



Miniature St. Mary's on Display at Irish Museum

By James Merolla

The Museum of Newport Irish History has a new display to add to its Interpretive Center's many others, which are organized around key aspects of Newport Irish community life and personal histories. Visitors this month can get a miniature view of St. Mary, Our Lady of the Isle Church.

The scale replica of St. Mary's was donated to the museum's Interpretive Center by Rev. Kris von Maluski, pastor of St. Mary's and St. Augustin's parishes in Newport.

The museum's communications director, Ann Arnold, said that the model resided in a corner of the third-floor gymnasium of the former St. Mary's School building for years. Father von Maluski told curators that he was concerned that the model might sustain damage and urged that it be placed where, "Others could enjoy its beauty."

According to an article in the museum's recent newsletter by Arnold, the model "is decorated to reflect the beauty of the church during a snowfall." The designer incorporated interior lighting, as well. The intricately detailed scale model measures approximately 30-by-30 inches.

The model is at least 60 years old, Arnold said, and the designer/builder is unknown.



Special Interpretive Center hours for Irish Heritage Month are being held from Friday, March 16 through Sunday, March 18. More information is available at newportirishhistory.org. (Photo by Mike Slein)

Rev. George B. McCarthy, St. Mary's pastor emeritus, recalled seeing the model at the church when he arrived in Newport in 1957.

It is possible that the model was constructed in 1952, said Arnold, as part of the commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the church's dedication, but that has not been substantiated.

"Of course, we would love to know the identity of the model builder, know when it was built, have access to old photos of it," Arnold said. "[We would appreciate the community coming] forward if they have information that predates Father McCarthy's tenure with St. Mary's," she said.

Barbara O'Neill, wife of museum board member Rick O'Neill, and museum member Peg Whitford

restored the model to its current condition.

In the future, the model will be displayed in a custom case. "The plexi-glass and wood display case is not yet complete," Arnold said. "Rogers High School students are building it, under the supervision of their instructor. So, for now, one can view the model very up close."

The museum's goal is to collect and preserve heirlooms that trace the chronology, along with the social and cultural impact of Irish immigration and settlement in Newport County.

It opened in June 2011 and sits in the heart of Newport's best-known Irish-American neighborhood, at 648 Lower Thames St., where this Saturday's St. Patrick's Day parade comes to an end.

'Potatoes for Progress' to Benefit Food Bank

A group based in Cork, Ireland will distribute Irish potatoes as part of Newport's St. Patrick's Day parade festivities on Saturday, March 17. Dubbed "Potatoes for Progress," the group will donate \$1 to the Greater Boston Food Bank for every potato distributed.

For centuries, potatoes have been the main Irish staple and so "Potatoes for Progress" aims to draw attention to hunger in both the United States and Ireland. The Cork group, which is one of the few parade participants attending from Ireland, is looking to strengthen personal, business and charitable connections between County Cork and the Irish communities in Boston, Newport and Providence.

"Everyone has a role in ending hunger at home and abroad" said



Alli McEntyre Gaharan, a member of the Cork contingent. "We hope that parade attendance will help further open lines of communication... We are all part of the same extended Irish family and should connect, assist and spend more time with each other in order to preserve historical and family connections."

The Greater Boston Food Bank is the largest hunger-relief organization in New England and among the largest food banks in the country. Last year, it distributed more than 60 million pounds of nutritious food to people who struggle to have enough to eat.

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