

February at the Museum!



African-American Heritage Month: Frederick Douglass and Daniel O' Connell

In 1845, Frederick Douglass, an abolitionist and former slave, traveled to Ireland to avoid re-capture and return to his previous 'owner'. He stayed there initially for only four months but regarded the experience as 'transformative.' Daniel O'Connell and Ireland were to become a major influence on the fugitive slave's subsequent political development, and in his transformation from an abolitionist to a human rights activist.

Douglass arrived in Ireland on August 31, 1845. He wrote immediately to friends in America, "I am now safe in old Ireland, in the beautiful city of Dublin ... Instead of the bright blue sky of America, I am covered with the soft grey fog of the Emerald Isle. I breathe and lo! The chattel becomes a man." Initially, his stay was to be of only a few weeks' duration, but it was prolonged when a Dublin abolitionist, Richard Webb, offered to publish an Irish version of his autobiography, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave*, so he stayed for four months, lecturing on abolition in Dublin, Wexford, Waterford, Youghal, Cork, Limerick, and Belfast.

Inevitably, Douglass's presence in Ireland attracted attention in the local press, his appearance being described in detail, albeit through a racialized lens:

"Evidently from his colour and conformation, descended from parents of different race, his appearance is singularly pleasing and agreeable. The hue of his face and hands is rather a yellow brown or bronze, while there is little if anything in his features of that particular prominence of lower face, thickness of lips, and flatness of nose, which particularly characterize the true Negro type. His voice is well toned and musical, his selection of language most happy, and his manner easy and graceful."

Douglass's visit coincided with a struggle for Irish independence taking place. Even before arriving in Ireland, Douglass knew of Daniel O'Connell and of his role in winning Catholic Emancipation. More significantly, he was also aware of O'Connell's vociferous championing of abolition and his unequivocal defense of black people as being the equal of whites.

Daniel O'Connell, known as The Liberator, (born Aug. 6, 1775, near Caherciveen, County Kerry, died May 15, 1847, Genoa,) was a lawyer who became the first great 19th-century Irish nationalist leader.

By the 1840s, Daniel O'Connell was the most famous and outspoken abolitionist on both sides of the Atlantic. He had been committed to this cause since the 1820's, and, as a new member of the British parliament following Catholic Emancipation, had played a pivotal role in ending slavery in the British Empire. O'Connell's abolitionist activities were known and simultaneously applauded and deplored in the United States. In the introduction to the first edition of the *Narrative*, William Lloyd Garrison had referred to the Irishman as "Daniel O'Connell, the distinguished advocate of universal emancipation, and the mightiest champion of prostrate but not conquered Ireland." By doing so, Garrison had created a tangible link between the seasoned Irish abolitionist and the young rising star of American anti-slavery.

O'Connell was at the radical end of the abolition movement, consistently arguing for immediate, not gradual, abolition, and insisting that black people were the equals of white people - an unpopular view at the time. Unusually, O'Connell also saw the ending of slavery, and his demand for Irish independence, as part of wider struggle for human rights, a view not shared by many abolitionists or nationalists. He declared

"I am the friend of liberty in every clime, class and colour. My sympathy is not confined to the limits of my own green island; my spirit walks abroad on sea and land, and wherever there is oppression, I hate the oppressor."

From an Irish perspective, his most famous advocacy came in 1842 with the '*Address from the People of Ireland To Their Countrymen and Countrywomen in America!*' Written by members of the Hibernian Antislavery Society, James Haughton, Richard Allen and Richard Davis Webb, O'Connell adopted and endorsed the address.

He used his mass membership Repeal Association, dedicated to the repeal of the Union between Britain and Ireland, to gather a reported 60,000 supporting signatures. The '*Address*' was brought to America by African-American abolitionist Charles Lenox Remond, where abolitionists led by William Lloyd Garrison orchestrated a public reading in Faneuil Hall, Boston. The *Address* explicitly condemned American slavery and called on all the Irish in America to "treat the colored people as your equals, as brethren." Irish immigrants were also ordered "TO UNITE WITH THE ABOLITIONISTS" and to "cling by them" at all costs because "Slavery is a sin against God and man. All who are not for it must be against it. None can be neutral."

Douglass claimed that as a slave he had heard his master berate O'Connell's anti-slavery activities and that he had read some of his speeches, which had been reprinted in American newspapers. It was no surprise then, that while in Ireland he would want to hear the Irishman in person. Hearing that O'Connell was in Dublin, he decided to attend a Repeal meeting, although once there, "having observed the denseness of the crowd, I almost despaired of getting in." But he did squeeze in and, in a letter he composed later that night, admitted to having been entranced by O'Connell's eloquence:

I have heard many speakers within the last four years - speakers of the first order; but I confess, I have never heard one, by whom I was more completely captivated than by Mr. O'Connell . . . It seems to me that the voice of O'Connell is enough to calm the most violent passion . . . There is a sweet persuasiveness in it, beyond any voice I ever heard. His power over an audience is perfect.

Towards the end of the meeting when the audience was thinning out, Douglass moved to the front of the hall where he was introduced to O'Connell by a fellow American. He was then invited on stage to say a few words. Douglass recorded, "although I scarce knew what to say, I managed to say something, which was quite well received." In the course of his short speech, his admiration for the Irish man was palpable. It was during this impromptu speech that Douglass stated that his people needed a "Black O'Connell" to lead them to freedom, crying "The poor trampled slave of Carolina had heard the name of the Liberator with joy and hope, and he himself had heard the wish that some black O'Connell would yet rise up among his countrymen and cry 'Agitate, agitate, agitate!'"

Douglass left Dublin at the beginning of October, to travel to other parts of the country, including Limerick, Cork, Wexford, and Belfast. His treatment as an equal continued to surprise and delight him. He wrote, "I saw no-one that seemed to be shocked or disturbed at my dark presence. No one seemed to feel himself contaminated by contact with me."

Douglass left Ireland in January 1846. He continued his tour in Britain, staying away from America for nearly two years. He gave almost 200 lectures, over 40 of them in Ireland. On the eve of his departure from Belfast, Douglass reflected on his isolation: ". . . as to nation, I belong to none . . . The land of my birth welcomes me to her shores only as a slave, and spurns with contempt the idea of treating me differently. So, I am an outcast from the society of my childhood, and an outlaw in the land of my birth." However, he went on to add, "I can truly say, I have spent some of the happiest moments of my life since landing in this country."

Shortly after leaving Ireland, Douglass wrote to Garrison. The letter revealed that, as a result of this visit, he had come to see the crusade for abolition as part of a much wider struggle for social justice:

I see much here to remind me of my former condition, and I confess I should be ashamed to lift up my voice against American slavery, but that I know the cause of humanity is one the world over. He who really and truly feels for the American slave, cannot steel his heart to the woes of others; and he who thinks himself an abolitionist, yet cannot enter into the wrongs of others, has yet to find a true foundation for his anti-slavery.

In 1886, after a second visit to Ireland, Douglass published an 18-page article entitled "*Thoughts and Recollections on Ireland*." In it, he reflected on his first visit to the country and on Ireland's continuing poverty and colonial status. He described the country as "the land of Burke and Sheridan, of Grattan and Curran, of O'Connell and Father Matthew [sic]; a land renowned in song and story for its statesmen, orators, patriots, and heroes, but alas! a land which has been for ages the scene of misrule and social misery..." Douglass praised Gladstone for being the first British statesman who had attempted to resolve the issue. Pointing to the success of the Irish overseas, he stated, "Irishmen are said to rule everywhere except in Ireland." He concluded the article by saying: "I have favored 'Home Rule' for Ireland for two reasons: First, because Ireland wants 'Home Rule,' and Secondly, because it will free England from the charge of continued oppression of Ireland... I am for fair play for the Irishman, the negro, the Chinaman, and for all men of whatever country or clime, and for allowing them to work out their own destiny without outside interference."

Douglass died on February 20th 1895. He was 77 years old, although he passed away without knowing the day or year of his birth. Poignantly, he died following his attendance at a conference for women's suffrage - a cause that he had championed his whole life. O'Connell had passed away many years earlier, in 1847, not long after their brief, but significant, meeting. Newspapers in Ireland from the Cork Examiner to the Belfast News-Letter reported Douglass's death. Douglass had been born a slave, but he died a champion of international human rights.

In 2011, President Barack Obama, who has admitted the influence of Douglass on his own thinking, acknowledged Ireland's role in Douglass's development:

"For his part, Douglass drew inspiration from the Irishman's courage and intelligence, ultimately modeling his own struggle for justice on O'Connell's belief that change could be achieved peacefully through rule of law . . . the two men shared a universal desire for freedom - one that cannot be contained by language or culture or even the span of an ocean."

**Celebrate Imbolc and St. Brigid's Day with Triskele
Irish American Heritage Museum
Saturday February 1st, 7pm \$12 members, \$15 non-members**





Join the women of Triskele at the Museum as we celebrate Imbolc and St. Brigid. We will mark the matron saint of Ireland's feast day with Triskele's unique blend of craic agus ceol (fun and music) as their energetic and entertaining performance will help us dust off the cobwebs and usher in Spring!

Imbolc was the Celtic celebration of the end of winter and the impending light half of the year. The hardest part of the year was over; adverse weather, cold temperatures, food rationing would soon be a thing of the past. Farmers were getting ready to go back to work, preparing animals for breeding, warriors were picking up their weapons again, and the political and social aspects of life that had been put on hold for winter were also beginning again. After the onset of Christianity in Ireland, the festival was tied in with a celebration of Saint Brigid, and transformed from a pagan one into a Christian one. Christians used Brigid as the focal point of their celebrations to smooth the transition, as Imbolc had previously been associated with a goddess of a very similar name, Brighid.

As with all Celtic festivals, Imbolc involved a host of unique customs and rituals to welcome the spring, say farewell to the winter, ward against evil and promote health and well being. Music with Triskele is a very fitting way to honor Ireland's Celtic goddess and matron saint.

Tickets cost \$12 for members, \$15 for non-members.

Rambling House: Traditional Irish Music
Irish American Heritage Museum
Thursday February 6th, 7pm

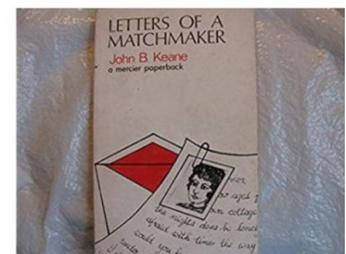




As usual, all are welcome to participate in this free evening of traditional Irish music and song brought to you by Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann (the Irish Musicians' Association). Bring your party piece or instrument! Audience participation welcome and encouraged by our friendly group. Hear traditional Irish music, and old songs, stories and poems in a traditional format that still happens in many Irish homes (and bars) today.

The motto of Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann is "ceol agus gaol" (music and kinship), and while headquartered in Ireland, there are branches of Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann all over the world. Light refreshments will be provided.

Performance of Irish Love Letters! Irish American Heritage Museum Saturday February 8th, 7pm



Join us for a reading of John B. Keane's *Letters of a Matchmaker*. These are the letters of a country matchmaker, Kerryman Dicky Mick Dicky O'Connor as he corresponds with a variety of lonely rural males and females eager to find a mate. Once upon a time, in rural villages in Ireland the matchmaker would make introductions and bring desperate bachelors and lonely women together. Keane saw the function of a matchmaker as a necessary one, particularly in the West of Ireland. Traditional reserve and the demands of rural living often meant people 'missed the boat' and ended up in a lonely condition, warming themselves alone by a fire in a farmhouse in the evenings. Emigration reeked desolation on rural communities and those who stayed to toil on the land and struggle against the elements were left with slim pickings. Sound familiar? Often they weren't even in a position to consider courtship until they'd inherited

land, often they wouldn't have known what to do with it if they had. The letters are comedic, yet as we all know, there's nothing humorous about loneliness and the absurdity of how Irish people deal with their repressed feelings is mined for comedy gold by the rapier sharp wit of John B. Keane. Using his inimitable way with words and his one sense of "devilment" and wit, Keane delves into the longings, hungers, fears and foibles of this collection of lonely county people and creates a marvelously colorful world, taking us back to a simpler time, when phones were few and far between and the only web was one left behind by spiders.

**Valentine's Day Essential Oils Make and Take
Irish American Heritage Museum
Wednesday February 12th, 7pm \$15 per person**



Bring your partner, friends, or come solo to relax, indulge with a glass of wine - and some chocolate, of course - and experience our Valentine's Day Make & Take. You will make 3 of your very own luscious personal care products infused with the purest essential oils from all over the world.

Products you'll make:

- Bombin' Body Butter
- Soft Skin Sugar Scrub
- Lovely Linens Spray

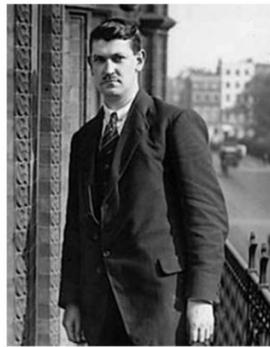
About the teacher: Sarah-Jane Fawcett is a Natural Health & Wellness Educator with Young Living Essential Oils and has spent the last 3 years teaching toxin-free workshops around the Capital Region and New Zealand. She is committed to empowering others with the knowledge of how to use Young Living essential oils and plant-based products to take simple steps towards toxin-free living and emotional & overall wellness.

Lecture Series: The Irish War of Independence

Lecture Two: Michael Collins: Intelligence and Violence in the War

Irish American Heritage Museum

Tuesday February 18th, 7pm



Michael Collins and the War of Independence.
Squad Members: Mick McDonnell, Liam Tobin, Vinny Byrne, and Jim Slattery.
Double Agents: Eamon Broy and David Nelligan.

"One of the cardinal maxims of guerilla warfare: the guerilla wins if he does not lose. The conventional army loses if it does not win."- Henry Kissinger.

Michael Collins was appointed the Minister of Finance in the Dail in 1919. He was also Director of Organisation and Intelligence of the Irish Volunteers, which in 1920 became the official army of the State, the Irish Republican Army, with Cathal Brugha as its Chief of Staff. Collins was also president of the Supreme Council of the Irish Republican Brotherhood, a secret organisation which had infiltrated the IRA. This tangled web meant that Collins actually ran the military war against the British, not the Minister for Defense, Cathal Brugha. But perhaps more effective than the military tactics he used against the British was his unparalleled use of espionage, with an intelligence network that had infiltrated practically every aspect of the British government's operations in Ireland.

This lecture will cover Michael Collins' intelligence campaign against the British, including his use of moles like Eamon (Ned) Broy and David Nelligan; the Squad or Twelve Apostles, the tight-knit group who carried out sanctioned assassinations against British military or counter-intelligence.

