



ANCIENT ORDER  
OF  
HIBERNIANS  
IN AMERICA

Dutchess County  
Msgr. Sheahan  
Division # 1



## Presidents Message:

Brothers,

It is that time of the year to plan the celebrations of the feast of our patron saint, Saint Patrick. We have lots of events to plan and participate in and very little time to work. I would like to encourage all of our brothers to lend a helping hand, during this busy season. Please plan on attending our February, 18 meeting at the K of C.

That said, I would like to congratulate all of the brothers who were sworn to their respective offices, at the January meeting. It was great to see so many new faces take on the task of moving our division forward and building on all the hard work of those officers who have completed their terms. The installation of officers meeting was beautifully performed by our brother Kevin Cummings (district director) and his worthy marshal, Kevin Moore, both from Orange. I believe that for all present, the ceremony reinforced who we are as a brotherhood. I know that I found it extremely gratifying. Thanks to Mike & Glen Kelly for managing the food and refreshments.

We started out the year with a very productive meeting. My sincere gratitude to those individuals who have taken the leadership role as committee chairs, for our near term events. They are as follows; Saint Patrick's Day Parade chairman, Jim Whalen, Castle Point Saint Patrick's Day Celebration chairman, John Kelly, and Hibernian Hunger Project chairman, Kevin Moran. Please assist them, in making each event a success which we can be all proud of. Information contact for each event can be found on the website. Please use the website for a calendar and contact source. This year, one of my goals, as president, is to conduct the regular business agenda in a timely fashion, to leave us with ample time to discuss ways we can grow as an organization. Growth, in an organization is not measured by numbers only, but by the quality its members and the quality of the work that we do in our Motto. I encourage all brothers to bring ideas, old and new, to discuss ways we can grow our fund raising and to suggest worthy recipients of our charitable work.

In closing, I am looking forward to the Emerald Ball where I will be introduced as the 2010 Grand Marshal for the Dutchess County Saint Patrick's Day Parade. I hope to see many of you at the event and at the Parade.

In Brotherhood & Motto,  
Gerard "Gearoid (GAR id)" McVicker  
President

Gene Noone - Editor  
jdrcks@optonline.net  
(914) 469-6661

February  
2010

# Division Newsletter

## Financial Secretary's Corner



Brothers,

This is a reminder that your new 2010 AOH membership card has arrived. Please forward your 2010 membership dues of \$25.00 payable to AOH Div. 1 Dutchess County to:

Bill Leo  
c/o AOH  
606 Leetown Road  
Stormville, NY 12582

I will mail you your membership card as soon as I receive payment. Please have your dues paid by our next meeting on Thursday Feb. 18th, 2010. If possible and to reduce the financial burden to the division, enclosing a self addressed stamped envelope would be greatly appreciated. I'm also seeking the information for the Parish you belong and the town it is located.

I'll also have all membership cards at our next meeting scheduled for Thursday 2/18 at the K of C Hall 2660 E. Main Street Wappinger Falls. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions at 845-226-1254.

If you have already sent your dues in the mail, Thank you and your card will be mailed to you. To maintain your membership in good standing your dues MUST be received on or before 2/18/10.

We have great things planned this year to keep with our motto of Friendship, Unity & Christian Charity and look forward having you involved to deliver those less fortunate than ourselves.

Slainte,  
Bill

**Don't forget to visit our Division website  
for additional resource information at:**

[www.dutchessaoh.com](http://www.dutchessaoh.com)



May St. Patrick guard you wherever you go,  
and guide you in whatever you do--  
and may his loving protection be a blessing to you always



## A Wee Bit of Irish History

### The Irish Potato Blight and the Great Hunger

We are fast approaching the month of March and that brings us St. Patrick's Day--a day on which, they say, the whole world is Irish. If so, then the whole world ought to know the story of the tragic times that changed the course of Irish history --- the 19th-century Irish potato blight. In that regard, we of Irish heritage most certainly need to be more aware of this terrible tragedy which caused such suffering and far reaching effects on the history of our race. In the mid-1800s, as we basically know, after centuries of hardship, Ireland suffered another famine that killed more than a million people and drove at least a million more away. Few people were lucky enough to go untouched. Here's one account of how politics, poverty, and potatoes combined to change Ireland forever.

The English practice of making life difficult for the Irish began in earnest in the early 16th century, when the British Crown, under the Tudors, started removing Irish Catholic gentry from their estates and handing the keys to influential English Protestant friends. Few English lords warmed to the idea of living in Ireland, though. Many simply stayed in England and charged their new Irish tenants rent. Later, laws designed to move more property to Protestant hands allowed any son who became a Protestant to inherit his father's whole estate, while Catholic sons had to divvy the land up. By 1801, the year Ireland became part of Great Britain, Protestants owned all but 5 percent of Ireland. While England built factories and modernized its cities, Ireland remained rural, green, and shockingly poor. At least half of Ireland's people lived in one-room mud huts, scraping out a bleak existence from the soil. Life was nasty, brutish, and short--not to mention potato-centric. Cheap to cultivate, simple to prepare, and rich with vitamins, the potato was Ireland's salvation. Millions ate little else.

In 1845, September's seemingly healthy potato crop rotted within days, causing a stink that could be smelled for miles. A deadly airborne fungus, the potato blight, claimed half the harvest. Britain's Tory Prime Minister, Sir Robert Peel, tried to avoid a crisis by shipping cheap corn from America. With the threat of starvation looming, Prime Minister Peel made a courageous political decision to advocate repeal of England's long-standing Corn Laws. The protectionist laws had been enacted in 1815 to artificially keep up the price of British-grown grain by imposing heavy tariffs on all imported grain. Under the Corn Laws, the large amounts of cheap foreign grain now needed for Ireland would be prohibitively expensive. However, English gentry and politicians reacted with outrage at the mere prospect of losing their long-cherished price protections. The political furor in Britain surrounding Peel's decision quickly overshadowed any concern for the consequences of the crop failure in Ireland. Some corn got through and much like the island of Haiti today, it never fully reached the people it was intended to benefit. But that importation of corn ended by the summer of 1846, when England's new Whig government decided the Irish were better off left alone. Treasury secretary Charles Trevelyan, now in charge of Ireland's economy, closed Peel's corn supply depots and announced that England would not interfere in the "rights of private enterprise." Instead, Trevelyan proposed a plan for Ireland's self-sufficiency. Local taxes would fund public works projects, which would provide jobs for workers, who would in turn buy food from local merchants. The plan was a disaster. When the potato crop failed again--this time completely--panic spread. A Catholic priest wrote to Trevelyan of passing people "seated on the fences of their decaying gardens, wringing their hands and wailing bitterly." Public works wages were too low to afford both food and rent. And local merchants exported goods, including food, rather than lower prices.

Though English Quakers and other groups were moved to action by the Irish plight, many English lawmakers felt the Irish should reap what they had sown, even if that meant starvation. For these hardliners, Ireland was a backward place full of lazy, superstitious, Gaelic-speaking rabble-rousers who would surely bite any hand that fed them. Meanwhile, food riots broke out as starving men and women watched ships loaded with local grain leave for foreign shores. English soldiers, sent to police the Irish mobs, were punished for giving out food to half-dead children. London newspapers published countless sketches of emaciated children scratching in the dirt for edible roots, old women waiting to die, and dead babies in their mothers' arms. Typhus and cholera spread, and people died in droves.

More American corn, some bought by private charities and some donated by an American Indian tribe, arrived in early 1847, but the afflicted Irish had no money to buy it. Food was piled high in warehouses while people continued to starve. Finally, the British government approved free soup kitchens run by religious groups and local relief committees. Three million people showed up for a daily ration of soup.

Blaming Ireland's landlords for the whole predicament, Parliament passed the Irish Poor Law Extension Act in June 1847, a proposal to collect £10 million in taxes from property owners to help support relief funds. But people hadn't paid rent for months. Faced with ruin, landlords were forced to evict tenants. By late summer, the soup kitchens--intended as a temporary measure--were shut down. Homeless and starving, people died on the roadsides, with no one to even bury the bodies. Ironically, 1847's potato crop was somewhat healthy, but too small to do any good, because people had previously eaten the seedling potatoes in desperation. An insurrection in early 1848 provoked the London Times to complain of the people's "monstrous ingratitude." When the potato crop failed again that fall, English compassion had slackened considerably. Another plan to tax property owners only drove people overseas, following the hundreds of thousands who had already fled. For those who couldn't afford the passage, the horrors mounted. Nearly naked, and without shelter, men, women, and children wandered the countryside until they dropped dead.

A look at how much food was exported during this period of mass starvation is absolutely shocking. In "Ireland Before and After the Famine", author Cormac O'Grada documents that in 1845, 3,251,907 quarters (8 bushels = 1 quarter)) of corn were exported from Ireland to Britain. That works out to be over 25 million bushels! That same year 257,257 sheep were exported to Britain. In 1846, 480,827 swine, and 186,483 oxen were also shipped to Britain. Dr. Christine Kinealy, the author of "This Great Calamity" and "A Death-Dealing Famine," published an article in "History Ireland" in 1998 which documented the

### **The Irish Potato Blight and the Great Hunger** (continued)

commodity exports from Ireland to England during "Black'47" (1847). In that one terrible year, 400,000 Irish men, women and children died of starvation and related diseases. Dr. Kinealy found that nearly 4,000 vessels carried food from Ireland to the ports of Bristol, Glasgow, Liverpool and London in 1847. The food was shipped under guard from the most famine-stricken parts of Ireland: Ballina, Ballyshannon, Bantry, Dingle, Killala, Kilrush, Limerick, Sligo, Tralee and Westport. She found that the total amount of grain-derived alcohol (porter, ale, whiskey and stout) exported from Ireland in just nine months of Black'47 was 1,336,220 gallons. Could the starving Irish have been fed on this grain? Not profitably.

A wide variety of other commodities left Ireland during 1847, including peas, beans, onions, rabbits, salmon, oysters, herring, lard and honey, but the most shocking export figures concern butter. Butter was shipped in firkins, each one holding nine gallons. According to Dr. Kinealy, exactly 91,409 firkins were exported from Ireland to Bristol and Liverpool during the first nine months of "Black '47. That works out to be 822,681 gallons of butter. If the other three months were at all comparable, we can safely assume that a million gallons of butter left Ireland while 400,000 Irish people starved to death!

In the four provinces of Ireland the smallest loss of population was in Leinster, 15.5 per cent, then Ulster, 16 per cent, Connaught's loss was greatest, 28.6 per cent, and Munster lost 23.5 per cent. Eventually, after more than a million people had died, and another million or more had fled, the blight subsided. The horror, and the loss of some 25 percent of the population, dramatically altered the political landscape. As a result, gradually money from Irish nationalists in America helped fund Charles Stewart Parnell's Land League, which eventually forced the British government to recognize tenant rights in 1881. Dormant nationalism awoke. The fight for Irish independence had begun anew.

As a segue for next month and a concise recap of the tragic results of this Great Hunger, between 1845 and 1850, more than a million Irish people starved to death while massive quantities of food were being exported from their country. A half million were evicted from their homes during the potato blight, and a million and a half emigrated to America, Canada, Britain and Australia, often on-board rotting, overcrowded "coffin ships". This is the story of how that immense tragedy came to pass. The article for the March newsletter will deal with this saddening experience of emigration, including the wholly inadequate and tragic system of transportation.

**Note:** In the future we would like to discuss at our meeting some aspects of the history of Ireland and other matters of interest presented in the newsletter articles. For instance, as you read this article, did any thoughts or questions come to you? Did you recall any of the so-called famine songs? Songs like: Four Green Fields, The Famine Song, Skibereen, The Fields of Athenry, Come Lay Me Down, to name a few. Or some of the songs of emigration like Noreen Bawn? Who was Colleen Bawn? How much do you know about Grosse Isle? What experience did Prime Minister Peel have in Ireland in years prior to his ascent to the PM position? What was the name of the Indian tribe that sent corn to the Irish? Was the potato indigenous to Ireland? If not, where did it come from and how did it get there? Is there a difference between and Irish Wake and an American Wake? More to come.....

## Irish Community

### **Dutchess County St. Patrick's Parade**

If anyone would like to take out an "Ad" in the Dutchess County St Patrick's Day Parade Journal, or become a Sponsor, or if you know anyone or a business interested, Please contact me:

#### **Journal Ads:**

1/4 page \$25.00

1/2 page \$50.00

Full page \$100.00

Full page in highlighted areas \$200.00

#### **Sponsorship:**

**Bronze:** \$500.00 includes, Full Page Ad in designated Highlighted area, Recognition at the Emerald Ball, Listed as Sponsor on Parade Banners and listed on the "Poughkeepsie Journal" front page, Friday March 5th edition...

**Silver:** \$1,000.00 includes, all of the above, plus two tickets to the Emerald Ball, full mention newspaper ads and distinction on all printed brochures

**Gold:** \$2,500.00 includes all of the above, plus 2 additional tickets to the Ball (4 total), "Full Gold Page Ad" in Journal, Full mention in all press releases, radio and television spots, and Special Recognition with a Sponsorship Banner prominently displayed on Parade Day... Limited availability

All information must be submitted by February 1st...

Thanks, Jim Whalen



# AOH Division 1

Brothers:

As we usher in a New Year, we bear witness to a new Slate of Officers for our Division, as well. As I put on the mantle of my new assignment, as Chairman, Standing Committee, I pause and wish each of my Brother Officers, and all of you, your families and loved ones a great deal of good health, success and happiness. In addition to my spelled our duties, as Division mediator, President McVicker, has asked me to take on additional responsibilities in areas of publicity and communications. To those ends, I shall do my very best, and from time to time will call upon you to assist me in achieving those goals. As we have already witnessed growth, we wish to grow and prosper even further in the months and years ahead. Let each of us, in own way, become not only spokesmen for increasing our ranks, but as models of our causes and programs, too. God Bless.

In Unity, Friendship and CHristian Charity,  
William J. "Bill" Schimpf  
Chairman, Standing Committee



The Dutchess County St. Patrick's Day Parade this year will be held March 6th in Wappingers Falls, NY. AOH Brothers, I ask each of you to hold the date and let me know if you'll be marching, etc.. Last year we had in excess of 40 marchers and we'd love to top that number this year. Please feel free to invite friends and family to march along with us. Attire appropriate for our AOH is requested. Giving everyone plenty of notice always helps, and helps us plan ahead. The Grand Marshal this year is our own AOH President, Jerry McVicker. We'll again be presenting the AOH's "Irish Cottage Float". We're arranging for a smoke/fog machine to have smoke exiting the chimney. Line up begins at 12 noon and the parade begins at 1:00pm from St Mary's parking lot.

Slainte, Jim Whalen

Brothers, For quite a few years the AOH Div 1 team has organized a lunch to honor the Vets who are patients at the Castle Point Veterans Hospital here in Dutchess County. We are lucky to have the very able help of Brendan Daly, one of our AOH brothers, who through his contacts at the Dubliner Pub, provides the food (Traditional Corned Beef & Cabbage & all the trimmings) as well as the Entertainment. This year, like last, will showcase Brendan Folley & friends, an All Ireland Fiddler, who without a doubt puts on a show that should not be missed by anyone who has any Irish blood. or for that matter anyone who enjoys good music. This, along with some traditional Irish Dancers make the day complete. Remember, we owe these Vets a lot and this is just a small token of what we can do to repay some of their sacrifice .



I encourage you to join me and your AOH brothers ,Saturday, 3/13. We will start to serve at noon. Any help you can provide will be greatly appreciated.

In Friendship Unity & Christian Charity  
Slainte,  
John P. Kelly, St Patrick's Vets Luncheon Chairman

Brothers,

We embark on a new event in the coming months to enhance our exposure in the community and to its visitors. Our participation in the Adopt-A-Highway program comes for free and the NYS DOT in the next couple of weeks will erect a sign (this highway maintained by "The Ancient Order Of Hibernians") on route 9D just north of the Castle Point Veteran's Hospital. Well, nothing is for free! We now have responsibility to maintain this 2 mile stretch of State road four times a year. I have scheduled the following dates with the DOT from 8am-11am for Saturday April 24<sup>th</sup>, Sunday June 27<sup>th</sup>, Saturday August 21<sup>st</sup>, Sunday October 17<sup>th</sup>. The DOT will provide the garbage bags, safety gear and signs to keep us safe and pick-up the garbage bags afterwards. I'm seeking volunteers (a minimum of 10 per date) who can help us keep our part of the agreement and each work on a two tenth (North/South) stretch of the highway. Please let me know if you are interested in volunteering and for what date (s). More information can be found on the events page of our web site.



Slainte, Bill Leo

## Sponsors Area



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Attention, all AOH members, your help is needed. This newsletter needs sponsors, for a small yearly fee we will print a business card sized ad monthly. This newsletter goes out to all our membership and to several other Irish organizations. If you or someone you do business with wants to advertise with us, just get a business card to the newsletter editor. And the money to our Financial Secretary the cost is just \$25.00 per year.

## 2010 DIVISION OFFICERS

President	Gerard McVicker	Recording Secretary	Mike Sheppard	Historian	Matt Fitzgerald
Vice President	John Fedigan	Treasurer	Denis Conn	Sentinel	Kevin Moran
Financial Secretary	William Leo	Marshall	Mike Quinn	Standing Committee	William J. Schimpf



### Important Dates

- ◆ February 6 - Emerald Ball
- ◆ February 18 - Regular Business Meeting
- ◆ March 6 - Dutchess Co. St. Patrick's Day Parade

### Prayers for the Sick

Pete Condon	Deacon Bob Horton
Matt Fitzgerald	Dan Lalor
Noel Morris	Bill Schimpf

### On the Radio 91.3 FM:

*"A Little Bit of Ireland"*

Hosted by our own Brendan Daly and  
broadcast from Vassar College.  
Saturday's from 1 PM to 3:30 PM.

### \* In Memoriam \*

Mary McVicker  
(President Gerard McVicker's Mom)



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