

WHERE YOU RELATIVES IN SAN FRANCISCO AT THE IRISH FAIR IN 1898 OR ADVERTISING IN THE FAIR PROGRAM?

Check out the link to see



A Place for All Things Irish, a series of posters which tells the story of the San Francisco Irish societies at the turn of the 20th Century and their dream of building an Irish Hall, will be exhibited at the United Irish Cultural Center from August 16 through December 31, 2018. The many Irish societies of that period met at a variety of places throughout the City – probably the most notable locations being the Hibernian Hall at 454 Valencia and the KRB (Knights of the Red Branch) Hall at 1133 Mission. None of these locations were large enough to accommodate the growing Irish population which comprised one third of the population of San Francisco. A new place was needed inspiring the societies to build such a hall. Through excerpts from major San Francisco historical newspapers and the original program from the Irish Fair of 1898, you will learn about their efforts which started

“Twenty six Irish Societies United to Build a Grand Hall. They Desire to Have a Home That Will Cost a Quarter of a Million.”
San Francisco Call, August 8, 1896

in 1896 with the formation of the Celtic Union.

To reach their goal, the members of the Celtic Union held many fundraisers including the Irish Fair of 1898. The Fair was held at the Mechanic’s Pavilion. The Pavilion was located on the current site of the Bill Graham auditorium in San Francisco Civic Center. Severely damaged in the 1906 Earthquake and Fire, it temporarily served as a triage center after the earthquake- until it was abandoned as unsafe. Modeled after a similar fair in New York in 1897, the Celtic Union imported sod from each of Ireland’s 32 counties. The sod was laid down at the Mechanic’s Pavilion in the shape of a map of Ireland. Homesick Irish men and women could stand on the “the old sod” once again. For a modest amount, they could take a jar of it home. If you visit the Patrick J. Dowling library at the UICC, you will have an opportunity to view an original copy of the Fair’s program donated to the library. According to World Cat, the world’s largest bibliographic database, it is one of only three libraries holding a copy.

“Many years ago so long ago that it is now ranked as ancient history, a movement was started to erect an Irish Hall here.”“We want an Irish Hall in San Francisco and we want it as soon as we can get it”

Editorial of the Leader newspaper, January 22, 1910

Selling stock was another major source of revenue. In 1902 & 1903 Tom Desmond, one time Sheriff of San Francisco and Commandant of the Knights of the Red Branch, a branch of Clan na Gael, was selling stock for the Celtic Union. Desmond was probably best known for his role in the famous Catalpa incident in which six Fenians were rescued from imprisonment in West

Australia. The Celtic Union continued to hold annual meetings and sell stock well into the 1930s and indeed purchased a construction site at one point but never reached their fundraising goal and eventually sold the lot.

The idea of *A Place for All Things Irish* in San Francisco hibernated for another 30 plus years until a new group of Irish men and women banded together in the early 1970s and built, with their own hard-earned money and labor,

THE UNITED IRISH CULTURAL CENTER OF SAN FRANCISCO.

Check out the complete exhibit: [CLICK HERE](#)