
MOHAWK VALLEY IRISH CULTURAL EVENTS NEWSLETTER

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Eileen Ivers and Immigrant Soul Comes to the Stanley

The fabulous Eileen Ivers – called "...the Jimi Hendrix of the violin" – will be bringing her electrifying show to the Stanley Theater, on January 11th, 2007, as part of the Munson Williams Proctor Institute's Great Artist Series. From her star musical turn in *Riverdance* to her 30-plus medals in the All-Ireland Championships, with a pedigree that includes being a charter member of Cherish the Ladies, Eileen Ivers will change the way you think about the violin. Joining her in her return to central New York will be the ensemble she assembled in 1999, Immigrant Soul. This exceptional six-piece ensemble bridges the gap between their Celtic roots with styles ranging from jazz and salsa to African and flamenco, with a signature sound that holds true to the heart of Irish music while embracing the multiculturalism of American life. Tickets for the 8 PM show range from \$15-\$65. For more information, visit <http://mwpai.org/>.



Commemorative Bricks Placed at AOH Hunger Strike Memorial



On Saturday, December 16th, the John C. Devereux Division of the Ancient Order of Hibernians held a re-dedication of the AOH Memorial, which stands in front of Our Lady of Lourdes Church at 2222 Genesee Street in Utica. The Memorial commemorates Ireland's Hunger Strike of 1981, and the sacrifices of the ten brave men who gave their lives for the cause of Irish Freedom. The ceremony, which included the placement of a commemorative brick for each of the ten martyrs and an 11th interpretive brick so that the community might understand what they gave their lives for, featured AOH members who spoke on the Hunger Strike. Taking place at a British prison camp in Ireland known as Long Kesh, where Bobby Sands and nine others lost

their lives, the hunger strike turned the eyes of the world toward Ireland's struggle for freedom, while also highlighting the conditions that Irish nationalist communities were living in, both inside and outside the prison camp. (See also MVICE Vol 3, Issue 5, May 2006 for a more detailed article).

The Ancient Order of Hibernians is a nationwide group whose goals include promoting Irish culture as well as fostering the ideals and perpetuating the history and traditions of the Irish people. The local AOH division is currently accepting applications for membership. Call John at (315) 768-2347 for more info.

Book Review:
“The Great Shame”
Submitted by Mark Sisti

If you're looking for a nice, light read to curl up with in front of a fireplace on a cold winter night, *The Great Shame* by Booker-prize winning novelist Thomas Keneally is probably not your best choice. If, however, you are willing to invest the time necessary, you'll be well rewarded by this massive account of the Irish Diaspora of the 19th century. It is the story, not just of the scattering of the Irish throughout the world, but of what they made of their lives in these new lands and how they were able to survive and, in some cases, thrive in their adopted countries.

During the mid to late 19th century, the population of Ireland was cut almost in half due to famine, emigration and penal expulsions. While the Great Famine and the resulting emigrations have been written about extensively, the forced transportation of Irish prisoners to Australia and the surrounding environs has not been dealt with to this extent previously, and the tale Keneally tells of this chapter in the turbulent history of the Irish and the English is absorbing.

Keneally – best known for his epic *Schindler's List* – tells the story (or rather, lets the story unfold) in two parts. Book I follows a member of Keneally's own family tree, Hugh Larkin, who was "transported" from Ireland in the 1830's for his acts as a "Ribbonman" and ultimately earns his freedom and the opportunity to build a new life in a new land. At the same time Keneally traces the development of the Young Ireland movement, a group of Irish statesmen who led the fight for Irish independence in the mid-1800's, and whose colorful ranks included inflammatory writer and editor John Mitchell, the stubborn, willful idealist William Smith O'Brien, and future American Civil War hero Thomas Francis Meagher.

Book II largely focuses on Meagher's escape from the penal colony to the U.S., where he commanded the Union's famed Irish Brigade, and the simultaneous establishment of his Young Ireland companion and fellow escapee John Mitchell as a cornerstone of the Confederacy. Keneally makes no attempt to reconcile the contradictions in these powerful personalities, and that's what makes his portraits of them so compelling. Mitchell, for example, saw no incongruity in his fiery advocacy of freedom for the Irish and his staunch defense of the institution of slavery; while Meagher, despite his passion for Irish independence, was unable to see any parallels between the domination of Ireland by foreign invaders and the treatment of the Native Americans in his adopted homeland. These inconsistencies and imperfections make these men emerge as flesh and blood, not as characters on a page.

Keneally also chronicles the rise of the Fenian movement, a movement that included among its members the fascinating John Boyle O'Reilly, as well as another of Keneally's ancestors, John Kenealy. While Keneally's research is meticulous and impressive, it is this human aspect of the history that makes the story come alive, from the inclusion of his own family members to the multidimensional portrayals of the major players in the fight for Irish independence.

The full title of the book is *The Great Shame: And The Triumph Of The Irish In The English -Speaking World*, and the full title is important because, ultimately, the story is one of triumph and not of shame, or at least, not on the part of the Irish in the story. Keneally explains the use of the word "shame" in the title as referring not just to the "misgovernment of Ireland by English rule" but also as referring to a sense of shame in the Irish themselves that he likens to the survivors of the Holocaust, an irrational shame for having survived, coupled with "the shame of being rendered less than human by cataclysm." This conclusion may be the only time in the book that Keneally is inaccurate, because that's far from the feeling derived from having met these diverse characters. Instead it is their overwhelming and indomitable humanity that shines through, as we see not just how the outside world affected the Irish but also how the Irish changed the world.

From the Irish Kitchen (*recipes suitable for clipping*)

Easy Shepherd's Pie – *presented by Al Sisti*

This recipe was stol... adapted from “Simply Recipes” (www.simplyrecipes.com).

Shepherd's Pie is an English dish, traditionally made with lamb or mutton. Americans typically make Shepherd's Pie with beef. The English (and Australians and New Zealanders) call the beef dish a “cottage pie.” Naming conventions aside, Shepherd's Pie is essentially a casserole, lined with cooked meat and vegetables, topped with mashed potatoes, and baked.



Here is a basic recipe for a simple ground beef Shepherd's Pie. I also found it to be a very flexible, forgiving recipe, not strictly tied to specific ingredients or quantities. For example, I substituted Chicken Stock for “Beef broth,” creamed corn for “chopped carrots, corn, peas,” and “drink beer” for “salt to taste.”

Ingredients:

1 1/2 lbs ground round beef	8 tablespoons butter (1 stick)
1 onion chopped	1/2 cup beef broth
1-2 cups vegetables - chopped carrots, corn, peas	1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
1 1/2 - 2 lbs potatoes (3 big ones)	Salt, pepper, other seasonings of choice

Instructions

- 1 Peel and quarter potatoes, boil in salted water until tender (about 20 minutes).
- 2 While the potatoes are cooking, melt 4 Tablespoons butter (1/2 a stick) in large frying pan.
- 3 Sauté onions in butter until tender over medium heat (10 mins). If you are adding vegetables, add them according to cooking time. Put any carrots in with the onions. Add corn or peas either at the end of the cooking of the onions, or after the meat has initially cooked.
- 4 Add ground beef and sauté until no longer pink. Add salt and pepper. Add Worcestershire sauce. Add half a cup of beef broth and cook, uncovered, over low heat for 10 minutes, adding more beef broth as necessary to keep moist.
- 5 Mash potatoes in bowl with remainder of butter, season to taste.
- 6 Place beef and onions in baking dish. Distribute mashed potatoes on top. Rough up with a fork so that there are peaks that will brown nicely. You can use the fork to make some designs in the potatoes as well.
- 7 Cook in 400 degree oven until bubbling and brown (about 30 minutes). Broil for last few minutes if necessary to brown.

Serves four.

Feel free to let us know how it comes out... and especially if it really makes a difference to “salt to taste.”

Discounted Great American Irish Festival Weekend Passes still on sale

For a limited time, the Great American Irish Festival will continue to offer discounted three day passes to the July 27-29 Festival for just \$20. Festival Director Matt Sullivan says, "Our booking department is promising the best lineup yet. With three days of entertainment, there is sure to be something for everyone! Where else can you get three days of world class entertainment for only \$20? This is a great value, and the lowest price that will be offered for the 4th annual fest - don't pass it up!" Children under 13 are FREE. Ordering could not be easier. Just click on the Click N Print link on the main page of the Great American Irish Festival web site (www.greatamericanirishfestival.com). You can purchase your tickets and print them out at home.

Stanley Theater to host "Lord of the Dance"

"Lord of the Dance," the world's highest-grossing dance performance, returns to the Stanley Theater on February 8th, 2007 at 8 PM. "Lord of the Dance" is the theatrical extravaganza that has helped catapult Irish dancing into the global spotlight. The show features more than 40 dancers who deliver an eloquent and stunning interpretation of one of Ireland's most famous legends. It has been the highest grossing dance show in the world since it began in 1996 (from www.lordofthedance.com). Tickets for the event, which range from \$22.50 to \$47.50, are available at the Stanley Box Office (724-4000) or at Ticketmaster outlets.

Calling all GAIF '06 volunteers!! In case you didn't get the invitation from the festival organizers, this serves as a reminder of the "Halfway to GAIF Hooley," the festival's way of saying "thank you" to the hundreds of tireless volunteers who helped make the Great American Irish Festival the fastest growing Irish festival in the land. The Hooley – free to volunteers of the 2006 festival (don't you wish now you'd volunteered? Doesn't it make you want to sign up to help at this year's event?) – takes place from 2-6 PM on January 28th at Valentino's in Washington Mills, with entertainment being provided by the incredible **Glengarry Bhoys**, along with **Cliudan** and the **Butler-Sheehan School of Irish Dance**. Festival Director Matt Sullivan says "This will be an opportunity to express our sincere thanks to our many volunteers, sponsors and other festival supporters, but it will be more than that. As it is exactly six months prior to the fastest growing Irish event in the U.S., it will also provide the perfect opportunity to announce the headline performers for 2007." But you'd better not tarry; since the invitation is being extended to all the volunteers, sponsors and other dignitaries, and the organizers need to get a handle on the size of the crowd, reservations are required. In order to ensure a spot, please contact Lynn Kent at mlkent@stny.rr.com by January 14, 2007.



RANDOM RAMBLINGS

- ❁ Mark the date January 12th on your calendar... that's when Jim Simpson will be at Piggy Pat's to announce this year's Parade Grand Marshall. This marks the first year the announcement will be held at Piggy Pat's, who garnered the honor by having the best tavern division float in last year's parade. The announcement will take place during the Irish Happy Hour.
- ❁ Looking ahead, Irish singer-songwriter **Paul Brady** will be appearing at the Egg (February 9th)... Authors **Frank McCourt** (Angela's Ashes), and his brother, actor/author **Malachy McCourt** appear in "A Couple of Blagards" at Munson Williams (Mar 23-25)...the **Irish Rovers** are coming back to the Turning Stone (March 17th)... and, oh yeah, an outfit calling themselves **The Chieftains** will be coming to Proctor Theater in Schenectady, on March 14th. Finally, the "...highly acclaimed celebration of Irish music, song and dance" known as "**Riverdance**" comes to the Crouse-Hinds Theater Mulroy Civic Center at Oncenter, from March 20-22, 2007. Stay tuned for more details on these and other events.

Celtic Club Calendar Finally, here's the Irish Musical and Cultural calendar for January:

Jan 5	Blarney Rebel Band	Piggy Pat's Pickled Pig Pub	Washington Mills	5-8:30 PM	Free
Jan 5	Donal O'Shaughnessey	Kitty Hoynes	Syracuse	9:00 PM	Free
Jan 6	Pat Kane	Kitty Hoynes	Syracuse	9:00 PM	Free
Jan 7	Syracuse Irish Session	HalfPenny Pub	Syracuse	4-7 PM	Free
Jan 11	Eileen Ivers and Immigrant Soul	Stanley Theater	Utica	8:00 PM	\$15-65
Jan 12-13	Jeff Phillips	Kitty Hoynes	Syracuse	9:00 PM	Free
Jan 12	Blarney Rebel Band, and St Patrick's Day Parade Grand Marshall Announcement	Piggy Pat's Pickled Pig Pub	Washington Mills	5-8:30 PM	Free
Jan 13	Cliudan	Glory Days	Herkimer	9:00 PM	TBD
Jan 14	Cliudan	Coleman's	Syracuse	4:00 PM	Free
Jan 19	DJ Corey Cobain	Piggy Pat's Pickled Pig Pub	Washington Mills	5-8:30 PM	Free
Jan 21	Syracuse Irish Session	Johnston's Bally Bay Pub	Syracuse	4-7 PM	Free
Jan 21	Donal O'Shaughnessey	Coleman's	Syracuse	4:00 PM	Free
Jan 26	Donal O'Shaughnessey	Piggy Pat's Pickled Pig Pub	Washington Mills	5-8:30 PM	Free
Jan 26	Cliudan	Kitty Hoynes	Syracuse	9:00 PM	Free
Jan 26	Battlefield Band	Night Eagle Café	Oxford	8:00 PM	\$25
Jan 27	Seanache	Kitty Hoynes	Syracuse	9:00 PM	Free
Jan 28	Flyin' Column	Coleman's	Syracuse	4:00 PM	Free
Jan 28	"Halfway to GAIF Hooley" featuring the Glengarry Bhoys, Cliudan and the Butler-Sheehan School of Irish Dance	Valentino's Banquet Hall	Washington Mills	2-6 PM	Free for GAIF '06 volunteers; \$10 for others (reservations required)

That wraps it up for this month. Next month's issue is going to be a biggie, with an announcement of the first batch of headliners and performers at this summer's Great American Irish Festival (believe me, you couldn't take it if we gave you the whole list all at once...and as a hint, you've already seen a couple of the names within this newsletter!!!), an article on this year's selection for St. Patrick's Day Parade Grand Marshall, and a brief biographical piece on one of the most revered and influential Irishmen to ever come out of Utica. Who could we be talking about? Is your interest piqued? Of course it is... so make sure you leave a few bytes open in your inbox for us around the beginning of February. In the meantime, if you have anything you want to add, feel free to contact us at sistia@adelphia.net, bloftis@verizon.net or marksisti@adelphia.net.