



# Irish Society

Of The National Capital Region  
irishsocietyncr.com

Volume 5 Issue 1

May 2025

## IRISH SOCIETY UPDATE

*Famine Memorial Unveiling at  
Macdonald Gardens Park  
June 14, 2025, 1:30 p.m.  
Reception to follow at St. Brigid's  
Centre of the Arts  
(Remember to RSVP by June 5th)*

*Almonte Celtfest  
July 4-6, 2025 | Gemmill Park*

## A GREAT AFTERNOON

May 8th was a wonderful opportunity for the Irish Society Board to meet with interested members and those who wished to learn more about the Irish Society. The sun shone brightly as stories were shared over beverages. It was a chance to hear what the Irish Society was like and how it has evolved.

New members shared their ideas and eagerly asked questions to learn more.

A warm **WELCOME** to our new members.

A gathering of thoughts as former and current ISNCR board presidents exchange stories and insights.



(L-R) Tom O'Neill (present), Bryan Daly, Brian Heeney and Patrick (Paddy) McDonald



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## ***Lá na Máthar Shona Duit - Happy Mother's Day***

On Sunday, May 11th, we celebrated Mother's Day. It was an opportunity to honour and appreciate our mothers, and all mother figures, for their roles in our families and in society.

On May 10, 1908, Anna Jarvis held what is considered by many to be the first formal and widely publicized Mother's Day celebration to commemorate her mother's lifelong activism. She chose white carnations as the symbol of the holiday, as they were her mother's favourite flower and represented purity and love.



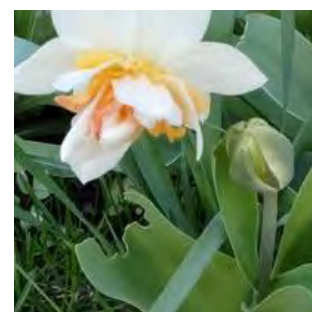
The first Mother's Day in Canada was celebrated on May 9th, 1914. It was celebrated by attending church services and wearing a white carnation.

It is a day to create special memories with your children and the moms in your life to treasure forever.

**Mother's Day in Ireland is also known as 'Mothering Sunday' and is celebrated on the fourth Sunday of Lent.**

It is believed to date back to medieval times when it was common for many poor Irish families to send their capable children to work as helpers or servants for wealthy individuals. During the Lenten season, these children were usually given a day off from work to return home to attend the traditional church mass, as it was part of the Irish tradition to attend services in their mother church during Lent.

As traditions evolved, the day became a special occasion to honour mothers. Mother's Day is also one of those occasions when distant families tend to come together to celebrate. The day is made special not just to mothers alone, but to grandmothers, mothers-in-law, and stepmothers as well.



Daffodils are the flowers associated with Mother's Day in Ireland. They symbolize joy and hope. Stories and music also recognize mothers, as reflected in the traditional Irish song, "A Mother's Love is a Blessing."





## It was a Great Day for the Irish, and the Flags were in Full Array



What a marvelous experience it was to be among the many who attended the unveiling of a commemorative street sign designating St. Patrick Street and Parent Avenue, part of the ByWard Market, as the ***Irish Village - Sráidbhaile Gaelach!***

The special event was attended by Mayor Mark Sutcliffe, city councillors, Irish Embassy officials, Irish Society board members, and local community members.

The Heart & Crown opened its patio and doors for this celebration to honor the Irish contributions to the building of the city of Ottawa, including the historic Rideau Canal.



*Go n-éirí an bóthar leat,  
Go raibh an ghaoth go brách ag do chúl,  
Go lonraí an ghrian go te ar d'aghaidh,  
Go dtite an bháisteach go mín ar do pháirceanna,  
Agus go mbuailimid le chéile arís,  
Go gcoinní Dia i mbos a láimhe.*





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## **A tribute to an Amazing Woman** **Mary Coffey, October 7, 1925 – April 24, 2025** **Past Present of ISNCR 1957**



On April 24, 2025, the Irish Community lost a respected member of our community. Mary Therese Coffey passed away six months shy of her hundredth birthday.

Born in Westport, Co. Mayo on October 7, 1925, Mary described her home as "A small, thatched house with beautiful views --on one side Clew Bay and majestic Croagh Patrick, on the other Neiphin Mor and Neiphin Beag. We had few of life's luxuries. A simple life but a carefree and happy one. Our widowed mother cooked and baked by the hearth fire and saw that my brother and I wanted for nothing".

Educated in the Sacred Heart Secondary School, in 1943, Mary successfully passed an exam for a position in the Department of Posts and Telegraphs. In the Post Office she was initiated into the mysteries of Morse Code, telephone exchange, sorting office pensions and much more. Her starting salary was 18 shillings, and her mother had to supplement her money for rent. At age 18 her salary was increased to 39 shillings and sixpence.

Most importantly, Mary met her husband Ben through work. They married in 1952 and happily settled in Dublin, where the first two of their eight children were born.

Lured by tales from friends who had immigrated to Canada, Ben sailed from Cobh in June 1955. Mary and their two toddlers arrived in Toronto on a cold, snowy day in December 1955. Ben's employment moved them to Ottawa in 1956.

Mary quickly became immersed in the Irish community in Ottawa, meeting up with many fellow countrymen.

In 1957, she became co-founder of the Irish Society of the National Capital Region and remained involved for many years in various capacities.

She became a member of Comhras Ceolteoirí na hÉireann and sat as a committee member for many years.

She acted in a number of Irish Plays put on by the Irish Society.

The Founding meeting of the Gaels was held in the Coffey home, with Mary as Treasurer.

Continued...





For many years, post-game Get-togethers were held in the Coffey home where copious amounts of food were served, and lively entertainment went on, often until the wee hours of the morning. Many of the young players saw Mary as a surrogate mother and later grandmother. Mary was often referred to as Queen of the Irish in Ottawa.

In the mid 1960s when the cost of travel to Ireland was prohibitive, Mary, through the Irish Society, organized affordable flights to Ireland. For many this was their first trip home in many years and was an emotional trip.

A fluent Irish speaker, Mary taught Irish classes for many years formally and informally. Weekly 'Coffey Club' meetings were held in her home and from that group Mary co-edited a collection of stories in Irish published in 2006.

In 2005 Mary was co-founder of what is today the popular Irish Seniors Social Group of Ottawa. She was treasurer of the Group until 2011 and remained interested in all aspects of the group when she could no longer attend.

Mary's integrity, kindness, and friendship will stay with those of us who were fortunate enough to have her in our lives.

**Ar dheis Dé go raibh a hanam dílis**, old friend! Your legacy is your contribution to the Irish Community!



Kay O'Hegarty

#### **Did You Know?**

- 1) Approximately 15% of the population in the Ottawa National Capital Region identify as Irish, whether it's Irish by birth or descent.
- 2) Thomas D'Arcy McGee's nephew Frank McGee led the Ottawa Silver Seven to two consecutive Stanley Cup championships from 1903 to 1905. He was one of the original inductees when the Hockey Hall of Fame first inducted members in 1945.
- 3) Frank Finnigan, also known as 'The Shawville Express', was an indispensable member of the Senators team that won the 1927 Stanley Cup. He played an active role in the "Bring Back the Senators" campaign.
- 4) The construction of Canada's new Parliament Buildings in 1859 was made possible thanks to the lumber provided by John Booth.



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## THIRTY-TWO COUNTY FLAGS OF IRELAND



**Ready to Fly**





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## Easter Simnel Cake

<https://www.allrecipes.com/recipe/24995/easter-simnel-cake/>

**Prep Time: 30 mins**

**Cook Time: 2 hrs 40 mins**

**Additional Time: 10 mins**

**Total Time: 3 hrs 20 mins**



### Ingredients

<b>cup butter, softened</b>	<b>1 cup light brown sugar</b>
<b>4 large eggs</b>	<b>1 ¾ cups self-rising flour</b>
<b>⅓ cups golden raisins</b>	<b>1 cup dried currants</b>
<b>⅔ cup candied cherries - rinsed, dried and quartered</b>	
<b>¼ cup candied mixed fruit peel, chopped</b>	
<b>1 tablespoons grated lemon zest</b>	<b>2 teaspoons mixed spice</b>
<b>1 lb almond paste, divided</b>	<b>2 tablespoons apricot jam</b>
<b>1 large egg, beaten</b>	

### Instructions:

1. Preheat the oven to 300 degrees F (150 degrees C). Grease and flour a deep 8-inch springform pan. Line the bottom and sides of the pan with greased parchment paper.
2. Beat butter and brown sugar together in a large bowl with an electric mixer until light and fluffy. Beat in 4 eggs, one at a time, mixing well after each addition. Mix in flour. Stir in golden raisins, currants, candied cherries, mixed fruit, lemon zest, and mixed spice until incorporated. Pour 1/2 of the batter into the prepared pan.
3. Divide almond paste into 3 equal portions. Roll out 1 portion into an 8-inch circle. Place over batter in the pan. Cover with remaining cake batter.
4. Bake in the preheated oven until evenly brown and firm to the touch, 2 hours 30 minutes. If cake is browning too quickly, cover with aluminum foil after 1 hour of baking. Let cool in the pan for 10 minutes, then turn cake out onto a wire rack to cool completely.
5. Set the oven's broiler to high.
6. Place apricot jam in a small microwave-safe bowl and heat in the microwave until warm, about 5 seconds. Brush the top of cooled cake with warm jam.
7. Roll out another portion of almond paste into an 8-inch circle and place on top of cake. Brush the top with beaten egg. Divide remaining portion of almond paste into 11 pieces, roll into balls, and arrange around the outside edge of the top of cake. Brush the tops of balls lightly with beaten egg.
8. Place cake under the preheated broiler until almond paste is golden brown, 8 to 10 minutes.



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## CAN YOU HELP?

Are you aware of any former Irish Society of the National Capital Region (ISNCR) presidents?

Do you want to share an event, a narrative, a picture, or a tale?

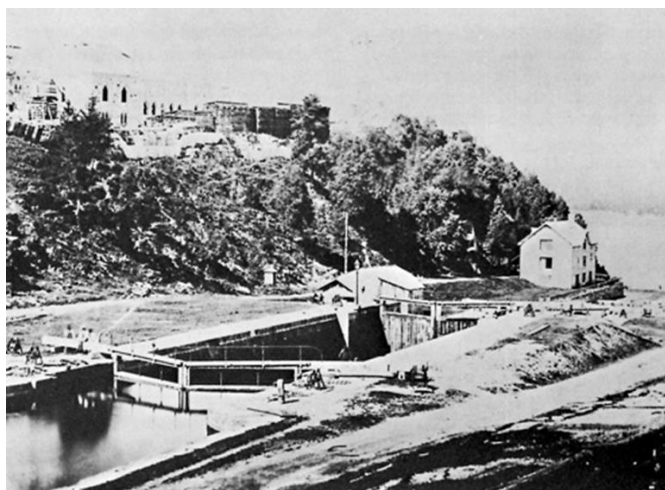
Do you know someone we ought to thank or acknowledge?

Would you like to share a recipe with the Irish community?

Is there someone we should recognize who passed away recently?

Tell us, please.

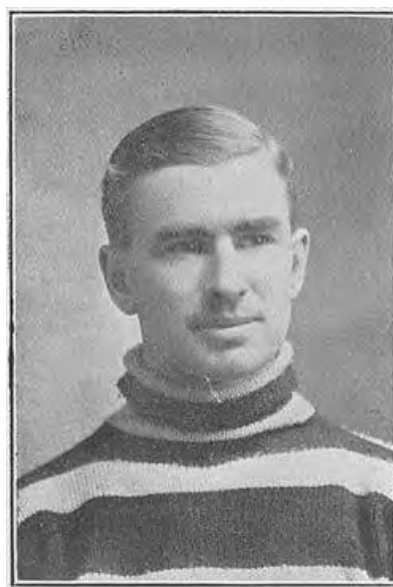
Email: [secretary@irishsocietyncr.com](mailto:secretary@irishsocietyncr.com)



Taken about 1862, this photograph of the lower end of the Rideau Canal shows the beginnings of construction of the Parliament Buildings. (*Public Archives of Canada.*)

Frank McGee player for the Ottawa Hockey Club (also known as the Silver Seven) between 1903 and 1906

From Wikipedia







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