



Hibernian News



Volume 8 Issue 7

The Choctaw Nation and the Great Famine of Ireland

August 2007

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Inside this issue:

The Choctaw and the Great Famine	1-3
Division President's Message	2
Calendar of Upcoming Events	2
Major Degree Ceremony Date	2
Irish Heritage Festival	2
NYS-AOH Mixed Doubles Bowling Tournament	3
Thanks and More Thanks!	3
Sponsors	3-4

One hundred and sixty years ago in 1847, the Indians of the Choctaw nation took up a collection. Moved by news of starvation in Ireland, a group of Choctaws gathered in Scullyville, Oklahoma to raise a relief fund. Despite their meager resources, they collected \$170 and forwarded it to a U.S. famine relief organization. It was both the most unlikely and the most generous contribution to the effort to relieve Ireland's suffering.

Begun two years before in the fall of 1845, the potato blight and subsequent famine had reached its height in 1847. It was, of course, much more than a mere natural disaster. British colonial policies before and during the crisis exacerbated the effects of the potato blight, leading to mass death by starvation and disease. For example, in March of 1847, at the time of the Choctaw donation, 734,000 starving Irish people were forced to labor in public works projects in order to receive food. Little wonder that survivors referred to the year as "Black '47."

First through letters and newspaper accounts, and later from the refugees themselves, the Irish in America learned of the unfolding horror. Countless individuals sent money and ship tickets to assist friends and family. Others formed relief committees to solicit donations from the general public. Contributions came from every manner of organization, from charitable societies and businesses to churches and synagogues. By the time the famine had ended in the early 1850s, millions in cash and goods had been sent to Ireland.

What made the Choctaw donation so extraordinary was the tribe's recent history. Only 16 years before, President Andrew Jackson (whose parents emigrated from Antrim) seized the fertile lands of the so-called five civilized tribes (Chickasaw, Cherokee, Creek, Seminole, and Choctaw) and forced them to undertake a harrowing 500-mile trek to Oklahoma known as the Trail of Tears. Of the 21,000 Choctaws who started the journey, more than half perished from exposure, malnutrition, and disease. This despite the fact that during the War of 1812 the



Choctaws had been allies of then General Jackson in his campaign against the British in New Orleans.

Perhaps their sympathy stemmed from their recognition of the similarities between the experiences of the Irish and Choctaw. Certainly contemporary Choctaw see it that way. They note that both groups were victims of conquest that led to loss of property, forced migration and exile, mass starvation, and cultural suppression (most notably language).

Increased attention to the Great Famine in recent years has led to renewed recognition of the Choctaw donation. In 1990 a delegation of Choctaw officials was invited to participate in an annual walk in County Mayo commemorating a tragic starvation march that occurred during the Famine. In honor of the special guests, the organizers (Action From Ireland, or AFRI) named the march The Trail of Tears. Two years later, two dozen people from Ireland came to the U.S. and retraced the 500-mile Trail of Tears from Oklahoma to Mississippi. That same year the Choctaw tribe made Ireland's President Mary Robinson an honorary chief.

Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of these events is that while they commemorate dark chapters of the past, they are focused on the present and future. In other words, they seek to dramatize the need to stop starvation and suffering worldwide. As the plaque on Dublin's Mansion House which honors the Choctaw contribution reads:

"Their humanity calls us to remember the millions of human beings throughout our world today who die of hunger and hunger-related illness in a world of plenty."

A Message from the AOH Division 2 President

Dear Brothers and Friends

August 2007

"Age is honorable and youth is noble" (old Irish proverb) Over the past couple of months, I have seen our noble younger members step up to work under our honorable older members advice. Truly, a wonderful thing to see! People come to our club and tell me how beautiful they think the building looks. Be proud Brothers, and then take it one step further. Kudos to all of you.

August (Lughnasa in Ireland) is the start of the Celtic autumn. The 15th marks the Feile Mhuire sa bhFomhar (Festival of Our Lady in the Harvest). When Christianity came to Ireland, it became known as the Feast of the Assumption. The Battle of Athenry occurred on August 10, 1316. Come down on a Friday night and the lads will sing you a song about it!

This month also brings us to remember the passing of the last four POLITICAL PRISONERS of the Hunger Strike at Maze Prison in Belfast. In 1981, Kevin Lynch, Kieran Doherty, Thomas McElwee, and Michael Devine stood fast with their other brothers for the Irish cause. Their fortitude has come to teach us our Irish pride and strength. They were taught by Michael Collins, who was assassinated on August 22, 1922, at the age of 31. Let us never forget these men nor what they did for the Irish.

July and August are usually quiet, but our honorable older members have been busy. Thank you for all your work around the club. Friday night barbecues are still going on and get better every week. September will bring our Irish breakfast again and we will need help and attendance. Don't forget where we are! See you at the August 15th meeting.

"Maybe it's bred in the bone, but the sound of pipes is a little bit of heaven to some of us." (Nancy O'Keefe). Thank you to all the pipers.

God bless all,

Michael Shannon, President, AOH Div 2

Upcoming Events

(subject to change)

- Aug 15** Monthly Meeting - Hall: 7 pm.
Members are encouraged to attend.
- Aug 18-19** International Celtic Festival—
Hunter Mtn. \$10 p/d admission.
(Note: our bus trip is cancelled.)
- Aug 29** Hudson Valley Regional Police
Pipes and Drums (Rescheduled) 7
pm—New Windsor Town Hall.
Bring a lawn chair.
- Sept 2** Hooley on the Hudson VI—
11:30am-9:00 pm. City of
Kingston waterfront. Good festival!
- Sept 9** Irish Breakfast 9:30—12:30.
\$7.00 adults - \$3.00 children.
- Sept 15-16** Irish Heritage Festival—Orange
County Park, Montgomery, NY
- Sept 19** Monthly Meeting - Hall: 7 pm.
Members are encouraged to attend.
- Sept 23** Major Degree—Burke H.S.—
Goshen. Members are encouraged
to attend.

Major Degree Ceremony Planned

A county-wide Ancient Order of Hibernians Major Degree Ceremony

will be held on

Sunday, September 23, 2007
1:30 pm

The ceremony will be conducted by the
Tara Court Degree Team

The location of the ceremony will be at:

John S. Burke Catholic High
80 Fletcher Street
Goshen, NY 10924

Any member planning on seeking division or
county high office must have their
Shamrock and their Major degree.

Watch your newsletter for
additional information.



Irish Heritage Festival

The 14th Annual
Irish Heritage Festival
Orange County Park
Montgomery, NY

Saturday and Sunday,
September 15—16, 2007

There will be continuous music, dancing, Irish
crafts, Irish and American food, bagpipes and
children's activities.

The festival opens on Saturday at 11:30 am.
Sunday there is a Celebration of the Eucharist at
10:30 am. The festival program begins at 12:00
Noon.

Adult tickets \$10.00, Seniors \$8.00,
2-day pass \$15.00, Children under 14 free

This festival is sponsored by the Irish Heritage
Festival Committee, a not-for-profit organization
dedicated to service to the community and to
preserving the many aspects of Irish culture.

For more information please call
845-343-5736

Thanks and More Thanks!

A Very Special Thanks to all our Friday Night Cooks, Jim Kane, Kevin and Rose Cummings, Cathleen Walsh, Kevin Moore Sr and Jr., Joe and



Alice Ryan and Don and Ann McClellan. Finally, a **Thousand Thanks** to all those who work behind the scenes (so many of you)—

your hard work does not go unnoticed. **Go raibh maith aibh—An Irish Thanks!**

Where in the World is Brother Dave Sutton?



As many of you know, our Division 2 Brother, Dave Sutton is now in China serving for eight weeks as a teacher and lay missionary with the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers. Dave has been in contact with us via email and is settling into the daily routine but is still trying to get used to the 100° heat and high humidity. Dave sends his love to all and deep appreciation to those who sent him off with a kind word, well wishes or contributed to the fund established by Division 2 to help defray his travel costs. Dave has promised to keep in touch and send photos when he can. Follow Dave's travels by visiting the member's area of the division's website at: <http://www.div2aoh.org/index3.htm>

Welcome to Our New Members

Céad míle fáilte...a hundred thousand welcomes to our new members **James Mullen, Joseph Carrigan, Paul Matthews and John Keeshen**. If you haven't done so already, come on down to the hall on a Friday night with the family and introduce yourself!

NYS A.O.H. Mixed Doubles Bowling Tournament



October 20th 2007

Colonial Lanes, Chester, NY

12:30 pm Registration...1:00 pm start

\$30.00 p/p includes a buffet dinner and awards at Division 1 Hibernian House in Monroe NY
(Join us for dinner only—\$15.00 p/p)

Dinner, Awards and Live Music

*Penne ala Vodka w/Shrimp
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Meatballs
Roast Pork Marsala
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Bread, Salad, Coffee, Tea, Wine and Beer*

Trophies will be given for Highest Team, Lowest Team, Highest Individual

Lane Sponsors are \$25.00 per organization/person

For more information please contact—

Patrick Burns, Chairman Sports Committee
(315) 406-8226

-or-

Dennis Browne, Chairman Charities and Missions
(845) 774-9436

Bowling Reservations by 10/13/07
Lane sponsors by 10/10/07



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