



• UNITED IRISH CULTURAL CENTER •

A Memorable Journey: Nashville’s Inspiration For The Irish Center In San Francisco

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

MY RECENT JOURNEY TO Nashville, TN, during the week of July 4th, was an unforgettable experience. The purpose of our trip was a family vacation, but it also coincided with the US National Irish Dance championships, which added an exciting twist to our itinerary. With three young Irish dancers participating in the Nationals, our days were filled with anticipation and joy. The bustling city of Nashville offered us much more than we had imagined, becoming a source of inspiration for our new project back home in San Francisco.

In the last three decades Nashville has transformed itself into a world-class destination, earning its reputation as the entertainment capital of middle America. Beyond the music scene, its downtown supports the NHL Predators, Tennessee Titans football team and the Nashville Sounds baseball team, a Triple-A affiliate of the Milwaukee Brewers.

Live Music Capital

The allure of the city draws thousands to its downtown and wider metro area each week. Nashville is the epicenter of avant-garde country music, which is now mainstream music. My daughter who is 16 is a big fan of Jason Aldean. The live music emanating from downtown bars and venues was mesmerizing, making it impossible to pass by without experiencing the next potential Taylor Swift or Luke Combs.

Civil War Sites

Our exploration extended beyond Nashville itself, leading us to nearby places like Franklin, Murfreesboro, and West Haven, where we delved into the history of the Civil War. Tales of conflict and perseverance enriched our understanding of Tennessee’s rich history, leaving us with a profound appreciation for the events that shaped the region. The historical significance of places like Carton House, once owned by Irish immigrant John McGavock, connected us to the journey of Irish immigrants and their impact on Nashville’s development. In 1864, McGavock’s home provided solace to the Confederate army, situated near the site of the bloodiest five hours of the Civil War in the undulating lands around Carton House. Our thirst for history led us to visit museums and landmarks, where we gained deeper insights into the struggles and triumphs that shaped the region’s identity today.

Grand Ole Opry

No trip to Nashville would be complete without a visit to the iconic Grand Ole Opry. The very mention of its name filled us with excitement, and we eagerly immersed ourselves in the country music culture that resonated from its hallowed halls. The Grand Ole Opry stands as a symbol of tradition and talent, leaving us in awe of its storied past. Attending a live show, we witnessed the rever-

ence shown for performers, past and present, a testament to country music’s lasting impact on the hearts of many.

Can We Do It?

As our vacation drew to a close, the Nashville experience sparked an idea that ignited our hearts with enthusiasm. Could we replicate Nashville’s success in a New Irish Center back home in San Francisco? The vibrant music scene and rich cultural heritage of Nashville had struck a harmonious balance between preserving its history and embracing innovation and change throughout the years. The spirit of community and celebration witnessed during the Irish dance championships and at the Grand Ole Opry showcased how art, music, and culture could unite people from diverse backgrounds. Inspired by Nashville’s example, we envision our new Irish Center that would not only celebrate Irish culture but also become a platform for modern artistic expressions. Much like Nashville, it could serve as a hub for traditional Irish music, dance, and storytelling while also embracing contemporary art forms to resonate with younger generations.

Drawing upon the rich history of Irish immigrants in our local community, the new Center will foster a sense of belonging and pride. Museums and exhibits will educate visitors about the struggles and triumphs of Irish immigrants,

deepening their understanding of their contributions to the region. To keep the spirit of Irish culture alive, the new Center would feature live shows and performances, showcasing the depth and beauty of Irish music and dance. It would remain a cherished and relevant cultural haven for generations to come, just as the Grand Ole Opry has in Nashville.

Grand Master Plan

The journey to Nashville inspired a vision for a dynamic new Irish Center in San Francisco, celebrating tradition while embracing the present. Drawing inspiration from Nashville’s success, we aim to create a cultural treasure that honors Irish heritage and fosters unity among all visitors. With meticulous planning and the passion of our community, we aspire to mirror the spirit of Nashville’s Grand Ole Opry in the heart of our new Center.

Rumble at the Beach

Get ready for an electrifying evening of boxing action at the Center’s “Rumble at the Beach” event on August 12th! In partnership with Fire in the Ring, this USA Boxing sanctioned event is set to be an adrenaline-pumping spectacle. Brace yourself for 16 thrilling bouts throughout the night, starting with the first fight at 6 pm. The Center has earned a reputation as a hotspot for local amateur boxing, drawing a passionate crowd of several hundred people who come to support the boxing.

Blood Drive

The San Francisco Fire Department are hosting a blood drive at the Center on Wednesday August 16th from 8.30am - 12.30pm. Please Support.

Rock the Gates

The much-awaited “Rock the Gates” music festival is just around the corner, scheduled to take place on August 26th. Following the resounding success of its inaugural edition, this year’s event promises to be even more spectacular. Showcasing an impressive lineup of local and statewide bands, the festival will be a mesmerizing celebration of music and culture. In addition to the foot-tapping tunes, attendees will have the opportunity to partake in engaging whiskey workshops, appreciate a captivating art exhibition, admire classic cars, and savor a delectable array of food. Kids face painting will add a splash of color to the festivities. “Rock the Gates” serves as the perfect occasion for the entire community to gather, bringing a delightful close to the summer season.

Limerick Hurlers Triumph

The Limerick Senior hurlers secured the Liam McCarthy All-Ireland Senior hurling championship for the fourth consecutive year and their fifth title in six years. A special moment for this new generation of hurlers and their dedicated supporters, marking a remarkable journey from the challenges of the past to the glory of the present.

Young Irish Pipers Achieve Milestone in Bagpipe Playing

FIVE YOUNG IRISH PIPERS HAVE REACHED a significant milestone in their musical journey, transitioning from mastering the intricacies of chanters to playing the bagpipes in July.

This achievement comes after a year and a half of dedicated practice and training. The Irish Pipers of San Francisco deserve immense gratitude for their partnership with the Center, offering free music classes that have nurtured

these budding pipers’ talents.

Looking ahead, the next exciting goal is to have these young pipers confidently marching and showcasing their skills at events scheduled for next March. Their passion and dedication promise to add a vibrant and melodious touch to future gatherings, delighting audiences with the enchanting sounds of traditional Irish bagpipe music.



Instructor Alex Lentz with Brendan Mullen.



Instructor Mike Bowler with Fintan Reidy.



Instructors Tom Harvey and John Carlin with young Tommy Harvey.



Tommy Harvey and John Carlin with Tanner and Sawyer Manning.

Visit us on the web at Irishcentersf.org

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Boxing At The Beach: Summer Series

Fire in the Ring will showcase the best in local amateur boxing on Saturday August 12th at the Irish Center. Jimmy Ford and his team have assembled a robust boxing card which starts at 6pm.



Fire in the Ring club members helping to organize the boxing on August 12th—
Left: Danny O'Shea, Miguel Rios, Jimmy Ford and Robert Fernandez. Center: Jen Adams and Danny O'Shea (Fitr). Top right: Johnny O'Shea (Fitr BC) will box in the 86 lbs category on August 12th. Below right: Alex Miller (Fitr BC) will box in the 175 lbs category on August 12th.

UICC Summer Camp Culminates In Great Theatre Production Of Tír na nÓg

THE THREE WEEK SUMMER CAMP ended with a wonderful performance of Tír na nÓg which was written, produced and performed by the summer camp kids, under the supervision of Camp Director Máire Clerkin. Over 300 people attended the free event which was sponsored by the Cultural Programming committee at the Center. This years camp had its highest enrollment (73 kids) since its inception back in 2021when it started with 33 kids. The camp will return again next year, with early bird signups due by the end of March, 2024.



Bree and Emma Moylan. Seamus Stannard, Ryan Fitzpatrick. Roisín Cotter, Olivia Lalosh. Hazel Kearney, Isabella Herrera, Nora Robinson. Ed Carew, Kathleen Manning, and Billy Cotter.

Enthralling Performance: Irish Tenor Leaves Audience Spellbound

THE CENTER WAS TREATED TO A MESMERIZING PERFORMANCE by the Irish Tenor, Paul Byrom, in July. In the intimate setting of the St Francis room, his presence captivated the audience. With every song he sang, Paul poured his heart and soul into the performance, leaving the listeners in awe. His flawless vocal delivery and magnificent song styling combined to create an unforgettable experience for all who were present.



Anne Torres, Paul Byrom, and Margaret Baxter. Colleen Hummel and Brenda Lockhart.

The United Irish Cultural Center of San Francisco presents

2nd ANNUAL

ROCK THE GATES

20 • Summer Fleadh • 23

ON STAGE: Avalon Rising • Bluesadelix • Darren Kiely • Dirty Spoon • Greg White • Karl McHugh • L.A.vation • Mangobus • Menagerie Bay • The Gas Men • The Kavanaugh Brothers • Celtic Experience • The Hooks • Irish Pipers • Irish Dancers

FOR THE KIDS: Face-painting • Jumpy House

ON DISPLAY: Keepers of the Steps • Art Exhibit • Classic Cars Patrick J. Dowling Library



PLUS: Clonakilty Whiskey Workshops • Irish Shoppe Irish Vendors • Concessions • Food Vendors

SAT. AUG 26, 2023
2-10 pm | 3 stages

WAWONA GATES
2700 45th Ave
Wawona (SF's Outer Sunset)
@IrishCenterSF

RUMBLE AT THE BEACH

Summer Series!

PRESENTED BY:  

Amateur Fight Night!

Featuring local boxers!

SATURDAY 8.12.23

IRISH CENTER SF
2700 45th AVE.
@Wawona

TICKETS: IrishCenterSF.org