

## A Prosey View of Irish Christmas

Irish Christmas is a time that has been remembered fondly by most Irish. The most cynical of Irish can feel their hearts melt at the thoughts of their childhood at Nollaig. The cleaning of the house, the hanging of the holly, the cooking of special meals and breads, the candles in the windows, all are the floss of childhood.

How the Irish looked back on Christmas, in reality or fiction, can be a bit of a revelation. Some views are sentimental: others are starkly dark. Let us take a trip to the past and see how Christmas was seen through the telescope of observers.

William Carleton was a writer who recorded many tales about the denizens of the Emerald Isle in the 1830's. He recalled a slightly joyful memory of Christmas in *"Traits and Stories of the Irish Peasantry, when 1830 – 33."*

"Christmas-Day passed among the peasantry, as it usually passes in Ireland. Friends met before dinner in their own, in their neighbours', in shebeen or in public houses, where they drank, sang, or fought, according to their natural dispositions, or the quantity of liquor they had taken. The festivity might be known by the unusual reek of smoke that danced from each chimney, by the number of persons who crowded the roads, by their bran-new dresses, – for if a young man or country girl can afford a dress at all, they provide it for Christmas, – and by the striking appearance of those who, having drunk a little too much, were staggering home in the purest happiness, singing, stopping their friends, shaking hands with them, or kissing them, without any regard to sex."

William O'Brien wrote in his 1878 book, *Christmas on the Galtees*, of life in the workhouse. He almost makes what was the last resort of the broke and

bankrupt of Ireland sound as though it was idyllic.

"I went to Mitchelstown workhouse today to see the paupers eat their Christmas dinner. The prospects I had seen of the festive season at Skeheenarinka excited a curiosity to learn how much worse off an idle pauper could be than a farmer who has spent all his days creating soil upon the breast of a mountain.

"Now, the Mitchelstown Guardians do not feast their charges with roast beef and plum-pudding, and currant cake and tea, nor are the rooms wreathed with holly, nor do kind ladies distribute toys and sweetmeats among the children, as is done within other workhouse walls of my acquaintance. But they give the paupers a breakfast of bread and coffee, and a solid dinner of one pound of prime boiled beef and vegetables, with an inexhaustible cauldron of appetizing soup. I saw the old people attack their trenchers, and right heartily demolish their contents." Underfed people generally have good appetites when given the chance to eat.

Frank Hennesey, whose family came from Waterford, was born and lives in Wales. He was touring Ireland with his folk group, The Hennesey's, in 1968, using Cork as a base. He discovered how tasty a basic meal could be.

"We had been in Ireland since June and had settled in Cork City under the guidance of our Manager, Christie. We

had just finished a gig in one of Cork's ballad lounges and it was about 11:15 p.m. on Christmas Eve when we packed our instruments into the group's A 35 van and made our way to the fine cathedral for Midnight Mass. Our Christmas duty done, we headed out to Christie's home in Ballintemple where we were assured of a warm Yuletide welcome.

"It was then that Christie played his ace. 'Have a little drop of soup', he said, 'it'll do ye good and set ye up for the drive home'. For a split second I wavered and the next moment a large steaming bowl of broth was shoved in front of me and a spoon pressed into my hand.

'Yerra, get it down ye', encouraged Christie, 'I'll bet ye never tasted the like of it'. He was right. It was wonderful. I couldn't stop scoffing it. It was addictive. This broth had a depth of flavour and a quality of consistency I'd never tasted before, or indeed since. It warmed me up alright. In fact I was in danger of boiling over as I polished off the last drop. I was sweating like a pig. Off came my jacket and pullover as I sat there puffing away Billy O. I then noticed four pairs of eyes staring at me intently.

'Nice soup, was it?', enquired Marie. 'So it should be', exclaimed Christie, 'there was a half bottle of poteen in it'.

'But how are we going to get home?,' I said, recovering a tiny bit of sense.  
*continued on page 5*

**DECEMBER 3, 2015 • 6:30 PM**  
**MILWAUKEE MONTHLY MEMBERSHIP MEETING**  
 Irish Cultural and Heritage Center (2133 W. Wisconsin Avenue)

☘ ☘ ☘

Christmas Potluck & Party • Please bring a dish to pass.



## ☘ Milwaukee Calendar of Events ☘

For More Information visit <http://shamrockclubwis.com>

### DECEMBER

- 2 Irish Emigration Library; ICHC; 12-6 pm
- 3 **Shamrock Club Christmas Party and Pot Luck**; ICHC; 6:30 pm
- 5 First Friday Ceili; ICHC; Music by Frogwater; 7:30 pm
- 5 Hallamor Concert; ICHC; 2133 W. Wisconsin Ave; Christmas with Makem and Spain; 7:30 pm
- 5 Cherish the Ladies; Cedarburg Performing Arts Center; 7:30 pm
- 6 Cherish the Ladies; Oconomowoc Arts Center; 7.30 pm
- 7 Annual Irish Genealogical Society of Wisconsin Holiday Party; ICHC; 7 pm
- 8 Celtic Women International Book Club; *An Irish Country Christmas*, by Alice Taylor; Hostess: Rosemary Walsh; ICHC; 1 pm
- 11 Celtic Woman Home for Christmas; Symphony Tour; with the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra; Riverside Theatre; 7.30 pm
- 12 Tallymoore and the Milwaukee Irish Fest School of Music Christmas concert; Milwaukee Irish Fest Center, 1532 N Wauwatosa; 8 pm; Benefit for the Milwaukee Irish Fest Summer School
- 12 Chant Clair Chamber Choir; ICHC; 2133 W. Wisconsin Ave; 7:00 pm;

### JANUARY

- 2 December Set Dance; Irish Cultural and Heritage Center, 2133 W Wisconsin; music by athas; 7 pm
- 4 Irish Genealogical Society of Wisconsin meeting; Shorewood Library; *Women of 1916*; Marguerite Helmers, Rosebush Professor of English UW Oshkosh
- 7 **Shamrock Club Monthly Meeting**; ICHC; 7 pm

### FEBRUARY

- 1 Irish Genealogical Society of Wisconsin meeting; Shorewood Library; 7 pm
- 4 **Shamrock Club Monthly Meeting**; ICHC; 7 pm

**ON GOING** ... Set dancing at the following: Set dancing Wednesdays, 7 PM at O'Donoghue's ☘ Craobh Curtin Conradh na Gaeilge meeting at O'Donoghue's Pub, 7 PM, last Tuesday each month ☘ Irish Emigration Library in ICHC open every Wednesday 12-6 PM ☘ Irish Sing-a-long, Irish Fest Center, First Sundays, (through May) 7 PM ☘ Irish Fest Sing-a-long: O'Donoghue's Pub, second and fourth Sundays, 7-9 PM ☘ Irish Music Sessions at the following: Session - O'Donoghue's, Sundays 7 PM; Thursdays @ Paddy's 7 PM; and The Pub in Oconomowoc, 7:30 PM ☘ Thursdays: Barry Dodd; County Clare Inn; 10 PM ☘ Fridays: áthas and Myserk; County Clare Inn; 6 PM ☘

## Irish Christmas Pudding

Irish Christmas pudding is also known as plum pudding, though I have no idea why as it does not contain any plums, and is an absolutely essential part of an Irish Christmas.

Every family has its own favorite recipe, but all make a rich fruit pudding with lots of alcohol. Many recipes use suet as the shortening, and while this is certainly more traditional, for me it makes a pudding that is too heavy and 'fatty'.

### Ingredients

Grated rind and juice of 1 lemon  
Grated rind and juice of 1 orange  
1 large apple, grated finely  
1 cups sultanas  
1 cups raisins  
1 heaped tbsp chopped or flaked almonds  
1 heaped tbsp chopped cherries  
1 tbsp chopped mixed peel  
½ cup brown sugar  
2 tsps mixed spice (cinnamon, ginger, cloves, nutmeg)  
3 tbsp Whiskey  
1 cup fresh white breadcrumbs  
1 cup self raising flour  
2 eggs, beaten together  
½ teaspoon salt  
4 oz (1 stick) butter

This is enough to make a pudding in a 1 pint pudding bowl. You will need some waxed or greaseproof paper to cover the pudding, or you can use a pudding bowl with a tight fitting lid. You will need a little additional butter to grease the inside of a pudding bowl before adding the pudding mix.

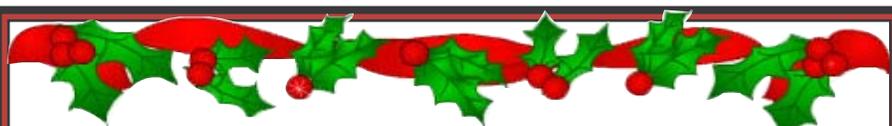
Mix together all the ingredients above, down to and including the whiskey in a large bowl. Cover and leave for at least 3-4 hours or overnight.

Stir the breadcrumbs through the fruit mix. Using an electric blender, mix the flour, eggs, salt and butter together. Add to the fruit mix and stir well. If the mixture seems a little dry add a dessertspoon or two of milk.

Put the mixture into a bowl and cover tightly using the lid or a cover made from several layers of greaseproof or waxed paper held in place with string.

Place the bowl in a saucepan of water, with the water coming about 2/3rds up the side of the pudding bowl. Bring to the boil then reduce the heat to a bare simmer. Cover the saucepan with a well fitted lid. Simmer like this for about 6 hours. You will probably need to top the water up now and then – keep an eye on it.

The cooked pudding will keep for months. When it is needed, steam it again for about 2 hours in the bowl, or turn out of the bowl and reheat in the microwave oven for about 5-10 mins. Serve with sherry or brandy sauce or fresh cream.



*Christmas Party - Nollaig Shona Daoibh!*

**Join us for the Shamrock Club's Christmas Party**

Thursday, December 3, 2015

Irish Cultural and Heritage Center, 6:30 PM

**Potluck Dinner**

Entertainment includes Patti and Dan Stotmeister with Rand Harteau, Caroling, Santa and a special guest from the North Pole. See you there!!



## Milwaukee President's Message

Nollaig Shona! Happy Christmas Season!

Friends and family will soon be gathering to tell stories of their past year - some wonderful, some very sad, but all are shared with the thought that the burden is lighter when people we love care. This year we counted many blessings with our Shamrock Club family at meetings, shared births, watched our future members grow, celebrated anniversaries, celebrated lives lived and lost, celebrated thousands of volunteer hours and years of service, welcomed past members back and welcomed new members into our family.

Every year, as I look back, I am amazed that though the money gets tighter and tighter, we as a Club have the most hard working and supportive group of people willing to share their time and talents, stories, and themselves to keep the traditions going and spin them in new ways to keep up with the times. Thank you!

We will celebrate our December meeting with food and music in the Irish tradition! Please bring a dish to pass. Dawn is a great inspiration with having us pull together to have beautiful feasts at the last few meetings. Also, if it is in your hearts to share some canned or boxed food for those in need, Dawn and Pete Fleming will be collecting those at the meeting.

Have a wonderful holiday season!

See you at the meeting!

- Mary Culver, President



## Celtic Women Lecture December 4, 2015

Topic: "A Christmas Celebration with Show and Tell"

Speaker: Audience bring a treasured keepsake for our admiration.



Do you have a precious item from your ancestors, a hand-me-down or a simple item that is meaningful in the family? Please bring it along and share its story with us. This is a special annual Christmas celebration that continues in its 19th year. Bring a yummy treat or a keepsake, or both, and enjoy the Christmas Celtic spirit.

All lectures are held from 5:30 - 7:00 p.m. at the Irish Cultural and Heritage Center, 2133 W. Wisconsin Avenue, Milwaukee. Parking lot available from the 23rd street alley. 2015-16 is our 19th year of lectures without interruption. The public is invited as always. We offer tea and home-made snacks and promise a delightful couple of hours. \$3 admission.

- Jean Bills

new e-mail address: JeanKBills@aol.com



## Word of the Month

Ca - (kaw) Where

Cá bhfuil mo chota agus mo hata?

(Kaw Will moe ho-ta agus moe ha-ta)

Where is my coat and my hat?

An additional phrase:

Tá sé fuar amuigh ansin!

(Ta shea foo-are a-mugh an-shin)

It's cold out there.



## Christmas with Makem and Spain Saturday, December 5, 7:30 pm

Rory Makem and Liam and Mickey Spain, three acclaimed performers who embrace and uphold the legacy of Tommy Makem and the Clancy Brothers, will perform at the Irish Cultural and Heritage Center, 2133 W. Wisconsin Ave., Milwaukee, on Saturday, Dec, 5 at 7:30 p.m.



The trio has taken the international stage with the vocal power of three-part harmonies, superb instrumentals and an engaging stage presence. Makem and Spain are celebrated for capturing the essence of their genre while making the music their own. They were featured in this year's Milwaukee Irish Fest Tribute to Tommy Makem.

Born in County Louth, Ireland, Rory continues the lineage of a music dynasty begun by his grandmother Sarah, who was sought after by collectors for her store of traditional songs. His late father, Tommy Makem, is credited with helping bring Irish music to a worldwide spotlight and is referred to as the Bard of Armagh.

The Spain Brothers learned Irish songs from their father while growing up in New Hampshire. Mickey's rich baritone voice and Liam's mastery of stringed instruments found a home when they met Rory and combined talents.

Tickets are \$24 in advance, \$28 on concert day and \$10 for students with ID. Go to [www.ichc.net](http://www.ichc.net) to order. Tickets may also be purchased by calling (414) 345-8800.

The Celtic Christmas Boutique and bake sale in the ICHC Parlour will begin at 6 p.m. on Dec. 5 and will remain open during the concert and intermission.

- Kathy Schultz

## Emerald Reflections Copy Deadline

Content for Emerald Reflections is due on the 15th of the month (next deadline: December 15th to appear in the Jan. issue). Copy received after that date will not appear due to deadlines. While we try to include every submission possible, due to space limitations, we cannot guarantee that every submission will be included immediately. E-mail submissions preferred, send to:

**Brian Witt, Editor**  
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**Pam Canon, Publisher**

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To become a member of the Shamrock Club of Wisconsin contact the membership chair of the chapter you would like to join. MILWAUKEE ONLY: Family membership (includes both parents and all children under eighteen) - \$25.00. Single membership - \$20.00. Membership is renewable annually on the anniversary month of the original membership. Please send all new and renewal Milwaukee club membership dues to Membership Chair, 2133 West Wisconsin Avenue, Milwaukee, WI 53233. Be sure to send change of address notification to Membership Chair, also. The post office will NOT forward copies of Reflections.

## Sunshine Report



Joe Donovan celebrated his 94th birthday on Thursday, November 5, 2015.

Mary Moze was in attendance for the meeting having broken her femur on October 9th.

Mary Ann Stevens fell and broke several vertebrae.

Jack and Sue Suit's daughter, Lindsey is expecting twin boys January 6, 2016.

Sue Dushek had surgery on the Thursday after the meeting.

Cate Harris has been inducted into the Holiday Folk Fair Wall of Honor on November 20, 2015. Congratulations, Cate, for your many years of service.

If you have Sunshine news, please email it to: slainte4142-shamrock@yahoo.com.

- Maggie Blaha, Sunshine Chair

### Board Meeting Time Change

The start time for the Shamrock Club board meetings has been changed to 6:30 pm. Meetings are held on the last Thursday of the month.

## Dawn's Corner Cupboard

### Christmas Party!

Pot Luck! Bring the dish you signed up for by 6:15 so we can begin eating at 6:30pm. The club will provide the ham. If you were not at the last meeting and don't know what to bring, please email me at pfleming4@wi.rr.com or call me: 414-303-3149. Santa, Mrs. Claus, Santa's Favorite Elf, fantastic Christmas music and singing will be part of this special Christmas evening.

Do not forget that Pete and I are collecting warm clothing and food for the homeless. Merry Christmas, Dawn.

- Dawn Fleming  
Sergeant-at-Arms



## Celtic Women International

The CWI Book Club meetings begin at 1:00 pm at the ICHC and include discussion, tea, and treats. New members and guests are always welcome to join us!

Rosemary Walsh will host our December 8th meeting when we will discuss *An Irish Country Christmas* by Alice Taylor.

To start the new year, Gail McAleese will host our January 12th meeting. Our topic will be *1916* by Morgan Llywelyn.

We will not meet in February, but will resume on March 8th when we will discuss *Paperboy* by Tony MacCauley. Our hostess will be Pat Powers.

On April 11th, Sharon Walsh will be our hostess. We will view a movie at this meeting.



- Rosemary Walsh  
rowalsh@wi.rr.com



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*Meeting*  
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or small events

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continued from page 1

‘You’re not going home, you’re staying here the night. The front room floor has plenty of cushions and blankets laid out and the fire’s well banked up’, said Marie. ‘Now, any more for soup?’”

One of the most popular authors in Ireland in recent years has been Alice Taylor. Her books about life in Ireland, *To School Through the Fields – an Irish Country Childhood*, originally published by Dingle Books in 1988, was the best-selling book in the country for many years.

She recounts her life in the 1940s, a time that was filled with bewitchment and fascination.

“Christmas in our house was always magical and for weeks beforehand my toes would tingle at the thought of it. The first inkling of its reality was Santa’s picture in the Cork Examiner: we pored over him, loving every wrinkle in his benevolent face. At first his was a small face peeping from an obscure corner, but as Christmas drew nearer his presence became more reassuringly felt as he filled a larger space on the page.

“The first step in the preparations in our home was the plucking of the geese, not only for our own family but also for all our relations. A night in early December was set aside for killing and plucking; homework had to be completed quickly after school that day and when the cows had been milked and supper finished the kitchen was cleared for the undertaking. I never witnessed the actual cleaning because my mother performed this ritual away from the eyes of us children, but when she brought the geese still slightly flapping and warm into the kitchen I always felt that she, who was gentle by nature, had been through some sacrificial fire which but for necessity she would have avoided.

“A big turnip was cleaned and a hole bored in it for the candle; this was decorated with red berried holly and placed in the window. That night no blinds would be drawn so that the light would shine out to light the way for Joseph and Mary. Before supper the Christmas log was brought in and placed behind the fire in the open hearth. Banked around with sods of turf it soon sent out a glow of warmth to make the toast that was part of

our Christmas supper tradition.

“Breakfast was always of baked ham, after which the remainder of the family went to the second Mass of the day. Before leaving for Mass my mother placed the stuffed goose in a bastable over the fire with layers of hot coals on the cover. There it slowly roasted, filling the kitchen with a mouth-watering aroma.”

Taylor told of going to Mass, finding her presents in the morning, and of the yearly events her parents celebrated. But then, the day would end. “It was all over for another year, but each year was another page in the book of childhood.”

Your Christmas is filled with your own memories and celebrations. Celebrate it well.

Nollaig shona daoibh.  
Merry Christmas to all.



- Brian Witt



### The Wren Song

The Wren, the Wren the king of all birds,  
St. Stephens day, he was caught in the furze.  
Although he is little, his honor is great,  
Rise up, kind sir, and give us a trate.  
We followed this Wren ten miles or more  
Through hedges and ditches and heaps of snow



We up with our wattles and gave him a fall  
And brought him here to show you all.  
For we are the boys that came your way  
To bury the Wren on Saint Stephens Day.  
So up with the kettle and down with the pan!  
Give us some help for to bury the Wren!



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The Board of Directors of the Irish Cultural and Heritage Center of Wisconsin (ICHC) announces the establishment of the Tierney Irish Music Fund. This fund will support bringing high-caliber Irish and Celtic music year round to the Hallamór Concert Series at the ICHC.

The fund is named for Dick Tierney, founding member of the Irish Cultural and Heritage Center. Dick passed away on September 11, 2014 at age 86. He was a beloved member of the Milwaukee Irish community, known for his big smile and ability to make others happy. Irish music was one of his passions.

Dick was inspired to create the Hallamór Concert Series when the ICHC found a permanent home at the historic Grand Avenue Congregational Church on West Wisconsin Ave. in 1996. The series showcases Irish and Celtic musicians of national and world renown, with three concerts in the fall and three in the spring. Performances are held in the 400-plus seat Hallamór (or Grand Hall), which also features a 1910 Kimball organ. In his years as entertainment coordinator, Dick booked dozens of performers such as Altan, Brother, Cherish the Ladies, Liz Carroll and John Doyle, Solas, and Tommy Makem.

The new Tierney Irish Music Fund will be used exclusively for booking talent for the Hallamór Concert Series. According to ICHC president, Karen Prendergast, “The board was looking for a way to thank Dick for all his work for the Center, back to the beginning in 1992, not a memorial, but something vibrant that keeps us moving forward. This is our way to preserve what Dick started for future generations. As the fund grows, we want to bring more of the best Irish and Celtic music to Milwaukee throughout the year.”

A schedule of entertainers for the upcoming Hallamór series can be found on the Center’s website at [www.ichc.net](http://www.ichc.net). There is also a link for donations to the fund, which are welcomed from the public and business community.

For more information about the Tierney Irish Music Fund and the Hallamór Concert Series, contact ICHC President Karen Prendergast at [president@ichc.net](mailto:president@ichc.net).

## St. Patrick's Church Organ Fundraising



St. Patrick's Roman Catholic Church was built beginning in 1893 and completed in 1895. The church was built to serve the growing Irish immigrant population in Milwaukee. St. Patrick's is fortunate to have a very rare Schulte organ - one of only four like it in the United States. The organ underwent an extensive restoration twenty-five years ago. The bulk of the work on this two and a half-year project was done by Shamrock Club members Jerry Hill, Jack Noonan, Erv Jankowiak and Joe Donovan. This organ, which lends such beautiful music for our mass every St. Patrick's Day, is once again in need of some repairs.

We are hoping to raise the money needed for the repairs. The Shamrock Club is accepting all donations. Checks should be made out to the Shamrock Club, with "St. Patrick's Organ Fund" written on the memo line and can be mailed to the Shamrock Club, 2133 W. Wisconsin Ave., Milwaukee, WI 53233. Please give generously. It would be a shame to not be able to have the organ played at our mass this coming March.

For more information, please call Chuck McLaughlin at 414-771-0458 or email Maggie Blaha at slainte4142-shamrock@yahoo.com.

## Facebook & Social Media

If you haven't seen us on Facebook, like us! 1200 people have already. <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Shamrock-Club-of-Wisconsin/102023943184>



You can also find us on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/shamrockclubwis> or on LinkedIn at [www.linkedin.com/company/shamrock-club-of-wisconsin](http://www.linkedin.com/company/shamrock-club-of-wisconsin).

## Milwaukee Membership News

Welcome to winter. I know the thought of that sounds kind of gloomy, but then I realized we are fast closing in on the "Green Season" which means lots of activity for all of us. As we move through the winter months, take time to recharge yourself for the events of the "Green Season." As a volunteer-run organization, your help is needed at many of the coming events. An hour or two of your time is a valuable contribution.

By the time this goes to print, we will have already finished Holiday Folk Fair so I would like to extend a huge thank you to all of our members that helped with this event. A special thank you goes out to the members of the State Advisory Board, which met Saturday during Folk Fair, and then stayed around to help out at our three different areas.

Lastly from my family to yours, I would like to wish all of you a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

- Glenn Nowak, Membership Chair

## Donate to the Club

The Shamrock Club is a 501 (c) (3) corporation. If you donate to us, you can write this off on your taxes. Donate to our scholarship fund, our general fund, or to the parade. Thank you!

## Cate Harris Named to Holiday Folk Fair Hall of Fame



Cate Harris has been named to the Holiday Folk Fair International Volunteer Hall of Fame and was recognized at the 72nd annual event which was held in November. She was recognized for participating in Folk Fair for at least 10 years and having made a significant contribution to the promotion and preservation of cultural, racial, and ethnic heritage and international understanding.

Cate has been involved in Folk Fair since 1984 in a variety of roles with different Irish cultural groups. She served as the Folk Fair General Chair from 2003-2006, then as coordinator of the World Café. Now she oversees the International Bazaar marketplace and can be found sharing her wit and wisdom in the Folk Fair office.

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or: [www.saintpatricksparade.org](http://www.saintpatricksparade.org)

## An Old Gaelic Prayer

May the Road Rise to meet you  
May the wind be always at your back  
May the sun shine warm upon your face,  
till the rains fall soft upon your fields.  
And, until we meet again,  
May God hold you in the palm of His hands.



## EMERALD REFLECTIONS PHOTO OF THE MONTH



Jacob Nowak demonstrates how to make potato soup at the International Holiday Folk Fair with the assistance of his grandfather, Tom McAleese.

Photo by