



Irish-American Club News

Publication of the Irish-American Club of Mid-Michigan

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Club News

Irish-American Club of Mid-Michigan
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By Wynne Potter, President

Meetings will resume in September, 2009

Coming up:

- ☞ Great Lakes Feis, August 16th
- ☞ IAC Family Picnic, August 29th

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Laethanta griannmhar agus taisteal sabháilte do gach éinne.

(Sunny days and safe travels to everyone!)

Recently learned of a retiree, Jim Ebert, who loves to walk and needed to spice up his walking and have more purpose to it than just walking for his good health and entertainment. He walks in DeWitt but is currently tracking his walking miles across Ireland. He first walked across America and is now "walking in Ireland".

In the process, Jim has learned much about Ireland as he studies the area he's in and learns about the people, customs, weather, geography, and sites of interest. He has never actually visited Ireland, so when and if he ever makes it, he'll probably know much more about the green isle than some who live there.

Jim blogs his daily walks, so you can make the travels with him. His site is:

www.walkforrestwalk.blogspot.com

Pierce's article for this issue is about the Travelers, and I thought it interesting that we seem to be focused on traveling this time of year.

The Social meetings will resume in September, the 2nd Tuesday of each month, except December and March. We have been busy planning next year's programs, trying to offer a variety of interesting activities and topics. We'll have a member/guest potluck, learn about Pubs of Ireland, get some behind the scenes scoop and attend an Irish play, share a Potato Night, learn about the Irish in Michigan, and enjoy a member night as we hear each other's Irish stories.

And, of course, our beautiful Christmas party is in December and St. Patrick's party in March. Pierce Kent has

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This month's recipe

Frappuccino

- ☞ 1/2 cup milk
- ☞ 2 tablespoons chocolate syrup
- ☞ 1 tablespoon granulated sugar, plus
- ☞ 1 teaspoon granulated sugar

☞ 1/3 cup strong coffee

☞ 1 cup ice

In a blender, combine everything but the ice, and blend until sugar has dissolved.

Add ice and blend until smooth. Sometimes you will need a bit more ice.

Ed. Note: Maybe a little Carolan's instead of some of the milk?

The Travelling People of Ireland

By: Pierce Kent

As I was growing up in Ireland in the 1950s and early 1960s the Travelers of Ireland were a common sight on the roads and byways of Ireland. We knew them as Tinkers (in Gaelic na tincéirí). This refers to their original trade of tinsmiths or repairers of pots and pans. In our throwaway society this occupation, along with that of the cobbler, is almost a thing of the past. They were also known as “Knackers”. This term refers to collectors of old or dead horses. Indeed a man I knew as Uncle Tom Kinsella owned a knackers yard in Dublin where the bones of dead horses were boiled to make glue I believe. I found this out years later from one of my sisters who, when recuperating from knee surgery in a Dublin hospital, struck up a conversation with an old lady who lived close to Kinsella’s knackers yard, and the old dame remarked “Ah the smell was something brutal”.

The Irish Travelers call themselves Pavees, or Travelers, and the latter is the more politically correct term. In Irish they were also known as the *Lucht Siúil* which means walking folk. In my youth they had horse drawn, brightly painted caravans pulled by distinctive piebald horses—black and white or sometimes brown and white. Both the Irish Travelers and their counterparts in the Scottish Highlands should not be confused with the Romany speaking Gypsies who were originally from India although their lifestyles are somewhat similar and they all tend to lead a nomadic existence. In recent years the Irish Government has encouraged the Travelers to settle permanently in fixed abodes but the lure of the open road remains strong. The movie “*Into the West*” makes this point well.

Passing a traveler campsite one would see a campfire, clothes spread eagled on the bushes to dry and a half dozen urchins or so playing games while the adults hunkered down by the fire imbibing tea or porter. Once they departed, some of the clothes would be left behind to adorn the bushes, plus other unwanted items.

Irish Travelers are of pure Irish origin living in Ireland, the United Kingdom and the southern part of the USA. A national census in 2006 put their number at around 22,000, but this is likely to be a gross underestimate, since they are always on the move and seldom have a fixed address. Their number across the pond in the U.K. may be many as 15,000. A further 7,000 live in the United States. Populations of Irish Travelers live in Murphy Village, South Carolina and in Forth Worth, Texas where they have not the best reputation. There are also communities in Georgia, Mississippi and Ohio. The Georgia Governor’s Office of Consumer Affairs issued a press release on March 14, 2007 titled “Irish Travelers Perpetuate a Tradition of Fraud”. They will travel up north to places like Wisconsin and Michigan in the spring and offer home improvement services. Police frequently warn the elderly about home-improvement scams operated by a few of these Irish Travelers. Wandering contractors

have been known to overcharge for shoddy work and inferior materials. These tricksters then hit the road once the check has been cashed. Not all of these wandering contractors are con men it must be said.

Back in Ireland Travelers were noted as horse dealers and dog breeders (greyhounds) apart from more nefarious activities like brawling, drunkenness, begging and thieving. It must be pointed out that the majority of the Travelers are good people who live by the golden rule and indeed are devout Roman Catholics in general.

A fondness for drink may have created a lot of their problems in the past. I remember coming back from a day’s hike with the 17th Tipperary Boy Scout Troop circa 1957 and seeing a Traveler family around the campfire on their knees reciting the Rosary. This made a vivid impression on me at the time. I also remember a momentous occasion for us young lads in Thurles, County Tipperary when a local Garda Síochána (Cop) named Charlie Geoghagan refused to jail a rowdy Traveler but inflicted rough justice with his fists. Apparently this was Charlie’s *modus operandi* in dealing with rowdies. This could not happen in the Ireland of today. At least the Traveler got to return to the camp site after getting stitched up.

The Travelers have their own secret dialects, which include elements of Gaelic with some English known alternately as Shelta, Gammon or Cant (from the Irish word *caint* for speak perhaps). They use this argot among themselves when they do not want to be understood by outsiders, including guardians of the peace, like cops. They are known for their hospitality, and lavishness of their funerals, wakes and weddings. You would need a step ladder to get to the top tier of a Travelers wedding cake.

A couple of years ago an Irish Traveler was killed in a fight. His cousin and good pal drank himself to death upon hearing the sad news. The remains of both Travelers were ferried across to Ireland for interment in St. Corban’s Cemetery in Naas, County Kildare. On the day of the burial the town of Naas came to a standstill while two hearses, drawn by six be-plumed black horses for each conveyance, paraded to the cemetery for the burial followed by hundreds of Travelers on foot. At the graveside a Hi Fi system blasted out the pop song “*Eye of the Tiger*” as the coffins were lowered into the side by side graves simultaneously. The display made the front page of the *Leinster Leader*.

The origins of the Travelers are a bit murky. They claim to be the oldest inhabitants of Ireland. It is pretty certain they pre-date *An Gorta Mór* of 1845-1851. It is postulated

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Club News (con't)

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consented to provide Irish language and history classes again next fall, beginning mid-Oct. We hope that something here entices you to attend a meeting, class, or activity and enjoy the Irish fellowship.

Check our website at www.irishmidmich.org for information throughout the summer. We'll post our calendar of activities and meetings as soon as details are solidified. And save the date of the **Great Lakes Feis, August 16**. (you'll think you're In Ireland!) Have a great summer and hope to see you at the **IAC Family Picnic, August. 29**, at Lake Lansing Park North.

Mark your calendar . . .

JULY -

1st, 3rd Sunday – Irish Music Session, 2 pm. Claddagh Irish Pub, Eastwood Towne Center.
2nd, 4th Sunday – Irish Music Session, 2 pm Green River Café, M.A.C Ave. E.L.
30th – Dublin, OH Irish Festival,
<http://www.bridgetgallaghers.com> for information

AUGUST

16 – Great Lakes Feis, Lansing Center, Michigan Ave, Lansing
29- IAC Family Picnic, 1 pm Lake Lansing Park North, Oak Knoll area. Bring a dish to pass, we provide hot-dogs and condiments.
1st, 3rd Sunday – Irish Music Session, 2 pm. Claddagh Irish Pub, Eastwood Towne Center.
2nd, 4th Sunday – Irish Music Session, 2 pm Green River Café, M.A.C Ave. E.L.

SEPTEMBER

8th = IAC Social Meeting, 7-00 pm Welcome Back pot-luck
25-26th = Kalamazoo Irish Fest, www.kalamazooirish.org
IAC Field Trip. watch our website, for more information
28th – IAC Business Meeting, 7 pm LaMoreaux home.
1st, 3rd Sunday – Irish Music Session, 2 pm. Claddagh Irish Pub, Eastwood Towne Center.
2nd, 4th Sunday – Irish Music Session, 2 pm Green River Café, M.A.C Ave. E.L.

Summer Reading

Our own Kathleen McGlinchey has written a lovely book, *The Final Gift*, available at www.thefinalgiftbook.com, or at Amazon.com. It's about a family's journey to come to terms with a tragedy that strikes them all, and about how they came together. A truly uplifting book.

Order it today!

Travelers of Ireland (con't)

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that the Great Hunger did swell the ranks of the Travelers, since during these dark days in Ireland there were said to be up to 3 million people wandering the roads. Another theory is that the Travelers were disinherited landowners from the time of Cromwell.

Common names among Irish Travelers include Murphy, McDonagh, Dooley, Connors, Cash, Fury, Barrett, Barry, O'Donnell, Gorman, Reilly, Dunne and Keenan. Among Scottish Highland Travelers names like Stewart, Mac Donald, McGill and MacGregor are known. All of these names are found in the general population also. These names are mainly Gaelic with a few Norman names like Barry and Barrett. This lends some credence to Irish Traveler origins in the Cromwellian period. In Scotland their origins may stem from the 18th Century Highland Clearances. The Travelers claim to be descended from Irish Kings in both Ireland and the Scottish Highlands.

Among famous Irish Travelers are the English-based heavyweight boxer Tyson Fury; Bartley Gorman, undefeated bare-knuckle boxing champion until his death in 2002; Margaret Barry, known as the "singing tinker"; Pecker Dunne, another singer; and the well known piper Paddy Keenan, a founder member of the Bothy Band.

The Travelers of Ireland, or as I knew them, Tinkers, have been a colorful part of Irish life rightly famed for their pugilistic talents, their songs and music as well as their ability to judge a good horse.

If any of you readers get to Ireland during the Ballinasloe Horse Fair and see some piebald horses, a Traveler will be in the vicinity, and maybe a window into Ireland's past will be opened to you if you happen to hear some horse trading going on.

More Summer Reading

Look for these books at your favorite library,
bookstore, or at Amazon.com

Irish Heritage Cookbook by Georgina
Campbell

Thank You for the Days by Deirdre Brady

Story of Ireland (Hardback Kids Book) by
Brassey

Aches and Pains by Maeve Binchy

Funny Peculiar by Constance McCullagh

Angels in My Hair by Lorna Byrne

Cork Rural Design Guide

Flowers of the Fairest by Rosemary Conroy

Letters from the Great Blaskets by Eibhlín
Ni Suilleabháin

An Leabhar Mor Great Book of Gaelic by
Malcom Maclean

Irish Civil War by Cotterell

All About Alice by Judi Curtin

Irish Folk Legends by Trotman

Seamus Heaney Bibliography 1959-2003:

Irish Highwaymen by Bunford

Soupers and Jumpers by Mirian Moffit

Three Kings: Cork, Kilkenny, Tipperary by
Ralph Riegel

In the Woods by Tana French

Legends of Cork by Thomas Crofton
Croker

Tragedies of Kerry by Dorothy Macardle

Leaves from the Fig Tree by Diana Duff

Year of the French by Thomas Flanagan

Desert Skies by Csilla Toldy

Shadow of Doubt by Novel Redican

The Cat Trap (HB) by KT McCaffrey

Oscar Wilde as a Character in Victorian
Literature by Angela Kingston

Oscar Wilde and the Candlelight Murders by
Giles Brandreth

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More Summer Reading (Con't)

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Complete Handbook of Gaelic Games
(Out of Print)

Where Clare Leads, Ireland Follows by
Richard Fitzpatrick

Playing in the Dark by Siobhna Kennedy
McGuinness

Tipperary Tales by Mil Roberts

Deeply Regretted by Maeve Binchy

Green Tears for Hecuba by Patrick
Twohig

First Steps in Irish by the
Christian Brothers

Many more books on many more subjects
may be researched at www.readireland.ie.



Irish Genealogy Help By: Mary Anne Hanlon Smith

Several counties have come online with the 1911 census returns for Ireland.

<http://www.nationalarchives.ie/>

It is a good place to start, although actually reading the original microfilm copy is always best, as the on-line is transcribed, and is only as good as the person reading it and interpreting it.

From the site:

The 1901 and 1911 censuses are the only surviving full censuses of Ireland open to the public. Both censuses cover the island of Ireland. They were released to public inspection in 1961, because of the stream of requests for information about people's ages, particularly those born before civil registration of births began in 1864.

The 1911 census was taken on **2 April 1911**.

The site is useful for history as well as genealogy, and is worth a read.



Mary Anne Hanlon Smith is a member of the IAC, and also of many genealogy groups. If you get stuck with your search, drop her a line, she always can get you unstuck and pointed in the right direction.

gothic@acd.net

Membership Form

Irish-American Club of Mid-Michigan
2023 N Fairview
Lansing MI 48912

Complete and return the form below with your check payable to the:
Irish-American Club, 2023 N Fairview, Lansing, MI 48912
800-743-9457

Name:

Address:

City:

State / zip:

Daytime Phone:

Evening Phone:

E-Mail Address:

PAYMENT METHOD



CHECK ENCLOSED

- Individual \$12.00
 - Family \$17.00
 - Life Member \$150.00
 - Student \$ 5.00
- New Renewal

From time to time we publish membership lists for member-
tion, please indicate by marking the boxes to the left of infor-
use. If you wish to exclude certain information from publica-
tion, you would like excluded from publication.