

THE WESTERN RESERVE HISTORICAL SOCIETY
MANUSCRIPT COLLECTIONS

REGISTER: Frank Stagg Family Papers

MS. NO.: 4924

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Date: August 13, 2004

Frank Stagg (1941-1976) was born into a republican family, in Hollymount, near Claremorris, County Mayo, Ireland. As a young adult, he immigrated to the United Kingdom, settling for a time in Luton, where he joined Sinn Fein in 1972. Shortly thereafter, he joined the I.R.A. (Irish Republican Army). Stagg was arrested in 1973, in Coventry, United Kingdom, for conspiring to commit arson, for which he received a ten year sentence. At his trial, he was described as a commanding officer in the Coventry IRA unit. He began to serve his sentence in Albany Prison on the Isle of Wight. He spent most of his time in solitary confinement, due to his insistence on being treated as a political prisoner. Parkhurst Prison was home at that time to a number of I.R.A. political prisoners, including the Belfast Ten, who were on hunger strike for political reasons. In 1974, Stagg joined this strike. They had three demands; no solitary confinement, the right to education with no forced prison work; and the setting of a reasonable date for a transfer to an Irish prison.

After the first hunger striker died, Michael Gaughan, the remaining strikers ended their fast, based on the assurance that they would be transferred to a prison in Ireland. However, this never happened. At the end of 1975, Stagg went on another hunger strike, his fourth strike in two years. He died on February 12, 1976, after a 62 day fast. Stagg was adamant that he would receive a traditional republican funeral, and left this request to Derek Highstead, who ran Sinn Fein in the United Kingdom. The government of the Irish Free State, a coalition of Fine Gael and Labour, under Taoiseach (prime minister) Liam Cosgrave, hijacked the body, held a Requiem mass which was boycotted by most of the Stagg family and relatives. His body was interred at Ballina, County Mayo. To avoid any interference or removal of Stagg's body, the Special Branch poured six feet of concrete on top of the body.

A brother of Stagg's purchased the plot next to where Frank was buried. Through this plot, on November 6, 1976, IRA volunteers removed Stagg's remains and buried him beside Michael Gaughan, in the Republican Plot in Leigue Cemetery, County Mayo.

The Frank Family Stagg Papers (1822-2001), consist of articles, book chapters, family charts, a family record, excerpts, magazine articles, newspaper clippings, an obituary, photographs, a poster, and a transcript from the Irish government.

The collection is arranged alphabetically by document type, and then chronologically.

This collection is of value to researchers studying the history and mission of the Irish Republican Army. Individuals with a special interest in Irish hunger strikers during the 1970's will find this collection useful. Those interested in the fight for Irish freedom from British rule will find this collection to be of value. Researchers searching for Cleveland Irish with a connection to County Mayo and the Hunger Strikers of the 1970s will find this collection valuable.

All photographs remain with the collection, given their integral relationship to a number of manuscript items.

Provenance: Sr. Mary Francis Harrington, 2004.

Number of Containers: 1 Oversize Folders: Oversize Volumes:

Size: .2 linear feet / 0.31 linear meters

Restrictions: None.

Container

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- Folder 1: Article, "Hunger-Strikers Remembered", Josephine Hayden, Ireland's Own Magazine, photocopy, 2001.
- Folder 2: Book chapter, "Frank Stagg, 1976" Cage Eleven, Writings from Prison, Gerry Adams, photocopy, 2001.
- Folder 3: _____, "The Road to the 'First' Hunger Strike, the 1970s: Part II", Irish Hunger Strikes, Irish Northern Aid, Inc., photocopy, 2001.
- Folder 4: Chart, descendants of John Vahey, (Stagg's great grandfather) photocopy, 1824-1996.
- Folder 5: _____, descendants of Patrick Jennings (Stagg's great great grandfather), photocopy, 1830-1989.
- Folder 6: _____, descendants of Thomas J. Vahey (first cousins of Stagg's great grandfather), photocopy, 1822-1997.
- Folder 7: Excerpt, "A History of Ireland in Song", Paul Dunne, photocopy, 2001.
- Folder 8: Excerpt, "The IRA, A History" Tim Pat Coogan, photocopy.
- Folder 9: Family Group Record, Patrick Vahey and Bridget Colleran, photocopy, 1866.
- Folder 10: Magazine article, "Ireland's Own: The Hunger Strikes – Frank Stagg" W. Shaw, photocoy, 2004.
- Folder 11: _____, "Frank Stagg's Memorial will be peace with justice", Caoimhghin O' Caolain, An Phoblacht (Republican News), photocopy, 2001.
- Folder 12: _____, "Isolated but unloved, the story of Frank Stagg's hunger strike in a British jail", Jonathan O'Meara, An Phoblacht, photocopy,

2001.

- Folder 13: Newspaper clippings, Ireland, "The Irish Independent", photocopy, July 26, 1971. _____, newspaper unidentified and undated.
- Folder 14: Obituary, including an article about Stagg's grave, photocopy, 1976, 1977.
- Folder 15: Photographs, (7), photocopies: Mary Stagg, Frank Stagg's mother, Hollymount, County Mayo, 1975; Mary Stagg, Hollymount, County Mayo, 1976; The Mallet Family (Frank Stagg's sister and family) with Mary Stagg, Hollymount, County Mayo, 1976; The Mallet Family with Mary Stagg, 1976; Republican plot in Leigue Cemetary, County Mayo, 1976; Republican plot in Leigue Cemetary, County Mayo, ca. 1977; The Irish harp and Celtic Cross built by I.R.A. prisoners, 1976.
- Folder 16: Poster, Frank Stagg
- Folder 17: Transcript, Dail Eireann (Irish Government), Volume 290, Questions, oral answers, Frank Stagg Funeral, photocopy, May 4, 1976.

Container

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- Folder 1: Oversize material described above in Container 1, Folder 16.