



Promoting Irish
Fellowship and
Culture for Future
Generations

IRISH HERITAGE SOCIETY News Bulletin Jan. 2014



"The Irish live in one another's shelters"

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IRISH HERITAGE SOCIETY
P O Box 23
Bloomington IL 61702

2014 EVENTS

Saturday, February 8, 2014 at 7:00 p.m.

The Don't Be Brothers

Irish-American Folksingers and Merry-makers

Knights of Columbus Hall, Bloomington IL

Tickets at Door for \$5.00

Saturday, March 15, 2014, at 1:00 p.m.

4th Annual St. Patrick's Day Parade

"The Sharin' of the Green"

Uptown Normal

Families welcome to participate in parade!

Sunday, June 29, 2014, 1:00 - 4:00 p.m.

Irish Society Summer Family Indoor Picnic

Knights of Columbus Hall, Bloomington, IL

Ongoing

Irish Exhibit

*The Greening of the Prairie: Irish Immigrants in
McLean County*

McLean County Museum of History, Bloomington, IL

Sunday, October 26, 2014, 4:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.

Irish Autumn Social and Annual Meeting

Knights of Columbus Hall, Bloomington, IL

Saturday, December 6, 2014 at 10:00 a.m.

Bloomington/Normal Jaycees Christmas Parade

Families welcome to participate in parade!

*In case you are wondering about your membership
and when it expires we have added this to the
mailing labels. Check your address label for the
date your membership expires.*
*Please complete the membership renewal form
below and mail it with your check to the Irish
Heritage Society.*
IRISH HERITAGE SOCIETY
PO BOX 23
BLOOMINGTON IL 61702

Name: _____
Spouse and children's names: _____
Address: _____
Email: _____
Phone: _____
Single Membership \$15
Family Membership \$20



Enjoy the antics and Celtic humor of these two nationally known Irish Folksingers/Merrymakers as they entertain us with their very own brand of song and comedy!

Saturday, February 8, 2014, 7:00 p.m., Knights of Columbus Hall, Bloomington IL.
\$5 at the door/ cash bar available.
Open to the public.

SHARIN OF THE GREEN PARADE



Saturday
March 15, 2014
Uptown Normal
1:00 kick off

Get your family signed up to participate!!!!

Watch wjbc.com for signup information.

THE GILL'S FROM BALLYCLEMOCK

By member Jim Gill



William Gill Sr 1833-1921

The first immigrant in our family, William Gill Sr., was born on a farm in Ballyclemock, County Wexford in 1835. He left Cork in the summer of 1854 on a sailing ship. It took them six weeks to land in Canada because they ran into a hurricane half way across.

He then went to Chicago via the Great Lakes. William then joined a group of Irishmen who went to New Orleans, then to Panama, where they caught a sailing ship headed to San Francisco. They were headed to the California gold-fields. After 18 months they realized that they were too late to strike it rich. William joined a wagon train and walked back to Illinois.

He began to work for a Stark County, Illinois farmer. He rented a farm in Peoria County, then bought 80 acres of swamp. William used his trusty iriah (turf) spade and dug a ditch to drain the land. He did not know it then but his gold was in the black soils of the Valley. Now, 140 years later his great grandson farms this land (approximately 20 miles north of Peoria near Speer, IL). Editor's note: see iriah spade illustration next to mail label.

ACROSS THE AGES

By member Mike Whelan

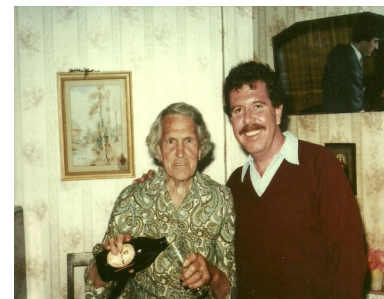
"Dear Michael. At long last someone has written. We thought you were all dead. Please allow me to introduce myself I am your grand-aunt, Elley Whelan Lynch, your late Grandfather's last living sister."

With these opening words, seventy-nine years from 1905, when my Grandfather Joseph Francis Whelan left Dungarvan, County Waterford, Ireland, to 1984, when this letter was sent to me, were erased. I had found my Irish family.

My grandpa never went back, and none of my family here had gone over, until now. It was the beginning of an adventure that continues to this day.

Grand-aunt Elley was 83 when I met her at her home in Dublin, and was in perfect form, as this photo attests. She referred to herself as "the last of a bad lot", kiddingly of course.

Slainte, Michael Joseph O'Faolain (the Gaelic spelling of Whelan, meaning "of the wolf").



Elly Whelan Lynch and Mike Whelan 1984, taken in Dublin, Ireland

IRISH HEX STORY

From member Jim Hull

Have you heard the legendary story of the Irish and the Pennsylvania Dutch at Valley Forge? During that cold winter when General Washington's armies were camped at Valley Forge the Pennsylvania Dutch and the Irish troops passed the time by fighting among themselves. The Irish would chant, "Hooray for the Irish they're not very much, but they're a darn sight better than the Pennsylvania Dutch". As the story goes, it was during one of these fights that an Irishman put a shamrock on a Dutchman's Hex Sign to bring the Irish luck. The shamrock is good luck for the Irish. The heart, love for your fellow man; the distelfink, the good luck bird (two for double good luck); the Trinity Tulips, faith in yourself, faith in what you do and faith in your fellow man; and the scallops around the border were ocean waves for smooth sailing through life.



An interview with Jim Hull of Wapella IL gives us more to the story. Jim's brother attended Cornell some thirty years ago and discovered the Irish hex sign. Jim re-researched the hex sign and commissioned a local artist to create a 4' diameter hex sign. Jim has it hanging at his Wapella farm on a weathered wooden door taken from the 1854 Wapella railroad warehouse which was destroyed in the 1968 tornado.