



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE MUSEUM OF NEWPORT IRISH HISTORY

Published by the Museum of Newport Irish History
P.O. Box 1378 Newport, RI 02840 (401) 848-0661

VOLUME 31

FALL/WINTER 2010/2011

2ND ANNUAL "IRISH EYES" BENEFIT A GREAT SUCCESS

Though final proceeds are still be tallied at press time, it is clear the 2nd Annual "When Irish Eyes are Smiling" benefit for the Museum's Interpretive Site Fund was a great success, financially and socially. Well over 100 Museum members, guests and community supporters gathered on Saturday January 29 at Salve Regina University' elegant and historic Ochre Court for an evening of Irish musical entertainment, delicious food and drink, and tempting silent auction offerings from many generous donors. Event attendees were treated to harp music by Mary King, a traditional Irish music session with A.O. Gutierrez, Tim May and Jack Wright, the three co-hosts of the weekly Irish music session at the Fastnet Pub, and special guest, the award-winning Celtic fiddler and recording artist, Sheila Falls, who was accompanied by her singer and guitarist husband, Tim Keohane. Among the many lovely auction items were watercolor paintings by both Richard Grosvenor and Holly Grosvenor, and a custom-designed gold and silver necklace by master jeweler, Angel Gonzalez, owner of Newport's Platinum House jewelers. Gonzalez's pendant is a reproduction of the Celtic-inspired seal selected as a symbol of the Museum's new Interpretive Site. The Celtic seal will be used

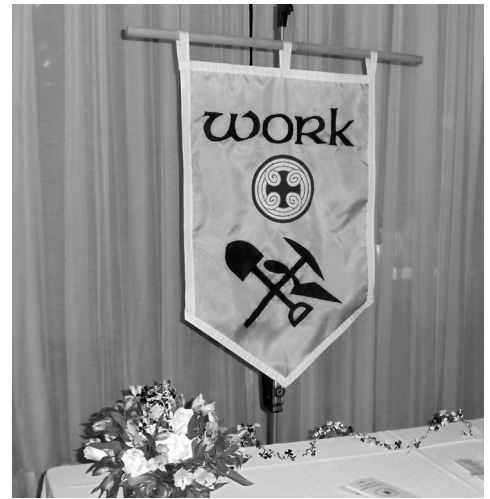


Guest enjoying themselves at Ochre Court on January 29.

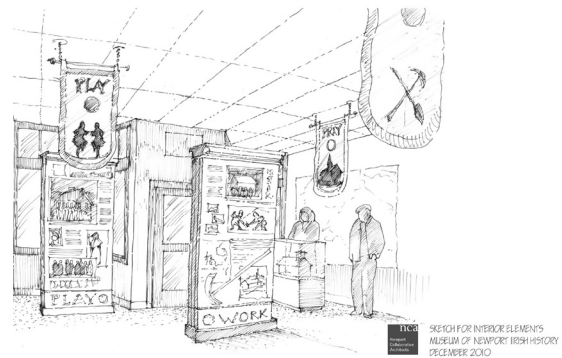
for display signage throughout the Site. The event proceeds will be made available to Museum members in time for the opening of the Interpretive Site, planned for March (see article on page 2). Many thanks to the event co-chairs Shannon Buss and Deanna Casey, and to all committee members whose efforts resulted in a memorable evening for all and most certainly a financial success for the Interpretive Site.

MUSEUM ANNOUNCES MARCH 26 “PREVIEW OPENING” OF INTERPRETIVE SITE

With Board of Director approval, the Museum has leased a storefront at 648 Thames Street to be the home of the new Interpretive Site. Working with the Newport Collaborative Architects, a layout has been developed and is shown in the below photo. The modest space, at the site of the former Margolis Photography office and studio, will be utilized to highlight a number of aspects of life in the Irish community and of immigration to Newport County, under the banners of “Work”, “Play”, “Pray”, etc. (see photo of banner from display at January 29 “Irish Eyes” benefit). Displays will cover such topics as the Fifth Ward in the early days, and social, religious, and work aspects of the Irish community. The exhibits will utilize photographs, documents, and artifacts related to these subjects. The organization plans a special “Preview Opening” event for the membership and the community at large on Saturday, March 26, during the hours of 9:30 am to 1:30pm, as part of Newport Irish Heritage Month festivities. More information about this event will be communicated shortly, as will the Interpretive Site regularly scheduled open hours, which will begin in June. If you are interested in volunteering at the Interpretive Site this summer, please contact Vince Arnold at 401-847-2890 or VJArnold@cox.net for more information.



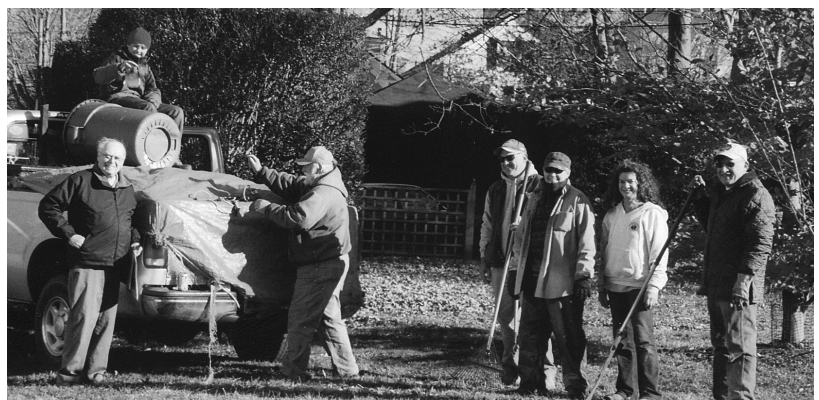
One of the banners for new Interpretive Site



*Rendering of the interior of the Interpretive Site
by Newport Collaborative Architects*

FALL CLEANUP AT THE BARNEY STREET CEMETERY

Nine hardy souls braved the cool Saturday, December 4th morning for the annual fall cleanup of the St. Joseph/ Barney Street Cemetery. Over 50 bags of leaves and other yard waste were raked up and removed for farm recycling. The cemetery was all set for a long winter nap. Many thanks to these volunteers.



Vince Arnold, Eamon Donovan (on the truck), John Booth, Patrick Donovan (Eamon's dad), Carolyn Booth, Robin Bosworth, and Ed Murphy. Not shown: Bob Finn, who took the picture, and Patrick Shea.

IN MEMORIAM

RABBI THEODORE LEWIS

Rabbi Dr. Theodore Lewis, who led Newport's historic Touro Synagogue for 36 years, died October 5, 2010, at age 95 in New York City. The Rabbi was born and raised in Dublin and studied for the rabbinate in London, England and Mir, Poland. Shortly after his arrival in New York in 1949, a friend invited him for a weekend at Touro Synagogue. He ended up staying for 36 years and becoming a much known and loved member of the Newport community.



Rabbi Theodore Lewis (1915-2010)

As noted in the obituary released by Touro, the Rabbi was "...well known for his thick Irish brogue, quick wit, regal bearing and erudite sermons....". During his tenure at Touro he received many awards and citations, including an honorary doctorate in Sacred Theology from Salve Regina University. He was well known and loved by the Newport community, and was an honorary Saint Patrick's Parade Day grand marshal. According to a November 5, 2010 Providence Journal article, the Rabbi was ".... known for passing out green bagels on St. Patrick's Day and walking the city's streets....". A memorial service for Rabbi Lewis, to which Museum of Newport Irish History members were invited, took place at the Synagogue on Sunday, October 31. Participants at the service sang "Danny Boy" in tribute to Rabbi Lewis, who is interred in Israel.

MICHAEL F. CROWLEY LECTURE SERIES UPDATE

The Museum's 8th Annual Michael F. Crowley Lecture Series kicked off on October 7 with a fascinating talk by William J. Matthews, Ph.D., about famous Irish politician, Eamon De Valera, whose career spanned 50 years and was a huge influence on 20th Century Ireland. On November 4, Marian Mathison Desrosiers, Ph.D. gave a talk about the late Justice Florence Kerins Murray (1916-2004), a well known and accomplished Newport resident of Irish descent. The final lecture of this year's series was the January 6 talk by playwright Ken Dooley regarding the Murder Trial of John Gordon and his play by the same name, discussed on page 4. This year's series is a bit shorter than typical, due to the plethora of other Museum activities and special initiatives this season, including the January 29 "Irish Eyes" benefit, the upcoming opening of the Interpretive Site, and a number of other March, Irish Heritage Month activities. We look forward to our usual full slate of five to six engaging lectures for the 9th Annual lecture series, which commences next fall.

NEW PLAY: "THE MURDER TRIAL OF JOHN GORDON", FOCUS OF LECTURE AND BUS OUTING

Playwright and Museum member Ken Dooley spoke about his new play, "The Murder Trial of John Gordon", to a fascinated and full house of just over 100 Museum members and others at the La Forge Casino Restaurant on Thursday, January 6. Dooley's drama chronicles the trial and conviction of 29-year old Irish immigrant, John Gordon, the last person executed by the State of Rhode Island, for the New Year's Eve Day, 1843 murder of Cranston mill owner and member of a prominent Rhode Island family, Amasa Sprague. Gordon was hanged on February 14, 1845 in Cranston, and is buried in an unmarked grave in St. Mary's Cemetery in Pawtucket. Dooley's meticulously researched play sheds new light on this infamous 165 year old incident, and dramatizes how Gordon was wrongly convicted during an era when Yankee prejudice towards immigrant Irish Catholics was widespread.

Those in the January 6 lecture audience were invited to sign up for a bus outing to the play, co-sponsored and underwritten by the Museum and the Newport Irish Heritage Association. More than 50 members and friends enjoyed a buffet supper at Hibernian Hall, followed by the bus ride to Cranston for the 8:00pm performance on Saturday, January 22.

Dooley's research into this infamous incident has resulted in Rep. Peter Martin (D-Newport) proposing that Gordon's name be cleared in the state's records. Those who attend the play are being ask to sign a petition calling on the General Assembly to take up Martin's proposal and exonerate Gordon and send a request for a pardon to Governor Chaffee.

"The Murder Trial of John Gordon" runs weekends through Sunday, February 27 at the R.I. Center for the Performing Arts in Cranston (formerly, the Park Theater). For information and tickets please contact the theater: 401-467-7275, or www.ParkTheaterRI.com.

FEBRUARY 12 BOOK SIGNING "RANELAGH: THE IRISH WARLORD"

Museum member and author, Charles Artaud Byrne, will hold a book signing on Saturday, February 12 from 1:00 - 3:00 p.m. at Spring Street Bookstore, 42 Spring Street in Newport. The O'Byrne Family, one of Ireland's ancient and most respected families, is brought to life in Byrne's saga, *Ranelagh: The Irish Warlord* (Tate Publishing Company, 2008), copies of which will be available for purchase and signature. Museum members may recall Charles Byrne's fascinating presentation about his family's history in Ireland and America during the 2008-2009 Crowley Lecture Series. Parking is available behind the store, which is located at the corner of Spring and Barney Streets. For more information please contact Charles Byrne at 401-849-8645 or cabyrne@mac.com.



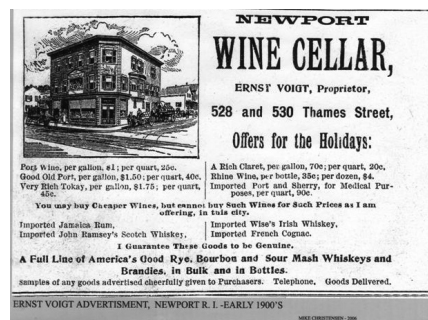
RECENT DONATIONS AND ACQUISITIONS

Here is a list of items that were recently purchased by the Museum or donated:

- A beautifully compiled and presented family history of the Boylan Family of Baltray, Ireland and Newport, and the Christmas-Jones Families of Fall River and Newport. The histories were written by Francis Boylan (2009) compiled and edited by Museum member Sydney Williams, who made this generous donation.
- A wonderful genealogy of the Sullivan, Donovan, Voigt, and Christensen families with great old photos, many courtesy of Charlie Donovan. The genealogy was compiled by Museum member, Mike Christensen, who made this generous donation to the Museum's library. A photo of the Voigt Brewery and warehouse, originally located on Houston Avenue, is shown at right. Also reproduced here is a copy of an old advertisement for Voigt's "Wine Cellar" business after its move from Houston Ave. to Thames Street, where it occupied the building which now houses the popular Café Zelda.
- A new publication, *De Valera in America: The Rebel President and the Making of Irish Independence* by Dave Hannigan (Palgrave Macmillan, 2010) was purchased by the Museum. Irish writer Hannigan discussed Eamon De Valera's efforts in America during 1919-1920 to raise awareness and funds for the emerging Irish nation, which was engaged in an uprising against England. Hannigan references the Museum of Newport Irish History's Newsletter and uses a Museum file picture of De Valera arriving in Newport Harbor on his visit here in September 1919.



Voigt Brewery and warehouse on Houston Ave. about 1892



Early 1900's ad for Voigt Wine Cellar. Building now houses Café Zelda.

WE WELCOME THESE RECENT NEW MEMBERS

FROM NEWPORT:

Nancy Austin
Jim & Jill Blumel
Raymond & Sharon Caine
Tony Cercena
Kate Dempsey
Karen DiRenzo
Ken Dooley
Francis X. Girr
Peter McConnell
Timothy & Emily Moulton
William Rives
Patrick D. Shea
Scott Skuncik
Elizabeth Stebbins
Sharon Sullivan

Patricia A. Toppa

Kari VanBuren

Patricia Varrecchia

FROM MIDDLETOWN:

Hugh Doyle
Craig & Mary Sampson
Kathie Semenchuk
Patricia K. Wood

FROM PORTSMOUTH:

Francis & Deborah Busher
Diane M. Caplin
Robert A. Fitzgerald
Roger & Marilyn Moriarty
Robert J. Dunphy

& Susan E. Nevins

Joan & Bobby O'Leary

FROM BRISTOL:

John W. Card
William & Charlotte DeMarco
Jim & Julie Dollins
Eleanor Card McGinn

FROM JAMESTOWN:

Richard Flanigan

FROM ELSEWHERE:

Mike Christensen,
Cumberland, RI

Ann Connolly, New
London, CT

Marian M. Desrosiers,
West Barnstable, MA

Karen Donnelly,
West Palm Beach, FL

Shawn Patrick Donnelly,
Bellevue, WA

Tom Maguire,

North Kingstown, RI

Francis J. McKenna,
Cranston, RI

William & Karen
McCann,

East Greenwich, RI

THE MUSEUM OF NEWPORT IRISH HISTORY
P.O. Box 1378
Newport, RI 02840

U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Newport, RI
Non-Profit
Organization
Permit #110

JOIN THE MUSEUM OF NEWPORT IRISH HISTORY AND SUPPORT YOUR IRISH HERITAGE



Vincent Arnold, President (401) 847-2890
Michael Slein, 1st Vice President (401) 847-7201
William Coffey, 2nd Vice President (401) 845-2615
Maria Carroll, Secretary (401) 846-8865
Deanna Casey, Treasurer (401) 847-7156
Pat Murphy, Historian PtrckFMrphy@verizon.net

Name(s) _____ Date _____

Address _____

Town/City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Email _____

Check Membership: ☐ Individual (\$15/yr) ☐ Family (\$25/Yr) ☐ Business (\$50/yr)

☐ Individual Life (\$150) ☐ Family Life (\$200)

Amount enclosed \$ _____ (Donations are tax deductible—a 501(c)3 organization)

Mail to: The Museum of Newport Irish History, P.O. Box 1378, Newport, RI 02840

401-848-0661

www.NewportIrishHistory.org

NewportIrishHistory@gmail.com