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December at the Museum!

*Nollaig Shona Duit
Merry Christmas To You*



Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Dear members and friends,

Well, 2020 is nearly behind us, thankfully. Little did we know what was ahead of us this time last year! I know that the year has been fearful, unpredictable, and devastating for so many people, who lost loved ones, or their jobs, or even just the company of friends as we socially isolated. But if the lives of our ancestors taught us anything, it is

that we will get through this, together. We hope that 2021 will certainly bring more peace, calm, and prosperity to everyone's hearth and home.

This year many organizations, including the Irish American Heritage Museum, are striving to overcome the challenges of the global pandemic. So firstly, we would like to take a moment to thank all of you for your loyalty and steadfast support. Your dedication helps to ensure that the Museum can continue to grow and expand, despite the fact that we were closed for five months this year. We have now shared all of the lectures we hosted during the pandemic on our [YouTube page](#) so you can watch them in your own time. The new exhibits for the museum will be printed and displayed in the new year, so we really hope when you visit us in 2021 you will be amazed by the stories we share of the Irish in America.

We are the only museum in this country dedicated to preserving and sharing the contributions of the Irish in America, and we need your help. Most of our events are free, and we have an amazing year planned for 2021 with talks by authors, historians and a Pulitzer prize winning journalist; performances by some of Ireland's best artists; and our lecture series on the centenary of the War of Independence will continue. To those of you who are already members, we are very grateful for your support, and cannot thank you enough. If you read and enjoy this newsletter every month, please support our education mission by [becoming a member](#) or making a donation. Don't forget, a membership would make a fantastic gift for someone in your family, so please think about who would enjoy supporting the museum as they learn about their culture, and purchase a membership for them. You will be providing support to an organization enthusiastically committed to the causes of education, arts and history. So, as you enter this holiday season, and reflect on the wealth of culture and heritage that we have at our fingertips, we hope that you will consider a tax-deductible charitable gift or a membership. All checks can be made out to IAHM, or you can donate on our [website](#).

We also have an opportunity for you to support the museum at a more permanent level. You can [sponsor one of the exhibit areas](#) in your family name or purchase a seat in our theater. Our new exhibit content will soon be displayed, and we hope to improve our technology, so that we can offer you the lectures and other events we host, online. Please help us with to continue our mission to preserve and share our immigrant stories for future generations, and to help Americans understand the best ideals that unite us as a nation.

Christmas Short Story

This year I wanted to share a story written by my neighbor, John B. Keane. He was one of Ireland's most prolific literary figures - a playwright, poet, novelist, essayist and ballad writer. He and his son Billy, also a journalist and writer, have just been awarded the 2020 Literature Award by Irish Books Arts and Music. This is an abridged version of his story, *Long Ago*, which was published in the book *Christmas in Ireland*. This abridged version is from Bridget Haggerty on *Irish Culture and Customs*. The story of ordinary folk pulling together for the communal good is at the heart of what makes Christmas - and the Irish community - so special.

Long Ago

Many years ago, in our street, there lived an old woman who had but one son. His name was Jack. Jack's father had died when his son was no more than a gorsoon, so Jack's mother had to go to work to support her son and herself.

As Jack grew older, she still went out to work for the simple reason that Jack did not like work. The people in the street used to say that Jack was good for three things. He was good for eating, he was good for smoking, and he was good for drinking. He was also good for leaving. When his mother was too old to work, Jack left for England.

Years passed, but the old woman never had a line from her only son. Every Christmas she would stand inside her window waiting for a card or letter. She waited in vain.

Now it happened that in our street there was a postman who knew a lot more about his residents than they knew about themselves. When Christmas came he was weighted with bags of letters and parcels. People waited his arrival the way children awaited a bishop on confirmation day. He was not averse to indulging in a drop of the comforts wherever such comforts were tendered but comforts or no comforts the man was always sensitive to the

comforts wherever such comforts were tendered but comforts of no comforts the man was always sensitive to the need of others. In his heart resided the spirit of Christmas. Whenever he came to the house where the old woman lived he would crawl on all fours past the window. He just didn't have the heart to go by and be seen by her. He hated to disappoint people, particularly old people. For the whole week before Christmas she would take up her position behind the curtains, waiting for the letter which never came.

Finally the postman could bear it no longer. On Christmas Eve he delivered to our house a mixed bunch of cards and letters. Some were from England. He requested one of these envelopes when its contents were removed. He re-wrote the name and address and also wrote a short note which he signed "your loving son Jack." Then from his pocket he extracted a ten shilling note, a considerable sum in those far off days. He placed the note in the envelope. There was no fear the old woman would notice the handwriting because if Jack was good at some things, he was not good at other things at all, and one of these was writing. In fact, Jack could not write his own name.

When the postman came to the old woman's door, he knocked loudly. When she appeared, he put on his best official voice and said "sign for this if you please Missus." The old woman signed and opened the envelope. The tears appeared in her eyes and she cried out loud: "I declare to God but Jack is a scholar." "True for you," said the postman, "and I daresay he couldn't get in touch with you until he learned to write." "I always knew there was good in him," she said, "I always knew it." "There's good in everyone Missus," said the postman, as he moved on to the next house.

The street was not slow in getting the message and in the next and last post there were many parcels for the old woman. It was probably the best Christmas the street ever had.

Christmas Market

Saturday December 5th 10am - 4pm Sunday December 6th 12 pm - 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 Christmas cards. 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.

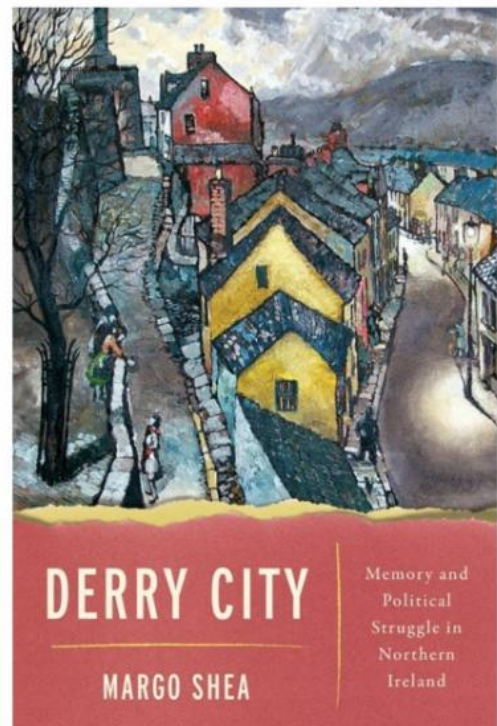
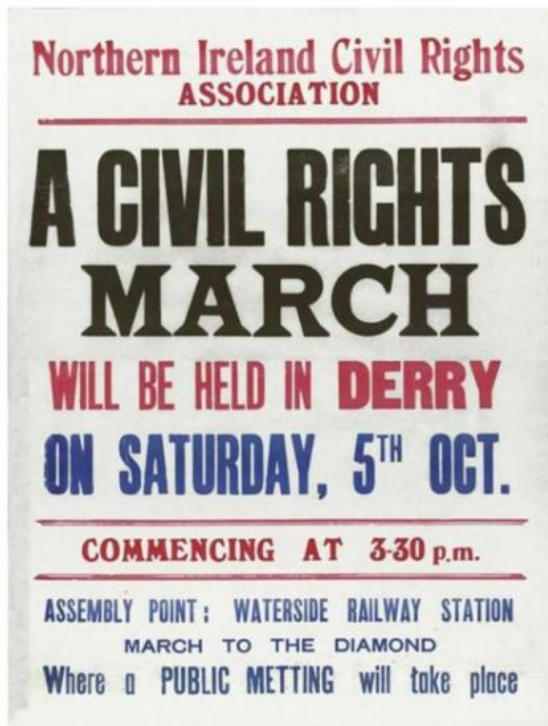
Zoom Event: Memory and Meaning in Derry

Margo Shea, PhD

Monday December 7th, 7pm

This has been rescheduled from October.

Memory and Meaning In Derry – Margo Shea, PhD



October 22nd, 7pm. Irish American Heritage Museum

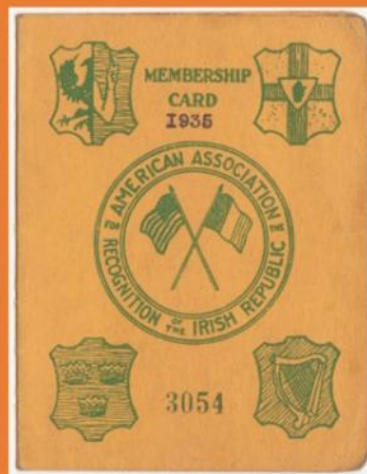
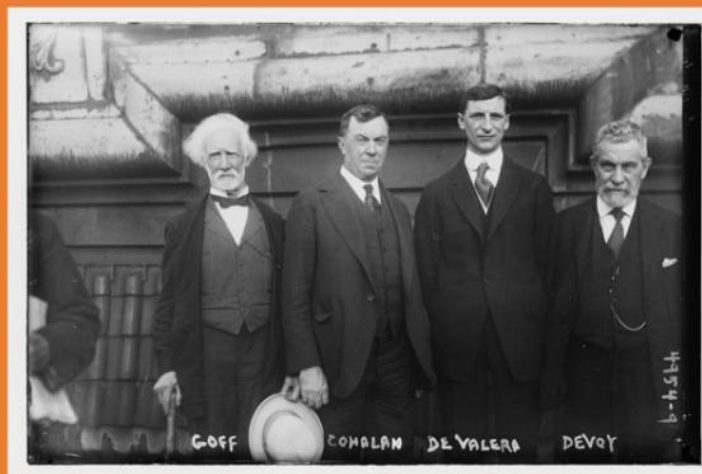
In Derry, Northern Ireland, the presence of the past is everywhere — in the stories, in the songs, in the streets. While Derry is known for its role in the Northern Ireland civil rights movement and as the site of Bloody Sunday, its longer history is just as fascinating and helps us understand how communities maintain their identity in the face of turmoil.

Join historian Margo Shea to explore Derry during the decades before the Troubles and learn how people, without much in the way of financial resources or political power, made their mark and held their own by drawing on the past. Memory was crucial to Derry's Catholic residents. Expressions of memory did much more than simply explain the past. They illuminated a way forward. Drawing on the past was a strategy for Derry Catholics to sustain their communities, to reflect their experiences, and to change their fortunes in the face of a partitioned Ireland and the many changes that came with it after 1921, when they found themselves on the "wrong" side of the Irish border. With Margo, consider the civil rights movement in Derry as an extension of the nationalist community's history instead of as a major break from it.

Notre Dame Press is currently offering 40% off Margo's book and free shipping so [click on the link to avail](#) of that great offer. The code is 14AARSBL20 and it will work until December 15th.

Email the museum at info@irish-us.org to get the Zoom link.

Lecture Series: The War of Independence: De Valera in America. Elizabeth Stack, PhD, Tuesday December 8th, 7pm



De Valera's War of Independence: A Year in America
Tuesday December 8th, 7pm

In June 1919, de Valera made his way to America to secure international recognition of the self-declared independent and republican nature of Ireland. This lofty goal was not realised, and much of the money raised to fund the nascent state never made it back to Ireland. Furthermore, the Irish American group, Friends of Irish Freedom, disagreed with de Valera's approach and split, arguably splintering their own political power. De Valera had been lionised by vast crowds, but had also met political opposition for the first time. So while his American experience boosted his ego, it also paradoxically accentuated his insecurity, which may explain a lot about what happened after his return to Ireland.

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

Irish Arts Center Annual Gala Thursday December 10th, 7pm

Our friends at the Irish Arts Centre in New York have asked us to share this link to attend their Spirit of Ireland Gala. Enjoy the event from the comfort of your home. It is one night only and has an incredible line up, including performances by Sting, Elvis Costello, Loah, Aedín Moloney, Camille O'Sullivan, Declan O'Rourke, Joanie Madden & Cherish the Ladies, Arturo O'Farrill Quartet and more, plus appearances by Liam Neeson, Gabriel Byrne, Roma Downey, Colum McCann, Paul Muldoon. They are celebrating the imminent completion of their new building and look ahead to a more hopeful horizon in 2021! [Click on this link](#) to register for the event. The Museum is not affiliated with this event.

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