

## No. 141-PAT HASSETT Of Ahane

BY SEAMUS O'CEALLAIGH.

**M**ANY of the younger generation of Gaels are not aware that the founding of the G.A.A. was actually inspired by the Supreme Council of the I.R.B.

With the failure of the Insurrection of '67 and the breaking up of many Fenian centres through arrest, imprisonment and deportation, those who were left to guide the destinies of the organisation agreed that some method had to be evolved to organise the youth of Ireland.

The I.R.B., as such, was a secret and oath-bound association, driven underground by oppression, and Britain's army and police forces then occupying the country.

**ORIGINAL ADVOCATE OF G.A.A.**

Thomas Francis Meagher is credited with being the first man to sense the value of an athletic association, built on national lines, to the cause of freedom, and he was the original advocate of the hurling revival.

Some years afterwards, P. W. Nally, who later died in Mountjoy Prison, encouraged Michael Cusack to establish the G.A.A., and assured him of the active encouragement and assistance of the I.R.B., who must, however, remain completely in the background, as any indication of their strong support would only damage the new organisation and deprive it of the patronage of many not identified with the physical force adherents.

The I.R.B., however, were anxious to have as many of its members as possible on the G.A.A. executive and it was at the wish of that organisation that Pat Hasset of Ahane offered himself for the position of Treasurer of the Central Council of the G.A.A. at the 1887 All-Ireland Congress of that body.

**JOINED AMERICAN ARMY.**

Pat was thirty-two years old at the time. When sixteen he swore allegiance to the I.R.B. and four years later went to the U.S.A. at the request of the leaders of the movement. There he joined the American Army to gain a knowledge of military tactics, etc. He met Looby, Leary, O'Donovan Rossa, Kickham, Stephens, John O'Mahony, General Dick Bourke, and Colonel Tom Bourke, and under their direction gained a good military training.

He then returned to Ireland, where he acted as Fenian organiser in Ulster for a period, until he attracted police notice, and served a term of imprisonment.

**ELECTED TREASURER.**

When Ald. John Clancy of Dublin retired from the Treasurership of the G.A.A., the I.R.B. executive, anxious to maintain their influence on the Central Council, suggested Pat Hasset for the position. On being pressed the latter agreed to allow his name go before congress, his proposer being Ned Ryan of Newmarket with P. N. Fitzgerald of Cork his seconder. Hasset was opposed by Hugh Ryan of Thurles, but won well on a vote.

From that onwards he threw himself into the work of the G.A.A. with remarkable enthusiasm. The following Sunday he refereed a great hurling match in Ballyneety, and a short time later one of the biggest tournaments ever held in the country opened at Castleconnell. Hasset refereed in all seventeen games in this competition, and, in the same season, handled twelve games in a tournament at Boher, and gave entire satisfaction to all—no ruling of his being ever disputed.

**HIS OWN STORY.**

Pat Hasset's story of the early G.A.A. days, told to me some months before his death many years ago, will be read with much interest:

"There were very few athletic enclosures those times—Limerick, Dublin, and Tralee being the only important ones—the other meetings all being held on open fields. Of a particular meeting at which the late Frank Dineen of Ballylanders was handicapper, I remember a great cycle race. It was the first time I saw anything but a high bicycle. There were a few of the new type pneumatic tyre machines competing but the honours were carried off by McAdam of Ashroe on the old bone shaker.

"The early pioneers of the G.A.A. in Limerick, as far as I can remember, were: Anthony Mackey, Castleconnell; Tom O'Gorman, at whose house in Thomas Street the first meetings of the County Board were held; Paddy O'Brien ("Twenty"); Michael Joyce, Henry Street; John Crowe and R. Troy, Willim Street; William Trousdell; Ned Cahill, Kiltely; P. D. Grogan, Knockaderry; P. R. Cleary, Caherconlish; John Sheehan, William Hickey, Boher; David Crammins, Bruff and John Downes, Kilfinane.

**A STORMY CONGRESS.**

"I continued for a number of years attending conventions and well remember the stormy congress of 1883, one of the most historic in the annals of the G.A.A. I was at the convention in Limerick, where Paddy O'Brien ("Twenty") beat by three to one the most

popular priest in Ireland for the county chairmanship. When not elected Father Sheehy seceded from the G.A.A. and formed a new Board. The split continued for almost three years and some of the old hands never returned to the Association.

"One of the greatest men outside of the Central Council was Stephen J. Donleavy of Kilkenny, then in charge of the Clare Champion but persecuted by the British so much that his offices were raided and he himself several times arrested. Later he was Editor of the Catholic Tribune and a prominent officer of Clan na Gael.

**OTHER GREAT WORKERS.**

"Frank Dinnéen was not blessed with much of this world's riches and suffered through standing by the G.A.A., but never flinched in his allegiance. A hard and sincere worker, he prospered in after years and was able to buy the Sports Field at Jones' Road, which he later sold to the G.A.A., and is now Croke Park.

"Michael K. Looney of Caherconlish was Limerick County Secretary for a good spell and always remained a staunch G.A.A. man.

"Frank Crowe from Killonan was another great worker for the Association in its early days. A superintendent at Todds, he gave valuable service as a club secretary and later as chief executive Officer of the City Board.

"Paddy O'Brien ("Twenty") was a great Irishman in every sense of the word, and was without doubt the leading figure in helping to establish the G.A.A. on a firm basis in Limerick. He gave all his time and energy to the affairs of the Association and was a born leader of men. A pork butcher by trade, his outstanding personality was frowned on by the then captains of industry and he was half his time idle. Labour was badly organised then and the employers tried to discourage any man of independent mind and outlook, such as Paddy proved to be.

**FOUNDER OF COMMERCIALS.**

"Dan Ryan, who founded the Commercial, was one of the finest fellows any man could wish to meet and he cannot get too much praise for the wonderful work he accomplished for Gaelic games in the city. Dan made Commercial famous, and the old Board were grateful to that grand club for sticking so well to them in troublesome times. Another man worthy of mention for his work then was Mr. Normoyle of Cannock's.

"Mat Griffin, of South Liberties, was one of the young club secretaries I remember in the Association, and also one of the most efficient.

**IN MURROE AND CASTLE-CONNELL.**

"Hurling was very strong in Murroe from the founding of the G.A.A., thanks to the grand work of men like Tim Humphries, a hurler and a Gael to his fingertips; William Nicholas, the Club Secretary; Tim Kett and Pat O'Brien.

"In Castleconnell we had a great curate in the early Gaelic days, Father O'Kelly, who was President of the Land League. He organised a splendid brass band, one of the finest in the county, and Fenians to a man."

Pat Hasset retained his interest in the G.A.A. all through a long life, living to see the Association grow to one of the greatest amateur sporting organisations in the world.