
MOHAWK VALLEY IRISH CULTURAL EVENTS NEWSLETTER

Volume 5, Issue 2

February 2008

Cherish The Ladies Return to Headline 2008 Great American Irish Festival

The Great American Irish Festival has invited some old friends to help celebrate its 5th anniversary.

The 2008 Great American Irish Festival will be held on Friday, July 25, Saturday, July 26 and Sunday, July 27 at the Herkimer County Fairgrounds in Frankfort, and returning for the first time since the inaugural festival will be the most successful and sought-after Irish-American act in Celtic music history, Cherish The Ladies.

“We’re very excited about this year’s lineup,” said Festival Director Matthew Sullivan. “We’re bringing back old favorites and introducing our audience to new acts. With three days of non-stop entertainment, there is sure to be something for everyone. You don’t have to be Irish to have a good time at the Great American Irish Festival.”

Festival-goers have an opportunity to make it an even bigger bargain, as a limited number of advance-sale tickets are available now for \$20 for the entire three-day festival, and once those tickets are gone, that price won’t come around again. “This is a great value, and the lowest price that will be offered for this year’s festival,” noted Assistant Festival Director Kevin Dowling. “You don’t want to pass it up.”

Also returning this year will be the Irish Mass to be held at 10:30 on Sunday morning. Last year’s mass was very heavily attended, so mass-goers will want to arrive early. But even with the culture and the history, for many of the festival attendees, the focus is on the music, and once again they will not be disappointed.

Headlining this year’s festival will be Cherish The Ladies, who helped catapult the Great American Irish Festival to its position as one of the preeminent Irish events in the world with their appearance in 2004. Organized by folklorist/musician Mick Moloney, they began as a concert series featuring the brightest lights in Irish traditional music. Though initially the group won recognition as the first and only all-women traditional Irish band, they soon established themselves as musicians and performers without peer and have won over millions of listeners and fans of their music.

Making it a reunion of sorts will be an artist who has been called the Jimi Hendrix of the violin, Eileen Ivers, who was an original member of Cherish the Ladies, one of the highlights of a career that includes a stint with the original Riverdance Company as well as the garnering of nine All-Ireland fiddle championships, a tenth on tenor banjo and over 30 championship medals. Ivers, who performed at the 2007 GAIF will return with her all-star band, Immigrant Soul.

In addition to these luminaries, festival-goers will also enjoy such world-class acts as The Prodigals, the most successful act ever to emerge from the thriving East Coast Irish rock scene; Enter the Haggis, recently featured on A&E Network’s Emmy-nominated Breakfast With The Arts series; the Midwest’s top Irish band and the undisputed hit of last year’s festival, The Elders; Hair of the Dog, who has been called America’s top Irish folk act; the exciting and award-winning David Munnely Band; the wildly popular Canadian family

band, the Barra McNeils, and festival favorites Rathkeltair and Greenwich Meantime. The festival will also feature Irish dance and music demonstrations and workshops, numerous sporting events, Irish history and culture seminars, and a variety of other local and regional performers, including Central New York's most popular Irish performers, The Blarney Rebel Band, Rattlin' Bog and Vince Colgan.

In addition to the non-stop music, merchandise vendors from across the U.S. and Ireland, carefully selected from a list of applicants, will be selling Irish and Celtic merchandise, and a variety of food booths will be providing a taste of the Emerald Isle for festival-goers. There will also be events for children, such as storytellers, rides, clowns, and games. Campsites - which go quickly at a three-day event - are also available.

New to the festival this year will be two major events, a 5K Run which will finish on the festival grounds, and an event that is expected to be a huge success; a major pipe band competition, featuring approximately 20 of the top pipe bands in the Northeast competing and then all joining together for a spectacular mass march through the festival.

Proceeds from the annual festival will be used to help establish an Irish Cultural Center in the Mohawk Valley on the recently-purchased site of the former St. Patrick's Church at the corner of Columbia and Varick Streets. The Herkimer County Fairgrounds is located just off Route 5S in Frankfort NY, just minutes from the New York State Thruway. For directions, tickets or more information, visit the festival web site at www.gaif.us.

Meet the Artists As announced at the Halfway to GAIF Hooley on January 27th, this year's outstanding lineup is as follows:

Cherish The Ladies Over the past two decades, the name of a time honored Irish traditional jig has become equally well known as the name for one of the most engaging ensembles in Irish music: Cherish the Ladies. They have grown from a one-time concert concept to an Irish traditional music sensation, literally the most successful and sought-after Irish-American group in Celtic music history. Organized by folklorist/musician Mick Moloney and sponsored by the Ethnic Folk Arts Center and the National Endowment for the Arts, they began as a concert series featuring the brightest lights in Irish traditional music. Though initially the group won recognition as the first and only all-women traditional Irish band, they soon established themselves as musicians and performers without peer and have won many thousands of listeners and fans of their music. With their unique spectacular blend of virtuosi instrumental talents, beautiful vocals, captivating arrangements and stunning step dancing, this powerhouse group combines all the facets of Irish traditional culture and puts it forth in an immensely humorous and entertaining package. Cherish the Ladies also accesses a roster of regional, national and world champion step dancers who join them in every performance



They have been named Entertainment Group of the Year by the Irish Voice Newspaper and received the Glasgow Royal Concert Hall's International Group of the Year Award at the Celtic Connections Festival in Scotland. They have shared the stage with such noted entertainers as James Taylor, Joan Baez, Emmy Lou Harris, The Clancy Brothers, Tommy Makem, The Chieftains and dozens of symphony orchestras. The "Celtic Album," their collaboration with the Boston Pops Symphony, led to a 1999 Grammy nomination. At the Summer Olympics in Atlanta, they were chosen to represent Irish music and culture at the Official Cultural Olympiad. Cherish The Ladies was named Best Musical group of the year for 2002 by the BBC and was chosen top North American Celtic act by NPR radio's "Thistle and Shamrock." Their artistry has captivated audiences worldwide.

Eileen Ivers and Immigrant Soul Eileen Ivers has been called a “sensation” by Billboard magazine and “the Jimi Hendrix of the violin” by The New York Times. Nine Time All-Ireland Fiddle Champion, London Symphony Orchestra, National Symphony at The Kennedy Center, Boston Pops, musical star of Riverdance, The Chieftains, Hall and Oates, Afrocelts, Patti Smith, Paula Cole, Al Di Meola, Steve



Gadd, founding member of Cherish the Ladies, performed for Presidents and Royalty worldwide ...this is a short list of accomplishments, headliners, tours and affiliations that have established her as the pre-eminent exponent of the Irish fiddle in the world today. The daughter of Irish immigrants, Eileen Ivers grew up in the culturally diverse neighborhood of the Bronx, New York. Rooted in Irish traditional music since the age of eight, Eileen proceeded to win nine All-Ireland fiddle championships, a tenth on tenor banjo and over 30 championship medals, making her one of the most awarded persons ever to compete in these prestigious competitions. Her virtuoso playing electrifies crowds wherever she plays, and she is matched every step of the way by her all-star band, as they seamlessly

blend African and Latin percussion and bass, Irish instrumentals, and American soulful vocals. It is no exaggeration when the Washington Post writes of Eileen Ivers, “She suggests the future of the Celtic fiddle.”

Enter the Haggis From the minute they take the stage, the non-stop infectious energy of Enter the Haggis makes it impossible for anyone to stay seated. Returning to the Great American Irish Festival by overwhelming popular demand, Enter the Haggis has built an international touring and recording career based on its unique approach to Celtic-based music and high-energy performances. The group’s constant touring schedule has made them one of the biggest draws at Celtic and folk festivals throughout the world, and their recordings have



been no less successful, from the band’s 2002 recording “Enter the Haggis - Live!”, to their most ambitious and successful recording yet, “Soapbox Heroes,” released in 2006, which once again established the band as possessing tremendous flexibility without abandoning their respect for the traditional Celtic genre. The latest release from ETH, “Northampton,” is effectively a live “best of” album, featuring 18 tracks recorded over two nights at the Iron Horse Music Hall in Northampton, MA. The band continues to tour constantly, including a tour of Ireland with their good friends, the Elders.

The Elders The Elders, the most popular Irish band throughout the Midwestern United States, are a six-man group that melds the energy of rock with respect for Irish musical traditions. The Kansas City-based group has become famous for their high-energy rock shows that exude a fiery Celtic-influence and comical story telling that is true to the culture they represent. The Elders released their sixth album,



Racing the Tide, in mid-2006, which introduced the sextet to the rest of the United States, and the band has been garnering accolades everywhere, ranging from top album of the year on paddyrock.com to second place in the most recent Celtic Music Awards, beating out such bands as Dropkick Murphys, Flogging Molly and Great Big Sea. Virtually unknown on the East Coast a year ago, the Elders exploded onto the scene with a four-set performance at the Great American Irish Festival that immediately established them as GAIF favorites and cemented their reputation

as one of the hottest acts on the festival circuit. The group consists of Norm Dahlor (bass, banjo, guitar and vocals), Brent Hoad (violin, mandolin and vocals), Joe Miquelon (keyboard and saxophone), Steve Phillips (guitar, mandolin and vocals) and Tommy Sutherland (drums and percussion) and, from County Wicklow, Ireland, Ian Byrne, (vocals and percussion).

The Prodigals The Prodigals are one of the most successful bands to emerge from the East-Coast Irish scene. Often imitated but never duplicated, the band combines brilliant original lyrics and melody with a genuine passion for the traditional music of Ireland and a funky energy that is pure New York. The roots of the music are unmistakably traditional Irish; the branches that shoot off delve into rock, worldbeat, jazz and punk, and the result has been called “the best Irish trad-rock band” by no less a source than the Village Voice. Fusing ancient melodies with rock rhythms, The Prodigals have emerged as the dominant force on the Celtic-music scene. Audiences are captivated by the raucous punk-inspired sound and the drum-and-bass rhythms from modern dance music and hip-hop, but their strong respect for Irish roots and a solid repertoire of time-honored tunes, along with rock-solid original compositions, has made them a hit with fans of traditional Celtic music as well as rock audiences. Dubbed “the kings of jig-punk,” The Prodigals have played throughout the United States, headlining the world’s largest Irish festivals (including every Great American Irish Festival since its inception) and they have received the #1 ranking by readers of the largest circulation Irish-American newspaper, the Irish Echo, beating out acts such as U2, the Saw Doctors, Black 47 and Van Morrison.



Hair of the Dog Over the past decade Hair Of The Dog has entertained thousands of fans of all ages with their unique blend of Celtic, rock, folk and bluegrass music. Their high energy sound, smooth four-part harmonies and tight instrumental attack has made them America’s number one Irish folk band, and an international success as well. The band has sold thousands of their CDs, pitching them from stages shared with The Clancy Brothers, Seven Nations, Black 47, The Wolfe Tones, The Young Dubliners, Solas, The Paperboys, The Prodigals, Off-Kilter and the like. They tour Ireland annually, they’ve been to the Caribbean and they’ve appeared in concert at pubs and festivals across the US, including The Chicago Gaelic Park Festival, The Bethlehem Pennsylvania Celtic Classic, The Cleveland Summer Fest, The Hunter Mountain Irish Festival, The Coney Island Great Irish Fair, Irish 2000 Music And Arts Festival, The Capital District Scottish Games and the East Durham Irish Festival. Hair Of the Dog – one of only two headline



acts to play all five Great American Irish Festivals – was featured as part of Project Children's 2005 compilation CD, “One Child At A Time,” along with artists like U2, James Taylor, The Chieftains, The Corrs, Mary Black and Carly Simon, and in 2007 released “Donegal,” their first new studio recording in ten years and their most ambitious to date.

Rathkeltair Rathkeltaír, (rath-KELT-ur), consists of bagpiper Neil Anderson and drummer Nick Watson, two original members of America's ground-breaking Celtic rock supergroup Seven Nations, and guitarist Trevor Tanner, front-man for England's legendary Goth rockers The Bolshoi. Following Neil’s return to the states after being called up for a tour of duty in Iraq, the band picked up where they left off - energizing Festival stages all over North America, and garnering numerous honors and awards, including Best Celtic Rock Band, Best Celtic Rock Vocalist and Best Traditional Musician awards in the Celtic MP3s Music Magazine Annual Audience Poll. Compelling original material combined with fresh, innovative arrangements of traditional Celtic music, instrumental virtuosity and a completely off-the-wall sense of humor are what set this exceptional band apart from all the rest. Simply put, you will never see a more high-energy show than Rathkeltaír.



Barleyjuice Barleyjuice's first recording – titled, strangely enough, “Barleyjuice” – was steeped in traditional bagpipe & Celtic singing songs, but by their second album, “Another Round,” more than half



of the material was original. Encouraged with numerous comparisons to Shane MacGowan and the Pogues, Tom Waits, Ronnie Drew, the Rolling Stones, even Monty Python, they continued to add their own original tunes as well as trad favorites, and the result has been phenomenal. Their tongue-in-cheek element delights audiences thoroughly, thanks in large part to the musical prowess with which the witty material is presented.

The six members pilot a barrage of instruments - guitar, fiddle, accordion, bagpipes, bouzouki, mandolin, harmonica, banjo, tinwhistle, piano, bass and drums. In the past year, Barleyjuice released a third album, Six Yanks, and stretched their avid fan base across America and into Europe with the help of such fan sites as MySpace, and a seamless live show. Celticradio.net listeners voted “What's Up Yours?” Song of the Year for 2005. In 2006, “Six Yanks” made #14 on Paddy Rock Radio's Top Twenty short list (paddyrock.com), and “Whiskey To The Sea” was listener-voted ShowStopper Track on CelticFolkPod.com's last show of the year.

David Munnely Band Noted for their award-winning musicianship and for “bringing new energy to Irish traditional music,” the David Munnely Band has been making waves on both sides of the Atlantic with their exuberant and unique style of playing, based in the West Mayo tradition, as wild, free, and awe-inspiring as the rugged West Coast of Ireland. In concert the tunes are played fast, with immense precision, creating a live excitement not often duplicated. Born and raised in County Mayo, David Munnely is an exciting young Irish button accordionist and an award-winning composer. He toured with The Chieftains, De Danaan and other legendary Irish artists, all before the age of twenty-five. Now touring the world with his own group, the David Munnely Band has delighted audiences throughout America and Europe in 2006, performing at festivals and concert halls, including The Kennedy Center, where families danced in the aisles to the band’s infectious music. The Village Voice has called them “the band to see if you can.”



Barra MacNeils The Barra MacNeils, from Sydney Mines, Nova Scotia, are one of Canada’s premier Celtic groups. Steeped in Cape Breton tradition with strong Celtic roots and musical artistry, this diverse and talented family group continues to win over audiences around the world with their captivating



vocals, harmonies and extraordinary musicianship. As a group, the six MacNeil siblings are widely regarded as one of the top live acts in the Celtic world. Their numerous critically acclaimed recordings have included their own original songs as well as tried and true standards, both instrumental and vocal. The Barra MacNeils live concert experience is family entertainment at its highest level, bringing to the stage an irresistible combination of multiple lead vocalists, beautiful sibling harmonies, top drawer instrumental prowess on a wide variety of acoustic, stringed, percussion and wind instruments, dancing, storytelling, Gaelic songs and a journey through an ancient culture. Multi-award winners, the Barra MacNeils have released numerous recordings, and in

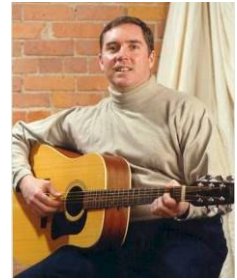
2001 they released a DVD titled “Cape Breton Christmas,” incorporating music from their live Christmas Concert Special (as seen on television), plus a visit to Cape Breton, interviews with the Barra MacNeils home at Christmas and music videos. Canada's Celtic ambassadors, the Barra MacNeils continue to perform to sold out audiences throughout Canada, the United States, the Caribbean and the United Kingdom.

Greenwich Meantime Greenwich Meantime was brought together when Shelley Downing, James Libbey and Steph McAlear felt a need to follow their own musical ambitions. This sparked the interest of Nigel Gibson who signed on and former “Haggis” frontman Nick Matthew completed the quintet.



Based out of Cornwall, Ontario, Canada, GMT grew up in traditional Celtic and French Canadian music country, and that influence is evident in the music they write and perform. The band has set its sights on staying true to the members’ Celtic roots, while making use of all their creative resources. As a result of that dedication, Greenwich Meantime has become one of the fastest rising acts on the Celtic music scene and with a new lineup and the release of their new CD, “Proof,” GMT looks to continue to rise in the future.

Donal O’Shaughnessy Donal O’Shaughnessy is a multi-talented performer, playing guitar, fiddle, keyboards, pipe organ, bodhran and mandolin. Donal is probably best known for his live performances. His quick wit and spontaneity with his audience keeps people in their seats until the very end of the night. He is also known for his work ethic as he rarely takes a break. On St. Patrick’s Day 1997 he played 12 straight hours only repeating a song if it was requested. Donal’s versatility with musical instruments and singing style makes every occasion special. Donal was the winner of the 1996 Fleadh Cheoil Mid Atlantic Regional Irish Singing Contest and placed seventh in the fiddle contest at the same event.



Pat Kane West o’Clare is the band Pat Kane formed in 1995, named for his family’s home county in Ireland. The band represents the Irish musical tradition of the region they were raised in, here in America. That region centers near Elmira NY, roughly the area around the Finger Lakes and Twin Tiers. West o’Clare are known for their fine vocals and harmonies. Their instrumentation is varied: fiddle, flute, whistles, accordions, concertinas, guitars, bodhrans and bones. The band consists of Pat Kane, Brian Hyland, and Bryan Kane, Pat’s nephew. The band has been active with concerts, festivals, parties, schools, colleges & clubs, ceili & square dances, radio, television, wakes & weddings, and every fancy ball!



Vince Colgan The term is often too easily and inappropriately applied, but Vince Colgan is a true legend in central New York Irish Music circles and beyond. A master storyteller as well as a consummate balladeer, Vince has entertained generations of Central New Yorkers and is now working on the next generation. The Great American Irish Festival is honored to welcome him to its stages.



The Blarney Rebel Band The Blarney Rebel Band is group of musicians from the Celtic hotbed of Central New York performing all types of traditional Irish music, from rollicking pub songs to traditional folk fare, from rousing sea songs to moving ballads, from stirring rebel songs to hand-clapping jigs and reels. It’s all on display by a group of talented musicians boasting virtuoso musicianship and perfectly blended harmonies, sure to please old and young alike. The Blarney Rebel



Band is always ready to help raise a pint, whether at a festival, party or a night at the local pub! The Blarney Rebel Band, which consists of Mark Sisti - banjo, mandolin, mandola, pennywhistle, concertina, accordion, flute, vocals; Al Sisti - bass guitar, vocals; Dan Sisti – guitar, vocals; Jessica Voce - bodhran, tambourine, percussion, has recently recorded their first CD, “Live at Piggy Pat’s” and are currently working on their follow-up recording.

Kyndryd Kyndryd is a Celtic Rock band based out of Lewis County, N.Y. Their music ranges from soft traditional influenced tunes, to hard edge story songs, to rocking Celtic influenced instrumentals. Kyndryd is made up of the multi-talented Mostyn brothers; Ray, who plays drums and bodhran, Terry, adding acoustic guitar and keyboards, and Don, playing electric guitar, mandolin and keyboards. The three siblings share vocals and are joined by Jon LaCroix on bass. Their debut album presents a solid and original selection of songs and instrumentals that puts their varied influences on display with a blend of traditional Celtic, progressive rock, and folk.



Cassidy/McCale Cassidy/McCale is an acoustic Celtic duo from Syracuse, NY. The band's name comes from the surnames of two grandfathers, Millard Cassidy and Raymond McCale. Formed in December 2005, they play a variety of Irish and Scottish pub songs, rebel tunes and sea chanteys. The duo – whose performances have been described as energetic and crowd pleasing – consists of Bryan Watson (guitar, vocals) and Matthew Douglas (guitar, vocals, bodhran). Influences include The Clancy Brothers, the Dubliners, regional favorite Pat Kane and Canadian import The Town Pants. Relative newcomers, Cassidy/McCale hope to become a regular part of the growing Celtic folk scene in Syracuse and Central New York.



Rattlin' Bog Long-time veterans of the local Irish Music scene, Rattlin' Bog is made up of tenor Rick Kincaid and baritone Joe Rowlands applying their tight vocal harmonies to Irish folk music and accompanying themselves on various acoustic instruments, including six and 12 string guitars, banjo, accordion, melodica, penny whistles and harmonicas. Hailing from the Utica area, Rattlin' Bog encourages audience participation with its catchy musical performance and its irreverent good humor.



The Stoutmen For 10 years The Stoutmen have been belting out Irish and Scottish folk songs in and around the Binghamton area of Upstate New York. Their love of big harmonies really shows as they work to keep alive a style of singing made famous by the Clancy Brothers and Tommy Makem. You'll hear well-known and a few obscure songs that cover the breadth of the Irish and Scottish experience, including songs of drinking, rebellion, sailing, and humor. Consisting of Tim Lynch (vocals, guitar, octave mandolin, bodhran), Sean Walsh (vocals, guitar, pennywhistle, bodhran), Bob White (vocals, 12-string guitar, banjo), and Roy Bartram (vocals, bass, pennywhistle), the band has crafted a finely balanced show that really grabs an audience's attention.



St. James Gate St. James Gate, one of the Capital Region's newest Celtic bands, was formed in 2001. Inspiration for the band came from Bill Connelly's cousin Martin Connelly of Newbridge, County Kildare, who used to perform in the band Mac's Fancy in Ireland. Martin has assisted the band over the years with many great tunes and ballads from Ireland. The band toured Ireland in November of 2005 and was a great success. A few highlights over the past two years include performing at Connolly's Pub in NYC. They also opened twice for Derek Warfield- formerly of the Wolfetones. They have performed at the Irish 2000 Festival for the past two years and last year also performed at the East Durham Irish Festival. St James Gate currently consists of Robert Daly on percussion (bodhran, djembe, and zendrum), Rick Russo on bass, six string guitar and lead vocals, Cassidy Buckley on fiddle, bass guitar, mandolin and background vocals, and Bill Connelly on guitar, banjo, mandolin and lead vocals.



Tàthù Tàthù is a rising CNY contemporary acoustic trio rooted in the Irish/Celtic tradition. The group has been performing together since 2004. While the tunes performed are predominantly of Irish tradition, the arrangements are influenced by various, more contemporary genres of music, aimed at rendering the appeal of their music to all ages. Their repertoire includes a variety of contemporary versions of Irish ballads and songs, instrumental tunes ranging from those that are driven to haunting “Airs.” The improvisational ability of this group further adds a surprising dimension beyond the traditional. The founding members are father and son - Mark Petrie on vocals, mandolin, tenor banjo and Irish whistles and Erik on guitar. They are joined by Michael Doyle on acoustic bass. Tàthù has been performing coffee-houses to festivals and everything in between across Central New York.



The Valley Bog Players The Valley Bog Players are a Mohawk Valley based band whose simple and unadorned style has been variously described as “lyrical and distinct” as well as “straight from the heart and directed to the feet.” Their music features a blend of traditional Irish music: jigs, airs, songs of the sea, barroom sing-a-longs, ballads, hornpipes and patriotic songs performed solely on traditional Irish acoustic instruments. Featuring dual pennywhistles, crisp vocal harmonies, 6 and 12 string guitar, banjo, accordion and bodhran, the Valley Bog Players will evoke the fogs and bogs of Ireland.

Kilrush Kilrush is a blend of crisp vocals and energetic instrumentals with Irish and Cape Breton influences. Led by Tim Sanphy on lead vocals, fiddles, bodhran and guitar accompaniments, and rounded out with Chris Sherwood, Dirk Sears and Tim Madigan adding harmonies and vocals, whistle, bodhran and flute, Kilrush adds up to a mix that is hard to beat.



...and that’s it (so far?). Mark the dates: Jul 25-27, 2008, at the Herkimer County Fairgrounds, and be sure to visit the website (www.gaif.us) regularly for further announcements and updates.

Submissions Sought for GAIF Photo Display Contest

What’s a picture worth? Well, if it’s that picture of your dad marching in a St. Patrick’s Day Parade or your family at the Cliffs of Moher during your trip to Ireland or maybe that photo of grandma with the shillelagh in her hand, it could be worth \$100.

The Great American Irish Festival is looking for submissions of photographs with an Irish-American theme for its **2008 Photo Display Contest**. To enter your Irish-themed photograph, submit it to: Great American Irish Festival Photo Display Contest, P.O. Box 584, Marcy, NY 13403. Include your name, address, phone number and a description of the photograph. All photographs that are submitted for this Festival event will be displayed, and ten photographs will be chosen by the members of the GAIF committee as the semi-finalists. Those ten will each receive 5 weekend passes to the Great American Irish Festival, scheduled for July 25-27, 2008. The ten selected photographs will be featured in a display during the festival in the Cultural Building, and festival goers will choose the overall winner, who will receive a first prize of \$100.

All submitted photos must be of an “Irish” event, Irish individuals or an Irish location. Use your imagination, but keep whatever you do “Irish-American.” All photographs must be at least 8 inches by 10 inches, and not larger than 11 inches by 14 inches. Photographs may be mounted or matted, but pictures must not be framed. Please send copies of picture entries, since no photographs submitted to the GAIF will be returned. All submitted photographs will become the property of the Great American Irish Festival.

Book Review:
“Tipperary”
Submitted by Mark Sisti

Let’s get this out of the way right off the bat: Frank Delaney is a great storyteller. If there were any doubts following his brilliant debut, “Ireland – A Novel,” they are thoroughly dispelled with his latest, “Tipperary.” But Delaney is more than just another Irish spinner of yarns. In “Tipperary” (as he did in “Ireland”), Delaney is intent on exploring new ways to tell the story, in this case, by coupling the autobiographical writings of the novel’s protagonist, Charles O’Brien, with a concurrent telling of (and commentary on) the story by a modern-day historian, who discovers, in retelling O’Brien’s story, his own connections to it.

Charles O’Brien is the son of a well-to-do Anglo-Irish family who becomes a traveling healer, an occupation that allows him to roam about his beloved Irish countryside while at the same time giving him the opportunity to help people, a trait instilled in him at an early age through events he witnesses and retells in his history. During the course of his healings he is called to the bedside of Oscar Wilde, who is dying in Paris, and it is there that he encounters a beautiful young visitor, April Burke, who becomes the object of a lifelong obsession, despite her brutal and consistent rejections of O’Brien’s clumsy overtures. A story told by Wilde about April’s possible ancestors sets the stage for O’Brien’s second obsession, as he becomes convinced that Tipperary Castle, the magnificent but rundown property near the O’Brien farm, rightfully belongs to April’s family.

When April comes into possession of the long-neglected castle, she asks Charles to show it to her, and he is subsequently hired by her to oversee its restoration. Restoring Tipperary Castle to its former grandeur becomes their shared passion (and that of the master craftsmen who work on it) and their mutual love for the castle helps them forge a comfortable, if slightly distant, relationship. But in the turbulent latter 19th and early 20th century, tensions between the interlopers who were given land and the native Irish families who had lived on those same lands for centuries make the restoration dangerous, as the bloody guerilla war for independence explodes all over Ireland, including Tipperary. As the atmosphere grows more deadly and the stakes become higher, Charles, April and Tipperary Castle all play their parts in Ireland’s fight for independence and, as the nation comes into its own, so do the characters.

The conceit of having the present-day historian comment on O’Brien’s history is not just a literary device. It allows Delaney to flesh out O’Brien’s character in ways that would otherwise be impossible. Truth be told, O’Brien, while good-hearted and decent, is, in some ways, weak, irresponsible and at times incredibly dense. As the historian comes to realize, Charles is not always the most reliable of narrators, as his writings are colored by his own viewpoints. O’Brien’s journal itself starts out with a warning to readers not to take his account as gospel truth: “Be careful about me... We Irish prefer embroideries to plain cloth.”

Furthermore, looking at his actions through an impartial third party, we come to see and appreciate Charles’ growth in ways we couldn’t if faced with his account alone. Likewise, the chance to see April as others see her – whether the love-blind Charles, his mother, who resents the cold young girl’s attitude toward her son, or his best friend, who likes her and respects her despite her flaws – affords her a depth of character far beyond what we would take from Charles’s viewpoint on its own.

Charles’s occupation is carefully chosen, for he becomes a healer of Tipperary the same way he tries to heal his patients, and, in doing so, does his small part in the healing of a nation; for Tipperary Castle is transformed from a symbol of English oppression to a loving homage to Anglo-Irish architecture, history and art.

“Tipperary” is Irish historical storytelling at its best, in part because Delaney knows enough to let the story tell itself at its own pace. The narrative is never rushed or hurried, but is delicately paced for perfect effect. Only occasionally does the offbeat narrative style intrude on the story; for example, the tying up of some loose ends comes off as unconvincing, and seems to have been put in only to answer small mysteries that Delaney has inserted throughout to maintain our interest. The irony, of course, is that neither the mysteries nor the solutions are necessary. The tale and the telling will keep a reader enthralled without any such artifice.

“Let the countdown begin!” -- Halfway to GAIF Hooley a Rousing Success

On Sunday January 27th, 2008, the 2nd Halfway to GAIF Hooley was held at Hart's Hill Inn, featuring perennial festival favorites The Prodigals, along with local artists, the Blarney Rebel Band. Intended to express the committee's sincere thanks to their many volunteers, sponsors and other festival supporters, it also provided the perfect opportunity to announce the headline performers for this year's festival, being held from July 25-27, 2008. Excitement was in the air as festival director Matt Sullivan rattled off one impressive act after another, and the packed house exploded with each announcement. Faced with six more months of counting the days, over 500 attendees looked to the Prodigals for a fix – and they did not disappoint! Within minutes, everyone in the building was on their feet, cheering the band on through two great sets of music, and well-deserved encores. Rounding out the party were the announcements of the recipients of the 2007 GAIF Volunteers of the Year – Celia and Joe Antonik – and the 2008 Utica St. Patrick's Day Parade Grand Marshal, namely...well, why make you wait?

James R. Kellmurray Chosen St. Patrick's Parade Grand Marshal

James R. Kellmurray's life journey has taken him all the way around the world. Now it has taken him to one place he never expected – to the title of Parade Grand Marshal. Mr. Kellmurray has been unanimously chosen from among a list of worthy nominees to serve as 2008 Utica St. Patrick's Day Parade Grand Marshal by a select committee of past Grand Marshals.



The grandson of immigrants from County Galway, Jim was raised by his parents, James M. Kellmurray and Gertrude Lynch Kellmurray in East Utica, the center of early Irish culture in this area, and attended St. Agnes Parish, St. Agnes Grade School and St. Francis DeSales High School, where he played basketball. Jim was in the first ROTC Class at Niagara University in Buffalo, earning his degree in Economics there. Commissioned in the U.S. Army at Fort Dix, N.J., he was sent to Europe in 1940, attached to the 1st Division US Army, and participated in the invasion of Omaha Beach in 1944. After suffering wounds in combat in Belgium in 1944, Jim recuperated in hospitals in Paris, France and in England and upon his release was assigned to active duty in England.

Following his return to the states in 1946 and discharge from the Army, Jim joined the US Army Reserve and helped form the Military Police Unit in Utica. He subsequently retired from the 414th civil affairs unit of the army reserve as a Lt. Col.

Jim found employment with a company called Controlled Manpower. In 1964 he joined the Utica Industrial Corporation and stayed on when it merged with the Oneida County Industrial Development Corp., in which capacity he was instrumental in bringing Metropolitan and Hartford Insurance Companies, and the Federal Reserve Bank to the area. In addition, he taught accounting at MVCC from 1962-1965 and worked for Carstair's and Calvert distilleries for 15 years.

Jim is involved in many Irish organizations, holding the longest membership in the Friendly Sons of St. Patrick and serving as an active member in the Ancient Order Of Hibernians, and is also a member of the New Hartford American Legion Post, Genesis Group, St. Paul's' Parish in Whitesboro and St. Anne's Parish, also in Whitesboro; holding the distinction of being (along with James Kernan Esq.) the oldest altar boy in the Syracuse Diocese. Enjoying his well-earned retirement, Mr. Kellmurray spends his time these days treasuring his two daughters, Gail and Sue, and granddaughters Kate and Amy.

Name the St. Patrick's Day Parade mascot contest

See this little guy to the left, the one holding the GAIF logo? You'll be seeing a lot of him over the next few months. This leprechaun is the new mascot for the Utica St. Patrick's Day Parade and his name is... you can call him... refer to him as... Wait a minute, I knew we forgot something! With all the commotion trying to put the parade together, we never got around to naming the little fellow! Well, you can help us rectify that minor omission. The Utica St. Patrick's Day Parade Committee is asking for your help in naming the St. Patrick's Day Parade mascot. Simply submit your choice for a name by going to the parade website at <http://www.gaif.us/parade/> and clicking on the "Name the Mascot Contest" link (at least we were clever enough naming that). The person whose name is chosen will win four weekend passes to the 2008 Great American Irish Festival, a bunch of GAIF merchandise and an honored spot in the St. Patrick's Day Parade. Deadline for submissions is March 8, 2008.



Speaking of the parade, Committee Chairman Charley Thomas is still looking for volunteers to help with this year's parade, which takes place on Saturday, March 15th. As you know by now, this year will mark the first year the Great American Irish Festival will serve as organizer and presenter of the 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 Charley – a former Parade Grand Marshal himself – expects this year's event to be even bigger and better. The next organizational meeting will be held at the Maennerchor on Flanagan Road, on Monday, February 4th at 6:30 PM. The list of volunteers increases with each week (thankfully!), although Charley notes that he can still use additional parade marshals, whose job will be assuring that individual unit(s) in their charge are properly lined up, in time and space, for a smoothly-flowing procession. And of course, additional sponsors are always welcome. For more information on the St. Patrick's Day Parade or the February 4th meeting, contact Charley Thomas at (315) 796-9916.

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

This month's recipe – "Scallop Pie (Irish)" [from <http://www.fooddownunder.com>]

INGREDIENTS:

- 8 Large scallops (or 4 scallops and an equal amount of any white fish. Or more scallops, if you like)
- 300 ml Milk (How continental. If you're reading this in, oh, America, I think that's about 10 fluid ounces)
- Salt and pepper
- 2 tbsp Butter
- 1 tbsp Flour
- ½ lb Mushrooms, sliced
- 4 tbsp Med. sweet white wine
- 1 lb Fresh mashed potatoes

PREPARATION:

Clean the scallops and cut in half, then simmer in the milk for 15 minutes. Strain, reserving the liquid. Heat 1 tablespoon of the butter and stir in the flour, cook for about a minute, stirring, then add the milk gradually, stirring all the time to avoid lumps. Season with salt and pepper, add the sliced mushrooms and simmer for about 10 minutes longer; then add the sherry or wine and finally the scallops. When hot, transfer to an ovenproof dish and cover with mashed potatoes, making sure they cover the fish right to the edges. Dot with the remaining butter and bake in a moderate oven, 350F (that'll be about 177 degrees Centigrade, if you insisted on measuring your milk in milliliters), for 20-30 minutes, or until the top is turning brown.

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.

RANDOM RAMBLINGS

- ✚ **Win a vacation in Ireland** If you're anxious to visit Ireland, 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.
- ✚ **Old Blind Dogs to Perform at Kirkland Art Center** 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. Old Blind Dogs have stood at the leading edge of the roots revival that has both reawakened and revolutionized Scottish folk music. In spite of some changes in players over the years, the award winning energetic group continues to be one of Scotland's most popular and firmly rooted traditional folk bands. Tickets for the 8 PM show are \$18 for general admission, and \$15 for KAC members. Call 853-8871 for ticket information.
- ✚ **Basic Irish Céilí Dancing** Have you found yourself at one of the many Irish cultural events in the area, enviously watching the simple beauty of Irish Céilí dancing, and asked yourself "Isn't there any way I can learn to do that?" Well, to answer your question, "No... no, there is no way I could learn to do that... but now there is a way that you can!" Herkimer County Community College's Community Education Office is offering a class called **Basic Irish Céilí Dancing**, from 7:30 pm to 9:00 pm on February 14th, 21st and 28th. Learn basic steps of Irish Céilí dancing and four to five easy Céilí dances. This class will prepare you for the Great American Irish Festival or even your next trip to Ireland! Instructor Tom Malley joined The New York Gaelic Society in the early 60's (the decade, that is; not his age), where he learned Céilí dancing and the Irish language. Tom has been one of the dance instructors at the Craobh Dugan, which not only has weekly dance classes in Utica, but has also given workshops at the Snow Ridge Irish Festival and the Great American Irish Festival. The fee for this three session course is a mere \$21, and pre-registration and payment is required by **February 11, 2008**. The lessons take place in RMCC 247 at the Sarkus Busch Theater. For more information, check out their Spring Term catalogue at <http://www.herkimer.edu/pdfs/Spring2008brochure.pdf>
- ✚ **Scythian – "Celtic with an edge" – comes to Kitty Hoynes.** Kitty Hoynes (301 West Fayette St., Syracuse) kicks off a three day "fiddle fest" on Thursday, February 7th, with the fastest-rising Celtic band in the Washington DC area, **Scythian**. Scythian – pronounced sith-ee-yin – is comprised of the Fedoryka brothers, Oleksander (Leks) on Violin, Mandolin, Harmonica, Bass and Vocals, and Danylo (Danu), playing Rhythm Guitar, Accordion and Vocals, with Josef Crosby (Joey) on Violin, Bass and Vocals, and Mike Ounallah (uh, Mike) on Percussion/Drums. Earning rave reviews in only their second full festival season, Scythian has been described as "...play[ing] Celtic music for people who hate Celtic music, but love rock." Showtime is listed as 9 PM, but you may want to show up early.
- ✚ **Old Songs Presents Two Celtic Fiddle Concerts** Old Songs, Inc. – "dedicated to preserving traditional music and dance" – presents two concerts during February in celebration of Celtic music's favorite instrument: the fiddle. On Saturday, February 16, Old Songs brings in Master Scottish fiddler Alasdair Fraser and cellist Natalie Haas, for an 8:00 PM show, at their new (old) home at 37 South Main St. in Voorheesville NY. Alasdair Fraser, long regarded as one of Scotland's premier musical ambassadors, presents the music of his homeland with unsurpassed eloquence, passion and energy. He links bows with

vibrant young cellist, Natalie Haas, in an exciting weave of rocking, reeling rhythms, poignant melodies, and exquisite musicianship. “The musical chemistry between Scottish fiddle legend Alasdair Fraser and young cello ace Natalie Haas is a rare, felicitous thing.” Tickets for the show are \$20; \$5 for those 12 and under... Then, on February 26th, Old Songs hosts their “Celtic Fiddle Festival,” with Kevin Burke, Christian Lemaître and André Brunet, with Special Guest Gilles Apap and Ged Foley on guitar. Sold-out tours and standing ovations give testimony to the electricity and excitement generated by these three great individual fiddle stylists. Kevin Burke (Ireland), Christian Lemaître (Brittany) and André Brunet (Quebec) combine their talents, musical traditions, and spontaneous humor for an evening of dazzling energy and subtle grace. Tickets for the 8:00 pm show are \$25, with kids 12 and under getting in for \$5. For more information on these shows, or Old Songs, Inc., call (518) 765-2815. [artists’ descriptions are from <http://www.oldsongs.org/>]

✪ **Trinity Irish Dance Company** 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, at 7:00 PM. “Creating a new vocabulary for Irish step dancing, Trinity Irish Dance Company performs with live music with all the passion, flair, and precision of the traditional art form while adding a modern twist.” Tickets are \$24 (adults), \$20 (seniors), and \$12 (children). The Egg is located at the Empire State Plaza.

Celtic Club Calendar. Finally, here’s the Irish Musical and Cultural calendar for February.

Feb 1	Cassidy-McCale	Piggy Pat’s Pickled Pig Pub	Washington Mills	6-9 PM	Free
Feb 1	Donal O’Shaughnessy	Kitty Hoynes	Syracuse	9 PM	Free
Feb 2	Pat Kane	Kitty Hoynes	Syracuse	9 PM	Free
Feb 3	Syracuse Irish Session	HalfPenny Pub	Syracuse	4-7 PM	Free
Feb 7	Scythian	Kitty Hoynes	Syracuse	9 PM	Free
Feb 8	Old Blind Dogs	Kirkland Art Center	Clinton	8 PM	\$18; \$15 for KAC members
Feb 8	Blarney Rebel Band	Piggy Pat’s Pickled Pig Pub	Washington Mills	6-9 PM	Free
Feb 8-9	Searson	Kitty Hoynes	Syracuse	9 PM	Free
Feb 9	Traditional Irish Session	Kitty Hoynes	Syracuse	2 PM	Free
Feb 10	Donal O’Shaughnessy	Coleman’s Irish Pub	Syracuse	4-7 PM	Free
Feb 10	Syracuse Irish Session	Johnston’s Bally Bay Pub	Syracuse	4-7 PM	Free
Feb 15	Two Feet Short	Piggy Pat’s Pickled Pig Pub	Washington Mills	6-9 PM	Free
Feb 16	Alasdair Fraser & Natalie Haas	Old Songs	Voorheesville	8 PM	\$20 (\$5 for <12)
Feb 17	Pat Kane	Coleman’s Irish Pub	Syracuse	4-7 PM	Free
Feb 22	Donal O’Shaughnessy	Piggy Pat’s Pickled Pig Pub	Washington Mills	6-9 PM	Free
Feb 22-23	Neil Emberg	Kitty Hoynes	Syracuse	9 PM	Free
Feb 23	Traditional Irish Session	Kitty Hoynes	Syracuse	2-5 PM	Free
Feb 24	Flyin’ Column	Coleman’s Irish Pub	Syracuse	4-7 PM	Free
Feb 24	Trinity Irish Dance Company	The Egg	Albany	7 PM	\$24, \$20, \$12
Feb 26	Celtic Fiddle Festival	Old Songs	Voorheesville	8 PM	\$25 (\$5 for <12)
Feb 29	Blarney Rebel Band	Piggy Pat’s Pickled Pig Pub	Washington Mills	6-9 PM	Free
Feb 29	Cliudan	Kitty Hoynes	Syracuse	9 PM	Free

That wraps it up for this rare month: it’s still the shortest month of the year, but it boasts five Fridays! If you have anything you want to add, feel free to contact us at sistia@adelphia.net, bloftis@verizon.net or marksisti@adelphia.net.