

Bridgewater State University

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**Maureen Connelly Irish Studies Collection,
(bulk) 1977-2001
(MSS- 018)**

*Finding Aid Compiled by
Orson Kingsley, April 2024*

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Volume: 5 linear feet (9 document boxes, four framed items, 7 bound volumes of newspapers)

Acquisition: All items in this manuscript group were donated to Bridgewater State University by Maureen Connelly from 2012-2016.

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Maureen Connelly Biographical Sketch

Maureen A. Connelly began her career as a professor at Boston State College in 1966, focusing on contemporary Irish literature courses. This was around the time numerous Irish Studies programs began opening at colleges and universities in the Boston area. The burgeoning of interest in Irish Studies during this era allowed Maureen to meet and make many connections with Irish literary figures through both her teaching and as a journalist. During this time, and for a time after, she wrote book reviews and interviews with authors for the Sunday Book

Supplement of the *Boston Herald Traveler*, the daily *Quincy Patriot Ledger*, the *Irish Literary Review*, two other monthly Irish papers, and she was the founding editor and then feature writer for the *Boston Irish Echo* during its complete run from 1981-1988. She was also active in the Eire Society of Boston, helping her make even more connections with well-known Irish and Irish American literary figures. She was a director for many years for the Eire Society of Boston and was the president of the organization in the late 1970s.

Maureen first met Irish poet Seamus Heaney in the late 1960s and became friends and remained so throughout Heaney's life. Boston State University closed in 1982 and Maureen began working as an English professor at Bridgewater State College (now Bridgewater State University) in 1983. At both universities, Maureen would have Heaney occasionally attend one of her Irish literature classes, as well as Thomas Flanagan, Mary Lavin, and others. Heaney gave official poetry readings at Bridgewater State in 1982 and 1990.

Outside of Irish Studies, Maureen was also friends with poet Conrad Aiken and author May Sarton, who are both represented by collections in BSU's archive through her donations. Maureen retired from teaching at Bridgewater State in 2000. Her passion for Irish Studies and bringing and hosting speakers and events to campus helped build momentum that was finally fulfilled when Bridgewater State began its first official Irish Studies Program in 2015.

Scope and Content Note

Maureen Connelly's eclectic collecting style of anything Irish is represented in this collection and others through letters, photographs, ephemera, books, pamphlets, art, audio recordings, etc. She was a prolific writer, writing weekly columns for newspapers such as the *Boston Irish Echo* where she was the founding editor in 1981. The *Seamus Heaney Collection* donated by Maureen is its own separate archival collection due to its size. The *Conrad Aiken Collection* and *May Sarton Collection* donated by Maureen are separate as well.

Related collections include: the *Dr. Charles Fanning Irish Studies Collection*, the *Dr. Patricia Fanning Collection*, the [Seamus Heaney Collection](#), the [Conrad Aiken Collection](#), and the [May Sarton Collection](#).

Series Descriptions

Series 1: Mary Lavin, (bulk) 1978-1982

This collection largely consists of personal correspondence and photographs of Mary Lavin, as well as published works of Lavin, some of which are signed. Lavin was a friend of Maureen Connelly, and the correspondence is between the two.

Mary Lavin was born in East Walpole, MA in 1912. At the age of ten she moved to Ireland with her mother, who was a native of Ireland. Lavin's literary career took off in the early 1940s with her first book, *Tales from Bective Bridge*. She wrote both short stories and novels. Much of her

work dealt with feminist issues based on her experience and struggle from being a female writer in a male-dominated Catholic Ireland. She passed away in 1996.

Series 2: Thomas Fleming, (bulk) 1977-1992

The bulk of this collection is of correspondence between Thomas Fleming and Maureen Connelly. The books in the collection are all personally inscribed by Fleming to Ms. Connelly. Thomas James Fleming was born in 1927 in New Jersey. He is from an Irish American family. He is both a historian and a novelist and has written many works in both categories. Fleming has won a Pulitzer Prize and has written over 40 publications.

Series 3: Jack Coughlin, 1973-1986

This collection consists mainly of Jack Coughlin portraits and etchings, and letters documenting the provenance of the artwork between Coughlin and Maureen Connelly. A 1982 etching of poet Seamus Heaney by Coughlin can be found in the [Seamus Heaney Collection](#).

Jack Coughlin is an artist of Irish American heritage who is well known for his portraits of literary figures and musicians. His prints, drawings and watercolors have been exhibited widely across the United States and Europe. His art is represented in the permanent collections of the Metropolitan Museum and the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the National Collection of Fine Arts in Washington D.C., the Norfolk Museum of Arts and Sciences in Virginia, the Worcester Art Museum in Massachusetts, the University of Colorado, the Philadelphia Free Public Library, Staedelsches Kunstinstitut, Frankfurt, Germany, the New University of Ulster, Coleraine, Northern Ireland and in several other significant museum, university, and library collections worldwide.

Series 4: Correspondence, Photographs, and Ephemera, c. 1915, 1974-2001

This series contains many individual letters and photographs, with nearly all letters being written to Maureen Connelly. Maureen's role as a journalist, professor, and Eire Society of Boston officer allowed her to correspond and attend many events revolving around Irish and Irish American literary figures and politicians. Highlights in this series include letters from Brian Friel, Edna O'Brien, and Brian Moore. Also included, a letter from around 1915 written by William Butler Yeats to a Mr. Whyte, given to Maureen by author May Sarton. Many of the photographs in the series were taken at Eire Society of Boston events.

Series 5: The Eire Society of Boston, 1962, 1968-2000

The Eire Society of Boston was founded in 1937 and is one of oldest Irish organizations in Boston. Their mission statement is: "To promote the knowledge of Irish culture through the encouragement of study in the arts, sciences, literature, language and the history of Ireland, and to raise awareness of the contributions to civilization made by the Irish and those of Irish ancestry." The organization has an annual Gold Medal Award Ceremony where they reward an Irish or Irish American recipient who has made outstanding contributions to society. Maureen Connelly was heavily involved with the Eire Society. She was on several Society committees

and was one of the organization's directors for many years. She was the president of the organization in the late 1970s. Many of the photographs in the entire collection come from Eire Society of Boston events.

Series 6: The Boston Irish Echo Newspaper, 1981-1987

The Boston Irish Echo newspaper series spans all issues from Vol. 1, No. 2, June 27, 1981, to Vol. VII, No. 52, December 26, 1987. It was a sister publication of the *Irish Echo* based out of New York, a weekly publication billed as "The Largest Irish-American Newspaper." Maureen Connelly was editor of the Boston paper from its inception in 1981 until the April 17, 1982, issue, after which her title was "Feature Writer." She continued in this role at least until 1988, when the physical copies in the series end, and likely held this position until the newspaper ended. Each year of the paper is bound separately. The *Boston Irish Echo*'s last published issue was August 20, 1988.

Box and Folder List

Series 1: Mary Lavin Collection

Box 1

Folder

1. Letter-Mary Lavin to Maureen Connelly, Feb. 26, 1978
2. Letter-Mary Lavin to Maureen Connelly, Jan. 4, 1979
3. Letter-Mary Lavin to Maureen Connelly, Feb. 12, 1980
4. Letter-Mary Lavin to Maureen Connelly, July 10, 1980
5. Letter-Mary Lavin to Maureen Connelly, Jan. 1, 1981
6. Letter-Mary Lavin to Maureen Connelly, Feb. 6, 1981
7. Letter-Mary Lavin to Maureen Connelly, Aug. 10, 1981
8. Letter-Mary Lavin to Maureen Connelly, Feb. 22, 1982
9. Envelopes with non-matching letters, 1978, undated
10. Etching of Mary Lavin by Charles L. Carroll, undated
11. Photographs-Lavin and family at her farm in Ireland, 1980
12. Photographs-Lavin and family at her farm in Ireland, 1980
13. Photographs-Lavin and a Boston State College Student, 1979
14. Eire Society of Boston program honoring Mary Lavin, 1974
15. News clippings and reviews involving Lavin, 1979-1980, 1995

Box 2

Books

- *Irish University Review: A Journal of Irish Studies. Mary Lavin Special Issue*, signed, autumn 1979
- *The Becker Wives*, signed, 1971
- *Tales From Bective Bridge*, signed, 1978
- *In the Middle of the Fields: and Other Stories*, 1965
- *At Sallygap and Other Stories*, 1947

- *The House in Clewe Street*, 1st edition, 1945

Series 2: Thomas Fleming Collection

Box 3

Folder

1. Letter – Thomas Fleming to Maureen Connelly, November 28, 1977
2. Letter – Thomas Fleming to Maureen Connelly, August 31, 1978
3. Letter – Thomas Fleming to Maureen Connelly, October 2, 1978
4. Letter – Thomas Fleming to Maureen Connelly, November 14, 1978
5. Letter – Thomas Fleming to Maureen Connelly, December 11, 1978
6. Three letters – Thomas Fleming to Maureen Connelly, ca. 1978
7. Letter – Thomas Fleming to Maureen Connelly, January 23, 1979
8. Letter – Thomas Fleming to Maureen Connelly, August 31, 1979
9. Letter – Thomas Fleming to Maureen Connelly, December 13, 1979
10. Letter – Thomas Fleming to Maureen Connelly, March 20, 1980
11. Letter – Thomas Fleming to Maureen Connelly, June 23, 1992
12. Envelope with no matching letter, April 1979
13. Photographs of Fleming for publicity, undated
14. Reviews on Fleming's works written by Maureen Connelly, undated
15. New York Times op-ed and other works by Thomas Fleming, undated
16. Press material for Thomas Fleming publications, 1992, undated

Box 4

Books

- *The Good Shepherd*; inscribed first edition, hardcover with dust jacket, 1974
- *Over There*; inscribed first edition, hardcover with dust jacket, 1992
- *Mysteries of My Father*; inscribed first edition, hardcover with dust jacket, 2005

Series 3: Jack Coughlin Collection

Box 5

Folder

1. Jack Coughlin to Maureen Connelly about purchasing "Thirteen Irish Writers" portfolio, Jan. 12, 1974
2. Coughlin to Connelly, includes prices of purchased etchings, July 15, 1974
3. Coughlin to Connelly (4 letters), 1975
4. Peter Fallon to Connelly about Coughlin art, 1978
5. Coughlin to Connelly, 1986
6. Photographs (9) of Jack Coughlin, undated
7. News clippings and publications about or representing Jack Coughlin, 1978-1982

Box 6

- "Thirteen Irish Writers on Ireland", portraits by Jack Coughlin, writing by Robin Skelton. All portraits are artist proofs. Inscribed by Coughlin on title page. Includes portraits of George Bernard Shaw, J.M. Synge, James Joyce, Flann O'Brien, Austin Clarke, Patrick Kavanagh,

Frank O'Connor, Samuel Beckett, and John Montague. Missing are Brendan Behan, Thomas Kinsella, Sean O'Casey, and W.B. Yeats (the Yeats portrait has been separated and put in Series 5), 1973

Framed Items (Oversized):

- Etching by Coughlin of W. B. Yeats, 13 ¼ x 18 inches, c. 1975
- Etching by Coughlin of James Joyce, 9 ¼ x 16 ½ inches, c. 1975
- Etching by Coughlin of Flannery O'Connor, 8 ¾ x 12 inches, undated

Series 4: Correspondence, Photographs, and Ephemera

(Arranged alphabetically)

Box 7

Folder

1. Coogan, Tim Pat – photographs (4), undated
2. Dezell, Maureen – letter, 2001
3. Fitzgerald, Sally – letter, 1982
4. Flanagan, Thomas – letters (3) and photographs (6, one with Flanagan, Charlie Fanning, and Owen McGowan at BSU), c. 1980-1990
5. Friel, Brian – letter, undated
6. Friel, Brian – playbills and reviews, 1990-1996
7. Goodwin, Doris Kearns – photographs (2, one taken at BSU) and news clipping of BSU event, c. 1987
8. Gordon, Mary – letter (photocopy) and photographs (3), 1981
9. Guinness, Desmond – photographs (2), c. 1980
10. Hume, John – photographs (2, one with Ted Kennedy), undated
11. Jones, Ann T. – photographs (2, one taken at BSU. Jones was a 1980 BSU graduate and author), c. 1995
12. Keane, John B. – photographs (2), c. 1985
13. Kenny, Herbert A. – letters (2) and photograph, 1974-1975
14. Lockwood, Margo – letters (2, one a typed poem to Connelly), photographs (2)
15. Mac Anna, Thomas – photographs (11, all from BSU event), c. 1985
16. Makem, Tommy – photograph (1, with Charlie Fanning), c. 1988
17. Manahan, Anna – letter, photographs (6), playbill, 1984-1985
18. Manning, Mary – letters (2), photograph, c. 1978
19. McCormack, John – photograph, undated
20. McCourt, Frank – photographs (2) and program for Annual Christmas Ball for Irish Cultural Center, 1997
21. McKenna, Siobhán and Desmond O'Grady – photographs (2), 1980
22. McKenna, Siobhán – photographs (17, from multiple events), copy of news column on McKenna written by Maureen Connelly, c. 1975-1980
23. Moore, Brian – letters (3, one a photocopy), photographs (2, one with Thomas Flanagan), 1978-1979
24. Murphy, William M. (W.B. Yeats family biographer) – letters (3), 1978, 1981
25. O'Brien, Conor Cruise – photograph, essay by O'Brien, magazine with O'Brien on cover, c. 1980, 1994

Box 8**Folder**

1. O'Brien, Edna – letter, photographs (5), 1978, undated
2. O'Casey, Sean – playbills, articles on O'Casey, one by Maureen Connelly, 1981, undated
3. O'Faolain, Julia – photographs (2), undated
4. O'Faolain, Sean – letters (4), 1978, 1981
5. O'Hara, Maureen – photographs (4), undated
6. Thomas "Tip" O'Neill Jr – letter, signed business card, photographs (4), and original draft of a farewell writeup by Maureen Connelly after O'Neill's death, 1981, 1994, undated
7. Payne, Basil – letters (3), 1975
8. Payne, Basil – letters (2), undated
9. Payne, Basil – photographs (4), undated
10. Payne, Basil – reviews and news clippings, c. 1975
11. Robinson, Mary – photographs (4), undated
12. Shannon, Elizabeth – letter, photographs (4, all are with Betty Friedan), 1988, undated
13. Yeats, Anne (daughter of W.B. Yeats) – photographs (11, event at Boston College), 1993
14. Broadside – *A Cradle Song*, poem by W.B. Yeats, drawing by Jack B. Yeats, hand-colored card, No. 61, Cuala Press, Dublin, probably reprint, undated
15. Broadside – *Silver Apples*, poem by W.B. Yeats, hand-colored card, No. 59, Cuala Press, Dublin, probably reprint, undated
16. Connelly, Maureen – Photographs, writings, reviews, and more by Connelly, 1979-2000

Oversize

- Yeats, William Butler – letter, transcription, portrait of Yeats by Jack Coughlin, all in a single frame; letter c. 1915, portrait 1973

Series 5: The Eire Society of Boston**Box 9****Folder**

1. Bulletin – Eire Society of Boston, 1962, 1968-1970
2. Bulletin – Eire Society of Boston (Oct. 1979 contains essay by Maureen Connelly), 1971-1979
3. Bulletin – Eire Society of Boston, sporadic, 1980-1989
4. Bulletin – Eire Society of Boston (Maureen Connelly Editor, Jan. 2000), sporadic, 1990-2000
5. Annual Dinner Programs – Eire Society of Boston (Maureen Connelly involved as a director from late 1980s to mid-1990s), sporadic, 1975-2000
6. Eire Society Night at the Pops program, 1979
7. Speech of John Hume, winner of the Gold Medal of the Eire Society of Boston, 1980
8. Letter from Thomas Flanagan to Eire Society of Boston about receiving an award (possibly a photocopy), 1987
9. Photograph of Thomas Flanagan and William V. Shannon at Eire Society ceremony; Eire Society of Boston Bulletin with essay by Shannon, 1975, 1987

Series 6: The Boston Irish Echo Newspaper, 1981-1987

- 1981, complete run outside of missing Vol. 1, No. 1
- 1982, complete run
- 1983, complete run
- 1984, complete run
- 1985, complete run
- 1986, complete run
- 1987, complete run