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## August at the Museum!



## A Quiet Month at the Museum!

Dear Members and Friends,

We are thrilled to say that the museum's new, permanent exhibition is almost completed and we are going to be proof-reading and installing that in the coming weeks. So it will be pretty busy behind the scenes here for the month, and we have decided to take a break from most events to focus on getting the museum ready. We also intend to film virtual tours of the exhibits when they are ready, so that those of you who are far away will have a chance to see it too.

We do have a very busy Fall planned however. We will be hosting an exhibition and lecture series called "Collars, Canals, and Conflagrations: The Irish in the Capital Region" and another exhibition and lecture series called "Making Change: Immigrant Activism" in the next few months. We will continue with our Centenary Series on the Irish War of Independence, and will have several authors come to speak about their books too. So keep an eye on the newsletter and the website for updates.

All of the talks that we have hosted since the Pandemic began are available to view on our Facebook page, and we are also migrating those to our YouTube page, so you can catch up on some of the fantastic topics we have previously covered.

Despite the closure and the uncertainty of 2020, we have had a great and productive year in lots of ways, transitioning to holding our events online and writing the new content for the larger space we are now in. The Museum will be transformed in the coming weeks and we think you will be really impressed when you see what we have been working on. As things (hopefully) start to go back to normal, we are looking forward to having our movie nights again and getting Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann back in for the Rambling House music sessions. Lots to look forward to in other words!

We are following the CDC and Governor's guidelines daily, and it looks like we will require proof of vaccine status to attend live talks and in-person events in the fall, and will ask all visitors to the Museum to wear their mask indoors. We thank you for your cooperation in this matter as we strive to keep our staff, members, and visitors healthy.

So, enjoy the rest of the summer and I hope you will watch some of the recorded talks on Facebook. We are looking forward to regular programming resuming in September.

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Seamus Heaney, one of Ireland's most beloved poets and their first Nobel prize-winning poet since WB Yeats, died on August 30th 2013.

Heaney won the Nobel prize for literature in 1995 and was celebrated for his many collections of poetry during his lifetime. He won the TS Eliot Prize in 2006 for his collection *District and Circle*. In 2010 he won the Forward poetry prize for *Human Chain*, a volume of verse inspired by his experiences after a stroke; his earlier collection *The Spirit Level* was shortlisted in 1996, as was *District and Circle* in 2006.

Heaney was born on a small farm near Toomebridge in County Derry, Northern Ireland, in 1939, "the eldest child of an ever-growing family." In his Nobel address in Stockholm he spoke lovingly of his childhood in a three-roomed thatched farmhouse at Mossbawn where, in their early years, he and his siblings passed "a kind of den-life which was more or less emotionally and intellectually proofed against the outside world."

After attending boarding school at St Columb's College in Derry city as a scholarship boy – a transition, as he has said, "from the earth of farm labour to the heaven of education" – Heaney went on to study at Queen's University Belfast, where he joined a generation of "Northern poets" that included Michael Longley and Derek Mahon. He published his first major collection, *Death of a Naturalist*, in 1966.

He contributed a first edition of *Death of a Naturalist* to a recent auction in aid of the writers' charity Pen, writing in pencil, above the poem "At a Potato Digging", that the critic 'Anthony Thwaite once described me (to my face) as "laureate of the root vegetable."

On another page, he wrote: "These two poems (along with 'Digging') were published by Karl Miller in the Christmas issue of *The New Statesman*, 1964 - and the poems caught the eye of the editors at Faber. Whence this volume."

Many of the poems he wrote in the 1970s and the 1980s, during the Troubles in Northern Ireland, are unflinching threnodies for a terrible time.

On receiving the David Cohen prize for lifetime excellence in writing in 2009, Heaney chose to sum up his achievement in poetry by reading his lyrical evocation of a moment during his honeymoon, *The Underground*, and his sonnet *A Drink of Water*.

*The Underground* sees him and his wife, Marie, "Honeymooning, moonlighting, late for the Proms", running down the corridor from the underground to the Royal Albert Hall. Heaney imagines himself as an Orpheus who won't

look back, and therefore keeps his bride. *A Drink of Water* recalls a memory from his childhood, of an old woman

look back, and therefore keeps his bride. A Drink of water recalls a memory from his childhood, of an old woman who drew water every morning, "Like an old bat staggering up the field", who is revealed later as a muse of sorts to the poet. Heaney said it was "about receiving a gift and being enjoined to 'remember the giver'" – something he said he would always do when remembering that evening.

At the close of his Nobel address he spoke of "poetry's power to do the thing which always is and always will be to poetry's credit": "the power to persuade that vulnerable part of our consciousness of its rightness in spite of the evidence of wrongness all around it, the power to remind us that we are hunters and gatherers of values, that our very solitudes and distresses are creditable, in so far as they, too, are an earnest of our veritable human being." (The Guardian, September 1st, 2013.)

He texted his wife his last words just before he died - "Noli timere" - "Do not be afraid."

He wrote this poem *August Nights* in 1991 and it was published in *Seeing Things*. This warm poem, probably concerning the poet's father, is very brief but gives an amazing insight into the relationship Seamus had with his father, who he had written about in other poems too, notably *Digging*.

An August Night  
His hands were warm and small and knowledgeable  
When I saw them again last night, they were two ferrets,  
Playing all by themselves in a moonlit field.

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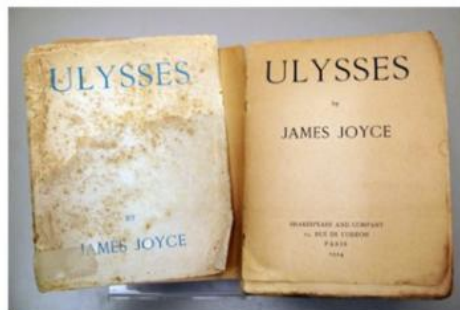
## Reading Group at the Museum

### "Ulysses for All"

### Weekly at the Museum - Begins September 9th.



Ulysses for All!  
A reading group at the  
Irish American Heritage Museum.



2022 marks 100 years since the publication of James Joyce's "Ulysses." It caused a furor when published, often

burned and banned. Today, it remains the subject of Ph.D. theses, academic education, derision, and confusion.

burned and banned. Today, it remains the subject of Ph.D. theses, analysis, adoration...and confusion. How many of us have felt we MUST read Ulysses, but every time we pick it up, we are quickly overcome by a sense of incomprehension or frustration?

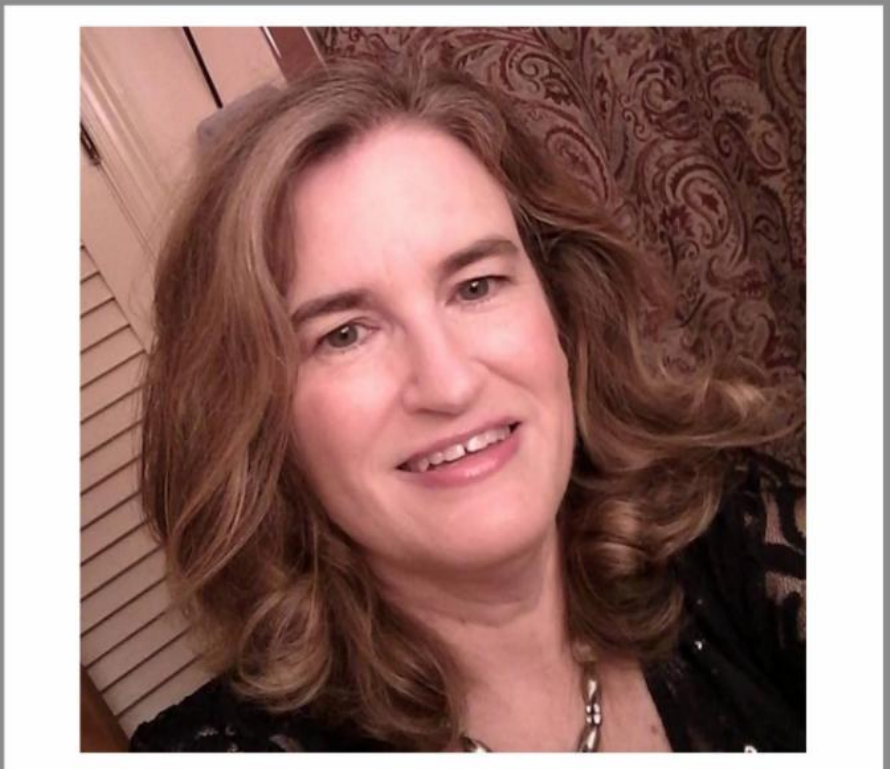
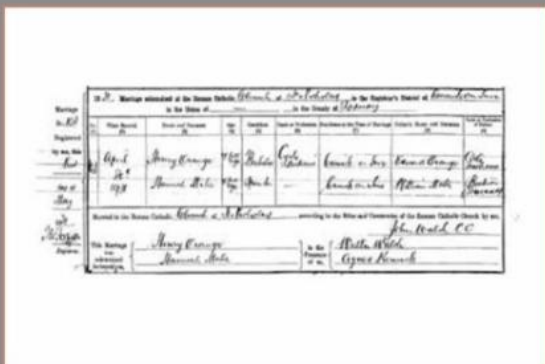
The Irish American Heritage Museum is offering a chance to change that, and learn more about this important work in Irish literature. Museum Trustee and Professor of Irish Literature at the Albany College of Pharmacy, Margaret Lasch Carroll, PhD, will lead a reading group about Ulysses that will begin on September 9 and conclude with the Museum's annual "Bloomsday" celebration on June 16.

The group is limited to 15 people. It will meet from 6 to 7 p.m. twice monthly, focusing on one chapter at each meeting. Museum membership (which starts at \$50) is required, and includes admission to the Museum at any time, and other discounts. Members of the reading group will need to purchase their own books, and we are working to arrange a discount for those who need a book. Sessions are scheduled to take place at the Museum at 21 Quackenbush Square on Sept. 9 & 23; Oct. 7 & 21; Nov. 4 & 18; Dec. 2 and 16; Jan. 13 & 27; Feb. 10 & 24; March 10 & 24; April 7 & 28; May 12 & 26; June 9 & 16.

To register, contact Irish American Heritage Museum volunteer Kathy McCarthy at [kmccarthy790@gmail.com](mailto:kmccarthy790@gmail.com). Please register by August 30, 2020. The Irish American Heritage Museum phone number is 518.427.1916.

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## ***Genealogy with Lisa Walsh Dougherty*** **Wednesday August 25th 6pm-8pm in the museum.**



Our resident genealogist, Lisa Walsh Dougherty, will answer any of your questions to help you get started on your family search. She can help outline the records needed to explore Irish ancestry, noting where to find them online and

offline, and explore how they can help to trace your ancestors back in time. She can help with church records, civil registration records, census and land records, inheritance records, and passenger lists. If you have lots of information, or barely any, Lisa can help get your family tree started!



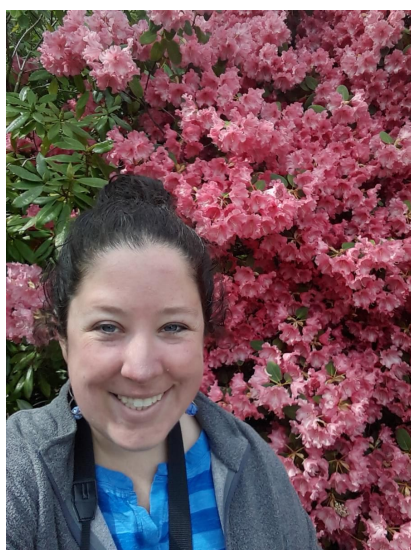
The poster for the IrishEcho Big Irish Campfire 2021 features a central logo of a campfire with the text "THE BIG IRISH CAMPFIRE 2021" and "REBUILDING HINCH THE YEAR COLLECTION IRISH WHISKEY". The event details are: "IrishEcho Big Irish Campfire 2021 10am-4pm, Rosie O'Gradys, New York, NY Friday 27 August Hybrid Followed by Gala Dinner honoring The Rebuilders (6-9pm)". Below this is a "Programme" section with icons for: Community & Irish Centers, Festivals & Parades, Culture & Arts, An Ghaeilge, Sport, Media, Heritage, Community Service, Tourism, Business, and Government. At the bottom, it lists "HEADLINE PARTNERS" (Hinch, Irish Whiskey, etc.) and "SESSION PARTNERS" (Tourism Ireland, Aer Lingus, NIBureau).

Elizabeth has been asked to chair a panel at the Second Big Irish Campfire organized by the Irish Echo. The panel is at 11:45am and is titled "Bouncing Back: Reinvigorating our Irish Museums, Arts and Heritage Centers."

She has been named an Irish Rebuilder, so will receive an award at the Gala Dinner. From the Irish Echo: "Following a full-day around the Campfire, we will repair to Rosie's ballroom for a gala dinner to honor The Irish Rebuilders, the folks already putting the pieces back together again and — as is the case in San Francisco — setting their sights ever-higher. Our roll of honor will include Belfast-born Caron McMahon of the [Irish Heritage Club in Seattle](#); Elizabeth Stack, from Kerry, of the [Irish American History Museum in Albany, NY](#); Mike Mitchell, Executive Director of the [Milwaukee Irish Fest](#); and North Belfast boy done good in Buffalo, New York, Conor Hawkins. That quartet will fly in to join us in person."

We are honored to be recognized with the other cultural and immigrant centers and are proud to be part of the rebuilding of the diverse and successful network of Irish American organizations.

You [can register here to watch the conference online.](#)



We are delighted to announce that we have hired Hannah Schockmel as Head of Digital and Special Projects. Hannah comes to us with years of experience in the museum field.

Given that so much of museum life has transferred to be online, we are very excited to have her skills to help us build more virtual and digital experiences as we continue to renovate and expand our space.

**Irish American Heritage Museum**

21 Quackenbush Square,

Albany, NY 12207

(518) 487-1016

Email Us



