

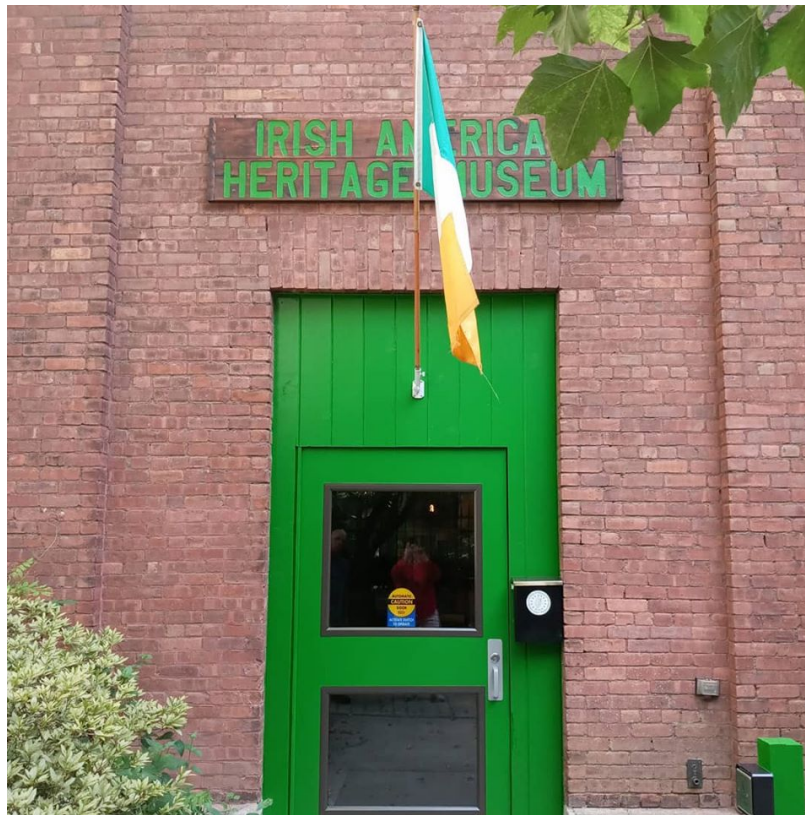


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## August at the Museum!



### The New Normal.

Dear members and friends,

Well, we are finally here: ready to open under the new conditions dictated by Covid, and in line with recommendations and requirements from the Governor's Office, the CDC, and State health officials. We will be feeling our way through this to a certain extent, but the safety of our guests, staff, and volunteers is paramount, so we will need your cooperation and patience as we gradually start to re-open this month. We expect to be able to accept visitors beginning on Wednesday August 12th at 11 am. Our hours will be Wednesday - Friday 11 - 4, and Saturday and Sunday, 12 - 4.

The Irish American Heritage Museum is now housed in a large building at Quackenbush Square and we have created all new exhibits, incorporated technology to enhance the visitor experience, and built a replica thatched cottage, so there will be a lot to discover when you can come visit us!

We will require ALL visitors to wear a mask while you are in the museum, in line with current New York State guidelines. We appreciate your cooperation with this policy - which is a state requirement, and failure to comply will result in the museum receiving a fine, which we can ill-afford, having been closed for five months. We cannot provide you with a mask - although we do have some Irish designs for sale in the giftshop - so please come prepared, with your mask, or we can not let you in.

We have a new cleaning protocol in place, and will have hand sanitizer available for you on entry. Physical distancing will be required between different groups. To this end, we recommend that you call the museum in advance of your visit if possible, so that we can monitor numbers, or recommend a time frame to visit. We will have to control the flow of people through the museum so that we are not over the capacity allowed in the building (25% of the total allowed usually). All visitors will be expected to sign in and provide us with a contact number, in line with state requirements, in case there is an outbreak and we have to contact/trace our guests.

We will do some form of online presentation of the in-person events we intend to hold, although these may be recorded and shared later, rather than live-streamed. Events will be strictly limited to FIFTEEN people per lecture, so you MUST call and reserve your seats so that we can accommodate people and maintain physical distance. Masks will be mandatory at these events too.

We are very excited to get back to in-person visits, to share the new space with you, and to share our history and culture. We intend to do this as safely as possible and are confident that with your cooperation we will re-open successfully and healthily.



James McHenry



Thomas Fitzsimmons



FDR nominating Al Smith 1924



Pieterse Butler



JFK with Civil Rights Leaders



William Paterson

August is Lughnasa in the ancient Celtic calendar, one of four seasonal festivals which falls midway between a solstice and an equinox. The other festivals are Imbolc, Bealtaine, and Samhain. It marks the beginning of the harvest month, and is named after the God Lugh, god of the sun, also known to be a great warrior, one of the central figures of ancient Celtic mythology. He was associated with many things like arts and crafts, and also with oaths, truth, and the law. It is believed that Celts did all they could to appease Lugh during Lughnasa. Celtic festivals and rituals typically center around the assurance of a bountiful harvest celebration of the harvest cycle and being that Lughnasa is one of the major Celtic holidays, the celebrations would sometimes continue for up to 15 days of fairs, markets, wrestling contests and more. If Lugh was satisfied, he would provide everyone with a bountiful harvest.

American history has seen several major events take place during the month of August, and Irish Americans were often

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### The National Anthem:

On August 1<sup>st</sup>, 1779, Star-Spangled Banner author Francis Scott Key was born in Frederick County, Maryland. After witnessing the British bombardment of Fort McHenry on the night of September 13-14, 1814, he was enthralled to see the American flag still flying over the fort at daybreak. He then wrote the poem originally entitled Defense of Fort McHenry which became the U.S. National Anthem in 1931.

Experts on a 1913 commission convened to investigate the song's origins, narrowed them to one of two possible Irish musicians who lived during the 18th century. The first was William McKeague from County Fermanagh, who some believed composed it as the regimental song for the Royal Inniskillin Fusiliers. However, the more likely writer of the famous melody is the greatest composer Ireland ever had – Turlough O'Carolan, the last of the Irish bards. The O'Carolan song regarded as the “ancestor” of our national anthem is his 1723 tune “Bumper Squire Jones,” which honors one of the composer’s patrons. Bumper Squire Jones is in fact metrically identical to Key’s famous song.

### The Constitutional Convention:

August 6-10, 1787 - The Great Debate occurred during the Constitutional Convention. Outcomes included the establishment of a four-year term of office for the President, granting Congress the right to regulate foreign trade and interstate commerce, and the appointment of a committee to prepare a final draft of the Constitution. Some were Irish-American, but fully half of the foreign-born delegates who participated were born in Ireland.

#### William Paterson

Paterson represented New Jersey at the convention, but he was born in County Antrim, Ireland, in 1745. He came over to America at the age of two with his family. Young William graduated from Princeton at the age of 18 and soon became a prominent lawyer. Paterson served as New Jersey’s first attorney general before the Constitutional Convention. He was only at the convention until late July, but he co-authored the New Jersey, or Paterson, Plan, which sought to protect smaller states against larger ones. Under the Paterson Plan, there would be one legislature with equal representation from each state. Part of the Paterson Plan was kept in the Connecticut Compromise, which established the House of Representatives (with representation based on population) and the Senate (which embodied part of Paterson’s plan). After the convention, Paterson became a Senator, the Governor of New Jersey, and then a Supreme Court Justice for 13 years until his death in 1806.

#### James McHenry

Born in Ballymena, County Antrim, Ireland, in 1753, McHenry is better-known today for the fort that was later named after him in Baltimore. McHenry was educated in Ireland and came to America in his late teens, with his family soon following him over. McHenry continued his education at Newark Academy in Delaware and studied medicine for two years with Dr. Benjamin Rush in Philadelphia. He also was on General George Washington’s staff and he served at Valley Forge, and with the Marquis de Lafayette. Unfortunately, a family illness kept McHenry away from much of the Constitutional Convention. McHenry later served as Secretary of War for Presidents Washington and Adams.

#### Pierce Butler

Butler was born in 1744 in County Carlow, Ireland, and his father was Sir Richard Butler, who was a member of Parliament and a baronet. He also served in the King’s military for a time. Butler moved to South Carolina when he married into a wealthy family. He became a planter and a local political and militia leader, and he was elected to represent South Carolina at the Constitutional Convention. Once there, Butler attended most of the sessions in Philadelphia and he was part of the James Madison-James Wilson caucus. Butler supported slavery in the South.

#### Thomas Fitzsimons

Fitzsimons was born in Ireland in 1741, and like James McHenry, he made the journey across the Atlantic in his late teens. Fitzsimons started a mercantile career in Philadelphia and he went into business with one of his brothers-in-law. Their firm, George Meade and Company, was one of the leading commercial houses in Philadelphia. He also supported the revolutionary cause and paid for supplies to help in the fight against the British.

After the war, Fitzsimons served in the Continental Congress and while he attended the Constitutional Convention as a delegate from Pennsylvania and active in the debates. After the convention, Fitzsimons served three terms in the U.S.

House, until he went back to his private life.



## Social Security:

On August 14, 1935 President Roosevelt signed the Social Security Act establishing the system which guarantees pensions to those who retire at age 65. The Social Security system also aids states in providing financial aid to dependent children, the blind and others, as well as administering a system of unemployment insurance.

Alfred Smith had a huge influence on Roosevelt. Smith was rhetorically a populist, but he built his career around progressive issues, including a controversial anti-prohibition stance. Despite his association with Tammany Hall, Smith earned a reputation as a moderate progressive and was recognized as a gifted orator and progressive legislator by fighting against political corruption and governmental reform at the city and state level. By 1913, Smith's interest and investigation into the Triangle Shirtwaist factory fire increased his popularity in the Democratic Party and the New York State Assembly elected him speaker. Smith was elected Governor of New York in 1918. As Governor, Smith appointed a commission to recommend a strategy for New York State to improve government response the needs of everyday citizens. Smith lost the 1920 election, but regained the governorship in 1922, 1924, and 1926, where he fought for the passage of progressive reforms. These reforms included creation of government subsidized housing, limitations on work hours for women and child workers, expansion of the state financing of public education and expansion of workmen's compensation and women's pensions.

Smith campaigned for President of the United States in 1928. Once Smith earned the Democratic nomination, he urged Franklin D. Roosevelt to run and succeed Smith as New York's Governor. Smith intended to focus his campaign on issues, but he was unable to overcome Americans' skepticism around his Catholicism and concerns about his New York upbringing. Herbert Hoover won the election in an electoral landslide. Smith removed himself from politics after the 1928 loss, but his political activities continued in private life. Smith supported Franklin D. Roosevelt in the election of 1932. The two men fell out when Roosevelt did not give Smith a role in his administration, and Smith campaigned against FDR. But they apparently mended their fences before Smith's death in 1944.

## Voting Rights:

On August 6, 1965 - The Voting Rights Act of 1965 was signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson. The Act suspended literacy, knowledge and character tests designed to keep African Americans from voting in the South. It also authorized the appointment of Federal voting examiners and barred discriminatory poll taxes. The Act was renewed by Congress in 1975, 1984 and 1991. In 1855, Connecticut adopted the nation's first literacy test for voting. Massachusetts followed suit in 1857. The tests were implemented to discriminate against Irish-Catholic immigrants. In 1889, Florida adopted a poll tax. Ten other southern states implemented poll taxes. This was introduced some years after the 15th Amendment passed, giving former slaves the right to vote and protecting the voting rights of adult male citizens of any race. In 1879, Mississippi adopted a literacy test to keep African Americans from voting. Numerous other states - not just in the south - also established literacy tests. However, the tests also excluded many white people from voting. To get around this, states added grandfather clauses that allow those who could vote before 1870, or their descendants, to vote regardless of literacy or tax qualifications.

In 1955, the first law to implement the 15th amendment, the Civil Rights Act, was passed. The Act set up the Civil Rights Commission - among its duties is to investigate voter discrimination. Discrimination continued however, culminating in demonstrations in Birmingham, Alabama, which King called the most segregated city in America. Initially, the demonstrations had little impact. Then, on Good Friday, King was arrested and spent a week behind bars, where he wrote one of his most famous meditations on racial injustice and civil disobedience, "Letter from Birmingham Jail." Birmingham City Commissioner Eugene "Bull" Connor used police dogs and high-pressure fire hoses to put down the demonstrations. Nearly a thousand young people were arrested. The violence was broadcast on television to the nation and the world. Invoking federal authority, President Kennedy sent several thousand troops to an Alabama air base, and his administration responded by speeding up the drafting of a comprehensive civil rights bill. Governor George Wallace had vowed at his inauguration to defend "segregation now, segregation tomorrow, and segregation forever." In June 1963, he upheld his promise to "stand in the schoolhouse door" to prevent two black students from enrolling at the University of Alabama. To protect the students and secure their admission, President Kennedy federalized the Alabama National Guard.

And on June 11, the president addressed the nation. Kennedy defined the civil rights crisis as moral, as well as constitutional and legal. He announced that major civil rights legislation would be submitted to the Congress to guarantee equal access to

public facilities, to end segregation in education, and to provide federal protection of the right to vote. "If an American, because his skin is dark, cannot eat lunch in a restaurant open to the public, if he can not send his children to the best public school available, if he cannot vote for the public officials who represent him, if, in short, he cannot enjoy the full and free life which all of us want, then who among us would be content to have the color of his skin changed and stand in his place? Who among us would be content with the counsels of patience and delay?"

On August 28<sup>th</sup> Martin Luther King Jr. delivered his "I Have a Dream" speech from the steps of the Lincoln Memorial. Later that fall, the comprehensive Civil Rights Bill cleared several hurdles in Congress and won the endorsement of House and Senate Republican leaders. It was not passed, however, before November 22, 1963, when President Kennedy was assassinated. The bill was left in the hands of Lyndon B. Johnson.

## **Lecture: Heart & Hand - The Siege of Derry. Presented by Abby Wise. Tuesday August 11th 7pm.**



The Siege of Derry was a watershed moment for the entire island of Ireland. Deposed and exiled, King James II believed that Ireland would serve as a launchpad in his quest to reclaim the throne of his three kingdoms - England, Scotland, and Ireland. Instead, he saw the gates of the walled city of Derry (also called Londonderry) shut in his face, to the rallying cry of "No Surrender" from the city's inhabitants. Instead of being the springboard for James's return to the throne, the Siege set the stage for the infamous clash between James and his nephew, Prince William of Orange, at the Battle of the Boyne a year later, an event that directly informs the island's partitioned state even today.

All are welcome to this non-sectarian event, which aims to describe both the events of the Siege as well as its lasting effects on the island of Ireland in the present day, especially as we approach the centenary of the partition of the island and the creation of Northern Ireland next year in 2021.

**Lecture Series: The Irish War of Independence:**

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## Administering Random Terror: The Black and Tans in Ireland

Elizabeth Stack PhD, Wednesday August 25th, 7pm



### Administering Random Terror: The Black and Tans in Ireland

The lasting image of the Black and Tans as brutes derives from their outrageous behavior, which was anything but conducive to the restoration of law and order in Ireland. Their tendency to engage in the wanton destruction of property, indiscriminate shooting and violence and, on occasions, even deliberate murder, led to their being Public Enemy No. 1 in Ireland. Indeed the War of Independence is also known as The Tan War. Lecture Three in the War of Independence Series will look at the worst of the atrocities committed by this paramilitary organisation, and the Auxiliaries, as well as Michael Collins's reaction to them.

### Irish American Heritage Museum

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