



CIMPN/RCPMI

CANADIAN IRISH MIGRATION PRESERVATION NETWORK

PROUDLY PRESENTS

An Líonra

(THE NETWORK)

#6. FALL 2026

Message from the President

It has been an exciting summer for CIMPN, with continued growth in our research, digital resources and community outreach. At the centre of this work remains The Irish Mile™, developed through our SRQEA-supported *Preserving and Showcasing Irish Heritage in Quebec* project. Since launching with 127 sites in January, the map has grown to more than 300 locations across Québec. Our Digital Library also continues to expand, making historical resources increasingly accessible to researchers, genealogists, historians, and descendants.

This summer marked our first collaboration with Concordia University's Public History Internship Program. Our interns contributed to both historical research and the continued development of our website and Digital Library—an important investment in the next generation of public historians.

September and October promise to be equally busy. On September 26, we return to Saint-Colomban for Irish Heritage Day, where CIMPN will be honoured by Archives Laurentides for our research and work preserving Irish culture and heritage. The event and accompanying history video capsule are supported through a QAHN micro-grant, *Footsteps of Exile: Interpreting the Bronze Shoes and Irish Famine Memory in Quebec*.

In October, we will participate in the QAHN Heritage Fair at Way's Mills, where we will demonstrate our cemetery mapping work and share The Irish Mile™.

We are also preparing to launch CIMPN genealogy services, providing another way to help people uncover and preserve their family stories.

With more research, presentations, and partnerships ahead, I look forward to seeing where the next chapter takes us.

Thank you, as always, for supporting CIMPN.

Kelley O'Rourke



The CIMPN Launches Online Digital Repository

By Laurie McKeown

The Canadian Irish Migration Preservation Network is proud to announce the official launch of our Online Digital Repository, also known as the Digital Library.

Our Digital Library is a searchable resource that will provide you with easy access to a growing collection of materials exploring the history and narrative of Irish migration to Canada. Designed as a central hub for genealogists, historians, scholars, students, organizations and anyone interested in Canadian Irish heritage, this Digital Library will bring together a wide range of valuable content in one place.

Serving as a Digital Repository, this platform organizes multiple file types into a single user-friendly database which allows you to browse, search and download resources with ease. From historical events and commemorative sites to family narratives, archival collections, academic articles, and interviews, the Digital Library offers rich and evolving resources for discovery and research.

Our online virtual map, The Irish Mile™, and our Digital Library work together to explore, preserve, and share Irish heritage. The Irish Mile brings heritage stories to life by showing where significant people, events, and stories unfolded. The Digital Library provides the deeper historical context, serving as a repository of records, resources, and information related to these places.

Search:

Cemetery Preservation and Restoration

Collections and Records

Events (Current/Recent)

Genealogy

Heritage and Culture (Past)

Commemorative Sites

Historical Events

Category

Reset

Image	Title	Excerpt	Categories	Link
	The Forgotten Shipwreck of the Rob Roy – Part I	First article of a three-part series. The authors recount the voyage of the Rob Roy from Belfast, the shipwreck at L'Islet, and the human tragedy that unfolded within sight of the Quebec shore. The goal of the series is not only to remember the shipwreck, but to seek to restore the names, families, and lives behind one of the earliest Irish migration tragedies in Quebec.	Historical Events	Article, English View Document

The CIMPON Launches Online Digital Repository (Cont.)

Together, the virtual map and the digital repository connect *place and story*, giving you a unique way to discover Irish heritage geographically while exploring the history, people, and sources behind each location. This integrated approach helps make our shared heritage more accessible, meaningful, and connected for today's communities and future generations. Both the Irish Mile and the Digital Library are proudly supported by the [Secrétariat aux relations avec les Québécois d'expression anglaise](#) (SRQEA).

Some examples of what is currently available in the Digital Library:

- The Watchman and Ottawa Valley Advocate newspaper from 1877-1939.
- The Irish Mile: Digital Mapping and Landscapes of Memory.
- The script and slides for a presentation given at the 2026 Canadian Association for Irish Studies conference.
- Following the Footsteps of Exile: Quebec Joins the Global Irish Famine Way. Articles relating to the Bronze Shoe markers being installed in Canada as part of the Global Irish Famine Way.

We also welcome contributions to our Digital Library.

If you have stories, photographs, documents, research, or other materials relating to Irish heritage, we invite you to share them with us. Your contributions can help enrich this growing collection and ensure that local knowledge, personal histories, and community memories are preserved and made accessible for future generations. Complete our [Digital Library Content Submission form](#) for consideration to be included in the library.

The Digital Library is available online through our CIMPON website, [Digital Library](#). We invite you to explore this growing collection of historical documents, records, and resources that help preserve and share the stories of Irish migration and settlement in Canada.

FRELIGHSBURG: THE QUÉBEC BORDER TOWN WITH A SURPRISING IRISH HISTORY

By Debbie Howlett



Frelighsburg wasn't always Frelighsburg. In the mid-nineteenth century, it was a busy village called Conroy's Mills, nicknamed "Slab City" for the piles of wood slabs and sawmill waste left behind by its early mills. Its name was later changed to Frelighsburg, after Abram Freligh, one of the community's early settlers and a prominent local mill owner. But one thing that hasn't changed about Frelighsburg is its proximity to the Canada-U.S. border.

Today, this seemingly peaceful boundary is once again a source of tension between the two countries, but for Frelighsburg, border tensions are nothing new. This same stretch of the boundary has seen its share of drama. In the 1840s, and especially after 1847, Frelighsburg became home to Irish families fleeing the Great Famine. Alongside English and French-Canadian neighbours, these immigrants cleared the rocky soil of the Missisquoi Valley and made themselves at home.

FRELIGHTSBURG: THE QUÉBEC BORDER TOWN WITH A SURPRISING IRISH HISTORY (CONT.)

But the Irish immigrants who settled in Frelightsburg left behind more than hunger. Ireland was already deeply divided over its political future, with many seeking independence from the United Kingdom. That struggle followed some of them across the Atlantic. In 1866, Irish-American nationalists crossed the border from Vermont near Pigeon Hill in the first of the Fenian Raids, bringing the fight to Frelightsburg.

To their surprise, the Irish-Canadian community did not rise up to greet them. Instead, residents locked their doors and watched as the Fenians looted the township. The raid convinced local men they could not stand idly by in the future. They organized a grassroots militia, bought their own rifles, and began training, becoming known as the Red Sashes.

When the Fenians returned in May 1870, the response was very different. At the Battle of Eccles Hill, just outside Frelightsburg, 37 Red Sashes took up positions on the rocky hill. Before the official army could arrive, they opened fire on the advancing Fenians, helping stop the invasion. Among them were Irish-Canadians, many descended from immigrants who had come to Québec seeking a new life, now defending the community they had built.

The amazing story of Frelightsburg is just one stop on the Irish Mile, where Québec's Irish heritage comes to life along the Canada-U.S. border. Visit [**The Irish Mile™**](#) to discover the Red Sashes, the two cemeteries at Abbott's Corner, the Battle of Eccles Hill National Historic Site, and other markers that tell the story of Irish immigration, settlement, and community across the province.



In the News



The Irish Mile™ Continues to Grow

Today, just seven months since the launch of *The Irish Mile*, the map has grown to 300 locations across Québec. This endeavor was made possible through our “*Preserving and Showcasing Irish Heritage in Quebec*” project, supported by the Secrétariat aux relations avec les Québécois d’expression anglaise (SRQEA). Each location represents a piece of Québec’s Irish story: a person, cemetery, church, settlement, building, monument, organization, event and shipwreck that helps us understand the breadth and diversity of the Irish experience in this province. Researchers, descendants, local historians and community organizations are helping us identify places and stories that might disappear from our history. The Irish Mile is a living, collaborative map that continues to evolve as new stories are discovered.

A Summer of Research, Collaboration and New Resources

This summer marked an important first for the CIMPAN through our collaboration with Concordia University’s Public History program, which brought Bernice Jabala and Abbiegale Dufresne to our team as summer research interns. The internship gave us an opportunity to work with emerging public historians while providing the students with hands-on experience in community-based heritage work. Bernice has made valuable contributions to our historical research, particularly in support of The Irish Mile, while Abbie has focused on the continued development of the CIMPAN website and our newly launched online Digital Library. Both have become valued members of the team and have made significant contributions to our research.

The CIMPAN at the CAIS Conference in Quebec City

In June, CIMPAN Project Manager, Katherine Diamond spoke at the Canadian Association for Irish Studies Conference in Québec City, presenting our digital mapping project to scholars in the field of Irish Studies. The conference also provided an opportunity for the CIMPAN’s researchers to go beyond the conference room. The CIMPAN’s oral history team, Samara O’Gorman and Evita-Maria Di Falco, interviewed members of the Irish community and local historians, including Ireland’s Honorary Consul for Québec, Bryan O’Gallagher, scholar Victoria Kelly, and historian Joe Lonergan.

Interviews Available on You Tube

The CIMPAN’s interview team has played an important role in this growing oral-history and interview program, helping capture the voices of people who share our commitment to preserving Irish heritage.

Bryan O’Gallagher’s interview and Katherine Diamond’s conference presentation are now [available through our website](#) along with recent interviews with UIS historian Ken Quinn and Professor Ryan Young. The slides and script of Katherine’s presentation are available in our [Digital Library](#).



Exciting Projects under Development

Susan Henderson has spent the summer developing a downtown Montreal walking tour highlighting people and places of Irish, Scottish and British heritage. Her research has uncovered Irish connections to familiar landmarks such as St. Patrick's Basilica and the former St. Antoine Cemetery, alongside lesser-known stories associated with the Victoria Skating Rink, the Sun Life Building and the former Sainte-Catherine Street home of Thomas D'Arcy McGee. The tour is being developed as a VoiceMap experience for Montrealers and visitors alike. Our newest research team member, Charlotte Lovell, has been concentrating on cemetery preservation in the Laurentides, Argenteuil and MRCs within the administration region Estrie.

Research, Conferences and New Opportunities

It has been an exciting year for our continued research into the Irish cemetery at Saint-Colomban, Quebec, demonstrating how mapping, genealogy, oral history and community memory can help restore the identities and stories of those buried there. This past spring, Kelley O'Rourke travelled to Ireland to attend the Global Irish Civic Forum, where she represented both the CIMPAN and the Montreal Irish Monument. Opportunities such as this continue to strengthen connections between our work in Québec and the wider Irish diaspora, while helping to build relationships and share knowledge beyond our borders.

Cartographica

The CIMPAN is proud to announce that Kelley O'Rourke's article, "Grave Matters: Mapping Memories of Irish Burials in the Saint-Colomban Cemetery," has been selected for publication in the special Mapping Memories issue of Cartographica. Her research explores how historical records, cemetery mapping, descendant knowledge and community memory can be brought together to recover stories from a burial landscape where so many of the original grave markers have disappeared.

Kelley's presentation last February at Concordia University's *Oral Histories with the Dead* symposium, "From Silence to Memory: Irish Famine Voices and Burials in Saint-Colomban," has been accepted as part of a Concordia panel at the European Social Science History Conference, taking place April 21–24, 2027, in Lyon, France. The opportunity to bring research rooted in a small historic Irish cemetery in Québec to an international audience is particularly meaningful.

The Forgotten Shipwreck of the Rob Roy – Part I

By Kelley O' Rourke & Katherine Diamond

A Three Part Series

This three-part series forms part of The CIMPN's Irish Mile project, developed with the support of the Secr tariat aux relations avec les Qu b cois d'expression anglaise (SRQEA). Through research, historical interpretation, and genealogy, The Irish Mile™ highlights the people, places, and stories that shaped the Irish experience in Quebec.

The story of the Rob Roy is far more than the account of a tragic shipwreck. It is the story of the early Irish who came to Quebec before the Great Hunger (an Gorta M r) of 1845–1852, the families whose lives were forever changed on the night of 30 April 1827, and the descendants whose memories continue to preserve this remarkable chapter of Canadian and Irish history.

Although the wreck claimed the lives of twenty-four passengers, no known document records all their names. Instead, their stories survive in scattered newspaper accounts, parish records, survivor memoirs, family histories, and the recollections of descendants. By bringing these sources together, we can begin to reconstruct the identities of those who were lost and follow the lives of the families who carried their memories forward.

This three-part series follows that journey—from the tragedy itself to the painstaking work of restoring the identities of the victims, and finally, to the survivors whose resilience and family stories have preserved the legacy of the Rob Roy for nearly two centuries.

In telling this story, our goal is not only to remember the shipwreck, but to seek to restore the names, families, and lives behind one of the earliest Irish migration tragedies in Quebec.

Part I – Before the Famine: The Forgotten Shipwreck of the Rob Roy

The voyage from Belfast, the shipwreck at L'Islet, and the human tragedy that unfolded within sight of the Quebec shore.

Part II – Restoring the Twenty-Four: Reconstructing the Victims of the Rob Roy

Using contemporary newspapers, parish records, survivor accounts, descendants' stories, and genealogical research to reconstruct the identities of the passengers who lost their lives. As additional records are discovered and descendants come forward, this reconstruction will continue to grow.

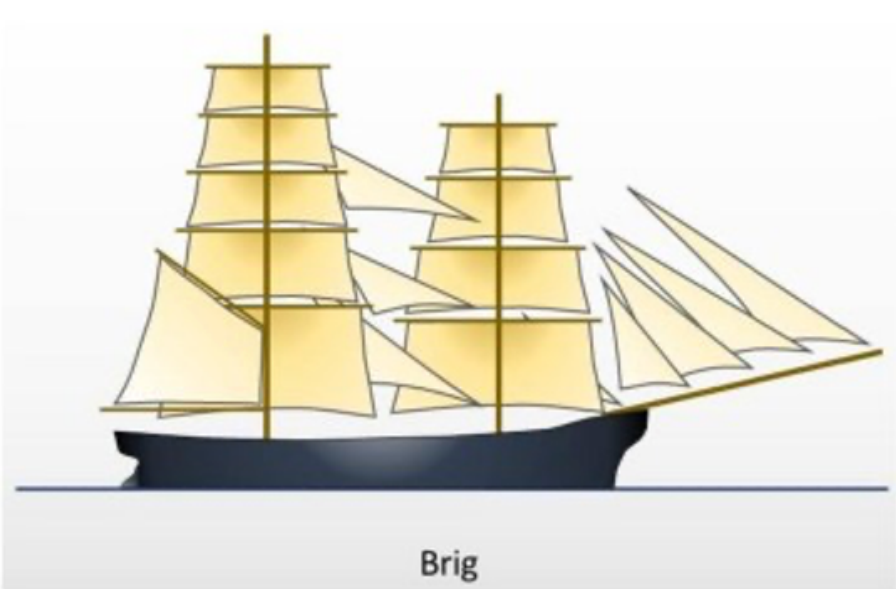
Part III – Beyond the Wreck: The Families That Endured

Exploring the lives of the survivors who lost loved ones aboard the Rob Roy and discovering how their descendants have helped preserve the memories of those who never completed the voyage.

The Forgotten Shipwreck of the Rob Roy (Cont.)

Lloyd's Register and the Aberdeen Register of Shipping describe the Rob Roy as a 243-ton, two-masted brig built at the Aberdeen shipyard of James Adamson in 1819. Registered in Aberdeen, the vessel was copper-bottomed and regularly carried emigrants and cargo across the Atlantic. Commanded by Captain William Kenn (also recorded as Kean in Lloyd's Register), she sailed established routes between Greenock, Belfast, Liverpool, New Brunswick, and Quebec, transporting hundreds of emigrants seeking new opportunities in British North America. *(Sources: Lloyd's Register; Aberdeen Register of Shipping.)*

In March 1827, Advertisements in the Belfast Commercial Chronicle announced that the Rob Roy would depart Belfast for Quebec under Captain Kenn's command, encouraging prospective emigrants to secure passage aboard what was described as a "first-class fast-sailing brig." The ship sailed in early April, carrying 151 passengers, many of them Irish families hoping to establish new lives in Lower and Upper Canada.

 Image Credit: Rob Roy© Aberdeen Art Gallery & Museums Collections	ROB ROY Date: 1819 Object Name: BRIG Medium: WOOD Classifications: Ship Dimensions: length 92' x breadth 24 5/6' x depth 15 7/12' Registered Tonnage: 241 ton Object number: ABDSHIP001784 Keywords https://museumdata.uk/object-search/?q=ABDSHIP001784
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[Read the full story here](#)

Saint-Colomban Irish Heritage Day

By Samara O’Gorman

Join us in Saint-Colomban on Saturday, September 26th, for Saint-Colomban Irish Heritage Day! The Canadian Irish Migration Preservation Network (CIMPN), with the generous support of the Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network (QAHN) through the grant *Footsteps of Exile: Interpreting the Bronze Shoes and Irish Famine Memory in Quebec*, invites you to a celebration of history, community, and culture. Beginning at 1:00 p.m. at Saint-Colomban City Hall, the afternoon will bring together local history enthusiasts, community leaders, and artists for a program featuring film, archives, music, and hands-on heritage preservation.

The celebration will highlight the CIMPN’s ongoing work to preserve, document, and share Saint-Colomban’s Irish heritage. The CIMPN President Kelley O’Rourke and Vice-President Fergus Keyes will share the story of the organization’s work to preserve the historic Saint-Colomban Cemetery and will highlight recent CIMPN initiatives, including The Irish Mile™ and Saint-Colomban’s connection to the Global Irish Famine Way. CIMPN board member Samara O’Gorman is coordinating the day’s program on behalf of the CIMPN and is creating a short video history capsule exploring Irish identity and memory in Saint-Colomban, which will premiere during the event.

Attendees will also have an opportunity to explore a curated exhibition of historical artifacts and archival documents presented by Histoire et Archives Laurentides. During the event, Histoire et Archives Laurentides will present the CIMPN with the prestigious Prix d’Histoire et Archives Laurentides in recognition of the organization’s outstanding contributions to preserving local history.



The Bronze Shoes at the Saint-Colomban City Hall are on the Global Irish Famine Way heritage trail



Catherine Phelan's 1853 School Sampler, donated to Histoire et Archives Laurentides Museum by Kelley O' Rourke, who received it from Colleen Pearce

Saint-Colomban Irish Heritage Day (Cont.)

The afternoon will conclude with a cemetery mapping demonstration across the street at the historic Saint-Colomban Cemetery, where guests can learn firsthand how historic gravestones are documented and mapped. Throughout the event, attendees can enjoy live classical Irish music, have their photograph taken by a professional photographer on the CIMPN's "green carpet" in front of the official CIMPN backdrop, and enjoy a selection of sweets and refreshments.

Whether you have deep ancestral ties to Saint-Colomban or simply appreciate local history, the CIMPN's Saint-Colomban Irish Heritage Day offers a wonderful opportunity to connect with the past and celebrate the community's living Irish heritage.



SAINT-COLOMBAN IRISH HERITAGE DAY



**SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER
26TH 2026 1 - 3 PM**



**SAINT-COLOMBAN CITY HALL
330 MNT DE L'ÉGLISE J5K 1A1**



THIS EVENT IS MADE POSSIBLE BY A GRANT FROM QAHN:
*Footsteps of Exile: Interpreting the Bronze Shoes and
Irish Famine Memory in Quebec*



**HISTORICAL ARTIFACTS
& ARCHIVES**

*Artifacts and historical documents by Histoire & Archives
Laurentides will be on display and formally presented.*



**AWARD
PRESENTATION**

*Presentation of the Prix d'Histoire et Archives Laurentides
recognizing CIMPN's contributions to preserving and promoting
Saint-Colomban's Irish heritage.*



**CEMETERY MAPPING
DEMONSTRATION**

*Learn how cemetery mapping preserves
our heritage for future generations.*



**SHORT FILM
SCREENING**

*Premiere of a documentary about Irish
history & identity in Saint-Colomban.*



**AND MORE
SURPRISES!**

*Special guest speakers, refreshments,
treats, music & more!*

**NATIONAL
FAMINE** *Way*™



**CANADIAN IRISH MIGRATION
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Canada

Upcoming Events

- **September 17, 2026: An Irish Social**

The St. Patrick's Society of Montreal will be holding a social at **Hurley's Irish Pub**. Members and guests welcome. Takes place from 7 p.m.- 9 p.m. at 1225 Crescent Street, Montreal, Quebec H3G 2B1

- **September 26, 2026: *Heritage Day in St. Colomban* - "Footsteps in Exile: Interpreting the Bronze Shoes and the Irish Famine in Quebec."**

The afternoon will bring together local history enthusiasts, community leaders, and artists for a program featuring film, archives, music, and hands-on heritage preservation. Takes place from 1:00 – 3:00 p.m. at **St. Colomban City Hall**, 330 Montée de l'Église, Saint-Colomban, QC J5K 1A1

- **September 28, 2026: *Montreal Irish Monument Golf Tournament***

For more information - <https://montrealirishmonument.com/golf2026/>
Takes place at **Kanawaki Golf Club**, 207 Rd St Isidore, Kahnawake, QC

- **October 3, 2026: *Quebec Anglo Heritage Network's Fall Heritage Fair***

Music, discussions, special guests, walking tour and demonstrations.

For more information - <https://qahn.org/events/fall-heritage-fair-ways-mills>

Takes place from 10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. at **Way's Mills**, Eastern Townships, QC

- **October 8, 2026: *Quescren "Lunch and Lecture."***

CIMPN researcher Katherine Diamond will be speaking.

12 p.m. – 1 p.m. This is a virtual event that is free of charge.

Registration required at -

<https://www.concordia.ca/cuevents/artsci/scpa/quescren/2026/100/the-irish-mile.html?c=/artsci/scpa/quescren/events>

Coming Soon

One of our newest initiatives brings us back to where many historical journeys begin: with a family name and a question. The CIMPN will soon begin offering genealogy research services for people interested in discovering more about their ancestors. We have assembled a skilled research team with experience in genealogical and historical research and look forward to helping individuals and families follow the clues contained in parish registers, census records, newspapers, passenger lists, cemetery records, and other historical sources.

Please note, these genealogy research services will be offered as a paid service, reflecting the dedicated time and expertise involved. Whether you are trying to identify where an ancestor came from, locate a burial place, or move beyond a genealogical brick wall, our team will be ready to help.

For more information please contact us at: genealogy@cimpn-rcpmi.ca



**Introducing
CIMPN Genealogy Services**

Every family has a story. We help you discover it.

Our experienced research team uncovers your family history using parish and civil records, census data, newspapers, passenger lists, cemetery records, maps and more. We provide clear reports, source citations, and a Family Group Sheet for each generation researched.



Meet our team...

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The Canadian Irish Migration Preservation Network
is a not-for-profit organization
dedicated to the preservation of Irish heritage

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