

# NEW YORK TIMES MALIGNS IRISH NUNS AGAIN

[Bill Donohue](#)

In 2013, I published a monograph, "[Myths of the Magdalene Laundries](#)," that debunked the myths about the rotten living conditions in homes for unwed mothers run by Irish nuns from the mid-eighteenth to the late nineteenth century.

In 2014, I published another monograph, "[Ireland's 'Mass Grave' Hysteria](#)," that debunked the myths about a mass grave containing the remains of nearly 800 children that were alleged to have been found outside a former home run by nuns in Tuam [pronounced Chewum] near Galway.

On May 6, 2025, the *New York Times* published a front-page story that repeats all the falsehoods that were previously told about the homes and the "mass grave." Ironically, one of the persons who showed the mass grave story to be a hoax was a *New York Times* reporter. They really ought to read their own newspaper before publishing another story on the same subject.

Even the title of Ali Watkins' article, "75 Years of Longing for a Child Taken From Her," is bunk. The baby was dead on arrival. Furthermore, no one "took" the baby from Chrissie Tully—she was in a jam and had to give the baby up.

When Tully was a teenager, she got pregnant out-of-wedlock and her "family disowned her." A priest took her to St. Mary's Mother and Baby Home in Tuam. As Watkins says, "for some like Ms. Tully, there was nowhere else to go." Not exactly. There was always the street. She made the right choice.

Watkins bemoans the fact that Tully's boy, whom she named Michael, "was taken away" from her and "never held him or saw his face." But she went to the home because she could not care

for her baby—that's why the homes exist—and because he died at birth, she never had a chance to see him. At the time, she thought the nuns were lying, but she doggedly pursued this issue for decades, and finally obtained the hospital paperwork. It read, "Stillborn." This settles it. She was never lied to.

Right on cue, Watkins tells readers about the homes being "one of Ireland's enduring moral stains," where "forced labor for young mothers, high infant mortality rates, pervasive shame and emotional abuse" occurred. The facilities, known as the "Magdalene Homes," were established in England in 1758 and in Ireland in 1765. Similar homes existed until the 1960s.

Unlike today, where there is no shame for girls who get pregnant out-of-wedlock, there was back then. Of course, the young girls were required to work—it would have been unethical not to demand that they contribute to their livelihood. Infant mortality rates were common all over Europe during those days—the homes had no monopoly on that.

Watkins just doesn't get it. She contends that the homes were horrid, yet she admits that Tully returned to the same Tuam home after she got pregnant again! Why would she do that? Was she a masochist? Or was she being prudent? It was obviously the latter—she admitted that the father was "not the marrying type."

Moreover, Watkins is apparently unaware that the McAleese Report on the Magdalene Laundries, a government study published in 2013, found that the women were not abused and that the conditions were not "prison like," as critics have contended. In fact, they were relatively good.

Regarding the mass graves hoax, Watkins writes, "In 2017, a mass unmarked grave was discovered in a septic tank at St. Mary's, which was shut down in 1961. Within it were the bodies of at least 796 children."

This is simply wrong. The allegation that a “mass grave” was found was first made in 2014, not three years later. That is when a “local historian,” Catherine Corless, made this claim (she is actually a typist who has no academic credentials). What Watkins is referring to is the 2017 statement on this subject made by the Mother and Baby Commission. [What she failed to say is that it made no mention of a mass grave.](#)

There never was a “mass grave.” As I previously detailed, Douglas Dalby, a *New York Times* reporter, quoted what Barry Sweeney said (he is one of the sources who testified about what he found when he was 10 years old). “People are making out we saw a mass grave. But we can only say what we seen [sic]: maybe 15 to 20 small skeletons.”

The septic tank story is also bogus. Dr. Finbar McCormick, who teaches at the School of Geography, Archeology and Palaeoecology at Queens University in Belfast, said the so-called septic tank was “more likely to be a shaft burial vault.” He said that “Many maternal hospitals in Ireland had a communal burial place for stillborn children or those who died soon after birth. These were sometimes in a nearby graveyard but more often in a special area within the grounds of a hospital.”

It does not speak well for the *New York Times* to peddle such trash.

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