



CIMPN/RCPMI

## CANADIAN IRISH MIGRATION PRESERVATION NETWORK

PROUDLY PRESENTS

# An Líonra

(THE NETWORK)

#4. WINTER 2025

## Message from the President



As this year winds down, the CIMPN is entering one of its most exciting phases yet—one defined by collaboration, digital innovation, and the strengthening of Irish heritage across Québec. At the heart of this momentum is ***The Irish Mile™***, our flagship interactive mapping project, proudly supported by the Secrétariat aux relations avec les Québécois d'expression anglaise (SRQEA) set to launch on the CIMPN website on **January 27, 2026**. The Irish Mile heritage site map is a province-wide digital map and storytelling platform that brings together 127 Irish heritage sites across Québec (and growing).

The launch of ***The Irish Mile™*** is only the beginning. With new sites to be added regularly and more communities joining our network, we are building a living archive that will continue to grow for generations. Through our website, we are also continuing build a bilingual, digital repository of information about Irish migration to Quebec and the lasting influence of Irish heritage that we experience today.

As part of our SRQEA-supported initiative, *Preserving and Showcasing Irish Heritage in Quebec*, CIMPN is building a wide-reaching digital and educational platform dedicated to the histories of Irishness across the province. By working closely with provincial communities of Irish origin, local experts, historians and individuals of Irish descent, we are documenting the diverse legacies of Irish settlement in Québec.

### ***Preserving and Showcasing Irish Heritage in Québec***

This past October was very busy for the CIMPN. Our outreach expanded significantly through participation in a series of public events:

- *Story and Stone – Morin Heights*: A workshop blending heritage storytelling with cemetery preservation, underscoring the importance of safeguarding rural Irish and Scottish burial grounds.
- *Québec City Cemetery Cleaning Demonstration*: A hands-on introduction to conservation-based headstone cleaning methods that engaged the public and strengthened province-wide preservation awareness of historic cemeteries.
- *Cartographica Submission*: Our scholarly submission to Cartographica—focused on our digital mapping and cemetery research methodologies—is now underway.

Thank you to our volunteers, partners, supporters, and descendants who continue to walk alongside us. Together, we are ensuring that Québec's Irish story remains visible, remembered, and celebrated.

Happy holidays and best wishes for the New Year!

*Kelley O'Rourke*

# In the News

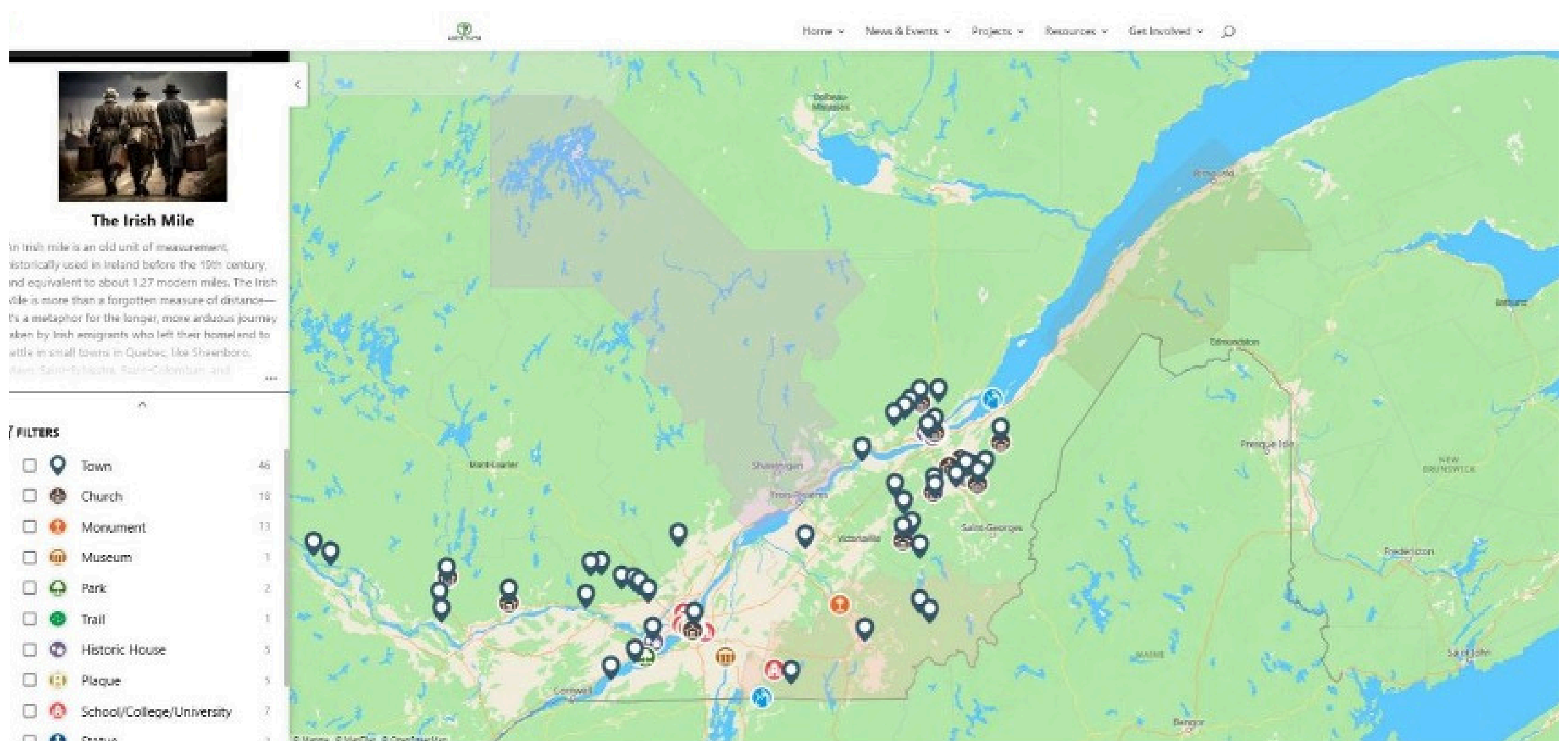
## The Irish Mile: Irish Heritage Sites in Quebec

### Coming Soon!!

On **January 27, 2026**, the CIMPN will launch ***The Irish Mile™***—an interactive map of Irish heritage sites. The map, an ongoing work in progress, will pinpoint sites in Quebec, including towns, historic sites, monuments, churches, cemeteries, and more, with meaningful Irish connections.

**Keep an eye on the “*Projects*” page on our website for a link to the interactive map.**

The launch date honours the length of an “Irish Mile,” a unit of measurement commonly used in Ireland before the 19th century and equivalent to about 1.27 modern miles. For this project, The Irish Mile also serves as a metaphor for the long, difficult journey taken by Irish emigrants who left their homeland to settle in small towns throughout Quebec.





We plan to start with 127 Irish heritage sites—a deliberate nod to the 1.27 traditional Irish Mile—and continue expanding the map in the coming months. The digital mapping program we’re using lets us include photos, videos, audio files, and related links for each site, giving you a rich and immersive experience. After you have time to explore this new feature, please [share your feedback](#) with us and let us know about any sites you think we should add.

We are grateful for the grant support from the ***Secrétariat aux relations avec les Québécois d’expression anglaise (SRQEA)***, which made the development of The Irish Mile interactive map possible.





## THE SCANDAL MILE: SAINT-SYLVESTRE

By Debbie Howlett

If you spend enough time driving the Irish Mile, this winding map of villages across Quebec where Irish emigrants landed pre- and post-Famine, you eventually notice that an Irish mile is always a little longer than you expect. Historically, it's 1.27 modern miles, but metaphorically? It stretches even farther. Long enough to carry stories that outlive their storytellers. Long enough to reach a tiny place like Saint-Sylvestre.<sup>[1]</sup>

Saint-Sylvestre sits 40 miles south of Quebec City, quiet enough that you can hear your own tires on gravel. But don't let the quiet fool you; this little parish once made headlines far beyond its farmers' fields. The first Irish arrived here with armloads of traditions, half-remembered saints, and stories that stretched back to the old country. Which emigrant arrived first is hard to pin down, kind of like trying to untangle the old Abbott and Costello bit "Who's on first?" You think you've got it, and then the whole thing slips sideways again.

Some records<sup>[2]</sup> identify William McNaughton and his wife, Catherine (née Murphy), buying land in the community of Saint-Sylvestre in the hill country of what was then known as Lower Canada in 1828. The Irish Catholic McNaughtons were among the first to have a plot to call their own in the small village already shaped by French-Canadian Catholicism, which meant the spiritual volume was turned up before anyone even unpacked their trunks.

The family settled among the French, who shared their church but not their language, and the British, who shared their language but not their church, which seems like a perfect recipe for a fight. In fact, spirited disagreement is one of the most reliable traditions that Irish immigrants to Quebec brought with them.

In 1851, Saint-Sylvestre's population of 3,733 included 2,872 Catholics; the majority of these were Irish, but there were 1,061 French Canadians, some English and Scots, and about 10 Germans.<sup>[3]</sup> Life in Saint-Sylvestre was mostly quiet, but the Irish, being Irish, made sure it never stayed that way for long. Enter Robert Corrigan, son of Patrick Corrigan, who'd emigrated to Canada in 1831 from County Tyrone in what is now Northern Ireland.

Robert, born in 1816 or 1817, was the fourth of eight children. He had a reputation for being quarrelsome, strong, and fearless or foolish. He had converted to Anglicanism,<sup>[4]</sup> attended the Anglican church, and even had a couple of his children baptized there. To the Irish Catholics around him, that was a provocation. To Robert, it was probably just faith, or maybe stubbornness. Either way, it didn't take long for tensions to simmer.

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<sup>[1]</sup> For clarity, Saint-Sylvestre, sometimes listed in older records as "de Beaurivage" or "de Lotbinière," is the same parish involved in the Corrigan Affair.

<sup>[2]</sup> <https://www.irishancestors.ie/80th-anniversary-archive-william-mcnaughton-136#>:

<sup>[3]</sup> [https://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/corrigan\\_robert\\_1816\\_17\\_55\\_8E.html](https://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/corrigan_robert_1816_17_55_8E.html)

<sup>[4]</sup> <https://baladodiscovery.com/circuits/935/poi/10758/saint-sylvestre>



The Scandal (cont.)....

At an agricultural fair on October 17, 1855. Robert was judging a class of livestock at a cattle show, a run-of-the-mill task for the farmer that somehow turned into a headline-grabbing incident that shook the country. A group of eight Irish Catholics, sticks in hand, surged forward. Corrigan was beaten to the ground and, two days later, died.

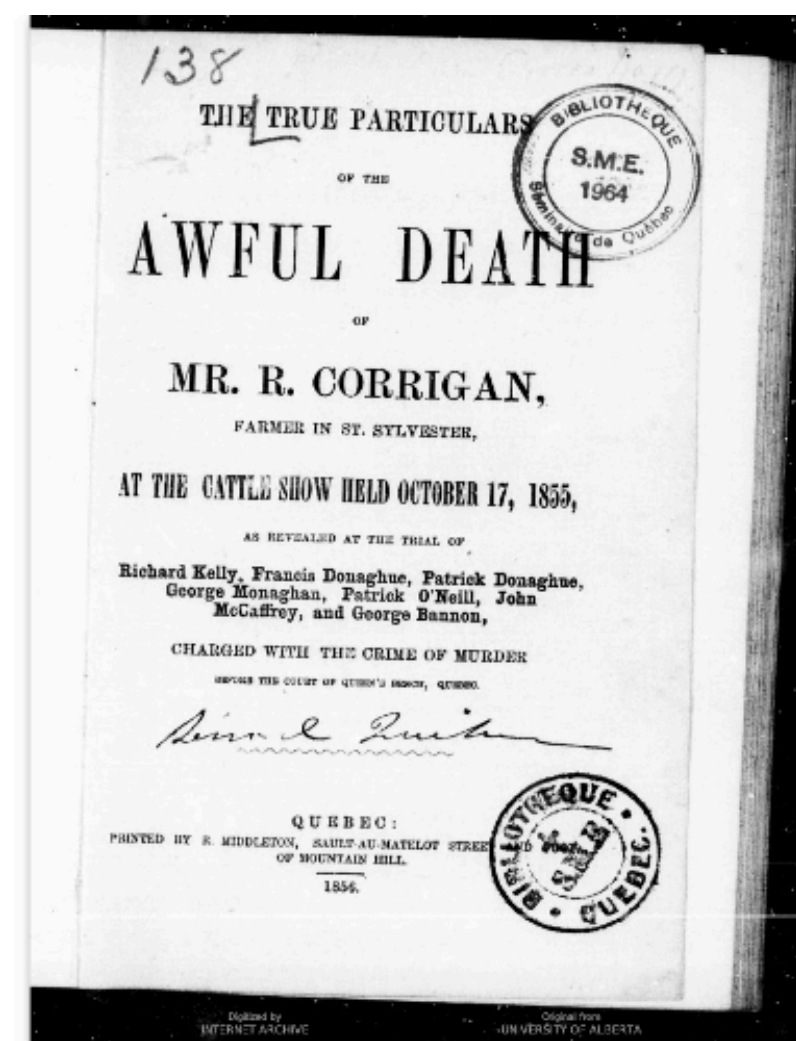
The rest of the story sounds like a true crime podcast. The local Irish Catholic community refused to cooperate with authorities investigating the murder, with one group threatening to steal the dead body to destroy all traces of the murder. Corrigan's body was eventually buried in Leeds, escorted by 300 rifle-packing Protestants.

Who were the murderers? Patrick "Big" O'Neill, one of Robert's adversaries, was likely involved. But even with an \$800 reward for their capture, no one in the small town came forward to reveal the men's hiding places, thought to be in and around Saint-Sylvestre. The reward was even upped to \$400 per accused, but to no avail. When seven or eight accused men finally came forward, they faced trial in Quebec City before the Court of Queen's Bench. Thanks to the testimony from predominantly English-speaking witnesses, the jury had little choice but to acquit them all.<sup>[5]</sup> The verdict rippled beyond Saint-Sylvestre, and the incident became known as "The Corrigan Affair."

Why the affair developed into a nationwide scandal is interesting in hindsight. If you squint at it from a distance, the Corrigan Affair looks like a tiny preview of what the world would later call "the Troubles." The same Catholic-Protestant split, just playing out in rural Quebec in the 1850s instead of Northern Ireland a century later.

Nevertheless, Saint-Sylvestre carries its past quietly. The Corrigan Affair may live in memory, in the way neighbors once eyed each other across fields, and in the transcript from the murder trial that was reprinted<sup>[6]</sup> in "The True Particulars of the Awful Death of Mr. R. Corrigan."

Today, the village hums with ordinary life, proof that even the most stormy events eventually settle into the wild stories we remember. Something about the past fades, leaving only the memory of what happened. On the Irish Mile, every town has a story.



<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=aeu.ark:/13960/t0rr31c15&view=1up&seq=6>

<sup>[5]</sup> <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=aeu.ark:/13960/t0rr31c15&view=1up&seq=18>

<sup>[6]</sup> [https://www.amazon.ca/Particulars-Corrigan-Farmer-Sylvestre-microform/dp/101433330X/ref=monarch\\_sidesheet\\_title](https://www.amazon.ca/Particulars-Corrigan-Farmer-Sylvestre-microform/dp/101433330X/ref=monarch_sidesheet_title)

## 61,000 Young Women!

# ASSISTED EMIGRATION FROM IRISH POOR LAW UNIONS TO THE NORTH AMERICAN COLONIES IN THE MID-NINETEENTH CENTURY

By  
LINDA FITZGIBBON, Ph.D.

On June 28, 1848, the Galway Poor Law Union Minute Book states: “a pauper named Jane Kelly had stolen from the garden of a person adjoining the temporary workhouse, 10 heads of cabbage. The Board directed that Jane Kelly be transmitted to the union workhouse and there to be kept in solitary confinement for 24 hours.”

Jane Kelly’s unfortunate circumstances seemed to continue, and by 1853, she had been a resident of Mountbellew workhouse for five years and was part of a group chosen to emigrate to Canada. At age 40, she was among the oldest of the group. Although listed as a tailoress, she does not appear to have found steady employment in Canada. In 1857, she was admitted to the Provincial Lunatic Asylum in Toronto. The 1861 Canadian census records her as a patient under the column “Lunatic or Idiot.” The records note that she is a widow. By 1871, the census reveals the changing view of mental health in Canada, as the Asylum has been renamed The Asylum for the Insane and Jane is listed as being of “Unsound Mind.” In 1881, Jane, now aged 69 years, is still an inpatient. Jane is listed as Church of England and her fellow patients, Church of England, Presbyterian, and Roman Catholic, are also Irish emigrants. Other inmates, male and female, include emigrants from England, Scotland, Norway and Germany and are from various religious backgrounds.

Jane is one of thousands of Irish women whose passages to the Colonies were paid for by the Poor Law Unions. Who were they? Where did they go? How did they fare when they got there?



Provincial Lunatic Asylum, Toronto.  
(Source: Toronto Public Library)



Although they did not leave written records, institutional records such as: Records Books in The Asylum for the Insane in Toronto; Census Records; Reports submitted by the Emigration Officials in Canada to the Colonial Office in London; Records housed in Private Religious Archives in Canada, supplemented by information published in newspaper articles and advertisements, can provide clues on how these Irish emigrants fared in the New World and allow their stories to emerge. They were young, brave, and willing to risk crossing the ocean in the hope of finding a better life and a brighter future. Not all their stories are tragic. The records indicate that there are still many stories to be told and highlight the importance of continued research on female members of the Irish diaspora in Canada and continued exploration on how they helped to shape the emerging Canadian society.

*Learn more about the diverse cohort of young Irish women who crossed the Atlantic in search of opportunity. Like Jane, who faced hardship and built new futures and contributed significantly to the development of Canadian society. Continued research is essential to uncover their experiences and restore their voices to the history of the Irish diaspora.*

**Read the full article on the 61,000 women at  
[www.cimprn-rcpmi.ca](http://www.cimprn-rcpmi.ca)**



# Mary Anne Sadlier

“The greatest Irishwoman that ever crossed the Atlantic”

Archbishop John Hughes



BY: Ed O'Shaughnessy



Much has been written about the life and influence of the authoress Mary Anne Sadlier (1820-1903), best remembered for her prolific writing about the “experiences of Catholic Irish immigrants in nineteenth-century North America by one who herself was just that”.<sup>[1]</sup> More than sixty novels, numerous short stories, translations of French stories to English, and newspaper articles are attributed to her. Arriving in Montreal one year ahead of the momentous Famine Exodus, she was the only Irish author of her generation to write of the famine experience.

(© Library and Archives Canada  
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Born Mary Anne Madden in County Caven in 1820, Mary Anne emigrated to Montreal in 1844. Arriving with no parents or siblings, and little other than some treasured books, she had to make her way in a foreign land relying on skills acquired in her formative years. Among those skills were a professional level competency in French and the ability to write for publication.

While Mary Anne realized publication success prior to emigration, it was in Montreal that she achieved breakthrough recognition. Publishing initially in *The Literary Garland* and the *True Witness and Catholic Chronicle*, the breakthrough came with the marriage in 1846 to James Sadlier, a printer and publisher, the younger brother of the famous Dennis & James Sadlier publishing concern.<sup>[2]</sup> Sent from New York City to Montreal to capture the rapidly expanding Irish immigrant market, James became acquainted with the budding authoress, then living in the Irish enclave of Sainte-Marthe.<sup>[3]</sup>

**Read the full article on Mary Sadler at**  
[www.cimpmn-rcpmi.ca](http://www.cimpmn-rcpmi.ca)

1 Quoted from Mary Anne Sadlier, Dictionary of Ulster Biography, by Richard Froggatt, Ulster History Circle.

2 In 1853 the D & J Sadlier & Co had become the largest printing house in the United States. It would become the largest Catholic book printing and selling business in North America. The first store opened in New York City in 1842, followed by a store in Montreal in 1846.

3 Mary Anne lived at 179 ½ Notre Dame Street upon her marriage to James. The D & J Sadlier bookstore was nearby.





# Irish Comfort Food for Those Chilly Nights

## Irish Soda bread

Also known as “Irish Brown Bread” in the South and “Wheaten Bread” in the North

- 2 cups whole wheat flour
- 1 cup white bread flour
- 1.5 teaspoons baking soda
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/3 stick melted butter (approx: 1 tablespoon)
- A glug of golden syrup (or any sort of sugar syrup like molasses, honey, maple syrup etc.)
- 300-350 ml buttermilk

### **Directions:**

Turn on oven for 180 °C (fan assisted) or 190 °C (non-fan assisted). Put a pizza pan, baking tray or cast iron pan in the oven and sprinkle the base with a little flour to prevent bread from sticking. Dust some flour on a cutting board or on your table-top if not using a cutting board.

Put dry ingredients in a bowl. Mix them together with a wooden spoon. Pour in wet ingredients. Mix until ingredients have combined. Put a little oil on your hands and, using your hands, knead the mixture a little until it all combines (about 1 min). It should be a little sticky. Add the 300 ml of buttermilk. Add a little more if the mixture is too dry.

Put dough onto the cutting board and shape into a round mound. Tip over so the dusted flour coats each side. Make two cross-cuts deep in the dough. Irish legend says to poke the four corners to let the faeries out. Lightly cover with foil and bake for 50 mins.

When you take it out of the oven, give it a tap on the bottom. It should have a hollow sound to it. Put on a rack to allow it to cool down. Enjoy with butter and jam.





## CIMPN Presents at QAHN's Stones and Stories Event

The Canadian Irish Migration Preservation Network would like to extend our sincere thanks to the Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network (QAHN) for inviting us to participate in the Stories and Stones event that was held on Saturday, October 4, 2025, at Trinity Anglican Church and Cemetery in Morin Heights.

Laurie and Kelley were honoured to present on cemetery mapping and preservation, sharing our work on the challenges of protecting historic burial sites, the cultural significance of lost gravestones, and the importance of reclaiming ancestral histories.

Our presentation highlighted how cemetery mapping, oral histories, and archival research can work together to reconstruct the fragmented narratives of the Irish diaspora and restore community memory.

We concluded the day with a hands-on demonstration on how to effectively and safely clean headstones. The session was well attended and filled with people who shared our passion for cemetery preservation. Our heartfelt thanks to QAHN for organizing such an engaging and meaningful event and for continuing to promote awareness and respect for Quebec's historic burial grounds.

Photo credit: QAHN/RPAQ



## CIMPN Travels to Quebec City

The CIMPN teamed up with QAHN for a gravestone cleaning workshop at the Beth Israel Ohev Sholem Cemetery in Quebec City, thanks to QAHN's SRQEA-funded MATCH program. Fourteen volunteers joined us in caring for this nationally recognized historic site. Designated a National Historic Site of Canada in 1992, the cemetery is a rare witness to the early Jewish community in Quebec City, with about 300 closely arranged headstones reflecting traditions of equality and respect in burial.

We also learned about the Jewish passengers of the RMS Empress of Ireland—Canada's worst maritime disaster—who are memorialized here.

Photo credit: CIMPN-RCPMI







## Concordia's School of Irish Studies Students Participate in Headstone Cleaning Workshop

On October 26th, 2025, students of Concordia's School of Irish Studies participated in a productive and illuminating headstone cleaning workshop organized by members of the Canadian Irish Migration Preservation Network. Hosted by researcher Katherine Diamond and President Kelley O'Rourke, the five volunteers eagerly went to work in Saint-Colomban's historic Irish cemetery.



L-R: Asama Chaib, Paula Russel, Océane Hebert, Xico Maher,  
Kelley O'Rourke, Katherine Diamond.  
Photo Credit: Yolaine Toussaint

During the industrious day, Kelley O'Rourke provided the undergraduates students with the rich history of the area. The Saint-Colomban cemetery would become the final resting place for innumerable Irish immigrants, including victims of the Great Famine, soldiers having fought in the American Civil War, and even ancestors to members of the CIMPN.

Katherine Diamond would go on to reflect on the importance of community outreach and historical preservation as integral to the study of history for undergraduate students: "As a historian by trade, it remains incredibly important for me to remind future professionals that history isn't just found between the covers of textbooks or inside classroom walls. History is all around us, and with the help of community and a little elbow grease, we can all help to preserve the past for future generations."

In only one short afternoon, the volunteers were able to clean thirteen headstones, preserving them for all future visitors to the cemetery to appreciate. The CIMPN is eager to host more cleaning events in the 2026 spring season for future volunteers.



# Upcoming Events

As we move forward, our commitment remains clear: to preserve, promote, and share the stories of the Irish in Québec through collaboration, innovation, and community engagement.

- **January 27, 2026:** The launch of *The Irish Mile™* virtual map on the CIMPAN website ([www.cimpr-rcpmi.ca](http://www.cimpr-rcpmi.ca))
- **February 13, 2026:** *Oral Histories with the Dead* at Concordia University: the CIMPAN has been invited to take part in the symposium. We will join leading researchers to discuss memory, place-based storytelling, and the ethical considerations of interpreting burial landscapes. This invitation marks an important milestone for the CIMPAN in academic and heritage circles.
- **February 6, 2026:** *Goose Village Presentation* at the Forget House (1195 Sherbrooke St W, Montreal)

The Montreal Irish Monument will be displaying artifacts from Hydro-Québec.

Concordia Professor Marisa Portolese will be giving the presentation on Goose Village and Archeologist Martin Perron will display the artifacts he found while excavating the site around Goose Village. This event will be presented in conjunction with the United Irish Society.

- **Late February/Early March, 2026 (TBD):** *The Black Rock DNA* at the Forget House (1195 Sherbrooke St W, Montreal)

This event will focus on the 14 individual remains uncovered by the 2019 REM excavation at the Black Rock cemetery site. For this exhibit, we will not display human remains, but will rely on visual aids. This evening is made possible through the SHARE grant with QAHN.

- **March 22, 2026:** *St. Patrick's Day Parades (United Irish Society)*. We are pleased to announce that the CIMPAN will once again participate in the St. Patrick's Day Parades in Montreal.
- **March 21, 2026:** *St. Patrick's Day Parade (Soulanges Irish Society)*. We are pleased to announce that the CIMPAN will once again participate in the St. Patrick's Day Parades in Hudson.

We warmly invite volunteers to join us in representing our community and sharing our mission.

If you would like to participate in either or both parades,

please contact us at [info@cimpr-rcpmi.ca](mailto:info@cimpr-rcpmi.ca)

We would be delighted to have you with us!



# Meet our team...

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The Canadian Irish Migration Preservation Network  
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dedicated to the preservation of Irish heritage

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