



# County Roscommon Society of New York, Inc.

## Newsletter November, 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 Incorporation of County Roscommon Society, Inc., dated December 22, 2014 changed name to County Roscommon Society of New York, Inc.

**The next meeting of the County Roscommon Society will take place on Sunday, November 18, 2018 at 2:00pm at the Riverdale Steakhouse 5700 Riverdale Avenue Bronx, New York**

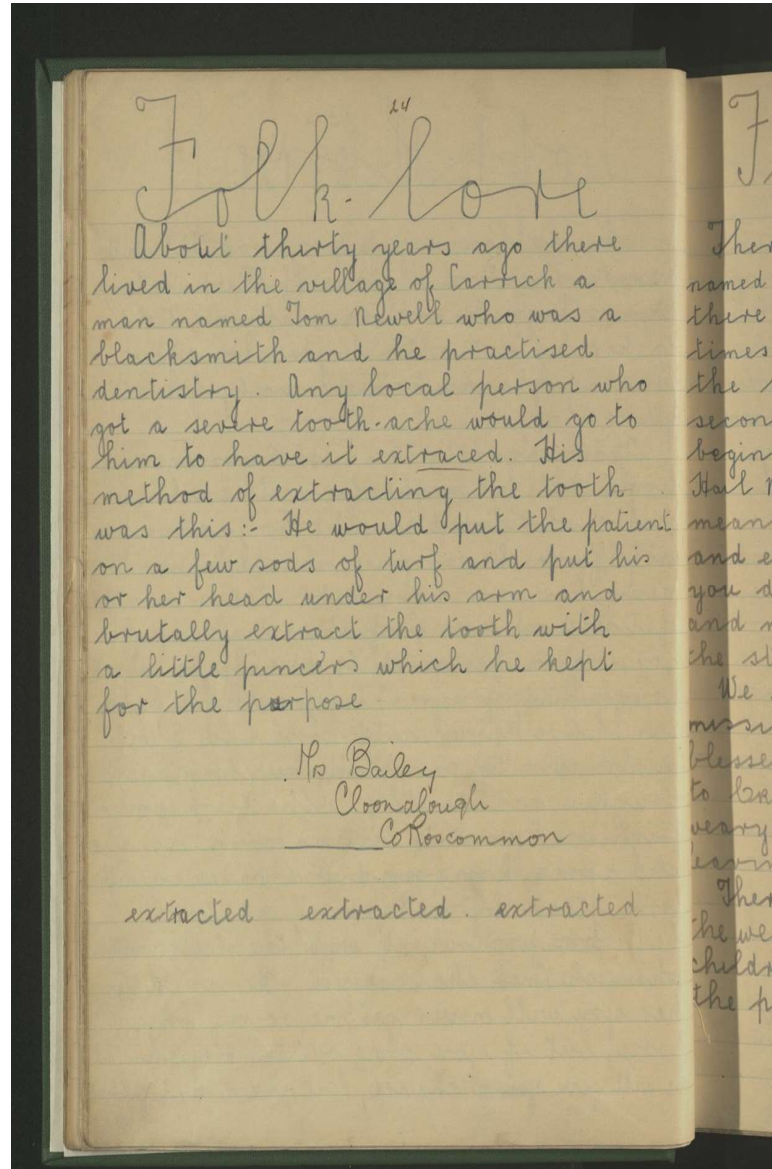
At this meeting Msgr. Flanagan will celebrate Mass for the deceased members of the Society. Please make every effort to attend.

Thank you to John Lyons and the staff at McKeon's Bar and Restaurant for hosting our October meeting.

At our October meeting the following were nominated for office for 2019 and will be appointed on November 18, 2018:

- Chaplain: Msgr. Kevin Flanagan
- President : Mary C. Montgomery
- Vice President: Bernie Sharkey
- Treasurer: John Kenny
- Financial Secretary: Bill Montgomery
- Recording Secretary: Katie Kenny
- Corresponding Secretary: Bernadette Connor
- Sergeant-at-Arms: Rosaleen Gormley

After our last meeting during our fellowship time a discussion turned to Folklore. Msgr. Flanagan informed us of a website: [www.duchas.ie](http://www.duchas.ie), where you can search for items of interest from your village. The following is one from Carrick, County Roscommon. The next time you go to the dentist, you'll realize how lucky you have it after you read the following:



About thirty years ago there lived in the village of Carrick a man named Tom Newell who was a blacksmith and he practised dentistry. Any local person who got a severe tooth-ache would go to him to have it extracted. [sic] His method of extracting the tooth was this:- He would put the patient on a few sods of turf and put his or her head under his arm and brutally extract the tooth with a little pincers which he kept for the purpose.

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## Douglas Hyde: Part Three

In the autumn of 1890, after graduating from Trinity College Dublin, Douglas Hyde set sail for the (soon-to-be-frozen) environs of Canada where he had accepted a post as interim professor of Humanities at the University of New Brunswick. His schedule required that he present three lectures each day on French, German, and English literature. During off-hours, Hyde, ever the intrepid folklore scholar, came into contact with the Milicetes people, a Native American group that shared their customs and tales with him, and from whom he learned a sampling of words sufficient to decipher a rudimentary phonemic pattern. Hyde generally enjoyed his brief sojourn as a professor in New Brunswick although the length and severity of the Canadian winter eventually wore him down, as he confided in his diary:

O dreary weary winter snow  
The dreary weary months go round  
And thou art yet upon the ground  
More white more bright and more profound  
Will nothing make thee go

I dream of green the lifelong night  
Of wavy woods, of grassy wold,  
I wake and what must I behold  
Ah Canada thy breath is cold  
Thy face is cold and white

Upon returning to Ireland in 1891, Hyde's life seemed to incorporate a wider palette of warm and colorful emotional hues. His aunts introduced him to Lucy Kurtz, a member of a distinguished and wealthy Russian family that relocated to England in the early nineteenth century. The couple became engaged, married, and raised two daughters, Nuala and Una. That same year Dr. Hyde assumed the presidency of the Irish National Literary Society. For his inaugural lecture on 25 November 1892 in Dublin's Leinster Hall, Hyde presented "The Necessity for De-Anglicising Ireland," which was to become the most celebrated address of his

long and distinguished career. Hyde's speech denounced British imperial rule in Ireland (past and present), especially as it pertained to the adoption of English manners, traditions, and culture. He appealed to Irish citizens (both Catholic and Protestant) to stop imitating England in language, dress, athletics, as well as in the acceptance of Anglicized naming patterns. Hyde asked: "Why hate England while [at the same time] imitating its culture?" He scorned what he termed "West Britonism" (the casual, taken-for-granted acceptance of English language and customs) as an abandonment and rejection of Ireland's own glorious native heritage. That November night in Dublin, Douglas Hyde ignited a movement to reclaim and rehabilitate native Irish language and culture. He called for the rejection of cultural and psychological self-contempt and inferiority. This call would later inflame the passions of nationalists fighting for a free and independent Ireland in 1916 and beyond.

Hyde's 1892 lecture to the National Literary Society functioned as a keynote address or the cultural movement known as the Irish Revival. The Irish Revival describes an era (1890-1930) during which academics, writers, and artists looked to the ancient past, or to country people living in the west of Ireland, in order to discover what was most authentically Irish about the nation. Artists and writers in the Irish Revival were fascinated by the ancient mythic past and equally by people they imagined to be representative of a native Gaelic culture. This past and these people were assumed to be untarnished by the predations and repressions of empire. The Irish Revival occupied a cultural and political niche in Irish society that opened when Charles Stewart Parnell's Home Rule and Land League initiatives were defeated in Westminster. As effective parliamentary action in support of Irish political independence appeared to be untenable in the last decade of the nineteenth century, a *politics of culture* emerged to resist the psychological, spiritual, and cultural deformations and dislocations that had accrued over centuries of British rule.



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By digging into the nation's pre-conquest past, and by resuscitating and nourishing the taproot of Gaelic culture that infused the soul of Ireland, a new foundation for independence, grounded in cultural and psychological autonomy, could be achieved. Key figures in the Irish Revival included such literary giants as the poet W. B. Yeats, the writer and patroness of the arts Lady Gregory, as well as playwrights J. M. Synge and Sean O'Casey. They, and many others, imbued their work with a rural and decidedly *vernacular* sensibility that would contrast sharply with the crass modernism and materialism then characterizing industrial Britain. This was an era of spectacular achievements in Irish literature and the arts, and it was a time of national redefinition that combined both cultural and political aspirations.

In 1893, Douglas Hyde and Eoin MacNeill co-founded the *Conradh na Gaeilge*, the Gaelic League. Hyde insisted that the mission of the Gaelic League should be to support the spread of *spoken* Irish as a language of everyday life, as opposed to simply serving as a resource for text-based academic and historical scholarship. Hyde was elected president at the organization's founding meeting and served in that capacity for twenty-two years. As mentioned, during the Irish Revival, Gaelic became a major symbol for affirming Irish identity. The language provided a source and touchstone for defining what was distinctively Irish in Ireland. The movement to revive the Irish language was particularly successful in towns and urban areas where Irish as a spoken language had all but disappeared. By the time Hyde departed Ireland for a fundraising tour of the United States on behalf of Gaelic League in 1905-1906, the League included some 600 branches and 50,000 members.

Hyde realized that while the League's central branch in Dublin would serve an essential organizational function during the early years, branches scattered across the country eventually would become increasingly more vital to the organization. In his role as president of the Gaelic League, Hyde traveled the length and breadth of Ireland to attend local committee

meetings and to find Irish teachers for each of the branches. A condition of membership required that each branch have a certain number of members attending Irish classes. Most branches had between fifty and three hundred members, ranging in age from young children to the elderly, and representing all classes and social strata in a locality. Irish classes met once or twice per week and included anywhere from ten to one hundred students. In addition to language classes, the League sponsored plays written and performed in Irish as well as traditional music and dance events. One of the most popular activities sponsored by the League was the evening *ceilidh* that brought people together for set and step dancing. In an era before the introduction of the cinema, radio, and commercialized entertainment it would be difficult to overstate the central role of the Gaelic League in the social life of a small town or rural community.

From the beginning of his tenure as president of the Gaelic League in 1893 until his resignation from office in 1915, Douglas Hyde's primary administrative goal was to attract people from all walks of life to the organization. He worked tirelessly on behalf of the Irish language, refusing, for as long as he could, to allow the League to become an arm of sectarian party politics. Hyde wanted all hands on deck for the cause of language revitalization. He aimed to establish an inclusive organizational framework that would welcome both nationalist Catholics and unionist Protestants. However, as the Gaelic League succeeded in recruiting ever larger numbers of Irish language learners seeking linguistic and cultural alternatives to English, as Hyde himself advocated, it became inevitable that many would be motivated to join the nationalist cause fighting for Irish independence.

Heroes of the 1916 Easter Rising, such as Patrick Pearse, Michael Collins, James Connolly, and Eamon de Valera, attested to the significant role played by the League in nurturing a social and ideological context in which revolutionary consciousness flourished. Just before his execution by the British for the part he played in



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the 1916 rebellion, Patrick Pearse stated that the Gaelic League was “the most revolutionary force that has ever come to Ireland.” And De Valera disclosed at the end of his eventful life that “It was in the Gaelic League that I realized best what our nation was, and what had to be done to get our freedom.” Although Hyde disavowed violence, the men of violence, some of whom were his students, cited Hyde as an inspiration. When the Gaelic League decided to become overtly politically active in 1915, Hyde resigned in protest. Dr. Hyde’s policies of moderation, conciliation, and compromise that formerly held sway in bringing together opposed factions now buckled under the darkening skies of revolt and revolution. His activism on behalf of the people and language he loved would need to take a new turn.

Next month we’ll take a look at Dr. Hyde’s creative work as a playwright and actor for the Irish stage in the years between 1900 and 1914, as well as his tenure as first university professor of modern Irish. Then we’ll turn to his surprising second career as an elected political official and his tenure as the first modern president of Ireland. Finally, I’ll offer some closing remarks pertaining to my personal favorite books, essays, and plays written by this remarkable scholar and activist.

James Francis Abrams  
November, 2018

### **Items of Interest:**

**We are planning on putting a booklet together for our 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and need some information from you. Please share any memories you have of the society’s annual dinner dance, parade, weddings, funerals, etc. Also photographs much appreciated. Please e-mail to me at [roscommonsocietyofny@aol.com](mailto:roscommonsocietyofny@aol.com).**

### **Upcoming Events:**

**Friday, March 1, 2019** – 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary County Roscommon Society Annual St. Patrick’s Day Celebration. Cocktail hour 7:30 followed by dinner and dancing. As always, if you have an item of interest for our future newsletters, please let me know.

***Also, if you are receiving this newsletter by mail and have an e-mail address, please let us know what your e-mail address is. This will help us cut down on printing and postage costs. We can be reached at [roscommonsocietyofny@aol.com](mailto:roscommonsocietyofny@aol.com)***

### **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*