

HAPPY ST. PADDY'S DAY!



In honor of Saint Patrick's Day, *The Courier* has released this special edition to celebrate the history and culture of the Irish people. So turn off your Riverdance, turn down the bagpipes, and revel in the Irish heritage that lies within us all. *Cead Mile Failte!*

And coming up...

March 19, 2003

Special *Courier* edition on the potential for a war on Iraq.

SPECIAL EDITION

PAGE 2

THE COURIER

Erin go bragh...agus go bragh agus go bragh...

By **Natalie Pullen**

Copy Editor

My freckles, red hair, and pale complexion give me away. I'm Irish all the way back on both my father's and mother's sides (just forget about the Welsh, Scottish and Choctaw for now). But, for as long as I can remember, I've hated Saint Patrick's Day with a passion.

Most people look at me like I've stated something blasphemous, but it's the truth. I despise everything about the holiday, and it's not because I'm another Irish-American disconnected with my heritage. Far from it. Instead, I'm tired of America butchering my culture--and that includes its Irish-American citizens.

The tacky phrases usually begin early in the day, in a bad Ulster accent, "top o'the mornin'" (note: no respectable Irish person would be caught dead saying this). These are usually from the individuals clad in full green (do you realize how few people can pull this color off?), not to mention decorated with numerous buttons with "cute" phrases like "Irish I was Irish" (all I can say is thank God you're not!) These people usually make a quick glance to see if I'm donning the appropriate color of attire, and if not, quickly reach out to pinch me. What this has to do with St. Patrick I've never understood, but I will warn you right now: you pinch me, and I'll punch you.

My day is full of classrooms covered in poorly drawn cutouts of a *leipreachán*, making me wonder if the artist was blind or even knew anything about the myth of the fairies who used to make shoes. And as if this all wasn't enough, the day usually ends with the aroma of corned beef and cabbage wafting into my room at dinner time--and it sure isn't coming from my kitchen. (Might I suggest the recipes included in this issue; they are definitely worth a go.)

But most of all, I'm tired of America using Ireland's saint as an excuse to color its beer green. I mean, if this country wanted a day to get drunk, why didn't it just say so? It is disturbing to think that so many people fill pubs every March to down their Guinesses in America's one celebration of Ireland.

But have we--especially the sons and daughters of Erin--ever stopped to think of the repercussion of this March celebration? What does Saint Patrick's Day do for America's impression of Ireland and the Irish? Ask a random American what he or she associates Ireland with and what will your answer be? St. Patrick's Day, a holiday about a man its celebrants know nothing about? Potatoes, the staple of Ireland's diet? The color green, filling its countryside in early spring? Religion, something that has split families and friends for over 800 years? These are all very vague, su-

perficial answers that demonstrate exactly how little America knows about Ireland. How many people would you have to ask before receiving an answer with some weight, an answer that shows some initiative about truly investigating Ireland's history and traditions, an answer revealing appreciation for what the Irish have contributed to society (and no, I do not claim, like some authors, that the Irish saved civilization.)

However, something tells me you won't have to ask too many people until you got the answer alcohol. And don't get me wrong, the Irish do drink. But it wasn't too long ago that "No Irish Need Apply" signs filled American cities. It wasn't too long ago that the racial epithet "mick" was used with the same disdain that certain words are now used for African-Americans and Asian-Americans. It wasn't too long ago that the only information most Americans had about the Irish was a stereotype: a loud red-head, with a funny accent and a funny religion, who is out on the street drinking his money away.

I only ask you that today, before you sit down to enjoy your green shake from McDonalds, think a little about the man we recognize and honor, think a bit about the country whose celebrations we cram into one day, and think about the cultural heritage so many Americans share.

Erin go bragh!

History of St. Patrick's Day explained

The Saint

It's always amazed me that the one person America most associates with Ireland isn't even Irish! The number of myths surrounding this man is always amazing too; he didn't introduce Christianity to Ireland and he didn't drive out the snakes.

Maewyn Succat was born in Wales around 385 CE. He considered himself a pagan until he was sixteen. It was then that he was baptized Padraig, the Irish form of Patrick.

At this age, Irish pirates raided his village and sold him into slavery; the experience brought him closer to God. After six years, he escaped by walking over 200 miles to County Mayo. From there, he went to Gaul, modern day France, where he became a priest. He studied under St. Germain, bishop of Auxerre, for twelve years.

During his studies, he felt his calling in life was to convert the pagans of Ireland into Christians. But his superiors sent St. Palladius to Ireland instead. Padraig's time came two years later, when Palladius went to Scotland; Padraig became the second bishop to Ireland.

He successfully converted many Irish; this greatly upset the Celtic Druids, the original holy men of the Isle. To convert the Irish more easily, he tried incorporating the pagan religion. This is why the Celtic

Cross, for example, has a circle around it. The Celts originally used fire—the sun—to honor their gods; when Padraig superimposed this on the cross, it didn't feel as weird to the Irish.

He was arrested several times, but managed to escape each time. During his thirty-year mission to Ireland, he set up many monasteries, schools, and churches around the country, all of which helped him win converts. It is believed his first church was established in 444 or 445 in Amargh. He retired to County Down, dying on the seventeenth of March in 461 CE.

The Snakes

It has long been recounted that, during his mission in Ireland, St. Patrick once stood on a hilltop (now called Croagh Patrick), and with only a wooden staff by his side, banished all the snakes from Ireland. In fact, the island nation was never home to any snakes. The “banishing of the snakes” was really a metaphor for the eradication of pagan ideology from Ireland and the triumph of Christianity. Within two hundred years of Patrick's arrival, Ireland was completely Christianized.

The Day

The Irish have observed this day as a religious holiday for thousands of years. On St. Patrick's

Day, which falls during the Christian season of Lent, Irish families would traditionally attend church in the morning and celebrate in the afternoon. Lenten prohibitions against the consumption of meat were waived and people would dance, drink, and feast—on the traditional meal of Irish bacon and cabbage.

In modern-day Ireland, St. Patrick's Day has traditionally been a religious occasion. In fact, up until the 1970s, Irish laws forced pubs to be closed on March 17.

Today, St. Patrick's Day is celebrated by people of all backgrounds in North America and Australia, as well as Japan, Singapore and Russia.

The first St. Patrick's Day parade occurred in 1762, when Irish soldiers serving in the English military marched through New York City. The parade reconnected the soldiers with their Irish roots.

Since then, parades seem to be an inevitable part of St. Patrick's Day. Traditional Irish dance, music, and clothing is displayed by parade participants; the largest parade closest to us is in San Francisco. It was on March 16 this year, and started at noon at Second and Market, ending at City Hall.

SPECIAL EDITION

A wee bit o' the history

The History

Of course, no country's history can be explained in a short paragraph without doing some major injustices to its people, leaders, and victories. Ireland's is no different; its "recent" history has included many invasions, wars, and treaties, many involving the horrible treatment its people received from England.

Now, without further ado, a much abridged history of Ireland:

TWELFTH CENTURY:

-Pope Adrian IV gives lordship of Ireland to King Henry II, ignites 800 years of Anglo-Irish conflict

SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

-1607: England takes six of Ireland's nine northern counties, called Ulster, imports Protestants to live there

-1690: English King William the Orange, a Protestant, defeats former English King James II, a Catholic, at the Battle of the Boyne

EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

-1720: England grants itself the right to pass laws for Ireland

NINETEENTH CENTURY

-1800: The Act of Union unites England and Ireland as one country

-1845 to 1849: Fungus destroys potato crops, the staple of Ireland's diet; ¼ of its population dies; 1.6 million Irish come to America

TWENTIETH CENTURY

-early 1900s: Irish Nationalism takes root; militia groups like Irish Citizen Army and Irish Republican Brotherhood form

-1916: On Easter Sunday, Patrick Pearse and followers seize control of government buildings, announce establishment of Irish republic, declare martial law; rebellion crushed by England; fifteen leaders executed; now called Easter Uprising

-1920: The Government of Ireland Act separates Ireland into two states: six northern Protestant counties and twenty-six southern Catholic counties

-1922: Treaty gives Ireland status as a free state within the British Empire

-1920s-1960s: Fighting occurs between pro-treaty and anti-treaty forces

-1965: Northern Ireland's prime minister, Terence O'Neill, visits Sean Lemass, the Irish Free State's Prime minister, to start the peace process

-1998: Peace accord signed between Great Britain, the Republic of Ireland, and 8 of Northern Ireland's 10 political parties in April

TWENTYFIRST CENTURY

-2002: Ireland begins using the Euro as its currency

Ireland's symbols revealed

The Shamrock

One traditional icon of the day—and Ireland itself—is the shamrock. This stems (sorry, couldn't resist!) from a more bona fide Irish tale that tells how Patrick used the three-leafed shamrock to explain the Trinity. He used it in his sermons to represent how the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit could all exist as separate elements of the same entity.

More recently, people have begun saying that one leaf represents the Republic of Ireland, another Northern Ireland, and the last represents the Irish residing abroad. St. Patrick's followers, therefore, have adopted the custom of wearing a shamrock on his feast day.

The Color

It rains in Ireland. A lot. So much that Ireland's rolling hills appear green throughout much of the year. It rains so much that Ireland is often called the Emerald Isle; the color has become so symbolic of the country that there really was no other consideration when thinking of a color for the holiday. That is why Boston has turned its bay green, and why we dye our beverages green in March. And if you don't mind the food dye, all I have to say to you is: *Slainte!* Cheers!

The Music

After being conquered by the English, and forbidden to speak their own language, the Irish, like other oppressed peoples, turned to music to help them remember important events and hold on to their heritage and history. As it often stirred emotion and helped to galvanize people, music was outlawed by the English. During her



reign, Queen Elizabeth I even decreed that all artists and pipers were to be arrested and hanged on the spot. That has only made the Irish play harder. The most traditional instrument is, surprise, the harp, not the bagpipes. (Bagpipes are from Scotland)

No Irish Need Apply

Up until the mid-nineteenth century, most Irish immigrants in America were members of the

Protestant middle class. When the Great Potato Famine hit Ireland in 1845, close to a million poor, uneducated, Catholic Irish began to pour into America to escape starvation.

Despised for their religious beliefs and funny accents by the American Protestant majority, the immigrants had trouble finding even menial jobs. When Irish Americans in the country's cities took to the streets on St. Patrick's Day to celebrate their heritage, newspapers portrayed them in cartoons as drunk, violent monkeys.

However, the Irish soon began to realize that their great numbers endowed them with a political power that had yet to be exploited. They started to organize, and their voting block, known as the "green machine," became an important swing vote for political hopefuls. Suddenly, annual St. Patrick's Day parades became a show of strength for Irish Americans, as well as a must-attend event for a slew of political candidates. In 1948, President Truman attended New York City's St. Patrick's Day parade, a proud moment for the many Irish whose ancestors had to fight stereotypes and racial prejudice to find acceptance in America.

SPECIAL EDITION

PAGE 6

THE COURIER

Prepare an Irish feast

It has been said that the food of the British Isles does not have the richness of flavor and texture of, say, French cuisine, but you will find that these recipes have a richness all their own; they were created to be hearty and flavorful for a people whose growing season was limited by cold weather, and who needed dishes that would pull them through many a wintry night. Most of these are fairly simple, and all of them are well worth the effort.

Irish Stew

Serves 6

Ingredients: 2 tablespoons oil
5 large carrots, cut into thick slices
6 large potatoes
salt and pepper to taste

4 large onions, cut into wedges
1 1/2 pound round steak or lamb
1 cup water
2 tablespoons flour

Directions:

Heat oil in large saucepan or skillet. Saute onions in oil. Add carrots and cook for about three minutes. Cut steak into 1/4 to 1/2 inch cubes and add to onions and carrots. Wash, peel, and slice potatoes; add to pot. Pour in water, season to taste with salt and pepper. Bring to boil. Skim off any foam and reduce heat. Simmer over low heat until meat and vegetables are tender. Stew can be thickened by mixing two table-
spoons of flour with a little water and adding it to the stew. Heat until thickened and serve hot.

Soda bread

Serves 8

Ingredients: 4 cups plain flour
1 teaspoon sugar (optional)

1 teaspoon salt
2 cups buttermilk

1 teaspoon baking soda

Directions:

Sieve the dry ingredients into a large bowl. Scoop up handfuls and allow to drop back into the bowl to aerate the mixture. Add enough buttermilk to make a soft dough. Work quickly; buttermilk and soda are already reacting. Knead the dough lightly--too much handling will toughen it, while too little means it won't rise properly.

Form a round loaf about as thick as your fist. Place it on a lightly-floured baking sheet and cut a cross in the top with a floured knife. Put at once to bake near the top of a pre-heated oven, 450°F for 30-45 minutes. When baked, the loaf will sound hollow when rapped on the bottom with your knuckles. Wrap immediately in a clean dish-towel to stop the crust hardening too much.

box ty

Serves 5

Ingredients: 1 cup raw potato
1 teaspoon baking powder
about 1/2 cup milk

1 cup mashed potato
1 teaspoon salt

2 cups plain flour
large knob of butter, melted

Directions:

Grate the raw potatoes into a bowl. Turn out onto a cloth and wring, catching the liquid. This will separate into a clear fluid with starch at the bottom. Pour off the fluid and scrape out the starch and mix with the grated and mashed potatoes. Sieve the dry ingredients and mix in along with the melted butter. Add a little milk if necessary to make a pliable dough. Knead lightly on a floured surface. Divide into four and form large, flat cakes. Mark each into quarters but do not cut right through, and bake on a griddle or in a heavy pan.