



# Irish Priest Crossed the Pond to Preach Temperance

By James Merolla

On the morn of the annual St. Patrick's Day Parade in Newport, the local bars, pubs and bistros open around 7 a.m. and the only thing greener than many of the patrons by day's end is the beer.

Rightly or wrongly, the Irish people have been too long associated with pub life, strong drink and stronger consequences.

It is hard to imagine then, that the temperance movement once had traction in Newport – by the Irish and for the Irish – for more than half a century.

The Irish priest who brought it across the pond, the Rev. Theobald Mathew (1790-1856), had already reached a staggering five million people in his homeland in the nearly 40 years before he came to the U.S. Once here, he gave the total alcohol abstinence pledge to another 600,000 imbibing souls.

Professor John Quinn, Salve Regina University History Department chair and a member of Newport's Museum of Irish History's board of directors, is a wealth of knowledge about the temperance priest. Quinn, whose research involves both Irish history and American ethnic and religious history, studied the temperance movement in Ireland at the time of the Great Famine for his dissertation. His focus was on Mathew's campaign.

In an article Quinn wrote for the museum's newsletter in 2014, he related how Mathew began his incredibly successful temperance campaign for Catholics in Ireland in 1838. In 1849, he embarked on an American tour that would bring him to more than 300 cities and towns. While he never reached



Members of the Father Mathew Total Abstinence Society's basketball team pose in this 1929 photo. Edward "Tope" Connell, an oil delivery man and a tug boat captain for the old J.T. O'Connell Co., is at far left. Also pictured are Tony Pine, Danny Shea, John Bowley, Timmy Shea and Eddie Murphy.

Newport, he spent three days in Providence and also appeared in Pawtucket and Woonsocket.

"The pub culture lent itself to making trouble with alcohol," he said. "The Irish tended to be whiskey drinkers, more than wine or beer drinkers. They drank [heavily] and not with a meal. Southern Europeans," he added, "tended to be wine drinkers, at home, with a meal."

The pub became the poor man's social club. "If you wanted to entertain, you would go to the pub and buy your friends a round."

According to the professor, a

powerful temperance movement got underway in Newport in 1876, and remained strong right through the 1930s. It "provided an environment for Irish Americans to socialize away from the bars and play sports and participate in parades," he said. "They had their own hall, with regular meetings; they had athletic contests, a basketball team, and a baseball team. They developed a whole mindset where families could go on their way together and not be in the bars."

*Editor's Note: To read more about Rev. Mathew, visit [newportthisweek.com](http://newportthisweek.com).*

## The Story on a Button

The yearly design for the St. Patrick's Day Parade button came from Grand Marshals William and Karen Cardinal, the first couple ever to be so honored. According to organizers, this year's button makes use of a number of symbols important to them.

The unique blue border represents the IHOP Restaurants (International House of Pancakes) color for which both are proud franchise owners. The green, white, and orange represent the national flag of Ireland and their Irish roots.

The cardinal? That you can guess. The shamrock that the cardinal carries in its beak represents the Holy Trinity and the many hours both of the Cardinals spend at their Parish Church (St. Barnabas) and in supporting Catholic education on the island.



## Newport Foursome Bound for Ireland

By Olga Enger

Four Newport notables are preparing for a three-leg journey to Ireland.

Former Mayor Stephen Waluk, acting City Solicitor Christopher Behan, former State Sen. David Kerins, and former City Councilor and Canvassing Clerk Rick O'Neill decided to join the AOH Pipes and Drums Band in their trip to Dublin to participate in a March 26 parade to commemorate the centenary of The Easter Rising.

The uprising, which began on Easter Sunday in 1916, has gone down in history as a pivotal moment in the struggle for Irish independence from the British. After nearly a week of fighting on the streets, hundreds of civilians were killed and the rebel leaders were eventually executed.

The quartet, all Hibernians who have been long-term participants in Newport's sister city relationship with Kinsale, thought it would be exciting to participate.

"I wanted to spend time with the pipe band, and also see the commemoration of the Easter Rising," Behan said. He first went to Ireland with the Newport Rugby team in the 1980s and has traveled

there seven times. Although he had hoped to visit with his daughter Bridget, who lives in Dublin, circumstances are returning her to the states at the same time as the parade.

Waluk, O'Neill and Behan are then moving their adventure to the Northern Ireland capital of Belfast.

"I want to see Belfast. I've heard a lot about it from my daughter," said Behan. To finish the trip, the men plan to head south to Newport's sister city, Kinsale.

"So many of us in Newport share Irish heritage and our special relationship with our friends in Kinsale only enhances our celebration of their culture and history and most importantly, friendship," Waluk said.

The former mayor said this will be his 13th trip to Ireland, most of which have included a stop in Kinsale.

"My first trip was in 1999, the year I graduated from college," said Waluk.

In addition to Kinsale, Newport has sister city ties with Shimoda, Japan; Imperia, Italy; Saint John, New Brunswick, Canada; Skiathos, Greece; and Ponta Delgada, Portugal. The intent of the program is to exchange social and economic cultures.

# Irish Heritage Month

## Tuesday, March 8

**Newport Irish Heritage Association Meeting**  
All welcome to attend the meeting at Hibernian Hall, from 7 – 8 p.m., for more information email [lehane3@verizon.net](mailto:lehane3@verizon.net).

## Friday, March 11

**Museum of Newport Irish History Interpretive Center**  
Noon – 4 p.m. See March 5.

**Annual St. Patrick's Day Tea at the King House**  
Sweet and savory treats and tea served at the King House plus a performance by local piper Liam Geer. The Edward King House Senior Center, 1 – 2:30 p.m., \$5. Space is limited and reservations required, visit [edwardkinghouse.org](http://edwardkinghouse.org) or call 401-846-7426.

**"Big Daddy" Award Ceremony & Pre-Parade Party**  
Honoring award winner IHOP Middletown, Bill and Karen Cardinal, Hibernian Hall, 6p.m., free. Hors d'oeuvres and entertainment including Fishing with Finnegan, Mystic Highland bagpipe band, and a DJ. Cash Bar.

**Celtic Music in the Mansion**  
with Irish folksinger, Robbie O'Connell. Linden Place Muse-

um, 500 Hope St. Bristol, 7:30 p.m., \$25, reservations recommended 401-253-0390.

## Saturday, March 12

**Mayor's Pre-Parade Reception**  
Coffee and pastries, Thompson Middle School, 10 a.m. free.

**Irish Hours on 1540 AM WADK**  
11 a.m. – 3 p.m. including live coverage of the parade. Traditional and contemporary Irish or Irish-influenced music.

**Museum of Newport Irish History Interpretive Center**  
Noon – 4 p.m. See March 5.

**Post-parade Party**  
Corned seef sandwiches, Irish music, cash bar, Hibernian Hall, noon, \$20, advance tickets only.

**Celebrating the Irish**  
Corned Beef and Irish beverages starting 1p.m. Live music and sing-a-longs with Dave O'Manuel. Immediately following parade until 5:00 p.m. Music continues from 7-11 p.m., La Forge Casino Restaurant.

## Sunday, March 13

**Traditional Irish Country Breakfast.**  
La Forge Casino Restaurant, 9 a.m. – 2 p.m., reservations suggested, 401-847-0418.

**Museum of Newport Irish History Interpretive Center**  
Noon – 4 p.m. See March 5. Traditional Irish Music "Session."

## Tuesday, March 22

**6:00 p.m. – Lecture presented by Museum of Newport Irish History.** Guest speaker, Edward H. Fury, president, the Keely Society. The legacy of Patrick C. Keely, Irish-born architect of St. Mary's Church. St. Mary's Church, Spring St. & Memorial Blvd. Free-will offering to benefit the St. Mary's Building Fund.  
Info: [NewportIrishHistory.org/Lectures](http://NewportIrishHistory.org/Lectures) or Ann 401-841-5493.

**7:00 p.m. – Reading of "The Cripple of Inishmaan,"** a dark comedy, by Irish playwright Martin McDonagh, presented by The Newport Celtic Players. Edward King House, 35 King St. Newport. Free. Reservations not required, but space is limited. Not recommended for children. Info: [EdwardKingHouse.org](http://EdwardKingHouse.org) or (401) 846-7426.

## Saturday, March 27

**12:00- 2:00 p.m.:** The Irish Hours on 1540 AM WADK.

## Sunday, March 28

**(Easter Sunday)**  
6:00 – 9:00 p.m. - Traditional Irish Music "Session."

## Sunday, March 20

**12:00 noon – 4:00 p.m.:** Museum of Newport Irish History Interpretive Center.



**Irish Hours on 1540 AM WADK**  
Traditional and contemporary Irish or Irish-influenced music. Hosted by Rick Kelly, noon – 2 p.m.

**Museum of Newport Irish History Interpretive Center**  
Learn about Irish immigration to Newport County from the 1600s to the present. Open noon – 4 p.m. 648 Lower Thames St., 401-848-0661, [NewportIrishHistory.org](http://NewportIrishHistory.org).

**Hibernian of the Year Dinner**  
Tim Burns of the Ancient Order of Hibernians, Dennis E. Collins, Division #1 will be honored with a dinner at Hibernian Hall. Doors open at 6 p.m., dinner at 7 p.m., \$30 plus cash bar.

## Sunday, March 6

**Museum of Newport Irish History Interpretive Center**  
Noon – 4 p.m. See March 5.

**Traditional Irish Music "Session"**  
Musical entertainment hosted by A. O. Gutierrez, Tim May, and Jack Wright, The Fastnet Pub, family-friendly, no cover, 6 – 9 p.m.

