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November at the Museum!



DAVID CREEDON/ALAMY

Thanksgiving and Remembrance in November

Dear members and friends,

In the spirit of the Thanksgiving season, let me say how very grateful I am for the support that our community demonstrated to us this year, while we were closed for so long. I am very thankful for all of the messages, donations, and calls you have made to the Museum. I am so proud of our new space, and of the work we do here, telling the stories of immigrants who came to America, hoping for a new and better life. We have been overwhelmed this year with incredible volunteers like Bill Tobler, Don and Gail Reilly, Paul and Caroline Stark, Carolyn Durkin Kolysko, Bill Combes, Diane O' Connor, Siobhan Loughman, Dan Spicer and his crew, and the entire Board, who all gave so generously of their time and talent to move to and renovate our new space. I could not be more appreciative of our Museum family and am glad to say I love my job and being part of such a giving and caring community!

I want to thank all of you for helping to sustain us here in the Museum, in so many ways, and I wish you a joyful

and happy Thanksgiving.

In the 2018 newsletter, I wrote about the amazingly generous donation the Choctaw Nation sent to Ireland in 1847 when they raised \$170 (\$5,000 today) of relief aid for the Irish people, despite facing hardship themselves. The picture above shows a sculpture which was erected in Middleton, Co. Cork to commemorate the event. Named "Kindred Spirits," the magnificent memorial features nine giant stainless steel feathers, shaped into an empty bowl. The creator, artist Alex Pentak, explained, "I wanted to show the courage, fragility and humanity that they displayed in my work."

The Irish and Native American people - for whom storytelling is woven into the fabric of their societies - have also kept the memory of their historical bond alive. Beyond the monument, there are many other examples of the continued link between the Irish and Choctaw people. In 1990, several Choctaw leaders took part in the first annual Famine walk at Doolough in County Mayo; two years later, Irish commemoration leaders walked the 500 mile length of the Trail of Tears. In 1995, the Irish president at the time, Mary Robinson, visited the Choctaw Nation in Oklahoma, where she was made an honorary chief. In 2017, the sculpture, Kindred Spirits, was unveiled in Bailick Park. The following year, Irish Prime Minister Leo Varadkar announced a scholarship program for Choctaw youth, calling the relationship between the two communities "a sacred bond...which has joined our peoples together for all time."

And this year, with the devastations of Covid 19 raging, Ireland had the chance to repay that gesture. As COVID-19 swept through the Navajo Nation, with at least 2373 cases and 73 deaths as of May 3, Irish donors contributed hugely to the Nation's GoFundMe campaign. "From Ireland, 170 years later, the favour is returned!" a message from one donor reads. "To our Native American brothers and sisters in your moment of hardship."

The donations from Ireland seem to have started after The Irish Times journalist Naomi O'Leary shared the Navajo and Hopi fundraiser on Twitter, garnering thousands of likes and retweets. Ethel Branch, the fundraiser's organizer, estimated that Irish people had donated about three million dollars to the relief efforts, which goes toward food, water and other necessary supplies for Navajo and Hopi communities. "It's very unexpected, but it's just incredible to see the solidarity and to see how much people who are so far away care about our community and have sympathy for what we're experiencing," Branch told CNN. Another leader confirmed "our leadership team was confused but glad, and we started checking 'comments.' Many of us broke down, it is so beautiful! Finding out we had brothers and sisters across the world, learning of this solidarity connection is so powerful!"

To many on the Emerald Isle, it was time to repay a long-forgotten, and unexpected, gift of solidarity from another people, embattled, beaten down by racism, in their own time of desperate need. One who felt a personal connection is Dublin native John Romano, of Choctaw ancestry. "You rarely ever get the opportunity to repay such a deep debt of gratitude, that our ancestors passed on to us. Bonds of human solidarity are strong!"

"There is a symbiosis of what it means to be a colonized people and to have lived through cultural trauma," says Pdraig Kirwan, a senior lecturer at Goldsmiths University and co-author (with LeAnne Howe) of the forthcoming book, *Famine Pots: The Choctaw Irish Gift Exchange 1847-present*. Kirwan says that the Choctaw gift was "a moment of empathy, of understanding what it means to have lost." And even though the Hopi Nation are not related to the Choctaw, the gesture has been much appreciated.

Imagine the Choctaw collecting that money for a people so far away from them, barely sixteen years after they themselves had suffered the terrible deprivations of the Trail of Tears - at which there were many Irish soldiers involved.

"Choctaw people had experienced such great loss," Allen said. "We had to leave our homes forcibly, and they had lost people that they loved. They'd lost family members, they had lost everything that they had. They had frozen to death, they had been starved to death. And when they heard about this other race of people that were experiencing the same loss ... That was not at their own hand, and it was unnecessary - just as the Choctaw people's loss was what they considered unnecessary - they wanted to help." It made headlines in Ireland. Historian Turtle Bunbury wrote a book about that year, "1847: A Chronicle of Genius, Generosity and Savagery," and remembers this story sticking out. "Well, it got a lot of coverage in the British and Irish press at the time because it's so

this story sticking out. Well, it got a lot of coverage in the British and Irish press at the time because it's so extraordinary that this donation [came] from very far away; most people who, you know, didn't have anything, immediately obviously connected to the Irish experience," Bunbury said.

The Choctaws' act of goodwill was never forgotten by the Irish, and a close bond between the two groups has persisted historically. The GoFundMe donations are just the latest example of the longstanding relationship. As one Irish donor on the fundraising page wrote: "You helped us in our darkest hour. Honoured to return the kindness. Ireland remembers, with thanks."

And in another great gesture of solidarity, and a remarkable show of sportsmanship, Ireland's lacrosse team withdrew from an international tournament, the World Games 2022, to allow a Native American team to play instead. The Iroquois Nationals lacrosse team will take Ireland's place, World Lacrosse announced in September. "It's simply the right thing to do," Michael Kennedy, chief executive officer of Ireland Lacrosse, said in a statement. "We are a proud member of World Lacrosse and we recognize the importance of The World Games to the continued growth of our sport. As much as our players would have been honored to compete, we know the right thing is for the Iroquois Nationals to represent our sport on this international stage."

Eight teams were selected to participate based on where the team finished in the 2018 Federation of International Lacrosse World Championship. The Iroquois finished third and Ireland finished 12th, but the Nationals were initially deemed ineligible to compete by the International World Games Association (IWGA). The team was ruled ineligible because it does not represent a sovereign nation and do not have an Olympic Committee. But in August, the IWGA said it was willing to reverse course if a place could be found for the Iroquois team. That's when Ireland Lacrosse stepped up.

Lacrosse was created by Native Americans in North America as early as the 12th century, according to the Iroquois Nationals. The Nationals represent the Iroquois Confederacy - also known as the Haudenosaunee - a confederacy of six Native American tribes that dates back hundreds of years. The confederacy is comprised of the Mohawk, Onondaga, Oneida, Cayuga, Seneca and Tuscarora tribes. The team is the only Native American team that has been authorized to play a sport internationally, and has been competing in international lacrosse since 1990, according to the team's website.

As the only Native American team with international recognition, the Iroquois Nationals couldn't be more grateful for the beautiful display of sportsmanship. "You have gone above and beyond not only for us, but for what you believe is right," the Iroquois Nationals tweeted to Ireland Lacrosse. "Your actions have spoken louder than words showing everyone the true power of sport, and the spirit of lacrosse," the team wrote on Twitter.

These actions on the part of Irish people demonstrate how important our international ties are, and that bonds can stretch even across history. *The Cure at Troy* by Seamus Heaney is an adaptation, written in verse, of Sophocles' play *Philoctetes*. It premiered in 1990 and published in 1991. Almost 1,600 years had passed. Sixteen centuries. Yet the story of the master Greek archer Philoctetes abandoned on a desert island by his fellow soldiers and countryman, then asked to return to fight in the Trojan War resonated with Heaney. He reflected in his verses the return of Nelson Mandela to his people, after 27 years in prison, to continue the fight against Apartheid.

Field Day, the publisher, writes on its website about Heaney's adaptation, "[it] probes the conflict between personal integrity and political expediency. It explores the relationship between public and private morality. It examines the consequences of outrage and obligation."

THE CURE OF TROY

Human beings suffer.
They torture one another.
They get hurt and get hard.
No poem or play or song

Can fully right a wrong

Inflicted and endured.

The innocent in gaols
Beat on their bars together.
A hunger-striker's father
Stands in the graveyard dumb.
The police widow in veils
Faints at the funeral home.

History says, Don't hope
On the side of the grave,
But then, once in a lifetime
The longed for tidal wave
Of justice can rise up
And hope and history rhyme.

So hope for a great sea- change
On the far side of revenge.
Believe that a further shore
Is reachable from here.
Believe in miracles.
And cures and healing wells.

Call miracle self-healing,
The utter self revealing
Double-take of feeling.
If there's fire on the mountain
And lightening and storm
And a god speaks from the sky
That means someone is hearing
The outcry and the birth-cry
Of new life at its term.

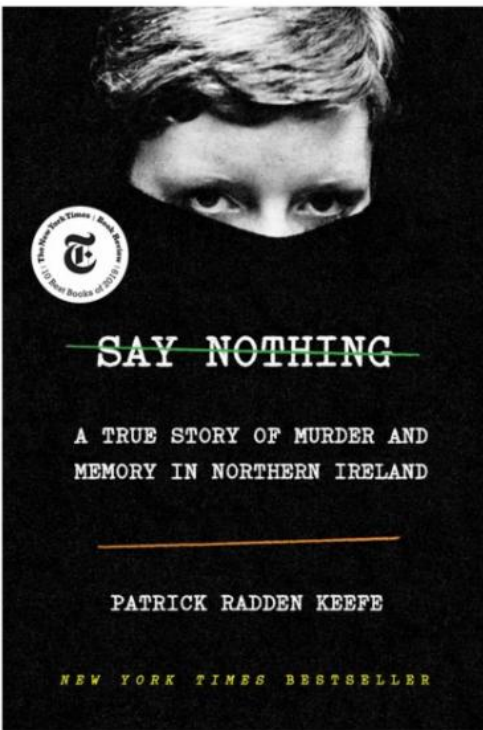
It means once in a lifetime
That justice can rise up
And hope and history rhyme.

Let us hope that in this season of Thanksgiving we remember our common humanity, and shared sorrows and joys, and come together instead of pulling apart. 2020 was a difficult year, and Covid 19 is still not over, but hopefully we will all come through together.

Happy Thanksgiving everyone!

**Zoom Event: A Conversation with author Patrick Radden Keefe
Say Nothing: A True Story of Murder and Memory in Northern
Ireland.**

Tuesday November 17th, 7pm



Ard-Chonsalacht na hÉireann | Nua Eabhrac
CONSULATE GENERAL OF IRELAND | NEW YORK

November 17th, 2020 7pm. Email info@irish-us.org to register.

Join the Irish American Heritage Museum, and the Irish Consulate in New York, for a conversation with investigative journalist and author Patrick Radden Keefe as they discuss his New York Times bestseller, *Say Nothing: A True Story of Murder and Memory in Northern Ireland*.

Roddy Doyle called Keefe "a terrific storyteller" and declared "what Keefe captures best, though, is the tragedy, the damage and waste, and the idea of moral injury." The book reveals the truth behind one of the most infamous crimes of a terrible conflict, and with potential trouble from Brexit looming, it is a timely reminder that past hurts are never far below the surface in Ireland. He won the 2019 National Book Critics Circle Award (nonfiction) for *Say Nothing*. He is the recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship and fellowships at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, the New America Foundation, and the Cullman Center for Scholars and Writers at the New York Public Library.

Please email the museum info@irish-us.org to register for the event and the link will be sent to you.

Travel with the Museum and Collette to Ireland in 2020!
Join us for a Zoom Meeting to learn all about it!
Friday November 20th 11am



We have teamed up with Collette Tours to offer you a trip to Ireland in September 2021.

Shades of Ireland

September 08 — September 17, 2021 • 10 Days • 13 Meals

Highlights:

Dublin, Irish Evening, Choices on Tour, Kilkenny, Waterford, Blarney Castle, Killarney, Jaunting Car Ride, Ring of Kerry, Farm Visit, Limerick, Cliffs of Moher, Galway, Castle Stay

From history-filled Dublin to the rolling green hills and dramatic coast, experience Ireland's charms on a journey through the Emerald Isle. Choose how you explore the city of Dublin. Kiss the Blarney Stone at historic Blarney Castle. Pick from a selection of the best restaurants with our Diner's Choice program. Experience the world-famous beauty of the Ring of Kerry. See sheepdogs in action on a working farm. See Killarney from an Irish jaunting car. Stand in awe at the top of the stunning 700-foot Cliffs of Moher. Live like royalty during an overnight stay on the grounds of a castle. A vibrant blend of captivating culture and stunning nature, this is the Ireland you've always imagined

Email the museum at info@irish-us.org to register for the information session on Zoom on Friday the 20th at 11am. No commitment expected until March 2021.

Lecture Series: The War of Independence: The Church and Northern Ireland in the War.

Elizabeth Stack, PhD, Monday, November 30th, 7pm



We are combining two major topics in this month's talk - the role of the Church in the War of Independence and how the war played out in Northern Ireland. These topics are somewhat related, as the conflict in north-east **Ulster** had a **sectarian** aspect. While the Catholic minority there mostly backed Irish independence, the **Protestant** majority were mostly **unionist/loyalist**. A Special Constabulary was formed, made up mostly of Protestants, and loyalist paramilitaries were active. They attacked Catholics in reprisal for IRA actions, and in Belfast a sectarian conflict raged in which almost 500 were killed, most of them Catholics. Belfast had famous pogroms in July 1920 and the IRA there was one of the most organized in the country.

The role of religion was complicated in the war, as several priests acted as chaplains to various IRA and Sinn Fein leaders, especially Terence MacSwiney. Templemore was also the site of strange apparitions and alleged miracles during 1920 which resulted in a short-term truce between the IRA and Crown forces.

This is the sixth lecture in our Centenary Series about the War of Independence.

Christmas Market
December 5th and 6th 10am - 4pm



Join us at the Irish American Heritage Museum for our annual Christmas Market featuring local artisans and our own Irish goods. This year we will be selling fabulous large Irish wreaths and some Christmas trees. We will have to manage crowd numbers to comply with Covid 19 restrictions, so call the museum in advance to ensure you won't be waiting too long.

Irish American Heritage Museum

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