

march is irish american heritage month

Ireland: The Isle of Saints and Scholars

the saints

Before Christianity the Irish were Druids who built some of the most impressive ritual sites found in Europe. Most famous is the passage tomb of Newgrange built during the Stone Age. The Druids built monuments all over Ireland, to signify the importance of their beliefs and worship of the sun.

St Palladius was consecrated by Pope Celestine and sent to be the first Bishop to the Irish believing in Christ. He landed at Wicklow in 431AD but his stay would be very short lived. The inhabitants banished him from their land. St Palladius next landed at the Orkney Islands in Scotland and never return to Ireland.

St Patrick arrived in Ireland in 432AD. He landed on a small island near Dublin which is now named Inish-Patrick. He converted the son of Irish Chieftain, Benignus to Christianity. It's believed St Patrick founded a monastery on the island which flourished until the invasion of the Vikings. In modern day County Down, St Patrick converted a local pagan Chieftain, Díchu mac Trichim, who donated a barn St Patrick converted into a church. His gentle approach convinced the Irish to be baptized and convert to Catholicism. Saint Patrick used the shamrock to teach the Irish about the Holy Trinity. He continued

his mission in Ireland for about 30 years.

St Columcille studied at Moville under St Finnian and then at Clonard with another St Finnian, and became a monk at Glasnevin under Mobhi. He spent the next 15 years preaching and teaching in Ireland. As was the custom, he combined study and prayer with manual labor. By his own natural gifts he soon became a monk of unusual distinction. By the time he was 25, he had founded more than 27 monasteries, including those at Derry, Durrow and Kells. In 563, he crossed the Irish Sea and landed on the island of Iona (The Holy Island). Eventually, Iona became the heart of Celtic Christianity and its existence was one of the strongest influences in the conversion of the Picts, Scots, and Northern English.

St Brigid of Kildare was an Irish nun, abbess, and founder of several convents. She held the rank of bishop and ranks only behind Saint Patrick himself in importance. In 470 she founded Kildare Abbey, a monastery for both nuns and monks known as the "Church of the Oak". She is buried in Downpatrick, near St Patrick and St Columcille.

St Brendan was ordained 512. Brendan traveled widely to evangelize and establish monasteries. One journey, passed orally for generations, was written in the 9th century - *Navigatio Sancti Brendani* (*The Voyage of St. Brendan*). This book, widely known among cartographers, convinced Christopher Columbus to sail beyond the western horizon to America.



Astronomy and Navigation

In the 8th century Irish astronomers proclaimed the earth to be round "like an apple" and "round as an egg". Irish astronomer Dungall of Bangor named seven planets in our solar system (*Saturn, Joib, Mercurir, Mars, Sol, Uenir, Luna*). As written in *Saltair na Rann*, a 10th century history of the world. Brendan the Navigator sailed to North America ca 525 AD.

Law

Statute Law of St Patrick commonly referred to as Brehon Law written in five volumes of civil law during the 5th century.

800-1900AD

The Viking invaded in the 9th century and for the next two hundred years the arts of learning and of peace were banished from Ireland. Brian Boru defeated the Vikings at Clontarf in 1014.

This was followed by English invasion and occupation—an 800 year era of obstinate resistance, of confiscation and plunder, of tyranny and injustices, and even of extermination. "The spirit of literature was banished out of the people and all instruction, intelligence, wisdom and natural ability that had come down from their ancestors before them were driven out of them." It wasn't until the close of the 19th century that Irish literature and scholarship was renewed. (Source: *Irish Literature, Volumes IX and X, Charles Welsh, 1904*)

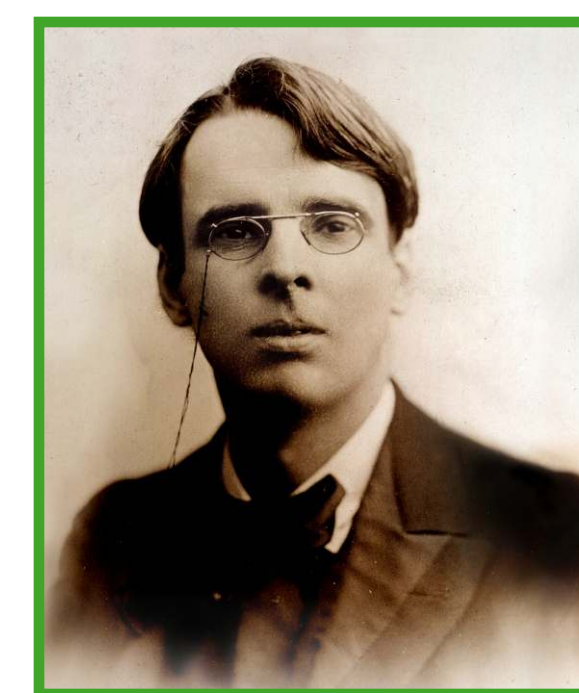
others followed



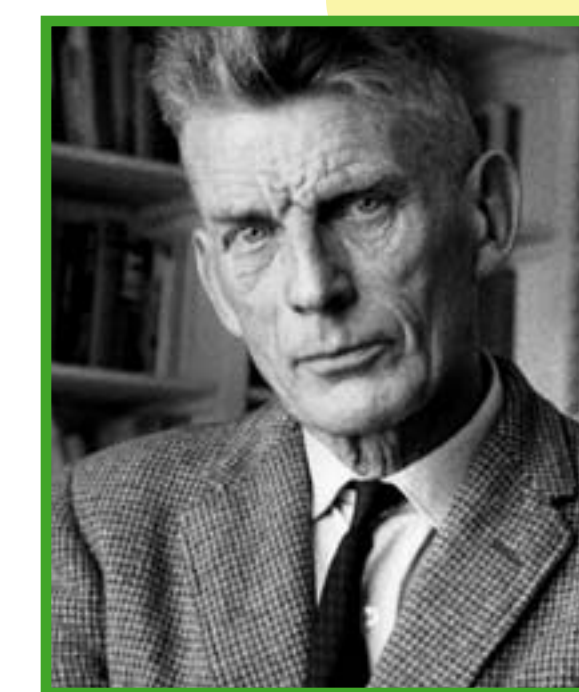
Seamus Heaney
(1939 – 2013) Irish Nobel Laureate and poet, playwright, translator and lecturer



Maeve Binchy Snell
(1939 - 2012), Irish novelist, playwright, short story writer, columnist, and speaker best known for her sympathetic, humorous portrayal of small-town life in Ireland



William Butler Yeats
(1865 – 1939) Irish Nobel Laureate and one of the foremost figures of 20th-century literature



Samuel Barclay Beckett
(1906 – 1989) Irish Nobel Laureate and avant-garde novelist, playwright

George Bernard Shaw
(1856-1950), only Nobel Laureate and Oscar winner, well known for *My Fair Lady*



Abraham "Bram" Stoker
(1847 – 1912) Irish author, best known for *Dracula*

James Joyce (1882 – 1941), Irish novelist and poet regarded as one of the most influential and important authors of the 20th century.

Jane Barlow (1857 – 1917) Irish novelist, noted for poems describing the lives of the Irish peasantry in relation to both landlords and the famine.

the ancient order of hibernians

"Friendship, Unity, and Christian Charity"

The General Thomas F. Meagher Division—Meet 3rd Tuesday, 7:30 p.m., Fredericksburg Knights of Columbus Council Home at 4724 Harrison Road

FOR MORE INFORMATION: www.aohvirginia.org/fredericksburgdiv1

the scholars

400-800AD

For four hundred years from the 5th through the 9th century, monasteries and places of learning sprang up all over Ireland and Irishmen were welcomed with distinguished honors at every court and seat of learning in Europe.

It is certain Ireland had the use of letters long before others... written Irish is first seen in Ogham inscriptions from the 4th century. The early literary history of Ireland began long before any other European country (source: Memoir of the Reverend Geoffrey Keating, D.D., Michael Doheny, 1857)

Ireland can boast of being the birthplace of high culture as early as the 5th century ... in the 5th century Ireland was a "beehive of learning – teaching in Gaelic, Latin and Greek". Innumerable Irish scribes devoted their lives to creating beautiful books in Ireland and on the Continent (e.g. *Book of Kells*).