
MOHAWK VALLEY IRISH CULTURAL EVENTS NEWSLETTER

Volume 5, Issue 1

January 2008

Utica Irish Cultural Center Celebrates Return to “Sacred Ground”

IN the early-to-mid 1800s, Utica’s new Irish population yearned for a Roman Catholic parish and church they could call their own. In 1850, their dreams and hard work resulted in the construction of St. Patrick’s Roman Catholic Church; the first Irish Catholic church ever established in this area. The church, a brick structure, with a slate roof and a wooden steeple, was located at the corner of Columbia and Huntington Streets, and served Irish immigrants and first-generation Irish-Americans alike, until it was closed in 1887 by its pastor and owner, Father Carabar for financial reasons; whereupon parishioners convened in temporary quarters elsewhere in the city. Two years later, on Nov. 8, 1889, a fire destroyed the original church. However, within five years a new, larger church was built on the exact site, capable of accommodating 800 people. In addition to the resurrected St. Patrick’s church, there was also a school capable of accommodating 300 students, a garage, and a convent constructed on the site. Sunday services, weddings, funerals and other ceremonies continued unabated at that location until the mid-1960s, when a decision was made by the Syracuse Diocese to consolidate St. Patrick’s with St. Joseph’s Church across the street, and the last mass was held at St. Patrick’s on August 28, 1966. Not long afterward, the city expressed a desire to build a West Side fire house on the site, and in October of 1968, the parish paid to have the St. Patrick’s property demolished to clear the way for this project.

Fast forward nearly 40 years... On Wednesday, December 5th, in what must have seemed to locals like an overnight turn of events, but in actuality represented the culmination of five years of discussions, planning -- and even a bit of dreaming -- the Great American Irish Festival, Inc. had their proposal for construction of the Utica Irish Cultural Center unanimously approved by the Utica Common Council. After nearly as long a period of inactivity as that experienced by Utica’s original Irish population, the Irish Cultural Center -- a fresh new symbol of Irish tradition, heritage, pride and old-fashioned resolve -- will be built exactly on the site of the original St. Patrick’s Church; rightfully revered as “sacred ground” by Utica’s Irish population.

The Elders to Take the Stage at Rome’s Capitol Theater

This is the last reminder to get your tickets to hear the hottest Celtic Rock band in the world, **The Elders**, who will be coming back to the area for the first time since they lit up the stage with five incredible sets at the Great American Irish Festival last July. If you were at the festival, you probably have already rushed out to get your tickets for the January 12th show at the Capitol Theatre in Rome. If you haven’t seen them yet... well you’ll just have to trust us when we say “This is a show you definitely don’t want to miss.” And if you miss it this time, someone will be telling you “You shoulda been there.” Trust us. Tickets for the 7 PM show, which is presented by Rome Weed & Seed, are available at Accents of Ireland, New Hartford Shopping Center; Gary’s Music in Rome; Rome Federal Credit Union; Rome YMCA; Oneida YMCA, and online at www.ymcatrivalley.org. General admission tickets are \$20 in advance, \$15 for students and seniors and \$25 at the door. Proceeds from this concert will go towards Rome Weed & Seed’s “Prudy Ellinger Scholarship Fund,” which was established in memory of one of Weed & Seed’s founding members. The scholarship fund is designed to benefit a local youth who wishes to further his or her education.

The concert will also include a performance from the YMCA Center for the Creative Arts, as well as a performance by dancers from the Butler-Sheehan Academy of Irish Dance.

Book Review:
“The Color of Blood”
Submitted by Mark Sisti

In this newsletter’s review of Declan Hughes’ debut novel, “The Wrong Kind of Blood,” published in the September 2006 issue, a not-so-bold prediction was made that this would not be the last we see of private detective Ed Loy. Well, shock of shocks, Loy is back in the second book featuring the Dublin detective, “The Color of Blood.”

This time, Loy, still getting acclimated to the new Dublin after his return from Los Angeles, is hired by a member of a prominent Dublin family to locate his teenage daughter Emily, who may or may not have been kidnapped. In fact, she may or may not even be missing. In fact, she may or may not be his daughter. In this book, few things are as they appear on the surface.

Loy locates the daughter very quickly, but, instead of bringing about a resolution, her return only deepens the mystery. In no time at all, Loy finds himself embroiled in blackmail, pornography, incest, sexual slavery, and several murders, some decades old.

As is the case with much Irish fiction, the story of the present can’t be disentangled from the stories of the past, and to get at the heart of what’s happening now, Loy has to unravel events that happened thirty years previous. Even after he has accomplished what he was hired to do, Loy finds himself compelled to stay on board to try to redeem the dysfunctional Howard family. In particular, Loy, who was unable to save his own daughter, wants to save the troubled Emily. In order to do this, he must resolve the many mysteries of the family’s past and the pasts of those around them. Unfortunately, he finds it may be too late for either rescue or redemption; in fact it may have always been too late.

Once again Hughes shows his strength in his use of dialogue and his ability to make the gritty streets of Dublin come alive for the reader. In much the same way as Gene Kerrigan’s “The Midnight Choir” (reviewed in the September 2007 issue of this newsletter) Hughes makes it clear that the economic rebirth evident in the new Dublin carries its darker aspects as well, with its seamy underside always just below the surface.

This novel is not without flaws. When you encounter a scene where the hero gets beaten about the head with a baseball bat and continues on unscathed a few pages later, you can only assume that the author has never been hit with a baseball bat; I have to believe the recovery period might be a little more extensive. And a little note to hard-boiled fiction writers: there is no literary law that says your protagonist must have sex with one of your other characters, particularly when it makes no sense and adds nothing to the plot or to character development.

As noted in the earlier review, the first Loy novel suffered from a bit of a convoluted plot, with far too many characters and far too many different generational threads woven together, and this book shares that problem. Reading this book is sometimes like trying to untangle those Christmas lights you put away last year. The author also tries to wrap everything up a little too neatly by simply shoveling characters into a convenient funereal conflagration (which I point out just to use the phrase “funereal conflagration.”) Still, for all its faults, this book fulfills the promise made in “The Wrong Kind of Blood.” In some odd way the novel has overtones of Faulkner’s Southern gothic novels (thematically if not stylistically), with its intermingled families, sexual dysfunction and upper class decay. (Although maybe that’s not so odd; we tend to forget that Faulkner was also a mystery writer and wrote the screenplay to “The Big Sleep”, which this novel resembles in many ways.) While Hughes still has not written the great Irish detective novel, he has written another pretty good one. Once again, one suspects that he’ll get another shot at it before long.

“Halfway to GAIF Hooley” Tickets to go on Sale to the Public

As we reported last month, the Great American Irish Festival is hosting a “Halfway to GAIF Hooley” event on Sunday, January 27, 2008 from 3:00 to 7:00 PM, at Harts Hill Inn in Whitesboro. This party – a well-deserved respite from winter weather, Christmas shopping and fruitcakes – will serve several purposes (like we need more than one?). First and foremost, it is an opportunity for the festival leadership and committee to express their sincere thanks to the many volunteers, sponsors and other festival supporters...but it will be more than that. As it is exactly six months prior to the next festival, it will provide the perfect opportunity to announce the headline performers for 2008. And, if those weren't enough reasons to attend, with the GAIF now being in charge of the St. Patrick's Day Parade, the Hooley – being the largest collection of Irishmen in Utica since July's festival and until the March 15th parade – is the perfect venue for the announcement of the selection of the St. Patrick's Day Parade Grand Marshall. There will be a complimentary buffet and beer (with a cash bar for other potables), and topping it all off, the party features musical entertainment; with international headliners and perennial GAIF favorites **The Prodigals**, with opening act, the area's own **Blarney Rebel Band**. How could this be any better? How about... inviting the general public! That's right, from January 14th-21st, a limited number of \$20 tickets will be made available for sale to the public, at Accents of Ireland in the New Hartford Shopping Center. I hope you noticed the attention-grabbing underline there... these tickets – what few will remain after the original invitees lay claim to them – will not last long. And for those original invitees – the volunteers, sponsors and dignitaries – remember: Being invited is not enough. You must still let the party planners know whether or not you plan to make it. (Oooh! There's another underline; I'll bet that's important!). To that end, it is very important that you contact event coordinator Kate Barefoot, at kfbare@yahoo.com, by January 13, 2008, to let her know your intent. If you do not call, it's entirely possible that you may end up outside looking in. Why risk it? Call today. And again, for the rest of you, mark your calendar for January 14-21, and (legally) race to Accents of Ireland and claim one of these hot tickets for yourself.

Next St. Patrick's Day Parade Meeting Scheduled for Jan. 7th

The next organizational meeting will be held on Monday, January 7th at 6:30 p.m. for all those interested in helping to plan Utica's 2008 St. Patrick's Day Parade. The meeting will be held at the Maennerchor on Flanagan Rd. in Marcy. This year will mark the first year the Great American Irish Festival will serve as organizer and presenter of the Utica St. Patrick's Day Parade, which had been ably run for many years by the Cable Cares Club. Last year's parade, the third largest in New York State, featured over 120 entries and Parade Committee Chairman Charley Thomas – a former Parade Grand Marshall himself – expects this year's event to be even bigger and better. The 2008 St. Patrick's Day Parade is scheduled for Saturday, March 15, starting at 10:00 am at Oneida Square, traveling north on Genesee St. to Columbia Street, with the Reviewing Stand once again located at the Stanley Theater. For more information on the St. Patrick's Day Parade or the January 7th meeting, contact Charley Thomas at (315) 796-9916.

“Celtic Evening At The Castle”

The Cortland Celtic Cultural Association invites you to a “Celtic Evening at the Castle” on January 19th from 6:00 pm to 8:30 pm at the 1890 House, 37 Tompkins Street in Cortland, New York. The snow date is Feb 2nd. Join us for an evening filled with Celtic delicacies, music and dance, all for a good cause, to support the 2008 Cortland Celtic Festival. Entertainment will feature local musician, Marty Brandon. Highlighting the evening will be the “Address to the Haggis.” Tickets are \$20 per person and can be purchased in advance at the following locations: Cortland Youth Bureau, Jodi's Hallmark, Sheridan's Fine Jewelry, the 1890 House, and online at www.cortlandcelticfestival.org. Seating is limited. Buy your tickets early and you'll be entered in a special drawing to be held at the event. For more information, please contact the Cortland Youth Bureau at (607) 753-3021.

From the Irish Kitchen (recipes suitable for clipping)

This month's recipe – "Irish Corned Beef Casserole Dip" [from <http://www.fooddowntounder.com>]

INGREDIENTS:

1 lb deli corned beef, shaved or sliced very thin
1/2 cup Thousand Island salad dressing
1 cup sauerkraut, well drained, squeeze out as much moisture as possible
1/2 lb Swiss cheese, grated
Rye crackers or party rye bread slices

PREPARATION:

Crumble the corned beef into a well greased 9 x 12 glass baking dish. Spread the dressing over the corned beef. Spread the sauerkraut over the dressing. Cover with the grated cheese. Bake at 350 degrees until hot and bubbly (the dish, not you). Serve with the party rye bread or rye crackers. This may also be heated in a micro-wave, just watch it carefully.

If you try this recipe, feel free to share your experience with all of us; and of course, if you have a recipe you'd like to share, please contact Beth Loftis at bloftis@verizon.net.

An Irish Blessing for the New Year We received an email from Pat McCann, owner and proprietor of Piggy Pat's in Washington Mills, and one of the area's staunchest supporters and promoters of all things Irish in the area. In this email was a link to a slideshow, with a beautiful Irish Blessing presented over splendorous scenes of the Irish countryside, set to the haunting whistle of Cherish the Ladies' Joannie Madden. The slideshow can be found at http://www.e-water.net/viewflash.php?flash=irishblessing_en, but in case you can't get to it (their server has been, not surprisingly, swamped), here is the text of the blessing:

Irish Blessing (author unknown)

**I wish you not a path devoid of clouds,
Nor a life on a bed of roses,
Not that you might never need regret,
Nor that you should never feel pain.
No, that is not my wish for you.**

**My wish for you is:
That you might be brave in times of trial,
When others lay crosses upon your shoulders,
When mountains must be climbed
And chasms are to be crossed;
When hope scarce can shine through.**

**That every gift God gave you might grow along with you,
And let you give the gift of joy to all who care for you.
That you may always have a friend who is worth that name;
Whom you can trust, and who helps you in times of sadness,
Who will defy the storms of daily life at your side.**

**One more wish I have for you:
That in every hour of joy and pain you may feel God close to you.
This is my wish for you, and for all who care for you.
This is my hope for you,
Now and forever.**

RANDOM RAMBLINGS

- ✚ **Win a vacation in Ireland** If you're anxious to visit Ireland – and if you just watched that Irish Blessing slideshow, you more than likely are -- the Committee for the Restoration and Preservation of St Mary's Church in Florence New York has put together a terrific opportunity for you. That's right, for a mere \$100, you can purchase one of only 400 tickets to be sold for a chance to win an Ireland vacation! Imagine, a one-in-400 chance to spend 7 nights (May 4-11, 2008) in one of the beautiful Galway Bay Cottages AND \$1500.00 for airfare. You can purchase a ticket by sending your check payable to "St Mary's Church" to: Dorothy Fey, 9180 Bones Road, Taberg NY 13471; please annotate on the check "Ireland Vacation." Your ticket will be mailed upon receipt of your payment. The winner will be drawn on February 16, 2008, and the winner need not be present.
- ✚ **Duos to Perform at Kirkland Art Center in concert** On January 11 at 8 pm, the Kirkland Art Center (East Park Row, Clinton) welcomes in two popular duos, John Kirk & Trish Miller and Sara Milonovich & Greg Anderson. Handling with alacrity everything from sentimental and humorous folk songs to inspired instrumentals, John's top-notch fiddle and sterling vocals mix with Trish's championship footwork. Making a welcome return to the area, award-winning fiddler Sara is joined by masterful multi-instrumentalist Greg, on guitar and bouzouki, to perform a mix of fiery Celtic and American instrumentals with emotive vocals. Tickets are \$15 for KAC members and \$18 for general admission. Call 853-8871 for ticket information.
- ✚ **Hokes inducted into the Comholtas Hall of Fame** Mike and Chris Hoke of Holland Patent were recently inducted into the Comholtas Ceoltoiri Eireann Northeast Region Hall of Fame. Comholtas is an international organization that promotes Irish music, culture, dance, language and storytelling. Mike and Chris have worked for their Craobh Dugan branch for about 30 years. In 1978, Chris helped found the branch, and Mike joined the branch in 1980. Their induction, with that of colleagues Tom Carville (2000), Kate (McDonough) Hill (2003) and most recently, Jim O'Looney (2006), is a testament to the respect afforded to the Craobh Dugan branch by their peers throughout the Northeast Region. Congratulations Mike and Chris!
- ✚ **Cortland Celtic Festival Calendars Going Fast!** Enjoy the Celtic spirit all year long with your own Celtic Calendar, a yearly fundraiser for the Cortland Celtic Cultural Association, thanks to the generosity of local photographer, Tom Haskell. Each year since 2004, Tom has photographed the Cortland Celtic festival in August, and these beautiful photos highlight each page of this one-of-a-kind calendar. This year, an added bonus is the section on Celtic cuisine, and Gaelic sayings with their translations on each page. Sure to be a treasure even after 2008 is over, the calendars are moving off the shelves quickly. Locations in Cortland include: Jodi's Hallmark, Mando Books, Sheridan's Fine Jewelry, Carbon Copies and the Cortland Youth Bureau. The calendar can also be purchased on the festival web site: www.cortlandcelticfestival.org. Be sure to pick yours up today!
- ✚ **Looking Ahead** There's lots of good stuff coming up in the next few months, including -- dare I dream? -- Spring? First, on February 8th, the legendary Scottish traditional band, **Old Blind Dogs**, will be appearing at the Kirkland Art Center in Clinton for a rare area appearance; you may recall they performed at the Great American Irish Festival in 2006... Celtic harpist and "spoken word artist" **Patrick Ball** will be making a few area appearances in March 2008, including at the Night Eagle Café on March 22nd... Lunasa will also stopping by the Café on March 9th... On January 26th, **MacTalla Mór Celtic Roots Band** will be performing at a Holy Family Irish Hooley in Syracuse. Details are sketchy on that event, although I can tell you that they'll be closer in June, when they're scheduled to play the Rome Art Concert in Rome, NY...The world-class **Trinity Irish Dance Company**, described as "Impossibly complex" by the *New York Times*, will be coming to the Egg in Albany, on February 24th...

On March 7th, fiery fiddler and step-dancer **April Verch** comes to Syracuse as part of the long-running Folkus Project, and she'll be back in April, performing at the Kirkland Art Center on April 25th...Finally, the fabulous multitalented family band from north of the border – **Leahy** -- will be at Proctor's Theater in Schenectady on March 14th. Sounds like a fine way to bring in St. Patrick's Day weekend.

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

Jan 4	Donal O'Shaughnessy	Piggy Pat's Pickled Pig Pub	Washington Mills	6-9 PM	Free
Jan 4	Cliudan	Kitty Hoynes	Syracuse	9 PM	Free
Jan 5	Pat Kane	Kitty Hoynes	Syracuse	9 PM	Free
Jan 6	Syracuse Irish Session	HalfPenny Pub	Syracuse	4-7 PM	Free
Jan 6	Pat Kane	Coleman's Irish Pub	Syracuse	4-7 PM	Free
Jan 11	Blarney Rebel Band	Piggy Pat's Pickled Pig Pub	Washington Mills	6-9 PM	Free
Jan 11	John Kirk & Trish Miller, Greg Anderson & Sara Milonovich	Kirkland Art Center	Clinton	8 PM	KAC members \$15; General Admission \$18
Jan 12	Rome Weed & Seed Presents: The Elders in Concert	Capitol Theater	Rome	7 PM	\$20 – adv., \$15 students/seniors, \$25 at the door
Jan 12	Traditional Irish Session	Kitty Hoynes	Syracuse	2-5 PM	Free
Jan 13	Syracuse Irish Session	Johnston's Bally Bay Pub	Syracuse	4-7 PM	Free
Jan 17	Syracuse Parade Grand Marshall Announcement	Kitty Hoynes	Syracuse	10 AM	Free
Jan 18	Blarney Rebel Band	Piggy Pat's Pickled Pig Pub	Washington Mills	6-9 PM	Free
Jan 18	Donal O'Shaughnessy	Kitty Hoynes	Syracuse	9 PM	Free
Jan 20	Cliudan	Coleman's Irish Pub	Syracuse	4-7 PM	Free
Jan 25	Blarney Rebel Band	Piggy Pat's Pickled Pig Pub	Washington Mills	6-9 PM	Free
Jan 25	Old Friends	Kitty Hoynes	Syracuse	9 PM	Free
Jan 26	Traditional Irish Session	Kitty Hoynes	Syracuse	2-5 PM	Free
Jan 26	Kevin McKrell	Kitty Hoynes	Syracuse	9 PM	Free
Jan 27	Flyin' Column	Coleman's Irish Pub	Syracuse	4-7 PM	Free
Jan 27	Halfway to GAIF Hooley w/ Prodigals and Blarney Rebel Band	Hart's Hill Inn	Whitesboro	3-7 PM	Free for GAIF volunteers; \$20 for public

That wraps it up for this month. If you have anything you want to add, feel free to contact us at sistia@adelphia.net, bloftis@verizon.net or marksisti@adelphia.net. Finally, from our homes to yours, we would like to say (but can't, without the pronunciation guide that follows): "*Athbhliain faoi Mhaise Daoibh*" (pronounced AH vlee-ihn fwee WAH-shuh gHeev); literally: "You have a Prosperous New Year."