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Welcome to the latest edition of the IACI e-news.

Founded in 1962, the IACI is the leading Irish American cultural organization. The IACI is a federally recognized 501(c)(3) not-for-profit national organization devoted to promoting an intelligent appreciation of Ireland and the role and contributions of the Irish in America.

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A Virtual Tour of Ireland

By

Raymond D. Aumack

As exciting as it may have been for Charles Lindberg, flying across the ocean is really a rather dull exercise. Clouds usually cover the ocean for entire route to Europe. The plane gradually descends signaling that the trip is almost over, flying within the clouds for a significant amount of time, maybe a half hour. The magic happens when the plane descends beneath the clouds and the first thing that you see is the Emerald Isle. It is so well identified as such because the legend of the forty shades of green is real. The rising sun kisses the earth to illumine and warm the Irish countryside with its beautiful shades of emerald, especially after five hours of only white clouds. Ireland is the sun's last lover as it moves relentlessly westward to awaken New York and Boston.

The Irish Airlines 747, identified as St. Brendan, settled gently on the ground at Dublin Airport. The excitement of disembarking in a new country combined with the excitement of the crowds at the airport awakened passions that I didn't know I had. As often as I have visited Ireland, the sense of arriving at home never goes away. My mother always referred to Ireland as "home." She would often ask her Irish friends if they were going "home" in the summer. One of my daughters visited Ireland many times and the first time she called us was to tell us that she had found the place that genuinely soothed her wandering heart. She has since visited Ireland over a dozen times.

For my wife, this was the first trip to the homeland of her heritage. Our plan for the trip was to visit the homes of our family roots at Cork and Donegal. Along the way we would visit whatever we could see and drink in the culture of the country and its people. Since I had visited there before I knew both the tourist attractions and the many other attractions that would express the genuine heart of the country and her people.

We worked our way through the traffic of a business morning and carefully wove our way through the ancient streets of east Dublin, built for horses, but now inlaid with cobblestones to accommodate automobiles. They left the streets only wide enough for a pair of horses to pass each other, making negotiating an automobile on a two-way street an interesting challenge. We finally made it to one of the picturesque bridges over the River Liffey, through Temple Bar, and made our way to St. Stephen's Green and the Shelborne Hotel.

The Shelborne is my favorite hotel in Ireland. There is something about its old world elegance that I find attractive compared with Dublin's other more modern and excellent hotels. It is a very old world hotel and one of the great amenities is the way they treat guests. It is almost as if we were old friends visiting. The rooms are comfortable. The hotel restaurant is outstanding. It was there that we met a number of the staff who could not have been more gracious. They seemed to enjoy speaking with us and asked us all their favorite questions about the United States,

especially New York. We had an excellent dinner in an Italian restaurant near the hotel on one of the side streets off of Grafton Street.

After a long nap we ventured over to St. Stephen's Green. So many small plants that I remembered from years ago are now trees. Everyone seemed to be having a good time chatting each other up. As we walked around, I thought of the defense of the Green during the Rising of 1916. Countess Constance Markiewicz co-led the company of the Irish Volunteers that for five days held well against the British until they went to the roof of the Shelborne and started firing into park with machine guns. The Countess led the retreat to the west side of the park and occupied the apartments located there. She didn't surrender until ordered to do so by Pdraig Pearse, at which point she handed her pistol to her cousin who was a British Officer. We went out the north exit and as we passed his huge bust, I said a silent prayer of thanksgiving for Arthur Griffith who gifted and funded the Green for the people of Dublin.

That first full day we took a bus tour of Dublin. Of course, my wife had never before seen Dublin and enjoyed the tour very much. I thoroughly enjoyed the stories the guide told us. I don't know where else you could hear the storied background of 3000 year old Dublin so eloquently told. We had lunch out and continued sightseeing. At the end of Grafton Street is a magnificent statue of Molly Malone. I'm sure Molly never looked as good as the statue.

Directly across the street from Molly is Trinity College and we toured the Boyle Library to see the Book of Kells along with many other illuminated manuscripts. As a student of Sacred Scripture I marveled at the art and reflected on the faith that could generate such art.

After the necessary late afternoon nap, we dined in the hotel dining room served by the waitress who elected to make us her own private guests. She was an American who had married an Irishman but they had divorced years before. She loved Ireland and had made it her permanent home. Later in the evening we were to meet an American friend who was working in Dublin. We met in a pub in a Dublin neighborhood far off the traditional tourist paths. The clientele of the pub enthusiastically greeted us. It is hard to be loner or a recluse in an Irish pub. Truthfully the Irish adage *that a stranger is only a friend you haven't met yet* must have gotten its start in a place like this one where many pints are pulled, many stories are told, and many laughs are shared. These people gathered there because they really cared for one another and they had no qualms about welcoming us. We shared a great night of singing, talking, laughing until the wee hours of the next day. Our friend has worked in many countries and we see each other several times a year when he comes home to visit his family. He still remembers that wonderful evening we shared in remarkable detail.

We obviously slept in the next day but we planned to embark on our tour of Ireland. We confirmed our reservations for our return in about ten days and set our sails south over the Wicklow Mountains. Our destination was Killkenny. We had met some pipers on the plane and in the airport who were participating in a competition at the Killkenny Castle. We arrived

relatively late in the evening because of our stopover at Glendalough, the ruins of the ancient monastery as well as at Bouvelouge and Enniscorthy, sights of fierce battles during the 1798 Rising.

Kilkenny was a great surprise. It is a wonderfully picturesque town characterized by the efforts to keep it looking regal. Every window had a blooming flower box. The homes were painted with a variety of colors and every street was unique. Our landlady had made arrangements for us to have a late dinner at the local pub and we were made as welcome here as we were in Dublin. The publican could not have been more gracious or more attentive to us. It was a typical pub meal of lamb chops. I am not a fan of lamb but this was delicious.

Unfortunately, the next day we had a heavy and steady rainfall and the piper competition was rained out. Around midday we set out for Waterford and indeed, it was a grand drive down to the port city. Waterford is a lovely town to just walk around. The rain stopped in midafternoon and the sun peeked out at times through the low hanging clouds. We spent some time sitting on a bench at one of the quays before we went on the tourist's tour of the Waterford Crystal factory. I had been there before but my wife, a fan of Waterford Crystal, was really looking forward to it. We saw the glass being blown and shaped, certainly an artistic craft. The quality control of Waterford Crystal is such that even an infinitesimal flaw requires that that the product is destroyed. We have collected a lot of wonderful Irish Crystal over the years and we give many crystal gifts. It is not only a beautiful piece but a genuine work of art.

Late in afternoon, we set out for Kinsale, our destination for the day. Kinsale is a wondrous town with a harbor filled with moored sailboats for the most part. The town itself is rather hilly, some of them rather steep streets to navigate. We checked into our B & B in time for our nap. We had missed it the day before and the activity of the day was taxing.

We woke in time for the Saturday evening Mass and for us, that was a strange experience. The church was packed with locals. However, for me, the whole communal experience was flat especially after our experience in several pubs. There was very little participation at Mass and there was no singing. Whatever prayerful participation there was came out in reluctant murmurs. The celebrant had a well-prepared homily but he delivered it in such a way that it seemed that he didn't give a tinker's damn if anybody heard it. He had absolutely no communication with the congregation. I did some further study on the state of the parish churches while we were in Ireland and, thank God, our experience was not duplicated in Ireland. I had read about some parish activities that were outstanding. My conclusion was that the attitude of the pastor dictated the attitude of the community. I felt badly for the people.

That evening we had dinner at the White House, no not the one you're thinking of, but one of Ireland's most noteworthy restaurants. It did not disappoint and the meal was the most outstanding of a trip filled with outstanding meals. Later in the evening we went to one of the local pubs. I noted that many people in the pub I had seen at Mass earlier in the evening. They

were singing their heads off with gusto and reckless abandon. I asked a housemate the next morning at breakfast about the lack of singing at Mass. His memorable reply was, "Sure, there is no drink taken."

I loved Kinsale. It is home to one of the great golf courses of the world. It was on the fields of Kinsale that a great battle was fought with Queen Elizabeth's British army; a battle that was lost, resulting in the British occupation of Ireland, the people enslaved in poverty, and the best and the brightest potential governors of Ireland fleeing to the European mainland. This became known as the *Flight of the Earls*.

The next leg of our trip was a lovely road along the shores of the Atlantic. I marveled at the scenery and at horse breeders training their horses in the Atlantic surf. In Ireland, they love their horses. There were many interesting stops that we could have made but we were planning to visit my cousin, Mary Leonard and her son, John on the Island of Ringaroga, our family home. The road would take us directly into Skibbereen and from there we would take a bridge from the mainland to the island.

I had been to Skibbereen before to visit a close uncle's family. They owned a tavern on the main street that looked down the street to dead end at the doors of the community church. It was a sight that was worthy of a postcard. My uncle was not an uncle by blood but by marriage. The first time I was there I visited with his sisters who owned ran the pub. While I was there one of the sisters asked me if I would sweep the floor while she was doing something else. I did it gladly. When I was finished she asked if I would like a drink. She pulled me a pint and then charged me 35 shillings. My best guess is that Irish hospitality does not extend to relatives once removed. My uncle was the husband of my grandmother's sister. I later picked up in conversations with my cousin on Ringaroga that the McCarthy girls of Baltimore did not enjoy high favor among the Ronan and O'Brien clans. Irish grudges never die. My uncle never wanted to return to Ireland. He fought in the civil war on the side of Michael Collins and I always thought that it was because he may have known something about Collin's assassination. Actually, they were relative neighbors and personally knew each other. It turns out that he just didn't want to deal with his sisters. Irish grudges live forever, in spite of the separation by a mighty ocean and 75 years of festering.

Ringaroga is an island off the shore of County Cork within Roaring Water Bay. It is the first of a string of three islands. The second island, Clear Island, is beyond the mouth of the bay about five miles away. The third island is about twelve miles from the mainland. Ringaroga is accessible by bridge.

My grandfather grew up on this island. He described to me once that he used to sit on the edge of a cliff, high above the beach (about 150 feet) and watch the ships sail from Cobh on their way to America. It was there that he laid plans for his own journey to America and a new life. My grandmother, Mary McCarthy, lived on the mainland at Baltimore. Baltimore has a Moorish

influence because it was the first stop of raiders from North Africa. Baltimore is not very far from Ringaroga. My grandparents probably met each other at one of the various regattas and festivals among the many shore villages in the region.

When I first visited Ringaroga years before, there were only six families that lived on the Island, all surnamed Leonard, though none of them were related to each other. There are now about twenty homes, some of them strictly vacation homes. During this visit my cousin, Mary Leonard, proudly proclaimed that she had seventeen cows. The house was a comfortable cottage. It had television and a telephone. Kerosene powered the engines of the farm equipment. They had no such thing when I first visited. We had a delightful snack as we visited and there was turf burning in the fireplace near to where we sat to talk, though it was the middle of August. The Gulf Stream runs very close to Ringaroga and the climate is different from the rest of Ireland. There is an occasional palm tree and a number of different kinds of tropical plants. It is still subject to the wild storms that strike Ireland and the snows of winter, but, in general, it can be an ideal vacation spot.

Mary is now into her 90s and, though frail, is as feisty as ever. Her son, John, runs the farm and gets around enough to be well-known throughout the area.

I send photos of her brother's descendants and we now number about forty. While she has never met any of them other than my siblings, we have a lot to discuss about our lives.

All of my older relatives are gone by now and we always remember them in our conversations. We had visited the cottage that my grandfather was born in. It is mostly a ruin now but there is one part of the frame still standing on which my grandfather tacked a horseshoe on a crossbeam in 1886. I had great admiration for my grandfather and my name embraces his. My full name is Raymond Denis Ronan Aumack and I am proud to carry his with me through life.

It was sad to leave Ringaroga, knowing that I would probably never return there. My great retirement plans included a once or twice a month visit to Ireland. I am a member of the Irish Writers Society and I had planned my activities around the Parnell Square courses, lectures, and contests. Alas, illness and age interfered with those plans. I have absolutely nothing to complain about. I thank God for the memories of Ireland and for the opportunity to write about them.

We set out for Killarney late in the afternoon. I remind the reader that the Irish summer day is quite long. The sun does not set until about 10:30 P.M. in the summertime. We decided to take the Ring of Kerry to the Lakes of Killarney and make our plans from there.

If you ever visit Ireland, do not miss the Ring of Kerry. It is truly one of the most scenic wonders of our world. The mountains are not very high, not like in Colorado or New York State. But they are beautiful and the cloud bank rides low enough to surround the peaks every now and then. Sheep graze on the sides of the mountains from the base to the peaks. I was driving the car on the Ring and my wife was sitting in the passenger seat on the left side of the car. Her view was out

over the mountains on her left. Also she had a clear view of the valley floor many hundred feet below. There was a foot high fence of chicken wire on the outside rim of the road. She said to me, "Ray, I don't think that fence is going to protect us if we run off the road." I reminded her that the fence wasn't there for us. It was placed there to protect the sheep should they lose their footing on the hillside.

After a couple of hours of rather hairy but careful riving, we arrived at the Ladies Lookout. It was so called because it was a rest stop for Queen Victoria when she visited Ireland. The view of the lakes is stunning from that area. From there it was a relatively brief drive down the mountain to the lakes. One striking site at the Ladies Rest was the large marble statue of the Virgin Mary at the south end of the rest area.

We made the decision of to stay at Killarney where we checked into a B & B, dined, and did the necessary pub call. We wanted to take the bus tour of the Ring the next day. My wife, Ruth, wanted to see the Ring in more detail and I wanted to hear the stories the tour guides would tell.

The bus tour was well worth the effort. Story after story rolled off the tongue of the tour guide. We passed Skellig Michael and the guide pointed out that, since the day was unusually clear, we could see things not ordinarily seen. We went through Cahersiveen, the home of Daniel O'Connell, who fought for Catholic Emancipation in the British Parliament in the early 19th century..

One interesting phase of the trip was passing though the Black Valley, memorialized in the novel by Sean O'Faolain. They did not accept electricity even though there is a generating station relatively nearby. The generator is fired by turf rather than import coal from England.

We came to the obligatory tourist stop at a department store in the Town of Sneem. Actually it was a good stop. We bought lovely sweaters for our children that were at a bargain price. We also had lunch at Dan Murphy's Pub, famous for the big stone outside the door on which is inscribed, "The Stone Outside of Dan Murphy's Pub." There are many versions to the story of the stone and all of them will tickle the fancy of any tourist.

Sneem is really a lovely town surrounded by lakes and streams that are so picturesque they could make the town a meditation garden. One majestic sight was the presence of mimes on the circle in the center of the town. At first I thought they were just unusual statues but they turned out to be first class mimes.

All in all, the beauty of the Ring of the Kingdom of Kerry, the places we visited, the stories we heard, the purchases we made, and the lovely lunch made for a genuinely great day. We spent some time at the lakes when we returned. We didn't see any, but I read of the red deer that are found only in the lake territory.

Killarney was a busy little town and was very attractive. It seemed to be a college town, filled with young people and their energy.

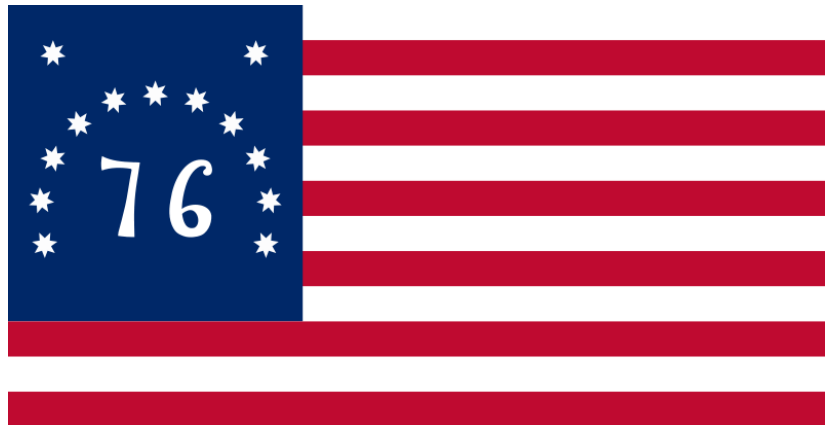
To be continued.

"Live Free or Die"



General John Stark

*There are the Redcoats and the Tories; they will be ours
or this night Molly Stark sleeps a widow."*



The "Bennington" Flag, 13 seven-pointed stars, seven white and six red stripes, reputed to have been used by the American forces under general John Stark at the **Battle of Bennington, 16th August 1777.**

The **Battle of Bennington** in the American War for Independence took place on 16th August 1777, in Walloomsac, New York, about 10 miles from its namesake, Bennington, Vermont.

An American force of 2,000 men, primarily composed of New Hampshire and Massachusetts militiamen led by General John Stark, and reinforced by men led by Colonel Seth Warner and members of the Green Mountain Boys, **decisively defeated** a detachment of General John Burgoyne's army led by Lieutenant Colonel Friedrich Baum, and supported by additional men under Lieutenant Colonel Heinrich von Breymann. Many of John Stark's New Hampshire militiamen (40 of whom were Irish-born) were recruited from that very Irish part of New Hampshire where he resided.

The American Patriots were reinforced by people horrified by atrocities committed by Burgoyne's Indians, most notably the murder and scalping of Jane McRae, a beautiful redhead, well-known, and well-liked, in the area. Although "Gentleman Johnny" did not approve of the murder (which became a *cause célèbre*) -- the guilty party, though known, was not punished.

Baum's detachment was a mixed force of 700 composed of dismounted Brunswick dragoons, Canadians, Loyalists, and Indians. He was **sent by Burgoyne to raid Bennington** in the disputed New Hampshire Grants area for horses, draft animals, and other supplies. Believing the town to be only lightly defended, the "Hessians" were unaware that Stark and 1,500 militiamen were waiting there. After a rain-caused standoff, Stark's men enveloped Baum's position, taking many prisoners and killing Baum. Reinforcements for both sides arrived as Stark and his men were mopping up, and the battle restarted, with Warner and Stark successfully driving away Breymann's reinforcements, with heavy casualties.

The battle was an important victory for the American cause, as it reduced Burgoyne's army in size by almost 1,000 men (14 Americans KIA), caused his Indian support to largely abandon him, and deprived him of needed supplies, all factors that contributed to Burgoyne's eventual surrender at Saratoga. That victory also galvanized colonial support for the independence movement, and played a role in bringing France into the war on the American side. The anniversary of the Patriot victory at the Battle of Bennington, August 16th, is celebrated in the State of Vermont as "*Bennington Battle Day*."



Known as the "***Green Mountain Boys***" **Flag**, this flag was actually carried by the infantry under the command of John Stark at the Battle of Bennington, 16th August 1777.

The green flag, itself, is in the Bennington Museum in Vermont. The Republic of Vermont declared its independence from England on 15th January 1777; Vermont joined the Union in 1791 as the 14th State, followed by Kentucky, the 15th State, in 1792, which caused the "**Stars and Stripes**" to be modified (1795 – 1818) to the 15 stars and 15 stripes "***Star Spangled Banner***" flag which was in use during America's Second War for Independence (1812 – 1815).

A brigadier general of New Hampshire militia at the Battle of Bennington, **John Stark** was commissioned to that rank in the Continental Army, on 4th October 1777, by the Continental Congress.

[In recognition of his contributions in such battles as **Bunker Hill**, **Trenton** (Stark had trained his New Hampshire Militiamen in the use of the bayonet, much to the shock and dismay of the Hessian Jaegers; see David Hackett Fischer, **Washington's Crossing** (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004)), **Princeton**, **Bennington** and **Saratoga**, as well as the **Quebec** expedition - at the end of the American War for Independence ***John Stark was promoted to the brevet rank of major general.***]

John Stark and his New Hampshire militia brigade next strode onto the stage of history at the **Battles of Saratoga**. After the Battle of Freeman's Farm (19th September 1777), General Stark's Brigade moved into a position at what is now known as Stark's Knob, cutting off English General John Burgoyne's possible retreat route back to Lake George and Lake Champlain.

It was the American victory at Saratoga in 1777, which convinced the French, and later Spain, to enter the war, which had the effect both of broadening, and of shortening, the conflict. One very important factor in that victory was the marksmanship of **Morgan's Rifle Corps**, particularly of **Rifleman Timothy Murphy** -- son of immigrants from Donegal, in the extreme northwest of Ireland's northern Province of Ulster. It was at the Battle of Bemis Heights (Second Battle of Saratoga), 7th October 1777, that Murphy fired the shots (from his Golcher double-barreled rifle) that mortally wounded General Simon Fraser (hit dead center in the chest at about 330 yards) and then killed Sir Francis Clarke (Fraser's senior Aide), throwing the British into disarray, that led directly to American victory, and the subsequent **surrender of a British field army on 17th October 1777**. At the 1929 dedication of a monument at the base of the tree, from which Timothy Murphy fired his famous shots, New York Governor Franklin Delano Roosevelt cited Murphy as an example that men in the ranks can be more important than generals in battle.

John Stark was born 28th August 1728 (died 8th May 1822), of immigrant parents, who were part of the settlement, of some one hundred Irish families in 1719, in one of two New Hampshire towns, Derry and Londonderry (different sources attribute his birth to one or the other town, however, the highway marker noting his birthplace is in **Derry**). These settlers brought not only their strong desire for freedom with them to New Hampshire, they also introduced the potato.

Perhaps the best source for information regarding the Irish in the American Revolution / War for Independence, which was highly recommended both by Thomas Fleming, and by Derek Warfield (of the Young Wolfe Tones, author of Washington's Irish), is A Hidden Phase of American History – Ireland's Part in America's Struggle for Liberty by Michael Joseph O'Brien (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1920). See also: Charles Patrick Neimeyer, America Goes to War: A Social History of the Continental Army (New York: NYU Press, 1997).

John Stark had earlier played a vital role in the **Battle of Bunker Hill** (17th June 1775) -- see: Thomas Fleming, Now We Are Enemies (Franklin, Tennessee: American History Press, 2010); Nathaniel Philbrick, Bunker Hill: A City, a Siege, a Revolution (New York: Penguin Group (USA), 2013). What frustrated the British attempt to turn the American left, by an attack along the Mystic River, was the identification (by Stark) and fortification and defense of this approach by a significant number of Colonel John Stark's New Hampshire veteran (and expert) riflemen.

The remainder of Stark's "Minute Men" would be on the ramparts of "Bunker Hill" when, their flanking movement having failed, the Brits tried a frontal assault. *Over one thousand British officers and men killed or wounded in the battle* testify to **American resolve**, to **American rifle marksmanship** and to **the American capability to fight**.

Historian Thomas Fleming ("*Looking again at the Irish at Bunker Hill*," in the IRISH ECHO newspaper (June 16-22, 2010)) cites American General Nathanael Greene of Rhode Island, "I wish we could sell them another hill at the same price." Although the Brits eventually gained control of the hill (American ammunition ran low), General Howe wrote to his brother, Admiral Lord Howe, "*the success is too dearly bought.*"

Ben Rose in John Stark: Maverick General (Enfield, New Hampshire: TreeLine Press, 2007) points out that, although John Stark did not enter into politics like other generals, he did correspond with Presidents Thomas Jefferson and James Madison. His suspicious attitude toward the British opposed the views of many in New England who did have sympathies toward the British during the Napoleonic wars, and he was pleased when the United States declared war on England in 1812.



General John Stark

Statue before the Bennington Battle Monument

After serving with distinction throughout the Revolutionary War, John Stark retired to his farm in Derryfield. In 1809, a group of Bennington veterans gathered to commemorate the battle. General Stark, then aged 81, was not well enough to travel, but he sent a letter to his comrades, which closed,

"Live free or die: Death is not the worst of evils."

[The motto *Live Free or Die* became the New Hampshire state motto in 1945, and graces its automobile license plates today -- as well as the year 2000 "New Hampshire" United States quarter dollar coin.]

John Stark and the Battle of Bennington were commemorated in 1891, with the 306-foot tall Bennington Battle Monument in Bennington, Vermont.