



• UNITED IRISH CULTURAL CENTER •

# “Daddy, Are You Really Going To Build A New Irish Center?”

by Liam Reidy, President, United Irish Cultural Center, (lreidy@irishcentersf.org)

My daughter Roisín turned seven years old on September 19th and I brought her along with me to the Center as I popped in to take some photos at Katherine Scanlon’s 90th Birthday celebration for the bulletin. As we entered the elevator from Wawona Gates, Roisín watched as the door closed behind us and then gazed up at the large posters showing the renderings of the proposed new Irish Center—now known as the 2025 Project. She turned to me and said: “Daddy are you really going to build a new Irish Center?” It was at that moment I found inspiration for this month’s bulletin message. There is no doubt that this same question is playing out in households throughout the City, the Bay Area and well beyond the California state line. The word has spread to the congregations, building sites, and hostelrys about the eyebrow-raising new direction that the 2025 Project Committee is now firmly focused on. The Center’s website traffic, social media platforms and the dedicated new 2025 project site ([www.irishcenter2025.org](http://www.irishcenter2025.org)) confirm that interest from the community is gathering momentum, and people are eager to find out as much as they can about the project.

People are now beginning to understand what the 2025 Project Committee has been

working towards for the past five months. This new building is going to be built. Why shouldn’t Irish Americans throughout the Bay Area put our own Irish Center firmly on the map as an iconic building that will secure the future gathering space for generations to come to celebrate all of our Irishness.

I was in downtown San Diego in early August and a restaurant manager upon hearing I was from San Francisco said to me: “Do you know that they are going to rebuild the Irish Center up there!” I replied: “Yes I did hear that and said won’t it be great if they can pull it off!” She replied: “it sure would be amazing!” To answer Roisín’s question, I turned to her and said: “Yes, we are going to build a new Irish Center but I am not going to do it on my own.” It will take an extraordinary effort from the community to get what has been proposed and hailed as a bold ambitious plan executed. Everyone is welcome to participate and help us out. What has amazed me in this entire process to date is the generosity of people to financially support what we have proposed. Thank you to all the who have pledged support up to now. As we move down the road on this journey, we will need even more help from the community. We are going to need everyone to chip in with



## IRISH CENTER 2025 PROJECT

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their time, talent and treasure and everyone to participate in this once-in-a-generation legacy project for the current population of Irish Americans, Irish residing in the Bay Area and those from the Emerald Isle yet to arrive on our shores.

### 2025 Project Updates

The 2025 Project Executive Committee (PEC) recruited Mark Conroe last month. Mark is an expert in commercial real estate construction and finance with almost four decades of experience here in San Francisco and the Peninsula. Currently living in Marin, Mark served on the Building and Finance committee at SFJAZZ during the construction of its new home at 201 Franklin Street. We also welcome Tony Bucher to the UICC Board, who will guide the effort to build out the content and exhibitions that will be the crown jewels of the new Library, Museum and History Center housed on the building’s 4th floor. Tony is a 5th generation Bay Area native who

has written extensively about the contributions of the Irish to the City by the Bay. When I invited Tony to participate to be part of this amazing journey his response was: “It would be an honor.” Welcome aboard Tony. I also welcome Jeanne Connolly and Seamus Canning who have stepped up to take roles specifically related to the 2025 Project. We have also commenced the much awaited feasibility study of the proposed new building and have retained Elena Kazlas (Boston, MA) as the Executive Consultant responsible for developing the technical report which will guide the future economics of the new building.

### Around the Center

It’s been another busy month in and around the Center. Our Events Manager Aileen Dulohrey has been kept busy since she came on board last July, and I think it’s safe to say September was one of our busiest months this year. We now have five local Irish dancing schools teaching at the Center. What a year it’s been for Irish dance schools and the Center. Long may it continue! We have ballroom dancing classes taking place during the weekday in the St Patricks room. We host Sunday church for Branches—a new Baptist church group in the Sunset, and also recently hosted services for Beth Israel Judea & B’nai Emonah Congre-

gations.

### Wawona Gates Closes October 30th

Wawona Gates will close for the season on Saturday, October 30th, but there are several more chances to come out on Saturday afternoons and listen to some live music from several locals including Dan Dectis, Paul Espinoza, rebel Irish band Sean Daly and the Shams and local Bay area group Menagerie Bay.

### Save the Date!

The San Francisco Bay Area Law Enforcement Society (Emerald Society) hosts their annual dinner at the Center on Saturday Oct 23rd where our own UICC Board member Josephine Brogan is honored as Citizen of the Year. Congratulations Josephine! Derek Warfield and the young Wolfe Tones are back live at the Center on November 13th and 14th. On Saturday December 11th, The Rebel Cork Annual Dinner will take place with 60-Year Rebel Cork Benevolent Association member Tim Murphy being honored as the Corkman of the Year. Turning the page to 2022, we are delighted to have Phil Coulter come back to perform on Saturday, February 5th. The St Patrick’s Grand Marshal Dinner is scheduled for February 25th, hosted by the United Irish Societies. So much more coming in 2022.

That’s it for this month!

## 90 Years Young Celebration For Katherine Scanlon At The Irish Center

KATHERINE SCANLON celebrated her 90th birthday party at the Irish Center on September 19 and it was a testament of the love and high regard she is held in by her family and friends. Rousing video greetings from Ireland and the UK were shown as a surprise to Katherine and a grand time was had by all!

A little trip down memory lane ...

Katherine Scanlon’s mother and father, May and Paddy Mahoney were from Enniscrone, County Sligo and Inchigeelagh, County Cork, respectively.

Katherine was born in St Mary’s Hospital on Stanyan Street on September 19, 1931.

Katherine and her sister, Mary Ellen Manley (RIP) grew up in the close-knit San Francisco Irish community, first living in Noe Valley and then moving to the Haight-Ashbury where she has lived for the past 85 years.

The girls attended St Agnes Primary School and Presentation High School. As was the custom of those days they attended the Irish dances with their parents and spent most weekends with family and other Irish immigrant friends. Most Sundays were spent at Beach Chalet for the Hurling and Football matches.

Katherine was a proud member of the Cork Ladies Drill Team.



From left to right: Patricia Culhane, Angie Palce, Michael Culhane, Joannie O’Leary, Nick Culhane, Katherine Scanlon, Pat Hanley, Francie O’Leary, Jennifer Culhane, and Danielle Miller.

In 1949, Katherine met the love of her life, Michael Scanlon, newly arrived with his sister, Mary from Donoughmore, County Cork. They married at St Agnes Church, San Francisco on January 27, 1951. The house on Cole Street was a revolving door over the years for innumerable family and friends “from home” who were always made welcome.

It was there that Katherine and Mike raised their three children, Joannie, Patricia

and Michael. In addition, Katherine’s love of children, particularly babies resulted in her own full-time babysitting service.

Throughout their children’s school years, Katherine and Mike were active in the Mothers’ and Fathers’ Clubs at St Agnes and Katherine remains a devoted member of the St Agnes Altar Society. The annual parish St Patrick’s Dinner found Mike and Katherine happily working side-by-side

with a multi-cultural committee, making it a tremendous success for many years. They were both extremely proud to be involved in the building and supporting of the United Irish Cultural Center and Mike served on the UICC Board.

In 1978, Katherine made her first trip to Ireland with Mike, who was returning after 30 years. It was a brilliant reunion with family and with friends, some of whom had visited San Francisco previ-



Katherine and Mike Scanlon on their wedding day in 1951

ously. Katherine made a solo trip after Mike passed away in 1991, and subsequent trips to Ireland and England with her grandchildren to visit more cousins and friends. She particularly enjoyed a reunion with her niece, Nora (Manley) Fox and family who had settled in Longford.

Katherine is a long-time member of the San Francisco Cooley-Keegan Branch of Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann from whom she received a “Service Award” in 2014 at the New Jersey Convention. She also enjoys attending the activities of the Irish Immigration Pastoral Center and organizes the “Cousins’ Luncheons” for the Mahoney Clan.

A hearty congratulations from your family and friends!



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Save The Planet Feis Scores Big For The Environment

THERE WERE NO WIGS, NO MAKEUP, NO PLASTIC OR colorful dresses at the “Save the Planet Feis” on the weekend of September 17th and 18th hosted by the Michael Dillon School of Irish Dancing at the Center. Just over 200 dancers came from as far away as the states of Colorado, Washington, Nevada and Phila-

delphia to participate. Old dance socks were collected throughout the weekend (40 lbs) and will be recycled as dog beds. The judges for the weekend were: Máire Clerkin (Los Angeles), Maureen Golden (San Jose) and Jeannie Thornton from San Diego.



Sarah Van Middlesworth and Mallory Brown.



Alyse Kahrimanian, Fairfield, and Abigail Foy, Dixon.



Bernedette Dineen, Abi Van Middlesworth and Shannon Whyte.



Roisin Reidy.



Feis musicians Eamonn Flynn (SF), Chris McLoughlin (New Jersey).



Karen Steen and Cheryl Cain.



Fionnula McEvoy-Pecko with Shane Pecko.



Maura Moylan, with daughter Olivia and Anne Moriarty.



Feis Dad, John O’Kane, and daughter Sammie..

Keepers Of The Steps, 150 Years Of Irish Dance In The San Francisco Bay Area

by Eileen Mize



COMING TO THE UNITED IRISH CULTURAL CENTER IN January 2022! Don’t miss this special exhibit exploring the roots, rhythms, and rituals of one the most enduring traditions of our Irish Heritage—Irish Dance. There most certainly was green among the gold in the hills of California in the mid 1800s. The prospect of striking it rich during the Gold Rush was the hook needed to drive people to the west coast of a young nation—including the Irish! With their hopes of fortune, they brought their culture too. The centuries old oral traditions of Irish music and dance made their way to California and took root in growing communities. Irish dancing is a centuries-old tradition that continues to capture the hearts of dancers and onlookers alike. Long before gold was found in the hills of California—a couple of centuries to be precise—the Dancing Masters of Ireland were promoting the rich tradition of Irish Dance by traveling around Ireland, teaching their steps, and sharing their stories. This critical piece of our Irish heritage and history has evolved over the years into local dance schools in various regions around Ireland—and eventually around the world. Casual dance-offs or competitions at the crossroads of Ireland in the days of yore gave way to feiseanna (Irish dance competitions). The entertainment industry has broadened the reach of the art form through massive stage shows like Riverdance and Lord of the Dance as well as through film and music. Our special exhibit aims to explore the people, places, and things that have sustained Irish dancing in the San Francisco Bay Area. We are ever grateful to the Dancing Masters who brought Irish Dancing to San Francisco and the Bay Area more than 150 years ago and created a rich legacy which thrives today through dance classes, competition, and cultural opportunities. To all the dancers who share in the joy of Irish Dancing, know that you are part of a long and storied tradition. And not unlike those Dancing Masters in 16th century Ireland you, along with your dance teacher,

are the “Keepers of the Steps.” The Keepers of the Steps committee would like to collect information for the upcoming exhibit from local dancers. Thank you in advance for helping to tell the story of Irish Dance in the San Francisco Bay Area. You don’t need to answer every question! Dancer Information Form hard copies will be available through the Library and at Wawona Gates or online at [www.irishcentersf.org](http://www.irishcentersf.org). [www.facebook.com/KeepersOfTheSteps](https://www.facebook.com/KeepersOfTheSteps) / [www.instagram.com/keepersofthesteps/](https://www.instagram.com/keepersofthesteps/)

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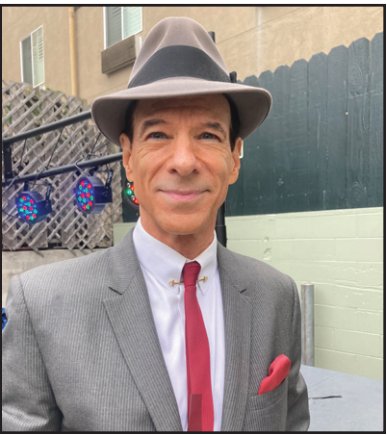
DOORS OPEN 4.30 TILL 11PM

MUSIC BY  
THE INTERNATIONALS

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Frank Sinatra Tribute

SUNSET RESIDENT Perry D’Andrea entertained the large appreciative crowd at Wawona Gates for the Frank Sinatra Tribute evening on Saturday, September 18. It was almost as if ‘Old Blue Eyes’ himself was at the Irish Center. These pictures were taken at the event.



Perry D’Andrea aka Frank Sinatra.



Diarmuid Philpott and Cyril Hackett.



Renee Lazear and Lynn Buckhart.



Michael O’Donoghue, Sheila Brosnan and Anne Cassidy Carew.

Derek Warfield & the  
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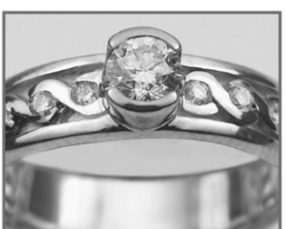

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• IRISH AMERICA •

## Remembering The San Patricios

by Catherine John



Catherine John, Remedios Gómez, Patrick Goggins, Robert O'Driscoll, Anne Cassidy Carew.

IN 1846-1847, AN IDEALISTIC group of conscripted Irish soldiers deserted the US army to fight for Mexico in the Mexican-American War. As Irish Catholic immigrants, they had received abhorrent treatment in the American military; they were not allowed to serve in high ranking positions, and, since only Protestant services were held in army encampments, they had to cross the river into Mexico to attend Catholic mass. It was there that these underappreciated Irish men began to realize they had more in common with Mexicans than with their adopted American society.

These brave soldiers were known as the St Patrick's Battalion, or El Batallón de San Patricio. Considered traitors to the US army, they are hailed as heroes in Mexico. In addition to Irish immigrants, other European immigrants, some Americans, and some Irish already living in Mexico joined the cause. They fought valiantly in Mexico's defense up until the Battle of Chapultepec, when US forces overtook Chapultepec Castle in Mexico City and tried the San Patricios as traitors. On September 12, 1847, a great number of these soldiers were executed for desertion.

One hundred seventy four years later to the day, a commemoration of the San Patricios was held at Wawona Gates at the United Irish Cultural Center in San Francisco. Sponsoring organizations the UICC, The Patrick J Dowling Library, The San Francisco Irish Mexican Association, Irish Culture Bay Area, AmeriCeltic, and the Consulates of Ireland and Mexico in San Francisco put on a fun and festive afternoon of Irish and Mexican culture and historical programming that was informative and uplifting

for all in attendance.

The Irish Pipers Band of San Francisco rang in the celebration shortly after 1 pm, as community members entered Wawona Gates, settled into their seats, and enjoyed Irish and Mexican beverages and delicious tacos and burritos from Carlos Mora's taco truck. Representatives of the San Francisco Irish Mexican Association welcomed attendees and shared a brief history of the St Patrick's Battalion, and President Emeritus of the Association Patrick Goggins spoke about the long history of Irish-Mexican representation and advocacy here in the Bay Area, in the name of values of fairness and justice shared with the San Patricios.

Next, the crowd received a special video greeting direct from Mexico City, featuring Dr Stephen Murray, Grand Master of the Illustrious Order of Saint Patrick, and the Irish Pipe Band of Mexico City. In lieu of a video greeting from Clifden, County Galway, there was a surprise appearance by Noel Laffey, a Clifden native and a possible relation of John Riley, leader of the St Patrick's Battalion. Clifden being the birthplace of John Riley, Laffey had heard tales of the bravery of the San Patricios since boyhood.

The following portion of the program was dedicated to Irish and Mexican cultural performances. The Boyle and Dillon Schools of Irish Dance, Grupo Danza Colibrí, Son de la Bahía, and Irish traditional musicians Darcy Noonan, Hector Bragado and Tedd Colt regaled the audience with lively music and dance, including a bit of crossover between the groups, demonstrating the resonance between Irish and Mexican art forms.

The Honorable Consuls General Remedios Gómez of

Mexico and Robert O'Driscoll of Ireland joined the program to give their own remarks on the St Patrick's Battalion and how the lessons learned from their story and shared Irish and Mexican cultural values influence the culture-bridging work that the Consulates and our communities continue to do today.

Consuls Gómez and O'Driscoll then joined event attendees in the St Francis Room for a live-streamed talk by Mark Day, San Patricios scholar and producer of the 1996 documentary "The San Patricios," followed by a Q&A session and a lively discussion among those present.

Also participating in the day's activities was the Patrick J Dowling library, which displayed titles such as Shamrock and Sword by Robert Ryal Miller and The Irish Soldiers of Mexico by Michael Hogan, for those interested in learning more about the San Patricios.

Remembering and commemorating the St Patrick's Battalion reminds us of the commonalities that bring us together rather than divide us, and bears evidence to how Irish and Mexican communities have held similar roles, spaces, and identities throughout the history of San Francisco, California and the United States. Nowadays, it is very common for Americans to claim shared Irish and Mexican heritage. This event honored and celebrated all those with such mixed heritage, as well as those with an affinity for both cultures or a special interest in the San Patricios story and legacy. A wonderfully enthusiastic response from attendees left everyone with a desire to repeat our San Patricios commemoration next year in San Francisco.



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