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WEEKEND EDITION

Irish eyes turn to state park for museum



David Hansen ♦ Daily News staff photos

Vince Arnold, founder and president of the Museum of Newport Irish History, holds a historic photo of the mule barn at Fort Adams State Park, also pictured at top, which he hopes will become a permanent home for the museum.

Irish history museum looks for a real home

By Sean Flynn
Daily News staff

The Museum of Newport Irish History was founded about 13 years ago, but it remains a museum without a real home.

NEWPORT Books, photos and artifacts that document the history of Irish immigrants in Newport and the city's old Fifth Ward neighborhood are kept at the Eisenhower House in Fort Adams State Park, but it is not a permanent location for the collection.

Vince Arnold, the museum's founder and president, and its approximately 400 members would like to establish a place where people could go to learn about the social and cultural impact the Irish have had on the city.

The favored location would be

'We're hoping to kick it up a notch and enter an intensive stage of planning for the interpretive site.'

VINCE ARNOLD

founder and president of the Museum of Newport Irish History

in the fort's former mule barn, which now is known as the Dr. Fred Alofsin Special Events Building. Newport Collaborative Architects created a preliminary plan for the museum layout in a small section of the mule barn, which is on the shoreline of Brenton Cove. It would include the museum, a library, a small theater and a boardroom.

"We would like the space if and when it becomes available,"

Arnold said. "It would be great for us because it is an historic site and the fort attracts tourists."

However, Sail Newport and several other organizations also are interested in obtaining space in the mule barn, he said, so it is uncertain who will be able to move into the state-owned building that requires restoration.

When construction of Fort Adams began in 1824 and continued for the next 37 years, Irish masons, stonemasons and laborers were recruited for the project. There were up to 400 laborers at the site during some periods.

"It was mostly Irish labor that built the fort," Arnold said. "It's one of the reasons we would like to stay here at Fort Adams."

It would not be feasible to

IRISH A6

WHAT'S NEXT

To raise money for the establishment of a permanent site, the Museum of Newport Irish History will present a comedy night at Ochre Court at Salve Regina University on Feb. 27 at 7 p.m. The evening will begin with a cocktail reception with food stations and harp music. The comedy show will begin at 8:30 p.m., followed by desserts and cordials after 9:30 p.m. There will be a silent auction throughout the evening. For more information, contact Vince Arnold by e-mail at vjarnold@cox.net.

Club fire in Russia kills 101

Associated Press

An explosion and fire apparently caused by pyrotechnics tore through a nightclub in the Russian city of Perm early today, killing 101 people, according to news reports.

Regional security minister Igor Orlov said the club had a suspended plastic ceiling that caught fire quickly when ignited by so-called "cold fireworks," which generally are fountain-type displays with lower temperatures than conventional fireworks, the ITAR-Tass news agency reported.

"The majority of the deaths were the result of burns or gas inhalation," state news agency RIA Novosti quoted Vladimir Markin, a spokesman for Russia's top investigate body, as saying "Along with this, there was a crush at the exit."

State television showed charred bodies lying in rows outside the club amid a light snowfall.

Markin said most of the victims were young people, and that there was no suspicion of a terrorist attack.



SOURCE: ESRI AP

Russia has been on edge since last week's bombing of the prestigious Nevsky Express passenger train midway between Moscow and St. Petersburg, which killed 27 people. It was the first fatal terrorist attack outside Russia's restive Caucasus republics since 2004.

Chechen rebels claimed responsibility for the train bombing.

State television news channel Vesti cited the regional branch of Emergencies as saying the toll was 101 dead and 160 injured. Other reports put the number of dead in the high 90s.

FIRE A6

HEALTH CARE REFORM

Long-term care remains in bill

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Senate on Friday turned back a Republican effort to eliminate a long-term care insurance program to help seniors and the disabled, saving the plan once championed by the late Sen. Edward M. Kennedy in its health overhaul bill.

But the vote exposed the difficulties Democratic leaders face in persuading their own moderates to remain united behind sweeping legislation they hope to deliver to President Barack Obama. Eleven Democrats voted with Republicans, who warned that the new program would turn into a drain on the federal budget.

Republicans fell short in a bid to strike the long-term care plan on a 51-47 vote. They needed 60 votes to prevail.

Two leading Democrats who shaped the health care bill, Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus of Montana and Budget Committee Chairman Kent Conrad of North Dakota, voted with the GOP — underscoring the gravity of the fiscal concerns.

Known as the CLASS Act, short for Community Living Assistance Services and Supports Act, the idea was originally

LONG-TERM A6

In England, if you see a UFO, don't call military's hot line

LONDON (AP) — The truth — and the UFOs — may be out there, but nobody in the British military is listening anymore.

The Defense Ministry has quietly shut down its UFO hot line as a cost-cutting measure and will no longer investigate any sightings. Veterans of such investigations more worthy of "The X-Files" say it will end work on one of the biggest mysteries of all time.

No longer will Britons who think they've seen flying saucers be able to enlist the services of Her Majesty's armed forces.

This week's closing of the ministry's hot line and its e-mail account, as well as its statement

that it "will no longer respond to reported UFO sightings or investigate them," has angered many Britons who believe such research is vital.

"I think it's a stupid thing to do because this could create a threat to national security," said Roy Lake, founder of the London UFO Studies group. "We take this quite seriously. We know that sometimes things can be explained as natural phenomena, but there could be that one thing that's not. I think the government knows damn well what's going on up there, and they're covering it up."

The hot line has been operat-

UFO A6



Songs of the season

Seniors, above, applaud Friday as the Salve Regina University Madrigal Singers, left, perform at the Edward King House in Newport as part of Christmas in Newport. Christmas in Newport calendar, Page A5.

Jacqueline Marque ♦ Daily News staff photos

Did
YOU?
know

Fuel shortage

All the coal, oil, gas, and wood on Earth would keep the Sun burning for only a few days.



'Tis the season

In Belgium, a popular bread at Christmastime is cougnou, also known as Bread of Jesus, a sweet bread that is formed to resemble a swaddled baby Jesus.

Advice	B7	Movies	C3
Business	C8	Obituaries	A4
Classifieds	B5	Opinion	A7
Comics	C6	Religion	C7
Community	C1	Sports	B1
Local & State	A3	Weather	A6





David Hansen ♦ Daily News staff

The Museum of Newport Irish History maintains the Barney Street cemetery, where many Irish immigrants are buried.

Irish

Continued from A1

locate the museum within the fort itself, he said. It only is open six months of the year and the interior space is damp. It would be expensive to restore it so it could house computers as well as books, photos, documents and other artifacts, he said.

Founded in 1996, the Museum of Newport Irish History's first task was to restore and preserve St. Joseph's Cemetery, known locally as the Barney Street cemetery. The large lot at the corner of Barney and Mount Vernon streets was the site of a small schoolhouse built in 1809 that was purchased by the Diocese of Boston in 1828 and became the first Catholic church in Newport.

The mostly Irish parishioners quickly outgrew the building, tore it down and erected a wooden Gothic-style church at the site in 1837. A little more than a decade later, in 1848, they purchased a site on Spring Street and built an impressive new stone church, dedicated as St. Mary's Church in 1852.

The wooden church on Barney Street was torn down in 1864 and all that remains on the lot is the church cemetery, with the graves of the first parishioners. There are headstones marking the burial locations of people such as Ann Flanagan, who died on June 22, 1841, and Mark Sullivan, who died Aug. 1, 1939. Later graves include those of Honora McCormick, who died Jan. 26, 1851, and Bridget O'Sullivan, who

died May 14, 1853. None of the graves is more recent than the 1850s.

The museum put up a plaque at the property that was dedicated in June 2000, and members have maintained the cemetery since then. Arnold said the steel fence enclosing the small cemetery was just completed this year.

In the past few years, the museum has hosted an annual lecture series at La Forge Casino restaurant on Irish history and culture. Just last month, Joyce Botelho, who has a master's degree in history from Brown University, spoke about the Irish working class culture of Newport in the early 20th century. She focused on people such as Nora Mulloy, who was born in County Roscommon, Ireland, and immigrated to Newport. She worked as a domestic in several prominent households until she saved enough money to open her own boarding house. Mulloy died in 1954.

After the work at Fort Adams, a later generation of Irish laborers helped build the mansions of Bellevue Avenue and later staffed them, Arnold said. Many of these Irish workers established their homes in the southern end of the city, in what was then the Fifth Ward. Museum members have been taping interviews with people talking about life in the old Fifth Ward.

"We're compiling an audio history about all phases of Irish immigration here and what the immigrants, their children and grandchildren contributed to the town," Arnold said.

The museum also has collected history

books about the Irish and has a computer program with data on the Irish who were born, married and died in the city since the 1840s. Patrick Murphy, the organization's historian, compiled this data, Arnold said.

While many Irish immigrated to the U.S. and this area in the 1840s as a result of the potato famines, there were Irish in the city from Colonial times, Arnold said. There was a Larkin family from Ireland in Newport in 1655, and the 1790 census included 37 Irish families.

The museum also conducts a tour of Irish-related sites in the city once a year, using a bus donated by Viking Tours of Newport, owned by the Oakley family.

"We're also working on a DVD with a virtual tour of Irish Newport," Arnold said. "We hope to get that out soon."

While the organization has been busy on many fronts, the next goal is to find a permanent museum site. If the hopes for the mule barn do not work out, perhaps the museum could move into a storefront on Thames Street, Arnold said.

"We're hoping to kick it up a notch and enter an intensive stage of planning for the interpretive site," he said.

To raise money for the effort, the Museum of Newport Irish History will present a comedy night at Ochre Court, Salve Regina University, on Feb. 27, beginning at 7 p.m.

Send reporter Sean Flynn e-mail at Flynn@NewportRI.com.

UFO

Continued from A1

ing, on and off, since 1959. That's longer than "Doctor Who" — British TV's time-traveling, monster-fighting alien — has been on the airwaves.

The military is taking no position on the existence or nonexistence of UFOs but has concluded that in 50 years none of the more than 12,000 reported UFO sightings turned out to be a national security threat.

"None of the thousands of UFO sightings reported over the years have ever provided substantiated proof of the existence of extraterrestrials," a Ministry of Defense spokesman said, speaking on condition of anonymity in line with government policy. "There is no defense value in investigating UFO reports."

The spokesman said closing the UFO inquiry unit would save about 44,000 pounds (\$73,000) a year and would not add to the security threats that Britain faces. He added that the money saved would be better spent helping British troops in Afghanistan.

He said no one has lost a job because of the closure of the UFO portfolio, which over the years had detailed sightings — including many with fanciful illustrations about purported alien encounters.

Some view the decision to end the hot line a sacrifice of mystery and romance in the name of cold financial logic.

Nick Pope, who helped the British military with its UFO inquiries for years, said the decision is wrongheaded.

"It's a great shame," he said. "This is the end of over 50 years of research and investigation into one of the biggest mysteries of our time."

Pope said the decision will also hurt British national security. He said that if commercial airline pilots and other experts no longer report suspicious activity, it will leave the country more vulnerable to terrorist activity and to espionage.

"That's one thing we learned in the 9/11 attacks, the threat of incoming aircraft with transponders turned off," he said.

In a 1996 lecture, famed British physicist Stephen Hawking discounted suggestions that UFOs "contain beings from outer space."

"I think any visits by aliens would be much more obvious and probably also much more unpleasant," he wrote, according to his Web site. "Meeting a more advanced civilization, at our

present stage, might be a bit like the original inhabitants of America meeting Columbus. I don't think they were better off for it."

Hawking also said he prefers to think that "there are other forms of intelligent life out there, but that we have been overlooked," and he lamented the demise of federal funding for the U.S. SETI project that listened for any signals from alien civilizations.

The U.S. Air Force says it has not investigated UFO sightings since 1969, when it ended Project Blue Book, which examined more than 12,600 reported UFO sightings — including 700 that were never explained.

Canada still investigates UFO reports or any other "threat to the Canadian sovereignty," said Canadian Defense Ministry spokesman Capt. Rob Bungay.

Through the years, the British military's investigations generated thousands of pages of secret documents, many of which were recently released by the National Archives after they were declassified.

Some UFO sightings seemed credible, like a 1984 report by a number of air traffic controllers who said they saw an unidentified aircraft land at a small airport, then take off at tremendous speed. Others seemed to be made after a few too many pints at a local pub. A few people said they were abducted and offered sketches of the aliens.

The UFO document release made clear that the British military had devoted considerable resources to the question of extraterrestrial life.

The British public seems divided over whether the UFO inquiry unit was worth the time and money.

Andrew MacDonald, a Manchester planning and development officer, said it makes sense to end the program after a half-century of investigation proved fruitless.

"I don't believe in them," he said of visitors from outer space. "If the hot line has been in place for 50 years and nothing has been found, and we still don't know if anything dangerous exists, then it's about time we stopped looking."

But London event organizer Rachel Keane, 25, said the hot line was important.

"Who's to say there is nothing out there?" she said. "If there is, it's a bit scary that there is no one to call to inform them of what you've seen. I think someone is out there and we've got to be given a chance to report something strange if we see it."

Fire

Continued from A1

Perm, a city of around 1 million people, is about 700 miles east of Moscow in the Ural Mountains.

Enforcement of fire safety

standards in Russia is notoriously lax and in recent years there have been several catastrophic blazes at drug-treatment facilities and apartment buildings.

Russia records nearly 18,000 fire deaths a year, several times the per capita rate in the United States and other Western

countries. Nightclub fires have killed thousands of people worldwide.

Ten people died when a so-called "fire show" went out of control at a Moscow club in March 2007.

In February 2008, a fire in the Golden Rock nightclub in the Siberian city of Omsk killed four

people. Officials said the blast might have been caused by natural gas.

A nightclub fire in Rhode Island in 2003 killed 100 people after pyrotechnics used as a stage prop by the 1980s rock band Great White set ablaze cheap soundproofing foam on the walls and ceiling.

Long-term

Continued from A1

pushed by Kennedy, the Massachusetts liberal who pursued the goal of health care for all through decades in public service until his death from brain cancer in August.

Workers would pay a modest monthly premium during their careers into the voluntary program. If they become disabled, they would get a cash benefit of at least \$50 a day. That can help pay for a home care attendant, for supplies and equipment, to make home improvements such as new bathroom railings, or defray nursing home costs. A version of the plan was passed by the House. The Obama administration supports it.

Sen. John Thune, R-S.D., who led the effort to cut the CLASS Act, said it would add another unaffordable commitment to a government already swamped with debt — and taxpayers would eventually get the bill.

"The CLASS Act is the same old Washington, same old smoke and mirrors, same old games," said Thune. "We are locking in future generations to deficits and debts as far as the eye can see."

But Sen. Chris Dodd, D-Conn., said the Congressional Budget Office projects the program to be fiscally sound for 75 years, without taxpayer bailouts. As a further safeguard, the Senate voted to ensure that funds collected under the plan would only be

used to pay out benefits — and not to cover other government obligations.

"It is a solid program that can make a huge difference for millions of Americans, allowing them to lead independent lives with dignity," Dodd said.

Supporters said the program would begin to fill a yawning hole in the social safety net. The cost of nursing homes averages \$70,000 a year, and a home care attendant runs about \$29 an hour. Medicare only covers temporary nursing home stays. Middle-class households have to exhaust their savings before a senior can qualify for nursing home coverage through Medicaid.

Separately, in a 57-41 vote, the Senate turned back a Republican effort to restore \$120 billion in cuts to Medicare Advantage, the private insurance plan that provides seniors with better benefits than the traditional program. Democrats say the government is wasting money overpaying the plans.

The list of Democrats who crossed the aisle to vote against the CLASS Act was a roll call of moderates whom Majority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev., desperately needs to beat back Republican filibusters and get a final bill off the Senate floor. Among them was Sen. Joe Lieberman, the Connecticut independent.

A dozen or so political moderates hold the fate of the bill in their hands. What makes things unpredictable is that they disagree on two key issues. On abor-

tion coverage and a government health insurance plan, the moderates were lining up in different places.

Reid needs 60 votes to win the last round. He has 60 senators in the Democratic caucus, and some have already said they can't support the bill as it stands now. Lieberman is threatening to filibuster if a government insurance plan stays in. Sen. Ben Nelson, D-Neb., won't vote to advance legislation unless the Senate agrees to strict limits on abortion coverage that liberals won't accept.

As senators prepared to debate into the weekend, it was hard to see how Reid would put together a winning combination. Two Republicans, Maine Sens. Olympia Snowe and Susan Collins may yet be persuaded to vote for the Democratic bill. But they also oppose creating a government plan to compete with private insurers.

Lieberman, Collins and Pennsylvania Democrat Arlen Specter came together Friday to outline an amendment that would give patients better information about the quality of their doctors and insurance plans, and crack down on hospitals where poor sanitation leads to high rates of avoidable infections.

The Senate's Number 2 Democrat, Richard Durbin of Illinois, was unfazed. "We feel like we're moving to the point where soon we can talk about an endgame, where we have an agreement that can bring together 60 votes," Durbin told reporters. "But we're not there yet."

LOCAL WEATHER

COASTAL RHODE ISLAND

Today, breezy with afternoon showers. High near 47. Tonight, rain, snow, breezy, becoming all snow after 3 a.m. Low around 33.

MARINE

Today, north wind 10-15 knots with gusts to 25 knots in the afternoon. Waves 1 foot or less, then 2-3 feet in the afternoon. Tonight, north wind 15-20 knots with gusts to 35 knots. Waves 2-3 feet. Sunday, northwest wind 15-20 knots with gusts to 30 knots. Waves 2-3 feet. Sunday night, west wind 5-10 knots. Waves 1 foot or less.

Monday, southwest wind 5-10 knots. Waves 1-2 feet. Monday night, west wind 10-15 knots. Gusts to 20 knots. Waves around 2 feet.

EXTENDED

Sunday, morning snow flurries, becoming sunny. High near 43. Sunday night, partly cloudy. Low around 33.

Monday, sunny. High near 46. Monday night, mostly cloudy. Low around 33.

Tuesday, sunny. High near 46.

TIDES

Sunday's sunrise 6:58 a.m., sunset 4:16 p.m. High tides: 10:39 a.m., 11:13 p.m. Low tides: 3:33 a.m., 4:39 p.m. Monday's sunrise 6:59 a.m., sunset 4:16 p.m. High tide: 11:36 a.m. Low tides: 4:32 a.m., 5:36 p.m.

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