



# County Roscommon Society of New York, Inc.

Newsletter May, 2018

Organize July 16, 1931. Charter issued October 30, 1931 reading County Roscommon Social & Welfare League, Inc. Name changed to County Roscommon Society, Inc., by charter dated November 4, 1946. Certificate of Amendment of Certificate of Incorporation of County Roscommon Society, Inc., dated December 22, 2014 changed name to County Roscommon Society of New York, Inc.

Dear Members & Friends:

**Thank you to Anne and John Kenny and the staff at Sissy McGinty's, Astoria, NY for hosting our April meeting.**

The next meeting will take place in September. Date and location to be determined.

**Member Jim Abrams** is providing us with the history of Dr. Douglas Hyde in four parts. This is the first part and the remaining three parts will commence in September.

Jim was born on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July as the middle child of triplets in New York City, Jim is an original Yankee Doodle Dandy. Three of his grandparents emigrated from Ireland and one from Germany. His maternal grandfather, Michael J. Brown, from Roscommon, served as Grand Marshal of the NYC St. Patrick's Day Parade in 1915. Jim is a folklorist and historian. He received his early education from the Irish Christian Brothers at Iona Grammar School and Prep in New Rochelle, NY. He went on to study folklore, history, and anthropology at Utah State University (BA), the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (MA), and the University of Pennsylvania (Ph.D.). Since 1990, Jim has worked as a research director for federal and state-level projects on labor and ethnic history in western Pennsylvania. His wife Louise is from Co. Durham in the north of England and together they have one child, Neil, who is an architect living in Pittsburgh. Jim can be reached at [jfabrams@atlanticbb.net](mailto:jfabrams@atlanticbb.net). Thank you Jim for this wonderful contribution.

## Douglas Hyde: Part One

It could be said that for the sons and daughters of Co. Roscommon there are two patron saints. How fitting it is that both should enjoy a place of honor on the banner carried up Fifth Avenue every March by the County of Roscommon Society of New York. Ireland's great saint needs no introduction but Roscommon's favorite son, Dr. Douglas Hyde, perhaps is slightly less well known. In this brief piece, I'll present some highlights from the early life of Douglas Hyde. Three additional short submissions will round out my highly compacted account of the career of this remarkable scholar and esteemed public figure. Part one touches upon the years 1860 to the early 1880s, the time of Hyde's birth and early life in Co. Roscommon until his immersion in academic life at Trinity College Dublin. The second part looks at the lead-up to Hyde's famous manifesto that urged "The Necessity of De-Anglicising Ireland," presented in 1892 and followed by the founding of the Gaelic League a year later. The third installment addresses the cultural policies and artistic projects advanced by Hyde during the heyday of the Irish Cultural Revival in the years between 1891 and 1922, as well as his tour of the United States to support the fledgling Gaelic League in 1905 and 1906. And in the fourth and final segment, I'll speak about the unexpected political turn in the latter part of Hyde's career, and his death at the age of 89 in 1949.

I first became acquainted with Dr. Hyde many years ago while studying for a graduate degree in the Dept. of Folklore and Folklife at the University of Pennsylvania. The distinguished folklorist Henry Glassie, author of several celebrated books on Irish history and culture, was my advisor. Professor Glassie lectured on Douglas Hyde's



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seminal leadership role in the Irish Cultural Revival during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and he traced Hyde's trajectory from precocious scholar of Irish literature and folklore in Co. Roscommon to his unanimous selection as Ireland's first modern president. I remember thinking at the time that "only in Ireland" could a folklorist and language scholar become president of the country. This June 25<sup>th</sup> will mark the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Hyde's inauguration in 1938. As a personal aside, I would note that my grandfather Michael J. Brown, Grand Marshal of the NYC St. Patrick's Day Parade in 1915, came from the same location in Co. Roscommon as Hyde.

Douglas Hyde was born on January 17<sup>th</sup>, 1860 in Castlerea, County Roscommon to a family firmly established in the Protestant Ascendancy. His mother Elizabeth's ancestral home, a handsome Georgian manor named "The Hill," was in the market town of Castlerea. Not long after Douglas's birth, his father Arthur accepted a position as rector for a Church of Ireland parish in Co. Sligo thirty miles to the north of Castlerea. When young Douglas was six years old, Arthur Hyde moved the family back to Co. Roscommon so he could serve as vicar of a parish in Tibohine, resettling the family in nearby Frenchpark. Rather than attending school with his peers, Douglas was tutored at home. As a boy, Hyde demonstrated outstanding promise as a scholar. He pursued two passions in particular: reading and hunting. The one interest developed his intellectual gifts and the other encouraged close familiarity with the Roscommon countryside and its inhabitants. He quickly established a gift for languages through hard work and incessant practice and by the age of thirteen was writing poems in French. By the time Hyde

reached sixteen years of age he was well on his way to fluency in Latin, German, and Irish. It was the Irish language, though, that most intrigued young Douglas. He experienced the language as it was spoken by his neighbors in the Roscommon *Gaeltacht*, or Irish-speaking region, and enjoyed close friendships with people from whom he learned songs and tales in the local tongue.

Even as a young man, Douglas Hyde began collecting folktales, songs, and myths from native speakers and singers of Irish in his locality. His method of collecting oral narrative involved visiting people who spoke Irish in their homes. He went prepared with a bottle of whiskey or poteen, which was intended to stimulate and fortify the imagination. Hyde offered only half a glass of whiskey, just enough to prime the pump without dulling a speaker's mental capacities or memory. He then listened to a story told in Irish once without interrupting. After the tale had been told, he would ask the teller to repeat it slowly so he could write it down. Having experienced many such pleasant and productive encounters with friends and neighbors, Hyde became acutely aware of the decline of what quickly was becoming his second language. Unfortunately, Irish enjoyed little status or recognition among the general (English speaking) Irish public at that time. The vanishing of Ireland's native language had much to do with the eradication of people who spoke Irish, a phenomenon largely the consequence of the Great Hunger, or Famine that hit hardest in the Irish-speaking rural west of Ireland. An 1851 census revealed that the proportion of Irish to English speakers had fallen to 23% and by 1891 that number dwindled to 14%. Hyde reasoned that without saving the language that voiced and transmitted



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centuries of traditional Irish thought and culture, all that was most authentically Irish would disappear forever. By the time he departed Roscommon for his formal studies at Trinity College Dublin in 1880, Hyde understood all too well the urgency of language revitalization, especially in areas of the *Gaeltacht* where Irish was still spoken as a first language in the home. Something needed to be done to stem of tide of linguistic imperialism, which Hyde viewed as coming from the British cultural Goliath to the east.

**Part Two** will follow Douglas Hyde to Trinity College and trace the development of his cultural manifesto, which stimulated the formation of the Gaelic League in the early 1890s. In February 1914, Patrick Pearse wrote as regards the Gaelic League: "The Gaelic League will be recognized in history as the most revolutionary influence that has ever come to Ireland."

James Francis Abrams  
May, 2018

### Items of Interest:

**Sean Lane** has been elected by the Board of Directors of the St. Patrick's Day Parade Committee as its new Chairman. John Lahey is retiring effective June 30 and he is also retiring from his position as President of Quinnipiac University.

**COL. Michael A. Lyons, Jr.**, (our 2016 Honoree) is retiring after serving with the New Jersey National Guard for thirty-three years. COL Lyons was deployed for the first time during Operation Desert Storm as Executive Officer of 144th Heavy Material Supply Company and also served as Assistant Group S-4 for the ARCENT Training Center in Kuwait. In 2005, COL Lyons served as Executive Officer for the 50th Main Support Battalion during their

deployment for Operation Iraqi Freedom stationed on Camp Speicher in Tikrit, Iraq. COL Lyons was again mobilized from 2008-2009 to serve as Rear Detachment Commander for the 50<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade Combat team. COL Lyons's awards include the Bronze Star, the Meritorious Service Medal with one oak leaf cluster, the Army Commendation Medal with 3 oak leaf clusters, the Army Achievement Medal, the Global War on Terrorism Medal, the Iraqi Campaign Medal, the South West Asia Service Ribbon, the Kuwait liberation Medal and the National Defense Service Ribbon. He is a recipient of the Engineer association Bronze De Fleury and the Ordinance association Order of Samuel Sharpe. We wish COL. Lyons much luck and happiness in his retirement and most of all thank him for his service to our country.

*"Always Ready, Always There"*

- **Bishop Christopher Jones**, retired Bishop of Elphin passed away recently. Many of you may remember him attending the Roscommon Society 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary dinner dance in 2009. RIP. The President at the time was Michael A. Lyons, Sr.



Bishop Christopher Jones pictured with Conor McGee, Tyrone; Catherine Higgins, Leitrim, Fairymount; Kevin O'Connor, New Jersey; Fr. Coman Brady, Episk; Maura Ambrose, Limerick; Mary Larkin Moran, Ballintubber; Connie Grady, Long, Ballaghaderreen and Bernie Sharkey, Clontarf/Dublin at the recent Roscommon Association dinner dance in Queens, New York.



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- **Mary Scally O'Brien** is improving every day. She still has a little way to go but is feeling much better and we look forward to having her attend our next meeting in September.

If you have an item you would like included, please forward it to me. Also, we would like to put together a booklet for our 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. Please submit any fond memories you have of the early days, we would love to have them. Also, if you have any old photographs you would like to share, please let me know.

### Upcoming Events:

**Sunday, June 10, 2018** – United Irish Counties Association 80<sup>th</sup> Annual Feis at Lincoln High School, 375 Kneeland Avenue, Yonkers, NY. Doors open and 8:00 am and competitions begin at 9:00 am.

**Sunday, June 10, 2018** – 48<sup>th</sup> Annual Irish Festival, Monmouth Park Racetrack, Oceanport Avenue, Oceanport, NJ 732-222-5100. [www.njirishfestival.com](http://www.njirishfestival.com).

**Friday, June 22, 2018** - Join the Bayside St. Patrick's Day Parade Committee for our 1st Annual Golf Outing at Clearview Golf Course, 202-12 Willets Point Blvd, Bayside, New York 11360. Registration starts at 12:00 followed by a BBQ lunch and Shotgun start at 1:30pm. Awards Dinner to follow golf at 6:30pm, tickets for golf and dinner \$165, dinner only \$60. Want to be a hole sponsor?? Hole sponsorships for \$150! For information contact Chris McManus (516) 650-6740 or Francis McLoughlin(212) 268-0952.

As always, if you have an item of interest for our future newsletters, please let me know.

So this is it until September. May you all have a very sunny summer, Happy Father's Day, Happy Independence Day and Happy Labor Day. Best of luck to the Rossies in this year's championship.

### The following is a list of the Committee for 2018:

Chaplain	Msgr. Kevin Flanagan
President	Mary C. Montgomery
Vice President	Bernie Sharkey
Treasurer	John Kenny
Recording Secretary	Geraldine O'Brien-Massey
Financial Secretary	William F. Montgomery
Corresponding Secretary	Mary Scally O'Brien
Sergeant-At-Arms	Martin Dowd

### Best wishes,

Mary