

NEW HAVEN
GAELIC
FOOTBALL
CLUB

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CONNECTICUT

New Haven, a major Connecticut city located between New York and Boston, entered a junior football team in the Boston division, of the American Board, during the 1975 season. New Haven had established a widely known GAA history throughout New England and New York from the 1940's through the 1960's. They developed top rated football and hurling teams, as immigrants from every county settled in their city, which provided a continuous stream of skilled players

The US immigration policy changes of the 1960's curtailed this supply of players, Club members, having unimagined foresight, and wishing to introduce the games they loved as children in their homeland to their American born children, began the first modern day US minor football teams of New Haven, in 1964. Many of the children continued playing football, improving their skills, and were members of the junior football team entered in the Boston GAA in 1975. They were complemented by well known immigrants: Phil Scully and Larry McKenna (Kerry), Harry Kennedy (Derry), John Fahy (Waterford), Pat Foley (Cork), Kevin Woods (Offaly), Mike Faherty (Galway) and Pat Hosey (Longford). A Yale University medical student from Australia, Peter Molloy, a veteran of Aussie rules football, joined the team and quickly adapted his skills to the Gaelic game.

New Haven's inaugural season in Boston, introduced the team to a level of competition and dedication to the game, they had not previously experienced. Although winning their share of games, the collective goal of winning the Boston junior championship was not reached, and the season was deemed a learning experience for the American born players.

New Haven began the 1976-year, the bicentennial celebration of America's birth, with the goal of winning the desired championship. Training commenced early in March, and by the first game, players were in full season shape. Now, having had a year of experience within the Boston league, New Haven marched through the season and reached the junior championship final.

New Haven met an extremely talented and favored St. Pat's team in the junior final on an extremely warm August day. New Haven's early season and continuous training paid off as they achieved their goal in a well played game, winning their first Boston junior championship by a score of 1-10 to 0-8. New Haven advanced past Philadelphia for the Eastern division championship, and finally lost to St. Vincent's of Toronto in Syracuse, New York for the American Board junior championship.

New Haven returned to Boston in 1977, to defend their crown. Again they marched through the season and reached the junior finals. New Haven met Shannon Blues in the final, in another well-played, fast paced game and relinquished the cherished championship, as they were defeated.

Travel, time and personal career developments of many of the players, resulted in the decision not to re-enter the Boston league during the 1978 season. Although this was a difficult decision, the short time spent within the Boston GAA developed New Haven's standard of commitment and football at a higher level, while leaving all players with a lifetime of fond memories.

New Haven continued playing within the New York GAA at the junior level from the 1970's through today. They also were one of six teams who played in the independent Southern New England league during the early 1990's with Worcester and Springfield, Massachusetts, Hartford and Stamford, Connecticut and Westport, New York.

New Haven continued their minor football program established within the 1960's, which still provides a development system for its junior team. These minor teams won several Southern New England championships. The under 14 and 16 teams toured Ireland during the Summers of 1982 and 1985, and had the honor of playing in Croke Park against a minor team, John Mitchels from Liverpool, in 1982. Members of these teams are still playing today at the junior level.

The earliest memories of our involvement in Boston goes back to a festival day at Tech Field in Brookline in 1956 or 57. There were games and entertainment - it may have been a Columban Fathers Field Day - anyway, Carmel Quinn was the main attraction. Two bus loads of players and supporters traveled from New Haven, Hurlers and Footballers, New Haven played and beat a fancied Kerry team but I do not know how our hurlers made out or who they played.

Back in the late 50's New Haven had a home and away series with a strong Erin's Hope team. New Haven were surprised winners in both games.

Memorial Day weekend 1959 had two Connecticut teams playing at Dilboy Field in Somerville, Massachusetts. New Haven played and beat Erin's Hope 3-5 to 4-1 and the Hartford played Kerry.

One year back about that time, New Haven won the "Schaefer Medals", a set of medals presented by the Schaefer Brewing Co. I forget about the game or games that were played for them.

In the 1950's through the 1960's New Haven played many games in Boston and certainly the scorelines were not in our favor like the games listed above.

The Connecticut State Hurlers also had many great games with Boston teams during this period. Some of the sharpest eyes of hurling in this are still feel that a game between Father Tom's and Connecticut State, played in New Haven, was the best game they ever saw.

We had a hurling and football doubleheader one day, don't know who we played or the result but I think the games were played in Mattapan. Is there such a place? Anyway, what everyone remembers most about that day was the reception provided for us after the games. We were treated like royalty. Maybe the reception was in Mattapan?

Our main contact person in Boston at that time was John Helier. He was well liked by all and highly respected. Another very dependable guy that I had contact with was ? Maunsel. I think he was from Kerry or played football with Kerry. Also Sean Lyons was always a contact for both hurlers and footballers.

*New Haven with Hartford, Bridgeport and Springfield formed the Southern New England League in the very early years of North American Board. The winner went on to the next round playoffs, but I don't think New Haven was involved in post season play.

John O'Donovan

*This league did not survive and was different from the S.N.E. league refereed to by Mike Hanlon.