

Out of the many women who have been recognized for their help with the Irish Independence, there are some that have been overlooked. Two of these women are the Wallace sisters. Sheila and Nora were six years apart, Sheila being the oldest. The sisters grew up on a small farm in Donoughmore, Cork. They moved to Cork City and owned a shop on the very uneventful Brunswick Street, now St. Augustine Street in Cork. They lived above the shop where they sold newspapers, sweets, cigarettes, religious statues and other home goods.

The Irish started fighting for their Independence because the British wanted their land. The Irish wanted to rule their own country, they wanted to do and say what they wanted, and not have the British on their backs all the time.

The shop started out as a normal business but became a regular meeting place for people that wanted independence. The Wallace Sisters were very underestimated, making it a perfect place for people, and things to stay. Between 1916 and 1921, Sheila joined the Irish Republican Army as a Brigade Officer. A Brigade Officer is someone who oversees the things that the people they are in charge of do. The Wallace sister's shop resembled a present-day post office. The shop was used for multiple reasons. Often, meetings were held in the shop for the IRA. There was also ammunition and supplies kept at the shop. The sisters gathered information from British spies and passed the knowledge to Dublin by the underside of a train, and to Liverpool, London and New York, by boat. Not only did they gather information, but they also decoded messages from the British army.

On one account, around March 20th, 1920, Tomás MacCurtain, went to the sister's shop to discuss matters with a recently elected alderman, Tadhg Barry. He and the new alderman stayed up late at the sister's shop, and the Wallace shop was the last place the Lord mayor was

seen. He was killed that night by the Royal Irish Constabulary. The RIC was a form of police officers for the British.

After settling Irish Independence in the early 1920's, which still had 5 counties in the north being owned by the British, they still held meetings in the shop for matters of the treaty. The Wallace sisters were against it and wanted full independence. They wanted to own all of Ireland, not just the southern half and part of the northern half. Sheila died on April 14, 1944, after a fall. Her funeral was a very large gathering of members of the IRA. Nora had a form of tuberculosis caused by exposure to cold and wet conditions, and despite being sick, ran the shop for a while. She retired around the year 1960, and then died in a nursing home around 1970.

As evidence of their importance, the sisters both received pensions during different parts of their lives. Sheila received a pension for her position as an IRA brigade officer. Nora received a pension because of lung problems most likely started during her role of dispatch in the IRA.

These sisters were a major part of the Irish Independence. They helped with secret British messages, to transport and decode them. Although they were just a small shop on a small street in Cork, they made a HUGE difference.