Irish in the States he was something of a father-figure.

Being separated by an ocean did not lessen his interest in affairs Irish and in particular the welfare of his club, St. Finbarr's, and this interest was quickened when he retired from business and took up residence in the College Road area, still in the Lough parish, in the late 1960s.

When his club sought to build a new clubhouse and sports complex at Toghier in 1969, Mr. Neenan's generosity was a major factor in the provision of such fine facilities, rated

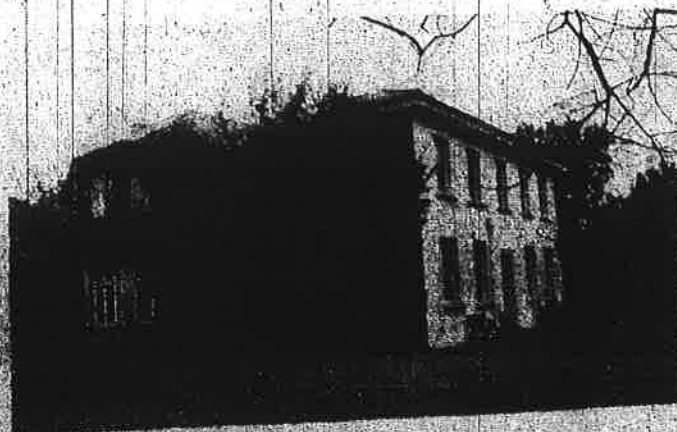
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