



Jan. 2010

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Lead Article from January 1980 – The Irish Famine of '48

by Mortimer O'Sullivan (1844-1918)

(This article was originally published in January, 1980. It was written by Mortimer O'Sullivan in 1905. Mortimer was the great-grandfather of Shamrock Club member Jerry O'Sullivan, as well as the father of Jeremiah, one of the early Deans of the School of Journalism at Marquette, and the grandfather of Quentin, who originally submitted this for Reflections.)

The interesting papers recently published in the "Ave Maria" from the gifted and learned writer Rev. R. O'Kennedy on the life and times of Sir Stephen De Vere, in which he graphically describes the home life, simple religious faith, mistreatment and suffering of the Irish peasantry, both before and during the great famines in Ireland, recalls to my mind some reminiscences of that period which may not be uninteresting to readers of the present day.

I was but four years old at the time of the famine of '48, and though too young at the time to have a general knowledge of the conditions which existed, I have distant recollections of occurrences in connection with our family which impressed me at the time, and which are still vivid in my own memory after the lapse of sixty-one years, as if they happened yesterday.

At that time, the family consisted of Father, Mother, and five sons, aged two four, six, eight and ten years, were living in County Cork, lying just southwest of Bantry. Whatever property that my parents owned when they were married, and I know they had some, had been lost through misfortunes that had visited them at intervals, and at the time of which I write their dependence for subsistence was confined almost exclusively to the potato crop, together with fish caught in springtime, which, when salted, were bartered in Bantry for household necessities.

When the potato crop failed, famine and pestilence crept out from

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from the pebbles, stepping stones, and pebbles, stepping stones from their hiding places, spreading suffering, terror and death throughout the community in which we lived, most of which we circumstanced no better than we were. Seaweeds and barnacles gathered from the rocks when the tides were out were gathered as food to sustain life, which seemed so dear, even in misery, and most especially so to a religious people such as they were, who had an implicit faith in Divine Providence. They were submissive to its decrees, and who regarded sin as a greater evil than bodily suffering, which must soon terminate either in death or in improvement of circumstances.

This diet soon brought fever and dysentery into most families, which in most cases resulted in death.

One of my mother's brothers, who had been crippled in youth, lived in the vicinity, and though not among the destitute himself, had a large family of his own to provide for, which taxed his resources to the utmost, leaving him with little or no means with which to help our family. This brother was an educated man, versed in both English and Gaelic languages and literature. He wrote the Irish language in characters that resembled print, and had a fine hand for English as well.

It was uncommon at that time to find among the peasantry an educated man; few of them possessed even the rudiments of an education, could neither read or write, and many spoke no language but Gaelic. Nor is it remarkable that the Catholics who had been living under the Penal Laws and Confiscation Acts, which deprived them of property and of all civil rights, and which made it a crime to even educate them, and that those laws were intended to reduce them to poverty and ignorance, and thus by degrading and exterminating them abolish the Catholic religion; and while these laws were somewhat modified after the beginning of the 19th century, or perhaps a little before, they remained in force until 1828 when the Catholic Emancipations Act was passed.

As it may be of some interest now to learn how my relation got his education under the conditions and in the surroundings I have endeavored to describe before proceeding with my narrative, I will relate what my Mother told me of it. My mother had an uncle on her father's side who she informed me was a self educated man. But she did not mean that he had received no outside help, for that would be incredible. After reaching manhood, I saw some fragments of manuscripts which had been written by him, and I never saw a neater or more legible hand; it looked like copperplate. The uncle followed the occupation of private tutor in wealthy families, and in the course of time married a Protestant woman who gave up her religion to become a Catholic. She had considerable property when they married, but died without issue. After she died, he turned over everything belonging to her to relations, and came to live with my mother's father. He brought with him a library of Gaelic and English writers, and he devoted himself to the education of my mother's brother. My mother told me her uncle taught her to read, using a textbook Goldsmith's "Animated Nature."

When the suffering of the famine-stricken people began to grow serious and the Angel of Death had already begun his merciful ministrations, my uncle wrote the Authorities in Dublin describing the destitution of the people living on seaweeds, and urging the Commissioners be sent to investigate the matter so that relief might be sent to keep them from starving.

The Commissioners came and stopped at the house, and when they left, my uncle offered them bread to take on the journey, because they would need it before they returned, as they would not encounter another house where they could get bread. They smiled and declined. My uncle met them when they returned, and they told him they had found poverty much worse than he described: sickness in every household, and in some instance death, and they regretted more than once their refused offer of the bread,

When the Commissioners sent in their report, a poor house was established in the area. the poor house soon became a pest house, into which the living entered but left dead. Soon after it opened, people decided to die at home or by the roadside.

At the time the poorhouse was ready for inmates, prospects for our family began to grow gloomy; our meager store of supplies had nearly vanished, and there was no way to renew them. My father could earn his own bread, but could earn nothing for his family, starvation began to stare us in the face, as there would soon be nothing left for us but seaweeds, the poor house and the grave.

Just at that time my father received a letter from America containing a draft for money. How much money the draft called for I do not know, that was then beyond my knowledge. My father had a younger himself who had gone to America, later to get married; but he was never heard from after he had left Ireland, and my father knew nothing of his whereabouts.

This brother met someone in America from our neighborhood who told him of our destitution, and the letter and the money were from him. Next we were on to America, and a new life.

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South Central Shamrock Club News

December 6th – The South Central Shamrock Club celebrated their Christmas Party at the Baraboo Country Club. Congratulations to Luanne (Sheahan) Krohn, Reedsburg, WI and Richard (Dick) Fish of LaValle, WI who were selected to represent our club as Irish Rose and Irishman of 2010!

Luanne and Dick will be honored on March 20th during our annual St. Patrick's Day Party.

It is time to renew your membership or join us. Please send \$20 for single membership or \$25 for family membership to: John Delmore, E9995 County Road P, Wisconsin Dells, WI 53965.

January Birthday Wishes to: Lucele Peterson 1/2; Jerry Dargel 1/17; John Delmore 1/18; Roger Stieve 1/20; Kate Birdsell 1/30; Pat Frederickson 1/30.

Happy New Year!

Slante,

– Dana Horkan-Gant

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Milwaukee President's Message

Happy New Year to all! Ten years into the new millennium has brought us all into a world of amazing technologies and communications. The buzzword for 2009 is "twitter" and has nothing to do with birds. What will the next decade bring? Shamrock Club members will spend the year in celebration of our golden anniversary. We kick off in January and keep going all year. Let's see where we are in the scheme of things in the next decade. With the help of all of you, we will succeed.

Was your Christmas merry and bright? Did you try any of the wonderful recipes in the December issue of *Emerald Reflections*? Don't forget our chili cook-off contest for the meeting this month, January 7 to be exact. Contact Veronica Ceszynski to be included. The best part of the contest is the membership will get to have a sample of the entries at the meeting. January seems to be a great month for chili, and it contains lots of ingredients that are so good for you. Come join the fun, and Veronica promises a prize to the winner.

This is the month we announce the winners of our essay contest. The winning family will have the once in a lifetime opportunity to ride on our 50th anniversary float. If you have your entry in by January 2, you're eligible for the judging. Thanks to Mary Moze and Maggie Blaha for their time and talent as the judges. All the entries will become the property of the Shamrock Club. We are asking you to be a member to enter of course. The question of joining the club and then entering is possible. We couldn't make this easier to be part of the fun.

Be sure your entry is in for the selection of the 2010 honorees. We

will vote at the board meeting on January 28, and as always, the nominees must be members to be selected. We are looking forward to making this another year in well deserved men and women being chosen. In looking at the bylaws, it is possible to be chosen for the same position more than once. Someone asked me if it could happen, and the answer is yes. We always call the winner to verify their acceptance before announcing the winners. If you want to nominate yourself, that may also be done. The meeting of the board begins earlier than usual that night, we go through our regular business meeting, and then go into a closed session to review the nomination entries. This is done to preserve the confidentiality of the procedure. Let's hope your name is offered, and better yet, be a winner.

Lots of contests this month, but that keeps it all exciting. Be at the meeting to begin the year right, make it a resolution to be there, and help honor all things Irish, and those folks that have worked to make this club the organization we all want to succeed and head into the next fifty years.

– Julie Smith, President

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Nomination of Milwaukee Officers

Nominations for officers of the Milwaukee chapter will take place at the March and April meetings. Persons nominated must be members in good standing of the Shamrock Club, with dues paid in full, and must be present for their nominations. Elections will take place at the May meeting.

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Volunteers Needed for Post Parade Party

We will need volunteers for the Post Parade Party on March 13. We will need help in food, bars, doors, children's and set up. If you can help, please contact PPP director Al Moss at [mossjr.alton@millercoors.com]

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Post Parade Party To Feature “Different Drums of Ireland”

The Shamrock Club’s March 13 Post Parade Party will feature the award winning band *Different Drums of Ireland*. *Different Drums* features the drums of the two religious cultures of Northern Ireland, the Lambegs of the Protestants and the Bodhran of the Catholics. *Different Drums* have become a Milwaukee favorite from their repeated appearances at Milwaukee Irish Fest, as well as other venues. *Different Drums* has all sorts of drums as well as pipes, fiddles and more.

Other groups scheduled for performing will be *Dublin O’Shea*, *Ian Gould*, *Ce*, *Blarney*, the *Shamrock Club Color Guard Pipes and Drums*. The dance schools this year will be *Kinsella*, *Glencastle* and *Rince Nia*, as well as the *Caledonian Scottish Dancers*. *Eileen O’Rourke* will be doing leprechaun stories.

The Post Parade Party will run from 1 until 6 p.m.

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Ceili For Peace

The annual Ceili for Peace will take place on Saturday, January 30, 2010 at UW Milwaukee’s Greene Hall, 3347 N. Downer Avenue, Milwaukee. The music is by *Ceol Cairde*, and will be called by Julie Clark. There will be a mini-concert by the band at 7 p.m., and a called ceili will start at 7:30 p.m. You do not need a partner, and dancing will be taught.

Proceeds from the Ceili for Peace will go to the Casa Maria Hospitality House.

Admission is \$8, or \$6 and two non-perishable food items for Casa Maria Shelter. Low or fixed income \$4, children 6-16 years \$3, children under 6 free entrance.

For more information, contact Kristina Paris at (414) 372-3060 or [info@ceolcairde.com].

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Milwaukee's Parade Made Top St. Patrick's Days

The Shamrock Club's Milwaukee parade made the AOL top St. Patrick's Day celebrations in 2009.

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Irish Honoree Nominations Needed

We need nominations for Irishman of the Year, Irish Rose and Parade Marshal for 2010. Please submit them in writing by the January 2010 Milwaukee board meet-ing. Nominees must be members in good standing, with dues paid up. Nominators must also be members in good standing. Send nominations to Shamrock Club, 2133 W. Wisconsin Ave., Milwaukee, WI 53233.

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Kid's Christmas Party

From January 1980 Reflections

John McMahon as the leprechaun, did an outstanding job. About 140 kids sang, ate and drank and received a present from Santa (Fran Connolly) and Mrs. Santa (Barb Rosine). Ed Reidy

Studies in Irish-American Literature at UWM – Instructor, James Liddy. Gift Suggestion – Why not give someone a chance to win a trip to Ireland in 1980, or one of 9 cash prizes? Bill O'Boyle. Irish Rovers February 29 – Special Discount for Shamrock Club members – Ed Ward.



Folk Fair 1979 – Shirley Reich and Mary McAndrew at the Shamrock Club Cultural Booth in medieval wear.

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RTE News: Kinane Retirement Imminent

It has been reported that Mick Kinane is set to announce his retirement from horse racing.

The 50-year-old, who rode Sea the Stars to victory in the Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe in Paris just months ago, is now expected to follow the colt into retirement. Kinane couldn't be contacted to confirm.

The Tipperary man has been champion jockey of Ireland 13 times and has ridden winners in the 2,000 Guineas four times, the Epsom Derby three times, the Melbourne Cup in Australia and, in the United States, the Belmont Stakes.

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lá gaeilge – Irish Language Day

February 20, 2010

A warm welcome awaits you as tradition and talent from the heart of Ireland comes to the heart of America. Our unique cultural event features classes in the Irish language, workshops in traditional singing and old style dancing, movies, concerts and presentations. Throughout the day you can also visit *Siopa Gaeilge*, our Irish language books and media shop.

For the first time, the Center for Celtic Studies invites you share this day with your children. A special Children's Workshop will be held in the afternoon.

Complete Beginners Welcome!

Location: UWM's Hefter Center, 3271 N. Lake Dr.; Milwaukee

Registration: \$25; \$15 w/out lunch; \$10 for Children. FREE to all students, but pre-registration is necessary for anyone who wants lunch. Students may also purchase lunch tickets at \$10 each.

Checks should be made out to The UWM Foundation. To register, simply fill out the attached form and send it to:

UWM Center for Celtic Studies
Holton Hall 290
P.O. Box 413
Milwaukee WI 53201-0413lá gaeilge – Irish Language Day

February 20, 2010

Registration Form

Name: _____

University Student: ___yes ___no

Address: _____

City: _____

State, Zip: _____

Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

Morning Language Workshops:

___Beginner ___Intermediate ___Advanced

Lunch: ___yes ___no

Children's Lunch (number): _____

Afternoon Workshops:

Session 1: ___Dance ___Irish Language ___Singing

Session 2: ___Dance ___Irish Language ___Singing

Children's Workshop: ____yes ____no

Number of Children: _____

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Celtic Women First Friday Lectures



Julie Revane, Barb Finch, Cate Harris, Pete Kucik.

Date: Jan. 8, 2010 (2nd Friday)

Topic: "Scottish Stories and Songs"

Speaker: Ian Day

Since we are still in the holiday season, the January lecture will be held on the **SECOND** Friday, the 8th. From 5:30 to 7 p.m., Ian Day will entertain with his vast repertoire of Scottish songs, stories and guitar music. Our wonderful Lecture Ladies, pictured here, provide tea and assorted goodies for all. Please join us for an enjoyable couple of hours of entertainment and Celtic enrichment. The lectures are held at Greene Hall on the UWM campus, 3347 N. Downer Ave. with ample street parking at the door. The building is wheelchair accessible. Everyone is welcome. \$7 admission.

A native-born Scotsman transplanted to Milwaukee, Ian is well known as an expert on the poetry and life of Robert Burns, an accomplished story-teller and a fine purveyor of Scottish songs. To spend an hour listening to Ian Day is to lose yourself in the Scotland of old. Join us this day in spite of the Wisconsin weather. A cup of tea will take us all to Scotland while we listen to his songs and stories.

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Veronica's Cupboard

Thank you to all those who contributed to our Christmas Banquet. The great assortment of wonderful foods certainly set the tone for a real old-fashioned Irish family Christmas!

We should all thank our decorating committee for the beautiful banquet hall they designed for us: Kathy Donovan, Dawn Fleming, Julie Smith and Kris Ploskuta were Santa's elves that night.

January brings the much anticipated Chili Competition. Anyone who cooks chili is convinced that her/his recipe is the very best. So, cleanse your palette, bring your appetite and help decide who is the winner of this historic event.

Your help is needed: A-G crackers; H-P salads; Q-Z dessert. Please make your offerings light as the chili will certainly almost be enough.

Questions?? Suggestions?? I'd love to hear from you? Veronica (414) 228-8621, or email [irishv@ameritech.net].

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Shamrock Club Raffle

Tickets will be mailed out for the 2010 St. Patrick's Day Raffle. Prizes are still being finalized at the time of writing, but they will be wonderful, as always. The proceeds from the raffle are used to pay for Irish Studies and School of Piping and Drumming scholarships.

The drawing will be April 1, 2010 at 7:30 p.m. at the Irish Cultural and Heritage Center, 2133 W. Wisconsin Ave., Milwaukee, during the Shamrock Club general meeting.

Raffle ticket printing underwritten by the Milwaukee Hurling Club [<http://www.hurling.net>]

Tickets \$2 each, three for \$5, six for \$10, nine for \$15, twelve for \$20. State of Wisconsin License # R0000744 A-03517

Tickets available at the ICHC, County Clare Inn, 1234 North Astor Street, or by calling (414) 571-0722.

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50th Anniversary Committee

We have ordered a 50th Anniversary Flag. Julie Smith has ordered and picked up the 50th anniversary letterhead.

The float will be funded by a donation. Plans are underway on the construction of the float by members of the Shamrock Club.

The next meeting is scheduled for January 11, 2010 at at Josh Walton's home, 2432 N. Lefebber Ave., Wauwatosa, at 7 p.m. If you wish to join, please stop by, or call Josh at (414) 443-0446.

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Web Site Problems

We recently had problems with both our main and our parade web sites. Our server host has corrected the issues. We apologize for any inconvenience.

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Shamrock Club Essay Contest

Why We Want to Ride on the 50th Anniversary Float

Our 50th Anniversary is in 2010. If you would like to be able to ride on the 50th Anniversary Float, please enter. Our requirements are Shamrock Club membership, and a 200 word essay.

Entries must have the written requirements (max. 200 words, typed, double spaced, no real family names are used.) You can download an entry form at our website, [<http://shamrockclubwis.com>], or pick one up at the ICHC.

The deadline is January 2, 2010. There is no limit to the number of entries.

For more information, please contact Mary Moze at [mozem@att.net] or mail to Shamrock Club, 2133 W. Wisconsin Avenue, Milwaukee WI 53233.

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Members' Doings



Shamrock Club Color Guard Pipes and Drums played at the Fire and Police Chili Cookoff in November.

Julie Pruske recently sang with *Present Music Now*, as well as with the *Milwaukee Children's Choir* Christmas show at the South Milwaukee PAC.

Mary Beth Holloway vacationed in Arizona.

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Sunshine Club

Long time member and Bradley Center volunteer Ed Barlow died recently. Our condolences to his family.

Dr. Sean Keane, a Milwaukee area surgeon who provided free health care for Milwaukee's Irish, and was also the voice of John Brown on the Irish music show *Radio Erin*, died recently, as well.

After many years, Joe and Catherine Donovan are stepping down as head of the Sunshine Club. They are being replaced by Tom and Maggie Blaha. The Blahas can be contacted at [slainte41-shamrock@yahoo.com].

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