



# THE LUCK OF THE IRISH



St. Francis of Assisi and Holy Cross teachers belted out a few Irish tunes during a St. Patrick's Day concert held at Holy Cross Friday. The

concert included fast lively foot stomping tunes, emotion stirring slow ballads, dancers and comica.



Children's hands were clapping and feet tapping as they listened to the St. Patrick's Day concert put on Friday by teachers at Holy Cross

and St. Francis. The concert concluded Parish Day which brought approximately 650 students together from both schools.

## Potato played small role in immigration to Halton

There is a myth going around that the Irish settled in Halton Region during the potato famine. Local historian Rick Ruggie, who has done extensive research into the roots of the Region, dispelled that myth.

The Irish were settled in Upper Canada before the potato famine, he said. They were some of the main settlers.

The Irish were the biggest group of settlers in the Esqueping Township. Anywhere you went outside of the Scotch Block in the township were the Irish, he said.

An 1881 population chart shows that 35 per cent of Ontario's population were Irish while 40 per cent of the settlers were from the Emerald Island.

Other nationalities in Esqueping Township included 24 per cent of English background and 29 per cent of Scottish descent.

In Ontario 28 per cent of the population were of English descent in 1881 while 21 per cent were of Scottish descent.

In Halton Region the accepted idea was Protestant Irish men were farmers while Catholic Irish men were laborers.

If you look at a Georgetown census anytime you find Irish Catholics and they were laborers, Mr. Ruggie said.

The impact of the Irish settlement is best seen in the names of towns and hamlets scattered throughout the area.

Omaha and Ballinacree are Irish names, the historian said. Down Highway 25 as you head towards Acton there is a place called the Boyne named after the Battle of the Boyne where King William of Orange defeated the Catholics. It was considered a victory for the Protestants, Mr. Ruggie said.

A lot of Irish settlers came by way of New York City, the historian said. James Buchanan, who hailed from the Esqueping township town of Omaha, directed a lot of people to Upper Canada following the War of 1812.

Mr. Buchanan was his majesty's counsel in New York City. Two large groups, who were mostly Methodist, came from the States to settle in Esqueping, Mr. Ruggie said.

Irish families with names such as Graham, Reid, Cook, Beatty and Carter are still prominent in the area.

Once they settled in the area the same families continued right on through the century, the historian said.

"I think those place names are kind of interesting," he added. "They carry on the link."

## Irish writers

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agnations.

The infamous poet and playwright William Butler Yeats was born in Dublin in 1865.

George Bernard Shaw, who won a Nobel prize for literature in 1925, was a lad of Dublin born in 1856.

Oscar Wilde, who was a leading Irish poet and playwright writing 'The Importance of Being Earnest', was born in Dublin in 1854.



Slobban Blake, 8, Patricia Ann Finnegan, 8, and Kathy Irvine, 7, danced up a three-handed reel and Irish jig. The trio performed for St.

Francis of Assisi and Holy Cross students Friday at a St. Patrick's Day concert held at Holy Cross.



'Tis the luck of the Irish for the one to capture a leprechaun and have access to his pot of gold. Three

Georgetown drama students realize the legend as they gather round a pot for St. Patrick's Day.

## St. Paddy's Day full of myths, mystery

Shamrocks, Saint Patrick, Leprechauns, good hearty Irish stew and jigs - they all conjure up images of the Emerald Island floating in the Irish sea.

But what is the mystique behind St. Patrick's Day which sets folks round the world commemorating Ireland's patron saint?

"St. Patrick's Day tends to be more celebrated outside of Ireland," said St. Francis of Assisi principal Kevin Finnegan.

For the first time in 110 years, Toronto had a St. Patrick's Day parade down Yonge Street Saturday.

On both weekends, communities organized St. Patrick's Day dances, and bars in Toronto brought in barrels of Guinness brew.

"You would not see green beer in Ireland," Mr. Finnegan said. Irish folk in Ireland celebrate St. Paddy's Day more by playing traditional Irish music, dancing and holding poetry and literature readings, he said. It is not a national holiday.

This year the organization Conhaltas, which is a music society, set

up and promoted a big outdoor concert to be held in the heart of Dublin at Stephen's Green.

The five to six hour concert will be all Irish dancing, singing and poetry.

There will be really lively reels, jigs and figure dancing. "All music is really lively," Mr. Finnegan said. There are two basic reasons for music. Slow songs show their love of country while the fast, toe tapping tunes make people want to dance.

Dublin also hosts a parade, which winds its way down O'Connell Street.

St. Patrick's Day originated with Saint Patrick, who has been deemed Ireland's most influential person and embodies everything Irish.

Born in 389 Saint Patrick brought Christianity to the pagan Irish by travelling all around the country preaching.

There are many legends surrounding St. Patrick. One states he used the three leaves of the shamrock to explain the idea of the Blessed Trinity: that there are three persons - the Father, Son and Holy Spirit - in one God.

A second tells that St. Patrick drove the snakes from Ireland so they could live freely. Mr. Finnegan said. In truth this myth explains how he was responsible for releasing the Irish from their sinful ways.

His feast day, March 17, is still celebrated 1,000 years later.

Traditional instruments such as the accordion are brought out by musicians to help make merry on St. Paddy's Day.

The harp, which is the most traditional instrument, will be blended with the black wooden flute, and uilleann.

The uilleann, which is softer than the bagpipes and a complex thing to play requiring both sets of fingers, elbows and the right wrist, was developed because you could not play bagpipes in the house, Mr. Finnegan said. It is played across the knees.

Many a good Irishman will be raising a mug of Guinness, which is Ireland's most popular drink, March 17, Mr. Finnegan said.

It takes seven to 10 minutes to draw the black liquid with a frothy

white top out of the barrel, the principal said.

Arthur Guinness began brewing the draft in 1750 and the cheer Slatte, which means good health, and God Bless Uncle Arthur still rings out as men down the brew.

The whole idea of St. Patrick's Day should be to celebrate Irish culture. "It is a day to make folks happy," Mr. Finnegan said. "It is the end of winter and cheer up for spring."

Not only are the Irish renowned for their foot stomping jigs and toe tapping tunes, but many of the great poets and playwrights have been born and raised in the fertile country.

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