
MOHAWK VALLEY IRISH CULTURAL EVENTS NEWSLETTER

Volume 5, Issue 12

December 2008

Irish Rovers sing in Oneida on December 4th

The Irish Rovers, the long-running Canadian-Irish folk band best known for their hit recording of “The Unicorn” (you might be surprised by the song’s composer!), come riding into the Oneida High School Auditorium on Thursday, Dec. 4, at 7:30. The Irish Rovers, named after the tradition Irish song, were formed in Canada in 1963, when then 16-year old George Millar and 23-year-old Jim Ferguson, both new emigrants from Northern Ireland, met in Toronto at an Irish function. They ended up singing together until dawn; and so the Irish Rovers were launched. They performed as a duo until George's cousin, Joe Millar, immigrated to Canada the following year. Joe, who played button-key accordion and harmonica, and also sang traditional ballads, was recruited as he stepped off the plane.

The Irish Rovers continue to perform in theatres around the world, with original members George Millar, Joe Millar and Wilcil McDowell. Will Millar retired from the band in 1995; and sadly, Jimmy Ferguson passed away in 1997. Completing the Irish Rover line-up today is Kevin McKeown, who has been with the band since 1984, and John Reynolds and Wallace Hood, who both joined in 1995. Tickets for the show, presented by The Oneida Area Arts Council, can be purchased at the door for \$25 and season tickets are still available. For more information call 363-7064 or visit www.oneidaareaarts.org or oaac13421@hotmail.com.

A Tartan Terrors’ Celtic Christmas

Okay, I’ll give you a couple seconds to digest that headline. Ready? Okay, then. What do you get when you bring together a two-time World Champion bagpiper, top ranked Scottish dancers, world percussion and... the holly berries to play Jingle Bells on the bagpipes? Duh, you get the “Tartan Terrors,” that’s what. Named “Performers of the Year” in Ontario for seven consecutive years, the Tartan Terrors will be coming to Cazenovia College’s Catherine Cummings Theater, Lincklaen St., Cazenovia on December 13th, bringing the best in music and dance as well as their unique Celtic comedy. Capture some holiday cheer with the Tartan Terrors – described as “Saturday Night Live meets Riverdance” -- with a special Christmas Extravaganza – Celtic style! The holidays have never looked more hilarious. Tickets for this special 4 PM show – a fundraiser for the Earlville Opera House -- are \$24 for adults and \$16 for children. For more information and/or to order tickets, call 315-691-3550 or visit the Earlville Opera House website at <http://www.earlvilleoperahouse.com>. And guys, I’ve got one word for you: Chrissy, Meg and Ellen.

Christmas in Irish Lore

Christmas in Ireland is a season of peace and joy, family celebrations and traditions. It is, according to Irish historian Michael McCormack, “...a combination of modern and ancient customs that combine to bring a unique meaning to this time of year.” Throughout this issue, we will present you with a handful of these time-honored traditions and their origins. We would like to thank the local people who sent these stories along: Beth Loftis, John Fox and Bonnie Ehre. For a more complete treatment, Mr. McCormack has a great article in the November/December 2008 issue of the National Hibernian Digest.

Nominations Sought For 2009 St. Patrick's Day Parade Grand Marshal

Once again Utica's St. Patrick's Day Parade organizers are asking the public to have a hand in choosing the parade's Grand Marshal. That's right, following a very successful process begun last year, the Grand Marshal for the St. Patrick's Day Parade, to be held on March 14, 2009, will be chosen from a list of nominations submitted by the general public. To nominate a candidate, simply go to the GAIF website (www.gaif.us) and fill out the application found under the News event "Application for 2009 St. Patrick's Day Grand Marshal," and submit via mail or email to the addresses below. The letter of nomination should detail reasons why the nominee would be a worthy choice for Grand Marshal. A brief background of the person and qualifications should be included. The nominee, male or female, need not be of Irish descent, but must be someone recognized by the community for his or her ongoing commitment and contribution to Irish causes in the Mohawk Valley Region. After careful consideration, the Grand Marshal will be selected from the list of nominees by a committee of past Grand Marshals. The deadline for nominations is December 15th, 2008. Nominations should be sent via snail mail to St. Patrick's Day Parade, c/o Kevin Dowling, PO Box 584 Marcy, NY 13403, or via email to assistant-director@gaif.us. The Grand Marshal will be announced to the public on January 18th, 2009 at the Great American Irish Festival Halfway to Festival Hooley, to be held at Hart's Hill Inn in Whitesboro. The newly crowned Parade Grand Marshal will also serve as the honorary chairperson of the 2009 Great American Irish Festival, set for July 24-26, 2009.

Great American Irish Festival Update

Great American Irish Festival Volunteer Chairperson Claudette Johnson wanted us to remind you that the festival still needs volunteers for the 2009 festival, and that the Volunteer portion of the web site (www.gaif.us) is now open for the new season. She also notes that you need to sign up via the web page even if you've volunteered with the festival in the past. Several venues could use your help, and of course, volunteering 8 hours of your time over the course of the weekend makes you eligible to get all the great perks that aren't available to the general public.

Christmas in Irish Lore #1: The Christmas Candle

In Ireland the tradition of the Christmas candle is lovingly handed down from generation to generation. According to one belief, the candle long served as a symbol of welcome to Mary and Joseph who sought shelter in vain on that first Christmas Eve. To have a light in your window on Christmas Eve to welcome the stranger meant that you were welcoming the Holy Family too. To have no light meant that you shared the guilt of the Innkeeper at Bethlehem who said, "No Room"!

The ceremony of lighting the candle is one of simple ancient rituals during which prayers are said for the departed, and the privilege of striking the match is usually given to a daughter named Mary.

This flickering symbol also served as a signal in times past to any priest seeking shelter and protection that he was welcome in this house and that it was safe to say Mass there.

The story of the abiding religious faith to which this nation has clung so strongly for centuries is reflected in the symbolism of the lighted candle in the window, which spells out the simple beauty of the Christmas story.

Book Review:
“Song of Ireland”
By Mark Sisti

Maybe it's because we've been raised to think of Ireland as a land imbued with magic, where the existence of fairies and creatures from the Otherworld is accepted without question, and where the history and the mythology are so inextricably intertwined that it is impossible to tell where one leaves off and the other begins. Whatever the reason, the Celtic world in general, and Ireland in particular, have always been a gold mine for fantasy writers. Some of it, such as the Sevenwaters trilogy of Juliet Marillier, is very good; some of it, which shall go unnamed, is tripe. The novels of Juilene Osborne-McKnight fall squarely in between those extremes, none more so than her most recent, “Song Of Ireland.”



Osborne-McKnight, with her previous three novels of Irish fantasy/history, “I Am of Irelaunde,” “Daughter of Ireland,” and “Bright Sword of Ireland,” has created a niche for herself by reworking the traditional folktales and legends of Ireland into novelized form, often intermingling these tales with historical elements, much like the earlier works of Morgan Llewelyn. In fact, “Song of Ireland” deals with the same tale told in Llewelyn’s earlier novel, “Bard.”

“Song of Ireland” (based in part on the “Song of Amergin,” one of the earliest works of western European poetry) tells the interwoven story of two distinct peoples, the Milesian Celts of the Galician coast of Spain, and the Danu, the strange and mysterious race that has, at the time of the story, occupied the isle of Eire for centuries.

The Milesians, and their chieftain in particular, have been fascinated by dreams of a land far away, Inisfail, a fabled Land of Destiny. When one of the chief’s sons, the poet Amergin, sings of his vision of the land, the die is cast and plans are made to sail to this island, perhaps to remain.

But the island, of course, is not uninhabited, and is ruled by the Tuatha de Danaan, the people of the mother goddess Danu, the magical little people of the light. The explanation of where this race came from is not very clear, as Osborne-McKnight seems to suggest that they are visitors from another planet, or at least another world. (Her explanation of the overlapping worlds is equally confusing.) But wherever they come from, the Danu have been the ruling class of Ireland for centuries. They attained that position by force and are prepared to defend it the same way if necessary.

Once upon the island, the Milesians encounter the Danu and the remainder of the story deals with how (or whether) these two disparate races can learn to co-exist, preferably without warfare. The story is told in an alternating narrative style, one chapter from the point of view of the Danu, the next from Amergin; the shifting perspective only occasionally become obtrusive and the transitions between the events in the novel and flashbacks to different eras are, for the most part, smoothly handled. Don’t be put off by the prologue, which can be difficult to follow, and don’t be misled by the incredibly cheesy Harlequin Romance-style cover, with the beautiful couple standing in passionate embrace, their long hair flowing in the wind. There is a love story in the novel, but it is hardly central to the plot and seems more than a little forced. It should be a rule that the artist creating the cover should, at some point, have read the book, but that’s probably too much to ask. And, in his or her defense, if there is a problem with the book, it is that Osborne-McKnight never seems sure what type of story she wants to tell, history or fantasy, science fiction or theology, action or romance. As a result it becomes somewhat less than satisfying as an example of any of those styles. Still, the story is interesting and Osborne-McKnight tells it passably well. Her use of language tends to lean too much toward the archaic in an attempt to establish a sense of time and place, but that is a natural consequence of this type of storytelling. In short, “Song Of Ireland is not epic fantasy, but it’s not a bad way to spend a cold winter evening or two.

Blarney Rebel on Irish & Celtic Music Podcast, Internet Radio

“Buy My Soul,” the latest CD by Central New York’s own Blarney Rebel Band, will be featured as part of the next podcast on Irish & Celtic Music Podcast. The Irish & Celtic Music Podcast (www.celticmusicpodcast.com) presents twice-monthly Celtic and Irish music by the best independent Celtic music groups. Irish drinking songs, Scottish folk songs, bagpipes, music from Ireland, Scotland, Brittany, Wales, Nova Scotia, Galacia, Australia and the United States. The most recent podcast, Podcast #58, featured such diverse artists as The Irish Balladeers, Sligo Rags, Silver Spire, Pog Mo Thon, and The McDades.



The Irish & Celtic Music Podcast, hosted by Marc Gunn of the Brobdingnagian Bards, has become the 26th most-popular music podcast on iTunes. This translates to over 10,000 downloads of each show. Listeners are encouraged to vote for their favorite songs and submit suggestions for podcasts they would like to hear. The Irish & Celtic Music Podcast also has a page on Myspace.com (www.myspace.com/irishcelticmusicpodcast) where information about recent and upcoming podcasts can also be found. The shows can be downloaded as standard mp3 files for non-iTunes users. The Irish & Celtic Music Podcasts are sponsored by Song Henge (www.SongHenge.com), a website offering the largest selection of totally free and legal downloads of Celtic music. You may also want to subscribe to Gunn’s Celtic MP3s Music Magazine, (www.celticmp3s.com), a free monthly Celtic music magazine featuring free music downloads of Celtic, Scottish and Irish music from around the world. A recent review of “Stand With Me Boys” from “Buy My Soul” can be found on the website. These three sources are invaluable (and cheap) resources for anyone with an interest in Irish or Celtic music.

In addition, BRB’s “Follow Me Up To Carlow/Morrison’s Jig” from “Buy My Soul” has been added to the playlist for Online Folk Festival radio (www.live365.com/stations/woodsmeister.) Finally, six of the 11 cuts on “Buy My Soul” have received “Power Hit” ratings on Highlander Radio (www.celticradio.net), with two cuts receiving five out of five stars, two receiving 4½ and another receiving four stars. Interested listeners are encouraged to subscribe to Highlander Radio (it’s free) for the opportunity to request and review songs.

Finally, Celtic Radio Music recently sent out an email advising that it is now accepting nominations for the 2008 Celtic Radio Music Awards. Wow, a Celtic Radio Music Award; what a lucky break that would be for some local Irish band, eh? Nominations can be made by going to their web site (www.celticradio.net/php/news.php?item=647), and following the link that says “To nominate a song for 2008, please contact us with the details of your nomination.”). Nominations and voting can come from musicians and fans alike, and from people who are savvy enough to read the Mohawk Valley Irish Cultural Events newsletter each month... yep, their email said that! (except no, it didn’t). The Celtic Radio Music Award is a program sponsored by Highlander Radio to acknowledge and promote exceptional Celtic music across five categories of music. Nominations for this award are made throughout the year by listeners and members of CelticRadio.net. After a careful screening process, which is based upon listener nominations, ratings, requests, and other radio statistics, they select three songs in five categories for community voting. Categories for an award are Celtic Rock, Traditional, Jigs & Reels, Bagpipes and Roots Traditional. Voting begins on January 1st of each year and ends on March 17th (St. Patrick’s Day). Winners receive recognition of this prestigious award through the induction into the Celtic Radio Hall of Fame and permission to use the Celtic Radio Music Award banner on their website, and they might even buy their friends beers at Piggy Pat’s, for example.

The Women of GAIF invade Ireland... God help Ireland!!!

Written by Special Guest Columnist Kate Flanagan Barefoot

“Judy...We’re in IRELAND!”...I think I whispered that to Judy Weeks and/or Beth Loftis in every place and stop we made...

From November 5 through November 13, some of the Women of GAIF, as we call ourselves, along with some other intrepid souls made the pilgrimage to Ireland. I use the word “pilgrimage” deliberately. Going to the land where all of our forefathers and mothers came from was almost a religious experience. That doesn’t mean we behaved like nuns though!! I have been asked to write a summary of this trip. It will be impossible to tell you everything that happened along the way (I could, I DID kiss the Blarney Stone after all!! But it would be pages and pages long!), but here are some of the highlights. We were blessed with fairly good weather and a great bunch of people to be with.

The trip started off with us arriving at either Union Station in Utica or the Denny’s in Herkimer to take the bus to Boston to the airport. (AND FOR THE RECORD.... Susan and Jen Smith and Jim and I were the FIRST ones to arrive for the bus!) Excitement was in the air as we put our bags on and headed out. We arrived in Boston with enough time to partake of an adult beverage at Hoolihan’s (an Irish Pub in Boston, who would have thought it?) in the airport and then we were air bound!! We arrived in Dublin at 5:15 a.m. Waiting three hours for the Bus Driver/Tour Guide was tiring... but when we met the man who would be our tour guide, educator and entertainer for the next 8 days, we realized we were in for a special trip. Mr. Greg Craigh arrived with a smile on his face and a song in his heart and off we went to begin the big adventure.

We began in Dublin with a trip to the Guinness Storehouse (but of course!!). We were all pretty jetlagged, but the Guinness at the Gravity Bar soon restored us. Drinking beer at 10 a.m. didn’t seem to faze any of us! We spent that day and the next enjoying the sites, sounds and people of Dublin. We all spent our days differently, but all agree, what a wonderful start. Most of us enjoyed music in one venue or another, some in the Temple Bar area, where there were bands and bars everywhere, while others went to a few local pubs and enjoyed sessions. Saturday night in Dublin is not to be missed, especially if you are under the age of 30! It is a city of young folks, but us older ones had a great time too.

We continued across that great country, stories and songs and history lessons abounding from Greg. We went to the Rock of Cashel, an amazing site with amazing views and history. We visited the Dingle Peninsula...one of the most breathtakingly beautiful places I have ever been blessed to see. We drove through the city of Cork, the city on the Lee... with its colorful buildings and history. Greg was a proud Cork man, who loved showing us his “beloved city and country.” We stopped in Cove, Cobh or Queensbury... whatever you wish to call it, the port where our ancestors boarded the coffin ships to come to either America or other places during An Gorta Mor, the Great Hunger. A memorial to Annie Moore, the first person to enter Ellis Island sits outside. Being there was very emotional for some of us.

Onward we continued, driving by watching the beautiful scenery. Some of us wouldn’t close our eyes, lest we miss something. We stayed in Kinsale for one night, a lovely seaside village which we all wish we could have spent more time. We stopped at the Jameson’s Distillery in Middleton. There some of our people became official whisky tasters!! Hardship duty, but SOMEONE had to do it! Blarney Castle was next...We had to kiss the Blarney Stone and learn the difference between Blarney and Boloney! Ok, that is where I got in trouble... I arrived late for the bus. I paid dearly for it!! My new nickname became “Katie come Latey!” Oh dear, my reputation was made on two continents! We stayed overnight in Killarney for two nights and enjoyed great CRAIC (which we learned was an anagram, not a word!) every evening.

Onward we went, crossing the Shannon estuary to arrive at the Cliffs of Moher. On the way, we stopped at a memorial in Ennistymon. It was erected in 1995 by the Hibernians both in Ireland and the United States. It told the story of Michael Rice, a young victim of the Famine. This was one of the most emotional times of the trip. We were standing and looking at the field house where people went to try to survive, but did not. Michael Rice did not. We were all very emotional as we left that place. But our friend, as he was more than just a driver at that point, gave us something to laugh about soon after. Ask one of us to tell you the story.



The Girls of GAIF whooping it up in Dublin.
Way to make us proud, ladies!!

The Cliffs of Moher was another unbelievably beautiful place to be. Even Judy was able to climb and look out over the cliffs in to the turquoise waters. God don't make no junk, folks.

We went onward to Galway Bay and the lovely city of Galway, another wonderful place where we just didn't have enough time to get to know. Then we were off to Bunratty, where we would be making our last stop. The Bunratty Castle and village is a wonder, with rooms to visit and a breathtaking view.

And now I come to our last evening. We had dinner at the Creamery, right outside the castle. Greg joined us in a pint or two. Then we HAD to go to Durty Nellies!!! There we enjoyed a most special evening. Greg sang us a song or two... which we joined in singing. We were joined by a friend of his who sang in his operatic voice... I was serenaded with the "Rose of Tralee"!! We couldn't have asked for a better ending to a fantastic trip.

The following morning was a completely different story from the morning we left. NONE of us wanted to leave!! We had an uneventful flight and the trip home from Boston seemed to last forever!

As will our memories. Thanks to all who shared it with me. Lynn Kent... Thanks for taking the bull by the horns and arranging it. Celia Antonik, thanks for putting it all together.

Judy... we've been to IRELAND!!!!

Christmas in Irish Lore #2: Holly

In the old days, children were usually charged with the responsibility of gathering the Yule-tide decorations and finding a holly bush loaded with berries was considered very lucky. Holly is a symbol commonly associated with Christmas and has been used in Yule-tide celebrations for almost two thousand years.

To the Druids, it was holly's evergreen nature that made it special. They believed that it remained green to help keep the earth beautiful when the other trees shed their leaves. It was also their custom to wear it in their hair when they ventured into the forests to watch the priests collecting mistletoe. Holly was also once used for protection, and in ancient times, people would decorate doors and windows with it, in hopes that it would capture, or at least dissuade, any evil spirits before they could enter the house.

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

This month's recipe – “**Bittersweet Chocolate Irish Whiskey Cake**” – comes from our resident cook, Beth Loftis... but we'd be remiss if we didn't also give a tip of the toque to reader John Fox, who also sent in a recipe that had almost the same exact ingredients; except his didn't have chocolate, espresso, water, almonds, flour, sugar, eggs or salt. Keep 'em coming, Foxy!

INGREDIENTS:

1/2 cup plus 2 tablespoons Irish whiskey	6 tablespoons all purpose flour, divided
6 ounces bittersweet (70% cocoa) chocolate (such as Scharffen Berger or Lindt), chopped	3/4 cup (1 1/2 sticks) unsalted butter, room temperature, divided
2 teaspoons instant espresso powder dissolved in 6 tablespoons hot water	7 tablespoons vanilla sugar, divided
1/3 cup blanched almonds (about 2 ounces), lightly toasted	3 large eggs, separated
	Pinch of fine sea salt
	2 ounces semisweet chocolate, chopped

METHOD

Position rack in center of oven (put the joke down!) and preheat to 350°F. Butter and flour 8-inch-diameter springform pan. Boil 1/2 cup whiskey in small saucepan until reduced to 1/4 cup, about 2 minutes. Combine bittersweet chocolate, espresso powder mixture, and 1/4 cup boiled whiskey in small metal bowl. Place bowl over saucepan of simmering water; stir until mixture is smooth. Remove bowl from over water. Finely grind almonds with 2 tablespoons flour in processor.

Using electric mixer, beat 1/2 cup butter and 6 tablespoons vanilla sugar in medium bowl until fluffy. Beat in egg yolks 1 at a time, then sea salt. Fold in chocolate mixture, then ground almond mixture. Using clean dry beaters, beat egg whites in another bowl until soft peaks form. Gradually add 1 tablespoon vanilla sugar, beating until stiff peaks form (stop giggling; we're trying to be serious here!). Fold whites into batter alternately with remaining 4 tablespoons flour in 3 additions. Transfer batter to prepared pan. Bake cake until tester inserted into center comes out clean, about 40 minutes. Cool in pan on rack 30 minutes. Remove pan sides and cool cake completely.

Combine semisweet chocolate and remaining 2 tablespoons whiskey in small metal bowl. Place bowl over saucepan of simmering water and stir until smooth. Remove bowl from over water. Add remaining 1/4 cup butter to chocolate mixture, one small piece at a time, whisking until each piece is melted before adding next. Place bowl over larger bowl of ice water. Using electric mixer, beat icing until thickened to spreadable consistency, about 1 minute. Spread icing over top and sides of cake. Note: Can be made 8 hours ahead. Cover with cake dome and let stand at room temperature. Makes 8 to 10 servings.

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. And get your mind out of the gutter.

RANDOM RAMBLINGS

✿ **The Elders Return to Rome** You've still got time to get tickets for the January 17th appearance of the Elders at the Capitol Theatre in Rome. Tickets for the show, a fundraiser for Rome's Weed and Seed program, are available at Gary's Music, Accents of Ireland, Rome Federal Credit Union, Rome YMCA, Oneida YMCA, and online at www.ymcatrivalley.org. Tickets are \$25 in advance, \$17.50 for children under 12 and Seniors, and the price that evening – if they're still available – will be \$30 at the door.

✚ **A Piggy Pat's Christmas** Save the date Dec 26th on your social calendar, and make plans to attend the 4th annual Irish Happy Hour Christmas Party at Piggy Pat's Pickled Pig Pub. What better way could there be to go into Christmas weekend; to celebrate the in-laws leaving, or no more wrapping, or just to get together with friends and family over laughs and libations? Time's up, I'll have to give you the answer: There is no better way. This year, Pat's house band, **The Blarney Rebel Band**, hosts the festivities for the fourth year; promising a night of music and madness, harmonies and humor, and singalongs and something else that starts with "s." And of course, this special night would not be complete without their infamous set of traditional and classic Christmas music. Also returning for their fourth year will be Irish Dancers from Syracuse, who once placed 6th in the world in Dublin. Why not join your friends there? Face it, they'll talk about you if you don't go. That's Friday, December 26th from 6-9 PM.

✚ **Plaide Palette Presents Annual Christmas Open House** Sue and Everett Miller of the Plaide Palette (www.plaidepalette.com) invite you to join them for some holiday cheer and a great shopping experience, at their annual Christmas Open House, to be held from December 5th through the 7th, from 10 AM to 5 PM each day. Come sample the new biscuits, teas and chocolates, or take part in wine and cheese tasting, try your luck at one of the gift basket raffles, or simply avail yourself of lots of discounts throughout the store. Sue and Ed assure you "There is nothing in the world like a Celtic Christmas!" The Plaide Palette is located at 45 Main Street in Cherry Valley, N.Y.; just two miles off Route 20's Cherry Valley exit. For more details, call (607) 264-3769, or email them at tartans@celticart.com.

✚ **"A Leahy Family Christmas"** Embarking on their first-ever solo Christmas tour, the phenomenal Canadian band **Leahy** comes oh-so-close to the area, when they visit the University At Buffalo Center for the Arts, in Buffalo, NY; on Thursday, Dec 11th at 8 PM. Leahy is comprised of eight musical brothers and sisters who have been playing together their entire lives, and this special Christmas-themed show gives the members of Leahy the chance to share a bit of the magic of the Christmas season that began as children and still continues today. Tickets for the show are \$28; \$18 for students, and may be purchased on-line at <http://www.ubcfa.org/webmodules/event/events.aspx?cid=15>

✚ **A Message from the Ladies of Accents of Ireland** Bonnie and the girls wrote us to say: "To thank you for your continued support, bring in your newsletter during our open house on Sat., Dec. 6th and receive 20% off any one item over \$25. (Limit one per customer, valid Saturday, December 6th, excludes prior sales, layaways and special orders.) Also from now until Christmas Eve you may register for a drawing for a pair of Elders tickets compliments of Accents of Ireland Gift Shoppe. The drawing will be held Dec. 24th and the concert is Jan. 17th. Wishing you all a happy and safe holiday!"

Christmas in Irish Lore #3: Mistletoe

While Mistletoe isn't very prevalent in Ireland, it can be found, and it was held in very high regard by our ancestors. In the Celtic language, Mistletoe means "All Heal." It was believed to have all sorts of miraculous qualities including the power of healing diseases, banning evil spirits, bringing good luck and bestowing great blessings. In fact, even enemies who happened to meet beneath a Mistletoe in the forest would lay down their arms, exchange a friendly greeting, and keep a truce until the following day. From this old custom grew the practice of suspending Mistletoe over a doorway or in a room as a token of good will and peace to all.

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

Dec 4	The Irish Rovers	Oneida High School	Oneida NY	7:30 PM	\$25
Dec 5	Blarney Rebel Band	Piggy Pat's Pickled Pig Pub	Washington Mills	6-9 PM	Free
Dec 6	Pat Kane	Kitty Hoynes	Syracuse	8 PM	Free
Dec 6	Hair of the Dog	The Parting Glass	Saratoga Springs	8 PM	\$13; resv. req.
Dec 7	Syracuse Irish Session	Wayside Irish Pub	Elbridge NY	4-7 PM	Free
Dec 7	Pat Kane	Coleman's Irish Pub	Syracuse	4-7 PM	Free
Dec 11	A Leahy Family Christmas	University At Buffalo Center for the Arts	Buffalo, NY	8 PM	\$28, Students \$18
Dec 13	Traditional Irish Session	Kitty Hoynes	Syracuse	2:00-5 PM	Free
Dec 14	Cliudan	Coleman's Irish Pub	Syracuse	4-7 PM	Free
Dec 17-19, 22 & 23	The McKrells Christmas Show	The Parting Glass	Saratoga Springs	7 PM (2nd show on 12/19 at 9:30)	\$8; resv. req
Dec 18	Craobh Dugan Open Session	Cafe Domenico	Utica	7:30-10:00 pm	Free
Dec 21	Syracuse Irish Session	Johnston's Bally Bay Pub	Syracuse	4-7 PM	Free
Dec 21	Donal O'Shaughnessy	Coleman's Irish Pub	Syracuse	4-7 PM	Free
Dec 26	A Blarney Rebel Christmas	Piggy Pat's Pickled Pig Pub	Washington Mills	6-9 PM	Free
Dec 27	Traditional Irish Session	Kitty Hoynes	Syracuse	2:00-5 PM	Free
Dec 27	Hair of the Dog	The Parting Glass	Saratoga Springs	8 PM	\$13; resv. req.
Dec 28	Flyin' Column	Coleman's Irish Pub	Syracuse	4-7 PM	Free
Dec 31	First Night Saratoga	Various stages/venues throughout downtown	Saratoga Springs	5 PM-midnight	\$13 (under 5 - free)
Dec 31	New Year's Eve Show w/ Donal O'Shaughnessy	Beck's Grove	Blossvale, NY	5 PM to 1 AM	TBD

That wraps it up for this month. If you have a book you'd like Mark to review, or a recipe to share, or a festival, concert or CD review of your own, feel free to contact us at sistia@roadrunner.com, bloftis@verizon.net or marksisti@roadrunner.com. As always, while we try to get things – prices, places, times, etc., -- as accurate as we can, sometimes we make mistakes. It always makes sense to call ahead to confirm some of these further-out trips.

And remember, in this holiday season, extend simple kindness to friends and strangers alike. Believe in the promise of peace on our planet. Have faith in the innate good of your fellow man... and live the message of a candle in the window. From our homes to yours:

Nollaig Shona agus Athbhliain faoi Mhaise Duit
("Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year")