

# The Freebird

Volume IV

March 2008

The Freebird is the newsletter of the **Irish Fair of Minnesota August 8-10, 2008**. Its purpose is to keep us connected, provide updates, celebrate successes and share our stories, and to support the mission of the Irish Fair by promoting and cultivating Irish culture.



## IRISH FAIR OF MINNESOTA 2008 HEADLINER NEWS -- WILD COLONIAL BHOYS

Named for three things: their upbeat sound, their roots, and the Glasgow Celtic Football Club, the Wild Colonial Bhoys have been a powerhouse on the Twin Cities Irish music scene since they formed in late 2003. The Bhoys, Adam Coolong and Geno Carlson, found common ground with a shared Irish heritage and a desire to reinvigorate the local Irish music community and have added zest and flavor with their energetic guitar playing and infectious vocal harmonies. They play pub shows with just two acoustic guitars and two voices, yet the sound is surprisingly full. For bigger gigs they add bass guitar, drums and a fiddle and other traditional Irish instruments to round out a sound that is already forceful, sincere and delivered with all the intensity of a soccer riot. They recorded their first album in May of

2004 and released it to an enthusiastic public. "*Graffiti on the Wall* was, by design, a small sampling of our perspective on Irish music," says Adam. "It features rebel ballads, contemporary Irish and Irish American radio hits and a few things in between. We wanted to showcase different *types* of Irish music and play them all with our unique style."

*Irish in America*, their 2<sup>nd</sup> album was released in 2007. The songs are about diverse subjects, but retain an "Irish" feel thanks to the plaintive voices, fiddles, tin whistles and uilleann pipes sprinkled throughout. Says singer Adam Coolong, "There were a lot of

things we wanted to sing about, from the Irish

diaspora to going away from home for the first time. From waking up in a strange place to living a very different life than what you planned for." For all that diversity there is definitely an underlying commonality of theme; the album is about life, how you live it and where you came from. Celtic rock site, [PaddyRock.com](http://PaddyRock.com) has "Irish In America" in their top CD's of 2007!

The Bhoys have been kept busy with tours in both the US and Ireland, playing in every Irish pub throughout the Minneapolis-St. Paul area, as well as several major festivals. Be sure to catch their outstanding shows at the Irish Fair of Minnesota. To hear a clip of their songs, including **The Irish in America**, click <http://www.wildcolonialbhoys.com/index2.htm>. *And be sure to come see them at the Fair!*



*The Bhoys playing a gig at O'Donovan's Pub*

## KILT CATERER OPENS 'KORNER'

Whether you need one for a special occasion, a Highland Games competition or if you just like to feel the breeze on your knees, the Frugal Corner likely has a tartan to your liking. You have seen their handsome goods on display in the Irish Fair Marketplace, now Deleah & Mark Wright and Mark Bennett have opened the Frugal Corner Kilt Shop in downtown Anoka to offer their goods the year round.

### History of the Kilt

Like most elements of Celtic history, the kilt has a chequered past (sorry! I couldn't help myself!) shrouded in



mystery. Ancient Romans wrote condescendingly of the Celtic tribes---ancestors of *both* the Scots *and* the Irish---that they loved to wear bright patterned clothing and gobs of ornaments. Tunics were a common form of dress for both men and women, with outer mantle thrown over for protection against the weather, and either of these would have been as bright and patterned, at least for dress occasions, as the owner could afford. One of the earliest examples of tartan found in Scotland dates back to the

3rd century AD, where a small sample of woolen check known as the Falkirk tartan (now in the National Museum of Scotland) was found used as a stopper in an earthenware pot to protect a treasure trove of silver coins. The first clear depiction of a tartaned kilt is of Scottish mercenaries serving in Germany circa 1631 (above). These were simple wrapped wool garments, with loose folds, rather than crisp pleats in the kilt, as suited to the place and time. Tartan patterns were not uniquely associated with any particular clan as nowadays, but were selected to wear according to an individual's taste and means.

### Contemporary Kilts and the Frugal Korner

Frugal partner Mark Wright bought his first kilt years ago while in the Marine Corps, paying more than \$400. In addition to the initial high expense he found the all-wool garment hard to care for. The Frugal Corner's ambition is to supply more user-friendly kilts to people at a more affordable price, so the Korner kilts are an acrylic blend rather than the traditional wool. "A lot of our customers compete in the Highland Games, so their [all-wool] kilts get dirty and ruined when they wear them," explains Mark Wright.

The 13-ounce kilts sell for \$53 while the 16-ounce variety goes for \$84. Such a deal? But wait! There's more, as the Wrights explained: there are Twin Cities pubs who offer a free pint for anyone who shows up on a specific day dressed in the Scottish regalia. "So you really could get back what you spend on your kilt in free pints," joked Mark Wright.

In addition to Highland Games competitors, other Frugal Corner customers include those looking for outfits for special occasions, especially weddings, as well as costuming for theater productions.

Kilts are not the only traditional Scottish item for sale at the Anoka store sporrans, chanters, kilt hose, flashes and other accessories are also on the shelves along with traditional fare including haggis (even of the vegetarian variety) and Walkers cookies.

Mark and Deleah Wright tour with their goods during the summer months to festivals such as at the Irish Fair of Minnesota. "The people who are there are always there to have a good time," said Deleah. "It's a great, lively and fun environment." The Frugal Corner is expected to be open during the day from Tuesday through Saturday each week. More information is available at [www.thefrugalcorner.com](http://www.thefrugalcorner.com).



## LEGACY FUND TO SUPPORT LUMBERJACK BALLADS PROJECT

As many of you know, the Irish Fair of Minnesota supports the Legacy Fund which has the goal of deepening and broadening the renaissance of Irish cultural activities, strengthening the vitality of new immigrant communities in Minnesota and promoting Minnesota's Irish community's sense of identity and connection. Grants are periodically awarded by the Fair board to artists whose projects meet this mission. At the last board meeting funding for 4 grants was approved, with disbursements of \$10,200.00.



*Early Minnesota Lumberjack*

Presented here are details of one of those funded projects. The first grant is to Brian Miller, the well-respected musician of Irish music who performs with the Gan Bua and The Two Tap Trio bands, among others. Brian is a regular at the Irish Fair (where he has been heard to sing his delightful original song about his hometown!

[http://www.5milechase.com/bemidji\\_song.htm](http://www.5milechase.com/bemidji_song.htm) )

This is what Brian writes about the Lumberjack project:

*“When most Minnesotans think of modern-day northern Minnesota towns like Bemidji, they probably picture the reserved Scandinavian townfolk and quiet lifestyle of Lake Wobegone. But a century ago, northern Minnesota was home to a much rowdier bunch:*

*Lumberjacks—many of them Irish—and their bunkhouses witnessed the continuation of an often forgotten branch of the rich Irish singing tradition. Many of the Irishmen who fled the potato famine and emigrated to New England and Eastern Canada in the 1800s found work in logging camps. As the logging industry moved west, some followed this dangerous job to the Great Lakes states. In their leisure time they entertained themselves in the bunkhouses by singing ballads and songs, many of which had Irish melodies and forms, often with newly composed texts about their experiences working in the north woods.*

*The only readily available collection of logging songs collected in Minnesota was made by Franz Rickaby in the 1920s. In an era when Swedish and Norwegian farmers were replacing Irish loggers, Rickaby managed to track down some of the last remaining singers, preserving a unique window into a forgotten era in Minnesota history.*

*My goal with the Lumberjack Ballads project is to introduce today's Minnesotans to these men who were not only tough, hard workers but who also carried on a rich tradition of singing in their bunkhouses that had deep roots in Ireland as well as a character specifically linked to the experience of logging. Hearing these songs changes your image of the lumberjacks so you see them not just as big ax-wielding Paul Bunyans but as immigrants, as Minnesotans tied closely to this land and, most importantly, as musicians and poets.”*



*Brian Miller*

The Irish Fair Board also approved funding for 3 other Irish music projects and one new immigrant support project; these will be covered in detail in future editions of **The Freebird**.

*Prep Them Pipes, Dust off Your Dance Shoes for the*  
**IRISH IDOL CONTEST 2008**

This could be your big chance! Now you and your friends have a chance to perform at the Irish Fair of Minnesota. On Friday, August 8, 2008 from 3:00 PM to ~5:30 PM on the Jake O'Connor's Stage, the Irish Fair will hold the **Second Annual Irish Fair Idol Contest**. All acts must be Irish or Celtic in nature and can be music or dance instrumental or voice, solo or group. *The winner gets to perform on the Jake O'Connor's Stage on Saturday, August 9th, and will receive \$250.* The first runner-up will receive \$100 in gift cards from one of our sponsoring pubs and the second runner-up will receive \$40 in gift cards from one of our sponsoring pubs. This could be your big chance to shine! See <http://www.irishfair.com/idol-contest/index.php> for more information---and *start practicin'!*

## EVENTS & OPPORTUNITIES

### TÍR NA NÓG IRISH CHILDREN'S THEATER SUMMER CAMP

Come experience theater the Irish way! Join us at a new theater camp taught by one of the Twin Cities leading theater educators. This week long camp will explore the rich world of Irish theater, art, song and stories. Children will explore a variety of texts to gain a basic knowledge of Irish theater and writings. Stories will be brought to life using fun and creative improvisational and staging techniques. Participants will create an original performance with sets, costumes and script to be shared with family and friends the last day of camp as well as to be performed on stage at the Irish Fair of Minnesota the weekend of August 9th. This camp is made possible with a grant from the Legacy Fund of the Irish Fair of Minnesota.

Offered Monday-Friday August 4th-8th.

Children ages 5-8 from 9:00-12:00.

Children ages 9-17 from 9:00-2:00.

Cost of the camp is 90.00 for ages 5-8 and 150.00 for ages 9-17.

The camp will be located at the Saint Paul Reformation Lutheran church 100 N.Oxford St.

For registration forms or more information email [starngt@hotmail.com](mailto:starngt@hotmail.com) or call 651-249-5517.

Enrollment is limited.

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## Minnesota Scottish Fair & Highland Games

Saturday, May 17, 2008

9:00 am – 5:30 pm (Gates open at 8:00 am)

[Ceilidh](#) 5:30 pm - 8:00 pm at the McCracken Pub with music by Highland Reign



*Join us where the Highlands meet the Prairie! A fair that, like Brigadoon, takes you to Scotland for one day a year. Enjoy everything Scottish. Returning in 2008, Highland Reign whose traditional & contemporary Celtic music rocked the fair in 2007 Don't miss the return to MN of Alex Beaton, Highland & Country Dancing, living history area-FREE kid's activities & prizes, Scottish Vendors & Clans, Pipers, Dancers and more. See Men in Skirts (kilts) throwing telephone poles (cabers) Free parking.*

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## AN GHAEILGE

*An t-uan ag múineadh méilí dá mháthair.*

*The lamb teaching its mother how to bleat.*

Courtesy of Gaeltacht Minnesota <http://www.gaelminn.org/index.htm>

# A GLANCE FORWARD TO MORE IRISH FAIR OF MINNESOTA 2008 HEADLINERS

## *Flogging Molly*



Drawing on the hardships and joys of their own lives and a musical history and ranging in style from old world Celtic to modern day punk rock, the seven members of Flogging Molly bring insightful lyrics, memorable melodies and blow-your-mind live performances with a charm and an ease that makes them one of the most accessible bands performing today; a crowd favorite every time they perform at the Irish Fair. [More...](#)

## *The Tannahill Weavers*

The Tannahill Weavers' embrace both the mystical quality of the Highlander's Celtic music, and the rollicking, sometimes even brawling qualities of the Lowlander's Anglo-Scots tunes. Their arrangements blend the beauty of the traditional melodies with the power of modern rhythms, and the penetrating sound of the bagpipes has a thread of ancient memory running through it all. [More...](#)



## *The Elders*

Take a group of Kansas City musicians with a passion for Celtic music, an Irishman with a love of all things American, and you get a cross-pollination of elements that is high octane and progressive, yet rooted in tradition. Some call it arsekickin' music from the heartland. Robert Oermann of MUSIC ROW Magazine calls The Elders "a band to shout from the rooftops about." [More...](#)

