

A president's ancestor travels to Boston by Justin Peterson

In the 1840s the potato famine drove many people from Ireland to America. The Irish faced starvation and poverty at home and sought a better life. They were so desperate to leave that they were willing to risk their lives and go on ships whose conditions were so horrible that they became known as "coffin ships." But without the brave Irish people who risked their lives to come here, we would never have had a famous sportsman like John L. Sullivan, a boxer. We never would have had a writer like F. Scott Fitzgerald. And we never would have had Patrick Kennedy.

In 1849 Patrick Kennedy made his decision to leave for America. He left behind his parents, brother and sister. His leaving Ireland was almost the same as another death in the family because back then, once you left Ireland, you would never see it or your family again. Due to the huge numbers of people leaving Ireland, these "goodbyes" became known as the "American wakes."

Traveling to America, he was on a ship that took a detour to Liverpool which was where many Irish set sail

for America. From there he could either choose to go to the United States or Canada. The trip to Canada cost much less than the trip to America and many Irish took advantage of this and sailed to Canada. From there they planned to immediately go down to the United States. While on the ship, Patrick met a young woman named Bridget Murphy who was two years younger than he.

Patrick Kennedy's one-month journey on the ship called the "Washington Irving" took him to one of Boston's ports. The "Irving" was one of the faster ships available, putting in perspective how long these journeys could be.

Patrick and Bridget got married almost immediately after they reached the United States. They lived in the eastern part of Boston which was said to be a place where "children were born to die." And they did. Almost sixty per cent of children living in Boston at the time did not live much longer than six years. It was the same with adults, too; the average life of a famine immigrant was about five to six years after he or she reached the United States. The Irish lived in basements and other diseased places.

Patrick started a cooper's trade so that he could support his wife and children. To bring in extra income, Bridget became a housemaid. Those were common jobs among Irish immigrants. Bridget had three daughters and one son. To be unique, Patrick Joseph Kennedy named his only son Joseph Patrick Kennedy. One time when Joseph was called an Irishman, he replied, "I was born in this country! My children were born in this country! What the hell does someone have to do to become an American?!"

Patrick died at the age of thirty-five from cholera in east Boston. He left behind his wife and children. One hundred two years later his great-grandson became the thirty-fifth president of the United States of America. Without Irish immigration we wouldn't have had writers like Frank McCourt. We wouldn't have had Walt Disney, and we wouldn't have had John Fitzgerald Kennedy.

Justin Peterson, 8th grade student at St. Agnes, Dalton is the second prize essay contest winner.

Tea party brings many together for Irish fun

A group of over 200 gathered in the Doolley dining hall on Sunday, March 2 to celebrate an early St. Patrick's Day, as well as all things Irish.

Mary Franz did her usual superb job as emcee and the musicians, singers, dancers, pipers and story teller all gave delightful performances.

Of special note were the young fiddlers, part of the

group of musicians who gather monthly for a session. The other crowd pleaser was the singing, dancing, and playing of tin whistles by some of the children who come to the Celtic Adventures for Kids in the summer. Led by Mike Rancitelli (our own Italian Irishman), they sang and played several songs, and ended the day's entertainment with the *Irish*

Blessing. The essay contest winners read their papers and received their prizes. Thanks to the organizers and all the bakers of Irish bread and scones. It was indeed a grand affair.



Pictured above are some of the students from the summer camp who entertained by playing their whistles. They also sang and four children danced.

Irish contributions to the Commonwealth by Catherine McDonough

For many years Irish immigrants in the United States have contributed to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Those citizens have taken important positions in the Massachusetts state government, helped other citizens, fought in wars, organized helpful committees, and have done many other things to help. These immigrants were, and still are, living proof that people can make a difference.

Thomas Cass is a good example of one of these immigrants. He became a successful businessman, and a member of the Boston School Committee. When Massachusetts Governor Andrew asked him to form and lead an Irish Regiment, the Ninth Massachusetts Volunteers, Cass bravely accepted. However, he was wounded at the Battle of Malvern Hill and had to return to Boston. He risked injury and his life to fight with the Union and the Ninth Massachusetts Volunteers. He is a brave man and a great role model.

Patrick Collins was another Irish immigrant who contributed to the commonwealth. He became the second Irish-born mayor of Boston and the first candidate in Boston's history to win a majority vote. He was mayor from 1902 to 1905. Collins was extremely loyal to his state and a very successful man.

A third example of an Irish immigrant who contributed to the Commonwealth was Mary Kenney O'Sullivan. A nationally named union organizer, she lived in Boston for fifty of her seventy-nine years. The head of the American Federation of Labor, Samuel Gompers,

enlisted her to organize women workers in Massachusetts, so she moved to Boston in 1893. She began her task by organizing the poorly paid women who worked under hard conditions as rubber makers, shoemakers, and laundry and garment workers. Despite being widowed with three children in 1903, she continued to organize labor unions, and helped to create the National Women's Trade Union League, also known as the W.T.U.L. While traveling to other parts of Massachusetts, she visited Lawrence, where she strongly supported the "Bread and Roses" strike along with the city's 30,000

These Irish immigrants show that everyone can make a difference for their contributions.

textile workers. Mary Kenney O'Sullivan, is one of six Massachusetts women honored in the State House Exhibit. Her exhibit's plaque inscription, written by Ellen K. Rothman, describes her: "As leader of the W.T.U.L. Mary O'Sullivan forged alliances between middle and work-class women. A leader in Massachusetts reform circles, she focused her efforts on women suffrage, housing for the poor, prohibition and pacifism. However, her highest priority remained the advancement of working women." This shows that Mary Kenney O'Sullivan was very determined when it came to her contributions. Captain John Barry was a great example of an Irish immigrant who

by contributing became a hero. He contributed, not only to Massachusetts, but also to the United States as a whole. When conflict broke out between Britain and the colonies. Barry offered his services to Congress. He was captain of many ships and later became an aide to General Gadowalder, where he was sent to deliver important messages. On October 10, 1776, congress sent out a list of the navy, placing John Barry as number seven on the captain list. He helped defend Philadelphia from the British and when they eventually took over, Barry sailed the unfinished "Effingham" up the Delaware River to safety. After that he captained and captured many more ships and made smart decisions as captain. After the war he made several voyages in merchant vessels and again continued great work in the navy in the war with France. After retuning his ship, the "United States" to George Washington, his service ended. Barry's contributions and sacrifices came with great risks, which he conquered.

These Irish immigrants show that everyone can make a difference for contributions. They became heroes; they proved that contributing can change their lives and those of others. They contributed to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and for that, they will always be remembered.

Catherine McDonough, 8th grade student at Holy Cross School, Springfield is the first prize essay contest winner

Irish Cultural Center—a founder's view by Kathleen Keating, SSJ

When I think of the Irish Cultural Center at the College of Our Lady of the Elms, I marvel at all that has been accomplished in the almost ten years of its existence.

This happy reaction should not come as a surprise to me because the Elms, from its inception, educated first generation students of many ethnic groups from western Massachusetts, including the Irish. Also, Elms had a long tradition of hosting programs relating to this Irish heritage, eventually introducing successful courses in the study of the Irish language.

Thus, the Center was a natural outgrowth of a significant aspect of the college's history. The spark that gave the impetus to its establishment was a "happening", the showing of the American premiere of the documentary film, *Blasket Roots: American Dreams* which brought some 800 people to the college on a wild winter's night in the midst of the worst ice storm of the season.

In the beginning it is understandable that most of the programming emphasized West Kerry. Hundreds of descendents of the people of the storied Blasket Islands, where the purest form of the ancient Irish tongue existed well into the twentieth century, were living in the Springfield, Massachusetts and Hartford, Connecticut areas. Some of the last inhabitants of the Islands still lived in these areas. Like its influence on so much of the rest of Ireland, the Celtic Tiger was contributing to the demise of the culture of the important west Kerry Gaeltacht

region, thus threatening the loss of a sense of our roots from which many of us grew.

However, over the years the interests of the Center and its members expanded to other parts of Ireland, indicated by the wide range of its programs. This breadth of programming is what makes the Center so exciting. We have delved into Ireland's ancient, medieval and modern history and analyzed the trends and changes in the social, religious, political and economic areas of the lives of the people. Geographically, the Center has sponsored events that dealt with aspects of the Irish Republic and Northern Ireland, as well as the influences of the Irish in Diaspora.

The many forms the programming has taken are simply amazing, for example, lectures, films, seminars, theater productions, concerts, dances, tea parties, instrumental *seisiúns*, art shows, poetry readings, journeys to Ireland, bilingual and Irish language liturgies, and short academic courses. This variety has had something to offer adults, families and children; some events have been serious, some light and almost all have drawn substantial audiences, not just the Irish, but people of other ethnic backgrounds.

In my opinion the most successful and enduring program has been the *Celtic Adventures for Children*, an annual week-long camp that causes spontaneous joy to its participants as they absorb many aspects of the culture, including the language. So the children, the grand children and

the great grandchildren of Irish immigrants will remember who they are and whence they came.

Most of all, I love this Center because it is no ivory tower, for it draws deeply from the people of western Massachusetts. Its Board members come from the college, the people of the nearby communities and representatives of the major Irish organizations of the Pioneer Valley. No program has ever failed and the participants are generally well informed and keenly interested. Most events at the Center are accompanied by live Irish music and are complete with homemade Irish bread, scones and desserts. Many new friendships have blossomed in these informal gatherings. Even as the Center has varied its programs, it still understands the necessity of the intellectual approach to culture. Academics and experts from both the United States and Ireland have been presenters.

The language courses still flourish and there has been an increase in course offerings on Ireland in the curriculum of the college. The Center, too, in developing an appreciation of one's own culture, aspires to foster an understanding of all cultures in a world where a global vision is a necessity.

Blessings and thanks to all those who make this Center such a vibrant place, our Executive Director Judith Kappenman, SSJ, a creative and hardworking Board, and all the faithful members. Come see for yourself!

Keeping the Irish arts alive!

Contributions of Irish immigrants by Ariana Liquori

The great number of Irish who came to Boston, Massachusetts changed our nation greatly. Both men and women had many jobs in their new country. Some worked in factories, mining, quarrying, bridge and canal building, railroad construction, and were also a big help in the Civil War. One of their huge contributions was their active role in politics.

The Irish immigrants became leaders of union efforts and the labor movement. Here in America, the Irish achieved lives that would not be possible in Ireland. They took on jobs that most people in America would not and did them without complaining. They didn't ask for a high pay, and worked harder than a lot of other people in Massachusetts. They supported themselves, their families, and made large contributions to America to help other people.

One person who made an impact on American politics was Patrick Collins. Collins was born on March 12, 1844 in Fermoy, County Cork, Ireland. His family immigrated to the United States and settled in Chelsea, Massachusetts in 1848 after the death of his father. Patrick Collins attended public schools until the age

of twelve. He then worked at various trades in Ohio and Massachusetts.

At the age of fifteen, Collins returned to Boston and learned the upholstery trade. While working in an upholstery shop, he rose to the position of foreman and became active in the trade union movement. He became secretary of his union and a delegate to the Trades Assembly.

Collins was very interested in a career in law. He saved his money and became active in politics. In 1867 he was nominated for a seat in the Massachusetts House of Representatives. Shortly afterward, he started working for a law firm. He was elected to the House, serving two terms in 1868 and 1869. He then served two terms in the Massachusetts Senate in 1870 and 1871. During his time in the state legislature, he studied law at Harvard Law School. He graduated and was admitted to the bar in 1871.

Collins practiced law in Boston. He served as judge advocate general of Massachusetts in 1875. He also served as delegate to the Democratic National Conventions in 1876, 1880, 1888, and 1892. Collins was elected to the United States Con-

gress in 1882 and served three terms in the 48th, 49th and 50th Congresses from 1883 to 1890. He retired from Congress in 1889 and resumed his law practice.

Collins served as consul general in London under President Grover Cleveland from May 6, 1893 to May 17, 1897. He also served on the boards of directors of several companies and civic organizations. He was elected Mayor of Boston in 1901 and served from 1902 until his death in 1905. He died during a meeting in Hot Springs, Virginia on September 13, 1905.

Even through all of the discrimination the Irish immigrants faced, they overcame it through close communities, families, a strong religious faith, the fact that they could speak English, and didn't encounter any type of cultural shock. The Irish who came to America, and especially to Massachusetts, changed our state and country in many ways. The Irish immigrants have helped make our country great, and have helped all the people prosper. Without the Irish immigrants, Massachusetts wouldn't be the same today.

Ariana Liquori, 8th grade student at Holy Cross School, Springfield is the third place essay contest winner.

Tim Allen invites travelers to join him for his Ireland visit

Tim Allen, who led our first Journey of the Soul trip in 2004, is leading a trip to Ireland this summer. Since a group of friends asked him to organize it, it is not an official trip of the Irish Cultural Center. However, if you are interested, there are a few

spaces available and he invites anyone interested to join the group.

The trip is ten days and includes three nights in Galway, three nights in Dingle, two nights in Killarney, and a final night in Limerick. It will include many special features, in-

cluding some time and entertainment with friends of Tim's in Ireland. It promises to be a memorable trip. The trip leaves out of Boston on July 24 and returns on August 3, 2008.

In our last issue of *The Cairde Connection*, Tim wrote an article about

anticipating his Ireland visit this summer. You can find the article on our website www.irish-cairde.org if you want to reread it.

If you are interested in more information, please contact Tim at 782-7626 in Springfield or by e-mail at timallen1951@hotmail.com.