



# Irish American Heritage Museum

## November Newsletter

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Dia daoibh!

I am absolutely thrilled to forward you this, my first newsletter as Executive Director of the Irish American Heritage Museum. For those not familiar with my journey here, I am the eldest of three lads. Mom hailed from Frosses, County Donegal, and Dad from Beltra, County Sligo. My parents met in the United States, as young immigrants, when Dad asked Mom to dance at the O'Neill House in East Durham NY. My brothers and I grew up in New York (Queens and Long Island) in the 1960s and 1970s. During that time: 1) the growth of regional retail shopping centers truly exploded; and, 2) a simultaneous phenomenon similarly occurred, wherein throngs of regional youth would both gravitate to and "hang out" at these retail centers. Feeling quite strongly that these gatherings couldn't possibly lead to any good whatsoever, Mom and Dad pledged that their sons would never be "mall rats." At the time, I am not sure my parents fully contemplated the riches we would all share as a result of their "plan" to achieve their pledge-goals. Each year, Mom and Dad would save, then days after school ended they would send us to a small farm in the west of Ireland to help our grandfather and uncles with the cattle, sheep, hay and turf. We would return a few days before the school year would begin and sometimes with wee brogues. I believe that their early pledge and its execution was the greatest of many gifts my brothers and I received from Mom and Dad. It provided a catalyst to a lifetime of commitment to our Irish heritage.



Since birth, we were immersed in Irish culture and arts, whether it be participating in music sessions in both Ireland and America; visiting Yeats' country in Drumcliff, Sligo, located right in the middle between my father's and mother's homesteads; taking Irish music lessons in New York and in the west of Ireland; or several times a month attending county and Pioneer Association dances or CCE (Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann) concerts and shows. Radio programming (WFUV; Adrian Flannelly; etc.) along with shelves of Irish LPs (followed by 8-Track then cassette tapes then CDs!!!) of trad greats from Sligo and Donegal, and show bands, and countless brilliant Irish-

American entertainers - were the soundtrack of my life. That glorious soundtrack still plays, and beautifully so.

Our shared Irish American heritage is rich; we build upon it every day.

With that in mind, I am grateful for the confidence the Board of Directors of the Irish American Heritage Museum has expressed by providing me this opportunity to serve as Executive Director. I am committed to continue creating world class exhibits - including visual arts, lectures, interactive exhibitions, dance and music performances - all focused on Irish culture and diaspora. As the father of four beautiful sons, I believe in the importance of preserving and educating about our collective story; in doing so, the children of the diaspora will learn and be similarly enriched. Your membership at the Irish American Heritage Museum demonstrates that you know well already the value of this cultural exposure and education. I assure you, the Museum will work hard during the coming year to expand these efforts, through providing access at the Museum and beyond to regional educational programs, through strategic partnerships with other cultural centers and museums, and through increasing the exposure to the gifts of the Irish American Heritage Museum utilizing all the tools available in this digital age.

This November - my first month as your Executive Director - is filled with some wonderful performances and activities. These are described fully, below. I wish to underscore two of these events:

- November 15, 2024 at 7:00 PM, world renowned Irish fiddler Gerry O'Connor will be performing in the Flanagan Theater of the Irish American Heritage Museum. Gerry - a dear friend of mine from County Louth - is touring the United States with Kevin McElroy. Gerry and Kevin are no strangers to the traditional Irish music scene in the United States. Indeed, Gerry has previously left an enormous imprint on scores of Irish music enthusiasts and students at the internationally famous Catskill Irish Arts Week, run by our sister heritage site The Michael J. Quill Irish Cultural & Sports Centre (East Durham NY).
- November 20, 2024 at 7:00 PM: Claire Nolan will perform her one woman show, "Georgia O'Keefe."

Those of you who have been to the Flanagan Theater know it to be a spectacular, intimate performance space. In 2000, my family and I moved to the Capitol region from New York City. The Albany Planetarium room which is now the Flanagan Theater was a frequent visit with my very young boys, especially during inclement weather. Little did I know, then, my future role with this remarkable venue! I can't tell you the thrill, being the Executive Director of a Museum with the Flanagan Theater as a prominent attraction. Since my appointment several weeks ago, I have been negotiating world-class Irish performances to appear at Flanagan Theater on a frequent basis in 2025. If you have seen a performance at the Flanagan Theater, you know how wonderful this space is. If you haven't been to our - your!!! - Flanagan Theater yet, please bring friends in the coming weeks to see Gerry O'Connor and Claire Nolan. You will be hooked on this venue once you experience these shows.

I want to take this opportunity to thank each one of you for your membership. I ask that you "spread the word" about the Irish American Heritage Museum as the holiday season approaches. Memberships for family and friends make fantastic "stocking stuffers," and that support will go a long way towards "keeping the tradition alive." Similarly, please bring family and friends to our events: you will share memorable and outstanding Irish cultural experiences, and we are confident the Museum's membership will increase as a result of your doing so!

As detailed in the "Culture" section, below, both Irish-born and Irish Americans sacrificed significantly in the armed services of our great nation. I shared a bit about my upbringing early in this missive; please allow me to tie-in my background a bit further as I conclude this Executive Director's November 2024 newsletter. I returned a few weeks ago from Sligo, where we Clarks gathered to celebrate my Dad's life, and for his funeral and burial. After coming to the United States in 1948, Dad enlisted - like many other young Irish immigrants - in the U.S. Army; he served in the Korean War. My family, our friends were so blessed: until his death this year at the age of 96, Dad was alert, sweet, full of life, sharp-as-a-tack, and was a walking historian who loved to both hear about goings on on both sides of the Atlantic as well as share his story. I think my family and I would all agree that it was near impossible to know of what Dad was prouder when he was here, with us: his family, his faith, his Irish heritage, or his military service to the United States of America. Please, if able, during the weeks ahead remember well, honor, (where you can) reach out, and give thanks to the veterans in

your life. With the greatest of gratitude, the Irish American Heritage Museum recognizes the sacrifices of our servicemen and servicewomen and their families.



Lastly, I would like to meet each and every one of you. I welcome your visits to the Irish American Heritage Museum. If you are so inclined, please call. I keep a few musical instruments at my office; I am not at all averse to backing or playing a wee tune, or to joining you in a spontaneous song or two. If you or family member/s are physically unable to make a visit to the museum itself, let me or our wonderful staff know: we can make arrangements for a FaceTime or Zoom call or a visit.

Please excuse the repetition. Our shared Irish American heritage is rich. We build upon it every day.

Tabhair aire duit féin.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Michael Cornelius Clarke".

Michael Cornelius Clarke

Executive Director



Poem of the Month



This month's poem is "November Night," by Patrick Kavanagh

November striking without mercy.  
Sleet squalls  
Fired from a lampless sky  
A cat calls  
Mournfully to no listening lover  
And I  
Homeless beneath a bush take cover  
From Death's sky.  
This is November and this night  
Shakes free  
Apple and leaf and the last glory  
From every tree  
I might have known long ago  
Her name  
The Woman of eternal summer who  
From the South came.

Patrick Kavanagh (1904–1967) was an Irish poet and novelist, recognized for his depictions of rural life and the Irish landscape. He was born on October 21, 1904, in Inniskeen, County Monaghan, into a farming family. Kavanagh worked as a farmer until he began writing in the 1930s.

His first major work, *Ploughman and Other Poems* (1938), set the stage for his career, but he gained wider recognition with *The Great Hunger* (1940), a long poem about the Irish famine and its social implications. This work reflects his deep understanding of suffering and loss.

Kavanagh is also known for "On Raglan Road," a poem inspired by a love affair, which has been adapted into a popular song by artists like The Dubliners. His novel *Tarry Flynn* (1948) is a semi-autobiographical account of a young man's struggles in rural Ireland.

His poetry often explores themes of nature, solitude, and the complexity of human emotion, marked by a direct and accessible style. Despite battling poverty and health issues, including tuberculosis, Kavanagh became a significant figure in 20th-century Irish literature. He died on November 30, 1967, and his work continues to influence contemporary poets.



Pictured are the five Sullivan brothers (from left to right) Joseph, Francis, Albert, Madison, and George, on Jan. 12, 1942. The five brothers of Irish heritage were killed in a naval battle November 13th, 1942.

As we enter November, a month that holds significance for honoring veterans, we take a moment to reflect on the remarkable contributions of Irish American veterans throughout history. The connection between the United States and Ireland is deeply intertwined through military history. From the American Revolution to today, Irish immigrants and their descendants have played pivotal roles in the U.S. Armed Forces.

Men of Irish heritage played a crucial role in the fight to win the American Revolution, participating in critical battles such as Lexington and Concord, Bunker Hill, Saratoga, and Yorktown. By showing up with their muskets to fight for the patriots they contributed heavily to the victory over British forces.

This level of bravery and loyalty to the United States continued through the Civil War. The Irish Brigade was a unit comprised of Irish immigrants, and they became known for their participation in battles like Antietam and Gettysburg. The brigade's motto was "Faugh a Ballagh," means "Clear the Way" in Irish, which symbolized their fearless approach to combat. In helping the Union win the war, they shaped the future of America and helped start the journey towards equal rights.

Throughout the World Wars, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War, Irish Americans continued to serve with distinction. The legacy of their sacrifices is reflected in countless stories of bravery, resilience, and camaraderie. World War I marked a pivotal moment for Irish Americans, who faced a struggle for identity as discrimination against Irish immigrants festered. Over 200,000 Irish Americans enlisted, all motivated for different reasons. America's allyship with Britain was something they had to grapple with but the fight for democracy and freedom echoed their homeland's struggle for independence. The 69th New York Infantry Regiment, known as the "Fighting 69th," helped solidify Irish Americans' place in America's military history.

World War II further illustrated the dedication of Irish Americans to their country. Approximately 1.5 million Irish Americans served in the military during this conflict, comprising a significant portion of the U.S. forces. They fought bravely in various theaters, from the European campaigns to the Pacific front. They participated in the D-Day invasion, the Battle of the Bulge, and the liberation of concentration camps. The war's aftermath brought about changes for the Irish American community. Many veterans returned home to seek education and employment, taking advantage of the G.I. Bill. Irish Americans were able to more easily integrate into American society and contribute to post-war economic growth.

Today, the contributions of Irish American veterans can be seen in various organizations dedicated to their service. Groups like the Ancient Order of Hibernians and the Irish American War Veterans of the Vietnam War honor and support those who have served, ensuring that their stories are remembered and celebrated.

As we honor our veterans this November, let us not only acknowledge their sacrifices but also recognize the unique cultural heritage they bring to the fabric of American history. Their courage in the face of adversity exemplifies the spirit of resilience that defines both the Irish and American identities.

# November Events

*Unless otherwise noted, speaker events will be on Zoom, or viewed live on [YouTube](#)*



## **November 12th, 6:00 PM: Film Night**

Thanks to the Irish Film Institute, Culture Ireland, and The Arts Council we are able to host an exclusive showing of the movie Verdigris. The movie is about Marian and Jewel, two very different women who form an unlikely bond. Shabby, unfulfilled and recently retired, Marian stumbles upon a job as a census enumerator. She meets teenager Jewel who has been living as a prostitute since her mother abandoned her and the two become reluctant friends. Marian realizes that, with this unlikely ally by her side, she can forge a new and empowering future. Due to the mature themes of the movie it may not be suitable for those under the age of 15. Admission is \$5.

## **November 13th, 5:30 PM: The Ulster Irish in America- ZOOM**



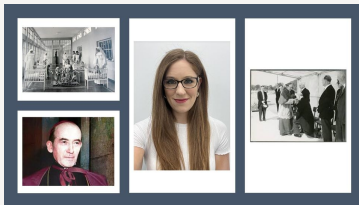
In conjunction with the Irish American Historical Society, join Liam Corry, Curator of Emigration at the National Museums Northern Ireland, as he discusses the lives and stories associated with some of the earliest Irish settlers in America. The Ulster Scots people, also known as the Scots-Irish, are an ethnic group who moved to Ulster, Ireland in the 17th century, and later emigrated to America. The Scots-Irish settled mainly in the middle colonies, particularly Pennsylvania, and later migrated south along the Great Philadelphia Road. [Register for the zoom here.](#)

### **November 15th, 7:00 PM: Gerry O'Connor Concert**



County Louth Fiddle player, Gerry O'Connor, is coming to Albany to perform in the Flanagan Theater at The Irish American Heritage Museum on Friday evening, November 15. The concert is part of a tour of the Northeastern United States with guitarist-fiddle player-singer, Kevin McElroy. [Tickets can be purchased here.](#) \$25 for members and \$30 for non-members.

### **November 20th, 6:00 PM: Ireland's Banished Children: McQuaid and Adoption- ZOOM**



This zoom talk in conjunction with the Irish American Historical Society will discuss the adoption of 'illegitimate' babies from Ireland - often to America - in the mid 20th century. The overseas baby trade was rife in this period. The eventual implementation of state welfare in 1952 was heavily overseen by Archbishop John Charles McQuaid, and its implementation in the latter half of the century offers a prism into the cooperation that existed between Church & State in policy-making in that period, during which thousands more babies were still illegally adopted, despite The Adoption Act. [Register for the zoom here.](#)

### **November 20th, 7:00 PM: Claire Nolan's Georgia O'Keefe Show**



Storyteller Claire Nolan performs her one-woman show, Georgia O'Keefe, at the Irish American Heritage Museum's Flanagan Theater on November 20 at 7 p.m. Tickets are \$10 for members and \$15 for not-yet members, and can be [purchased online here](#) or at the door.

### **November 27th, 11:00 AM: Genealogy Appointments**



Come and discuss your family tree with resident genealogist Lisa Walsh Dougherty. These are by INDIVIDUAL appointment ONLY, there are four 30 minute sessions available- 11am, 11:30am, 12pm, and 12:30pm. [Message her on Facebook by clicking here](#) or email at [lisagene@nycap.rr.com](mailto:lisagene@nycap.rr.com) to secure your space.

### **November 30th, 10:30 AM: Christmas**



The Irish American Heritage Museum's  
**Annual Christmas Market**  
Saturday, Nov 30th, 2024  
10:30 AM - 3:00 PM  
Celtic Hall  
430 New Karner Road  
Albany, NY 12205

Vendors for all your gift giving needs!

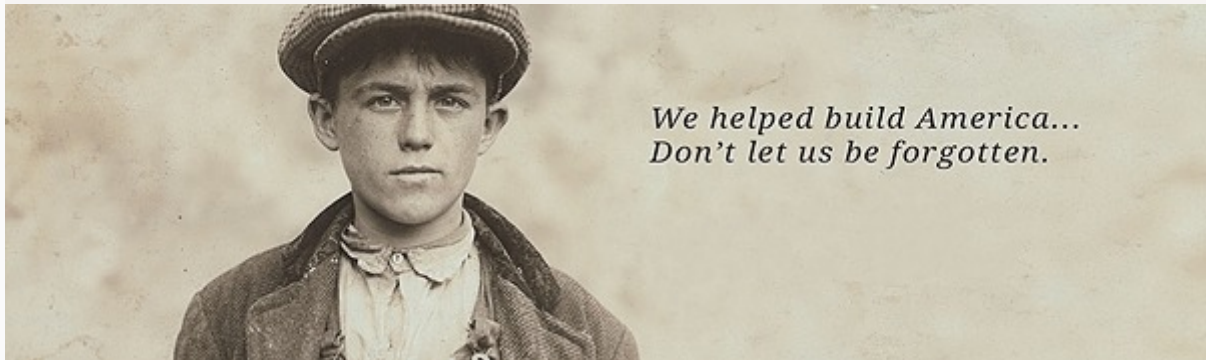
Live music and refreshments



## Market

We are having our annual Christmas Market this year at Celtic Hall. We would love to see you there to not only support us, but the small businesses that come out to sell their goods. It's the perfect opportunity to get some early gift shopping done. Bring your family from out of town!

We are still accepting vendors, if you are interested in a table [please fill out this form here](#).



*We helped build America...  
Don't let us be forgotten.*

## Support the Museum

We are very grateful to all of our members and supporters. We love what we do here in the museum, and we hope you do too. We are delighted with the progress that we have made over the last few years, despite Covid and other setbacks.

We hope you'll help us continue to build and grow our mission, by making as generous a gift as you can.

Please click the button below to donate. Thank you!

Donate Today





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