

He played in the celebrated "McNamara's Band"

THERE are few who are not familiar with the song—"My Name Is McNamara, I'm The Leader Of The Band, Although We're Small In Numbers We're The Best Band In The Land"; but how many know that the celebrated McNamara's Band got its name from four Limerick brothers? The last of this famous quartette of musicians, 81-year-old Thomas McNamara, is now concluding a holiday in his native Limerick. He is also the only surviving member of the St. Mary's Prize Band that won the All-Ireland Championship in 1895.

Last Sunday, the Feast of the Assumption, was a day of many memories for Thomas. It marked the Feast of St. Mary's Parish, where he was born, and the 80th birthday of St. Mary's fife and drum band, of which he is now 71 years a member. And, as the band paraded to St. Mary's Church, the only member he knew from the old days was 85 year-old "Ducker" Nash.

In the old days, Thomas's brother, Patrick, was bandmaster of the prize band of 1895 that won the championship from 26 other groups. As a musician there were few in Limerick who could claim to be his peer and he was also well known as a composer.

Patrick played throughout the 32 counties, at balls, pattern day celebrations, St. Patrick's Day parades, and the banner proclaiming "McNamara's Band," of which he was the leader, was a familiar and welcome sight.

When he emigrated to the United States in 1905 he carried with him this great musical tradition, and his orchestra there continued to be known as "McNamara's Band." Thomas had already gone to the States in 1901, and it was there that this talented combination caught the imagination of a great song writer, and the famous ballad, "McNamara's Band," was born.

RECORDINGS

In later years many discs were cut for Vocalion Records by the McNamara trio, Thomas on the piccolo; Paddy, the violin, and Paddy's daughter, Eileen, on the piano. A number of these were cut by the Aeolian Company in 1921, and some—Irish set tunes, reel medleys, Irish waltz medleys and ancient Irish classics—are treasured family possessions in the home of Thomas's niece, Mrs. Isabella McCarthy, 34 Nicholas Street, Limerick.

Patrick, who did much to popularise Irish music in the United States, came back to Limerick with his wife and six children on a visit in 1912. The return trip was to be made on the Titanic, but, Providentially, this arrangement was altered. The Titanic sank on the voyage with a loss of some 1,600 lives.

The two other brothers—all four played together in the one row with St. Mary's Fife and Drum Band—were Michael and John. Michael who fought in the Boer War, was an instructor and Sergeant of the Munster Fusiliers. He retired with the rank of Regimental Sergeant Major, and died in Devon three years ago. John was also attached to a regimental band, but was transferred to an ambulance Corps during World War I. He was killed in France, in 1918.

VETERAN OF FAMOUS BAND



Mr. Thomas McNamara and his his grand-daughter, Miss Patricia Ann Colbert, who are on vacation in Limerick from New York. Thomas, who was born in St. Mary's Parish was a member of the famous "McNamaras' Band."

Nicholas Street; Mrs. Mary Long, Sandmull; Mrs. Bridget Kiely, of Assumpta Park (nieces), and the McNamara family of Prospect (nephews, nieces and cousins). Thomas, who lives in the East side of Manhattan, is accompanied on his visit by his 16-year-old grand-daughter, Patricia Ann Colbert, and they are guests of Mrs. Isabella McCarthy. Mrs.

McCarthy has eight children—Mrs. Goodwin, Curragower Bar; James, Sandmull; Michael, 34 Nicholas Street; Bernadette and Thomas, Dublin; Mrs. Maura Williams, Cardiff, and Noreen and Joan, London. Thomas McNamara and his grand-daughter, who have been here since July 18, will fly to New York from Shannon to-morrow. An authority

on the old bands of Limerick, Mr. Willie Gleeson, who led the Old Limerick Historical Society's flight to New York last year, tried to contact this grand old veteran of "McNamara's Band," but failed. "Little did I think I would meet him in Limerick this summer," Willie told me, "and only a few doors away from where I live!"

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