



Irish American Heritage Museum

October Newsletter

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Dear Members,

You may have noticed that our emails and parts of our website look a little different. We are very pleased to announce that we have just switched to a new system, and we hope you will find it easier to do things like renewing or purchasing a membership, donating, or signing up to volunteer. We tried our best to ensure that all of your information was transferred correctly, but mistakes do sometimes happen so please let us know. If you'd like to update any of your contact information, please click the button below. Work is also continuing apace at the Museum and we are almost ready to unveil the new permanent exhibits! Just some final tweaks and we will be ready to install them!

I met Ireland's Prime Minister, An Taoiseach Micheál Martin, at the New York Consulate last week. He was visiting to reaffirm the links between Ireland and America, and was delighted that travel to America has been re-opened, allowing visitors to come back here. We were delighted to receive another generous grant from the Irish government through the Emigrant Support Program. Over the years, this grant has helped us further our cultural and educational mission, and we are very grateful to the Department of Foreign Affairs and all of the staff at the Consulate for their support.

We are also proud to report that we have been selected to participate in "Communities for Immunity," a joint program by The Association of Science and Technology Centers and the American Alliance of Museums, and supported by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Institute of Museum and Library Services, to promote vaccine confidence in our community. We are one of 51 museum and libraries across the country selected for this program, and will be partnering with various local organizations for this important health initiative. Stay tuned for more information on this.

We hope you will join us on some of our events - you can come in person to most of them now, and these events are also live-streamed on Facebook. This month, we have two Zoom events, and you will have to register for those by clicking on the title of the event here or go to our website. The Zoom talks will also be live-streamed to Facebook. All of the videos of the talks are available to watch later on our website or our YouTube channel, so there are plenty of opportunities to catch up with us.

Thank you for your continued support!

Elizabeth Stack, PhD

Update Contact Information



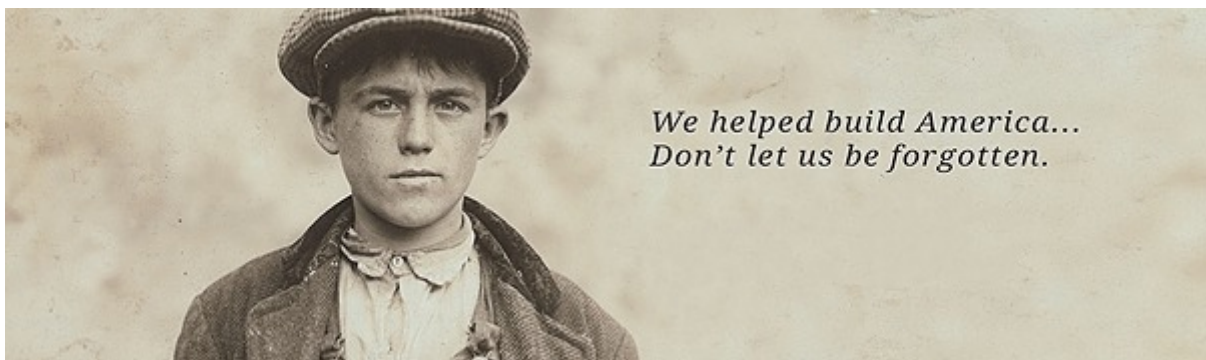
Government of Ireland
Emigrant Support Programme



An Roinn Gnóthaí Eachtracha agus Trádála
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade



Communities for Immunity
Museums and Libraries as Trusted Community Partners



Help us celebrate our 35th anniversary!

We're having a birthday! This fall, the Irish American Heritage Museum will celebrate its 35th anniversary. While 2020 was not the grand re-opening we envisioned, we have a lot on the horizon and think this coming year will be one of the greatest in our history.

We are asking you to help us with "35 for 35," a gift of \$35 in celebration of our 35th anniversary to help us recover from the pandemic so that we

can finally celebrate the way only we can—that is, with food, drink, and lots of music! Click the button below to donate.

Donate Today!

This month's poem is *The Wild Swans at Coole*, by William Butler Yeats, from 1916-1917. In 1768 approximately 600 acres of land at Coole was purchased by Robert Gregory on his return to Ireland following service with the East India Company. It remained with the Gregory family until 1927 when it was sold to the Irish State. Residing there at that time was Lady Gregory, already a legend in her lifetime as a dramatist, folklorist and co-founder of the Abbey Theatre with W.B. Yeats and Edward Martyn. She transformed Coole into a focal point for those who shaped the literary movement, making it a place they would return to time and time again to talk, to plan, to derive inspiration.



Alfred Müller, The Swans

The Wild Swans at Coole

The trees are in their autumn beauty,
The woodland paths are dry,
Under the October twilight the water
Mirrors a still sky;
Upon the brimming water among the stones
Are nine-and-fifty swans.

The nineteenth autumn has come upon me
Since I first made my count;
I saw, before I had well finished,
All suddenly mount
And scatter wheeling in great broken rings
Upon their clamorous wings.

I have looked upon those brilliant creatures,
And now my heart is sore.
All's changed since I, hearing at twilight,
The first time on this shore,
The bell-beat of their wings above my head,
Trode with a lighter tread.

Unwearied still, lover by lover,
They paddle in the cold
Companionable streams or climb the air;
Their hearts have not grown old;
Passion or conquest, wander where they will,
Attend upon them still.

But now they drift on the still water,
Mysterious, beautiful;

Among what rushes will they build,
By what lake's edge or pool
Delight men's eyes when I awake some day
To find they have flown away?

Culture Section



Aside from St. Patrick's Day, did you know that Hallowe'en is the most popular celebration in America that has roots in Ireland? In fact, considering that the Puritan Pilgrims banned most church holidays - including Christmas! - it is surprising that an ancient pagan festival took root here. Hallowe'en may not have emerged as the annual festival of costumes and candy in the US at all were it not for Ireland's Great Hunger.

Samhain was an annual night of celebrations that ran from October 31st to November 1st, a festival signaling the end of the harvest season and the beginning of the colder, darker nights that accompanied winter. People believed the real world and the world of the spiritual briefly intertwined. Malevolent spirits were said to roam free, leading many to perform strange ceremonies and incantations as a way of warding off these evil specters. Bonfires were meant to keep the evil spirits at bay and disguises worn so that if you were wandering home in the dark cloaked in an animal skin and bumped into a spirit, they just might mistake you for one of their own. The revelers even hallowed out turnips and carried a spark of the bonfire inside to light their way home.

In the years before the Great Hunger, the poor of the west of Ireland feasted on nuts and apples on the dark night of Oíche Shamhna. They also played games, many involving divination. A ring in a piece of barmbrack meant the finder would marry within the year, while a person who found a pea would remain single. Three bowls set in front of a blind-folded young woman determined her spouse. If she placed her hand in one containing clear water, she would get a young man; if the water was dirty, she would get an old man; if the bowl was empty, she would get none. And in nuts set alight near the

hearth a couple would read their fate: flames that joined foretold a strong union; flames that did not join were an indication that they would separate.

St. Patrick and later Catholic priests did their best to suppress these pagan beliefs, but the folk traditions persisted, and ultimately suppression gave way to syncretism — the beliefs were fused. Catholicism in Ireland reflected an eclectic mix of Christian and pre-Christian customs, and by the 8th century, the Catholic church was celebrating “The Eve of the Feast of All Hallows,” to which was later added “All Hallows’ Day/Hallowmas” or “All Saints Day” on November 1st and “All Soul’s Day” on November 2nd.

In the mid-1840s with the potato blight, the scale of Irish immigration to the United States increased dramatically, and the Irish throughout the mid-century decades became the dominant immigrant group to the country. Overwhelmingly poor and working-class, they received a largely hostile reception from the predominantly Protestant, Anglo-American established political culture. Catholics were viewed as a foreign threat, as it was feared they owed their loyalties first and foremost to the Vatican and were therefore a threat to American culture.

Ethnic identity, religious observance, and cultural practices became a refuge for the non-native immigrant as religion became a battleground, a way of targeting Irish immigrants and communities. There were numerous acts of violence directed at Catholic churches and places of worship in the 1840s and 1850s. The Philadelphia Nativist Riots, led by anti-Catholic nativists and where at least 15 rioters and soldiers were killed, were among the most infamous.

But the traditions persisted even when they were modified to suit the immigrants’ new home. Over the next few decades the Halloween celebrations became more refined, with pranks kept to a minimum while the costumes became more vivid and the treats evolved into offerings of the decidedly sweet variety. Pumpkins were far more plentiful than turnips, and the orange winter squash with a flickering candle inside, became commonplace in windows on this late fall night. By the early 1900s, trick-or-treats, haunted houses, or costume parties were common in many neighborhoods. The holiday took a new turn in the 1920s and 1930s with the rise of radio, film, and the mass entertainment industries, which drew on a variety of vernacular folk-ethnic traditions and yet also, slowly over time, worked to eradicate them. American culture adopted the once-feared pagan traditions of the immigrants, transforming them into a new, popular holiday. This year, over 80 million Americans will decorate their home and billions of dollars will be spent on decorations, candy, and costumes.

Oíche Shamhna shona daoibh – Happy Hallowe’en!



Calling all cooks, chefs, bakers, and kitchen experimenters!

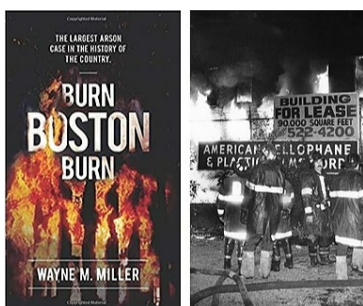
We're collecting healthy potato recipes for an upcoming project and we'd love to have yours! If you have a great recipe and don't mind

sharing, simply click the button below, or email Hannah at hschockmel@irish-us.org.

Share Your Recipe!

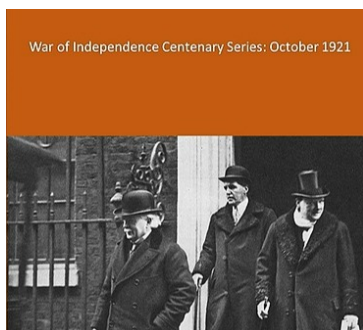
October Events

Unless otherwise noted, all events can be attended in person at the Museum, or viewed live on Facebook



October 5, 7pm: Wayne Miller on "Burn Boston Burn"

In the early 1980s, Boston was set ablaze. 264 buildings were intentionally set on fire, resulting in millions of dollars in damages and hundreds of injuries. This is the true story of the deep conspiracy of nine men, determined to wreak havoc on the city and the relentless investigators who uncovered them, told from the perspective of the head ATF Special Agent in charge of the investigation, Wayne Miller.



October 7, 7pm: War of Independence Centenary Series, October 1921, ZOOM ONLY

Our Centenary Series continues with an in-depth look at the events of October 1921. The delegates on both sides have been chosen and meet for the first time. Correspondence between the Dail and the plenipotentiaries reveals the pressure they are under in London, while the delegates themselves do not always see eye to eye.



October 10, 12-4pm: Great Famine Voices Roadshow

Come and share your family memories and stories about coming from Ireland to Albany, New York, and the United States. Dr. Jason King, Academic Coordinator at Strokestown Park, will record your interview for the Great Famine Voices online archive, which you can view here: <http://greatfaminevoices.ie/>

The Great Famine Voices Roadshow is hosted by the National Famine Museum, Strokestown Park and the Irish Heritage Trust. It is funded by the Government of Ireland Emigrant Support Program.

October 14, 7pm: Genealogy Myths with Lisa Walsh Dougherty

Is your genealogy being influenced by mythology? Our resident genealogist will take you through some of the most common myths that get passed down in family stories and which can hamper your research. She will tell you some of the most common misconceptions



Is Mythology Ruining Your Genealogy?
Lisa Walsh Dougherty

about your family past and why you should be suspicious about certain family legends!



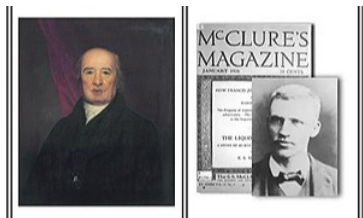
October 17, 12-4pm: Comhaltas Ceoltoiri Eireann

Join us for some "craic agus ceol" (fun and music) in a traditional Irish music seisiún. In this "open" session, anyone who is able to play Irish music is welcome. If you have a song to sing or a poem to recite, you are also welcome to take part! Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann is the primary Irish organization dedicated to the promotion of the music, song, dance and the language of Ireland.



October 18, 7pm: Famous Irish Ghost Stories

Join us as we discuss some of Ireland's oldest ghost stories, worst witches, and persistent superstitions to celebrate Samhain! Hear about how immigrants brought their traditions with them and created a new holiday here in America.



**October 21, 7pm: Making Change: Irish Immigrant Activism Series
Legal and Journalism Advocates in Irish American History**

Join us as we learn about the work of Samuel McClure, Thomas Addis Emmet, and Samantha Power, who have all worked to make life better for vulnerable people. Advocating for immigrants, religious freedom, and for better working conditions, these activists have all stood up to the powerful on behalf of the vulnerable. This series has been funded in part by Humanities New York, with the support of the National Endowment for the Humanities.



**October 25, 7pm: Making Change: Irish Immigrant Activism Series
Brendan Fay & St. Patrick's Day for All**

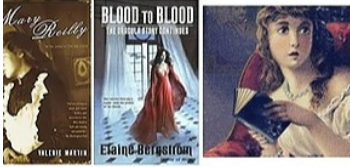
Brendan Fay is the founder of the Lavender and Green Alliance and St. Patrick's Day for All. He will discuss his life's work of advocating for inclusion and acceptance in the Irish American community. This series has been funded in part by Humanities New York, with the support of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

**October 26, 7pm: Collars, Canals & Conflagrations Series:
Toss the Feathers - History Through Music**

The Irish folk group Toss the Feathers will take us on a musical journey, singing the old songs which tell stories about canal and railroad workers, soldiers, maids, and other characters. The immigrant



experience is encapsulated in these songs, some laments, others Vaudeville hits, which illuminate the various experiences of the Irish in the Capital region. This event is part of our Collars, Canals, and Conflagration: Irish Immigrants in the Capital Region series, which is funded in part by Greenway Heritage Conservancy HRV, Inc.



October 28, 6pm: Dara Downey, PhD on Superstitious Irish Servants in American Gothic Fiction ZOOM ONLY

This talk explores the role of the Irish (or more broadly “Celtic”) servant woman in American gothic texts, both from the early twentieth- century and more recently. In particular, it examines the ways in which nineteenth- and early twentieth-century ghost stories dramatize the association in American culture between Irish Catholicism and pagan ritual, implying that the Irish American servant has valuable knowledge of and access to supernatural realms.



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