

Happy Hallowe'en from all at the Museum!



That which we know as All Hallow's Eve actually began as a harvest festival several millennia ago in Ireland. Though the evening's popular colors are black and orange, they might as well be Forty Shades of Green, for the customs of the celebration are Irish as the shamrock.

The ancient Celtic year was divided by the four seasons and reckoned by a lunar calendar. The full moon that rose midway between the Autumnal Equinox and Winter Solstice was called Samhain. It was the most scary and sacred time of all.

Winter was approaching, crops were dying, days were growing shorter, and the specter of death hung heavy in the air. Cattle were slaughtered and salted to feed the people through winter. Crops were gathered in and stored lest the shape-shifting Pooka, a nocturnal hobgoblin that delights in tormenting mortals, destroy the fruits of the field and bring on a season of famine. With storehouses full, the Celts marked the 3-day full moon period with revelry and ritual before facing the unknown.

Consumed with fear that they might be carted away to the land of the dead, the Irish lit huge bonfires to ward off evil forces. At night they listened to seanachies tell how the Gaels had defeated the magical Tuatha De Danaan. Undaunted, the Tuatha De plagued their conquerors with trickery, depriving them of milk and grain. Finally, a compromise was reached and the land was divided into two parts. The Gaels had won the right to live above ground; the fairy folk agreed to live underground.

But on Samhain the veil between this and the Otherworld was thin. The fairies roamed at will, the mounds marking the entries to their dwelling places glowed with eerie light, and many a mortal disappeared, lured to live forever below ground with the fairy Sidhe.

This was Feile Na Marbh, Feast of the Dead. Children born that night were blessed with 'double sight,' able to see and play with the fairies. Spirits appeared to ordinary folk advising them of future events. Long-dead ancestors sought the warmth of a hearth fire and communion with the living. In every window, flickering candles lit the way for lost souls.

In 432AD Saint Patrick brought Christianity to Ireland, but the old ways persisted. Rome attempted to take the easy way out and absorbed the tradition into its own calendar. For centuries, the Church had honored its martyrs and saints on May 13, so in 844AD Pope Gregory IV transferred the saints' feast to November 1, renaming it All Hallows Day.

Five hundred years later, Celtic descendants were still celebrating their 3-day Feast of the Dead. In the 14th century, Rome decreed November 2 would be known as All Souls Day and masses would be said for the departed who had not yet been admitted to heaven. In an effort to finally eradicate the ancient festival, October 31 was titled All Hallows Eve and installed on the Church calendar as a vigil of preparation for the 2-day religious observance.

Christianity had absorbed Samhain, but the Celtic ceremony of honoring the dead - now fixed on October 31st and November 1st and 2nd instead of the final harvest full moon - remained. It was still an occasion for feasting and revelry. It was still the night when souls roved free. And it was still the time to seek answers on things unknown.

Hollowed out turnips (which in Ireland are as big as pumpkins) were carved with fearsome faces, lit with candles, and placed in windows to scare away ghosts. People wore masks when out traveling to disguise themselves from creatures of the night. Youngsters went from house to house chanting for food for the poor in the name of Finn Mac Cuill, a tricky descendant of the Tuatha De Danaan.

Meals featured the fruits of the late harvest. No Hallows Eve dinner was complete without a steaming bowl of potato-cabbage Colcannon, crowned with a deep puddle of melted golden butter. Baked into the fruity Barm Brack dessert cake were fortune-telling tokens: a button for the bachelor, a coin for the rich man, a wooden matchstick for the pauper, and a thimble for the spinster. And whoever found the cake's hidden gold ring would certainly marry within the coming year!

In memory of the departed, crisp wafers called 'Soul Cakes' were kept by the door in easy reach of hungry guests - both mortal and immortal. Revelers bobbed for apples in buckets of water and quenched their thirst with mugs of spiced cider. Casting a glance backward into a mirror might show the face of one's future spouse. An egg white dropped in water could swirl into the initial of a someday betrothed's name. Through the evening happy music from pipes and fiddles kept all but the friendliest spirits at bay.

Finally at midnight, church bells began to toll. For the following two days candles burned bright in every home in memory of all those who had gone before. Just as they always had during the Celtic festival of Samhain.

Nearly eight hundred years on, All Hallows Eve is yet the night for magic, mystery and merry making. Ghosts haunt the imagination and trick-or-treaters go begging for goodies from door to door.

Decorations have gone far beyond carved out turnips and become big business, with devotees of the night decorating their lawns, yards and homes even more lavishly - and definitely more ghoulishly - than Christmas. Costuming is limited only by the imagination, and parties spawned

by this ancient Irish tradition now rival the revelry of Mardi Gras.

With thanks to Irish America Magazine.

The Carroll Lecture Series Continues with Peter Moloney, PhD, at the Davis Auditorium, Skidmore College, October 4th at 7pm

The popular and informative series picks up again this fall at Skidmore. Peter will discuss the transformation of the Irish economy during the 20th and 21st century.

From an insular and isolated economy after World War II, Ireland was transformed because of the economic policies of T.K. Whitaker and membership in the EEC in 1973. Today, it is a hub for American and other computer and pharmaceutical industries. How did it happen, and what are the consequences it has had on the Irish economy? What will Brexit mean for Ireland as the Gateway to Europe?



The 2018-2019
Carroll Lecture Series
6 lectures, 4 colleges, 1 museum

Contemporary Ireland

Peter Moloney, PhD
EU scholar, writer, and professor



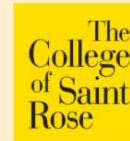
Lecture #3:

*“From Pigs to Micro-Processors:
The modernization of Irish Industry”*

Thursday, October 4, 7pm,
Davis Auditorium, Skidmore College
Saratoga Springs, NY

Presented by

The Irish American
Heritage Museum



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Seanchai Evenings at the Museum!

October 12th, 7pm

Naturally, this month is everything creepy and spooky! The Seanchai performers will tell you all about things that go bump in the Night! Come hear our performers tell entertaining stories, rooted in the long Irish tradition. \$25 family ticket.



Seanachie Evenings

Second Friday of the month
370 Broadway, Albany, NY (518) 427-1916 irish-us.org

**Stories of Whispers and
Things That Go Bump in the Dark**

with Barbara Chepaitis and Lâle Davidson

October 12, 7 pm

\$5 Museum Members, \$10 others, \$25 family four pack

**Briega Murphy at the
Irish American
Heritage Museum,**

**October 13th at 3pm.
\$10 for members, \$15
for non-members.**

Briege Murphy grew up in the village of Forkhill in South Armagh, Northern Ireland, where she still lives with her husband and two daughters. Briege grew up on a farm within a large family steeped in the musical tradition. Her mother Brigid was, unwittingly, a collector of songs and stories. Her brother Brian is a well-known traditional singer who won the Ulster Championship for traditional singing numerous times. So it is no surprise that music plays a big part of Briege's life.



As a teenager Briege joined her local branch of Comhaltas and often sang in their renowned sessions which is so typical of the Irish scene today. Briege began to write her own contemporary folk/country ballads and when a demo of two of her songs were played on a weekly BBC Folk Program, listeners were asking for more. She was persuaded to get her collection of songs together and record an album herself. The album "**The Longest Road**" was released to critical acclaim, followed by "**The Sea and other Songs**", which was named as one of the albums of the year by Folk Roots magazine. Her third album "**The Elm Wood**" was welcomed and greatly appreciated by a steadily growing fan base.

In September 2004 Briege released a new album entitled "**From Now On**". On this album she returned to her roots and sings songs that she grew up with, combining her love of Irish traditional and American folk. Briege has performed at festivals from Cambridge to Cork and Oslo to Ballyshannon. She continues to write and sing at festivals, art centers and folk clubs or anywhere a good ballad is appreciated. Her songs have been recorded by artists like **Niamh Parsons** and **Frances Black** among others. In November 2003 Briege represented Ireland in an International song contest in Holland, singing one of her own compositions in Gaelic, coming 5th out of 70 bands across Europe.

The Irish American Heritage Museum is delighted to have Briege perform for us, and look forward to seeing you all. [Check Briege out on YouTube here.](#)

***The Bloodsucking
Irish!***

***A Lecture on Irish
Gothic Literature***

by Maeve

McEneny

Johnson.

October 9th at

7pm. Members \$5,

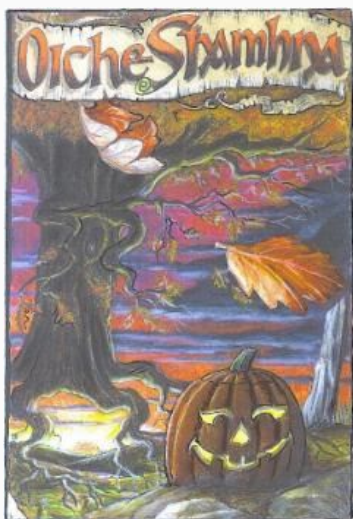
non-members \$8.

Irish authors have given us our most infamous vampiric villains. Though canon says Dracula comes from Transylvania, we will argue that Drac is more Irish than Romanian!

Join Maeve McEneny Johnson in a horror-filled examination of nineteenth century Dublin's Gothic writers. How does pagan folklore, Christian identity and Celtic pride, factor into the most famous bloodsuckers? Join us to find out!

Authors Examined: Charles Maturin, Sheridan LeFanu, Bram Stoker and Oscar Wilde.

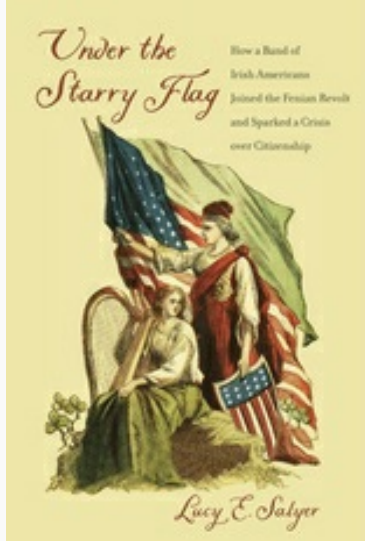
Maeve McEneny Johnson was raised in an Irish Catholic household, Christened with a pagan name, has more books than clean t-shirts and she's been telling ghost stories since she was six years old. She has been a tour guide for the city of Albany for over 10 years and penned The Original Albany Ghost Tour, the first haunted tour about the city. She boasts a Master's degree in English from the University at Albany and currently works at the Discover Albany Visitor Center as their Education and Heritage Coordinator.



Hallowe'en Family Fun Festival! Sunday October 21st 2pm - 4pm. \$10 per family.

Hallowe'en is an Irish holiday - based on the ancient Celtic "Samhain," which was the end of the old year. Oiche Shamhna is the Irish for Hallowe'en Night, and this afternoon we will celebrate all the old, traditional games, by Trick or Treating in the museum, bobbing for apples, eating Barmbrack to see what your fortune holds, and carving pumpkins. There will be a range of snacks and activities, including story-telling by Bill Combes. Suitable for all the family. Come in costume for an extra treat!

Author and Professor Lucy E. Salyer will discuss and sign her new book,



Under the Starry Flag: How a Band of Irish Americans Joined the Fenian Revolt and Sparked a Crisis over Citizenship. October 26th at 7pm. The book will be on sale in the Museum.

The riveting story of forty Irish Americans who set off to fight for Irish independence, only to be arrested by Queen Victoria's authorities and accused of treason: a tale of idealism and justice with profound implications for future conceptions of citizenship and immigration.

In 1867 forty Irish American freedom fighters, outfitted with guns and ammunition, sailed to Ireland to join the effort to end British rule. Yet they never got a chance to fight. British authorities arrested them for treason as soon as they landed, sparking an international conflict that dragged the United States and Britain to the brink of war.

Under the Starry Flag recounts this gripping legal saga, a prelude to today's immigration battles. The Fenians, as the freedom fighters were called, claimed American citizenship. British authorities disagreed, insisting that naturalized Irish Americans remained British subjects. Following in the wake of the Civil War, the Fenian crisis dramatized anew the idea of citizenship as an inalienable right, as natural as freedom of speech and religion. The captivating trial of these men illustrated the stakes of extending those rights to arrivals from far-flung lands. The case of the Fenians, Lucy E. Salyer shows, led to landmark treaties and laws acknowledging the right of exit. The U.S. Congress passed the Expatriation Act of 1868, which guarantees the right to renounce one's citizenship, in the same month it granted citizenship to former American slaves.

The small ruckus created by these impassioned Irish Americans provoked a human rights revolution that is not, even now, fully realized. Placing Reconstruction-era debates over citizenship within a global context, *Under the Starry Flag* raises important questions about citizenship and immigration.

*Lucy E. Salyer is Associate Professor of History at the University of New Hampshire and the author of *Laws Harsh as Tigers: Chinese Immigrants and the Shaping of Modern Immigration Law*, which won the Theodore Saloutos Book Award for the best book on immigration history. A former Constance E. Smith Fellow at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, Salyer has received the Arthur K. Whitcomb Professorship for teaching excellence and fellowships from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the National Science Foundation, and the American Council of Learned Societies.*

Join us at the Museum for Adult Ghost Stories! October 27th, 7 pm. Donations appreciated.

Steven O' Connor, Sheila O' Shea, Parker Cross, and Elizabeth Stack will share some of the creepiest



Hallowe'en stories, from old Irish superstitions to more modern horror writers from America and Ireland! We will discuss fear and why people are drawn to things that scare them. You are welcome to share your encounter with the supernatural too or tell us an Albany story.

Don't worry though - we'll give you something to replenish your spirits before sending you home!



Don't forget to sign up for the Book Club and the Knitting Group.

The Museum will host two different activities in the Fall and Winter. We will have a knitting and crochet class, where we will learn how to knit in the Aran Sweater tradition, knitting panels for a fabulous patchwork quilt. If you can "plain and pur!" then you will be able to learn how to do these beautiful patterns.

We also intend to host a book club which will start in October. Readers will take turns leading a session on the book of their choice. We will confirm the days we will meet when people sign up. Email the museum at info@irish-us.org to sign up for these fun activities.