



# MCCORD MUSEUM



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## IRLANDAIS O'QUÉBEC BEING IRISH O'QUEBEC

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PRESS RELEASE - FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### BEING IRISH O'QUEBEC

#### New exhibition at the McCord Museum Opens March 20, 2009

Just in time for St. Patrick's Day, the McCord Museum's newest exhibition, *Being Irish O'Quebec*, which opens **March 20, 2009**, explores the history of Irish immigrants: how they integrated with and contributed to the making of Quebec's social, cultural, political, and economic fabric, since the founding of New France all the way to the present day.

Quebec has always been made up of a wide range of ethnic groups. The Irish are one of the most significant, not only because of their numbers, but also because of the historical impact they have had. The Irish and their descendants helped construct Quebec's collective identity; this exhibition investigates how— by looking at the people, places, and themes that have marked their history.

The Irish community's two major associations, the St. Patrick Society and the Irish Protestant Benevolent Society, are both celebrating jubilee anniversaries. A special way of celebrating their Irish heritage was in order; thus was the idea of this exhibition born. It's a perfect fit for the Museum's mandate, too, says its Executive Director, Victoria Dickenson: "Being Irish O'Quebec not only affords an opportunity to forge links between the cultures and communities that make up our society, it also provides a look at how immigrants succeeded in creating new traditions and contributing to a shared history in their new-found home."

How appropriate, then, that the Museum should have as its spokespersons for the new exhibition Daniel Johnson and Pierre Marc Johnson. The two brothers, both former premiers of Quebec (as was their father), took on the task with enormous enthusiasm. It's their first public collaboration, and it came about because of their shared desire to celebrate their family's Irish roots. "As young children, we learned about the pride of our ancestors and discovered the diversity of our history," they explain. "Farmers and merchants, professionals and craftspeople, politicians and clergy, who either chose to leave their country or had no choice, established themselves in Quebec. They and subsequent generations have since been committed to helping develop the social and community life of the province."

## Some Features of the Exhibition

**Biography Booths:** These are dedicated to people whose stories illustrate the history that unites Ireland and Quebec; some are well-known, but some are not. Visitors will meet everyone from a 17th-century fur trapper to Louis-Joseph Papineau's right-hand man, Edmund Bailey O'Callaghan. You may be familiar with La Bolduc and D'Arcy McGee, but how much do you really know about their lives?

**Story Stations:** These will unveil the stories of some key sites in the establishment of the Irish population in Quebec. With archival documents, objects from the collections of the McCord and other museums, objects on loan from families, as well as digital access terminals, the history of places like Grosse-Île, Griffintown, and Saint-Colomban comes alive.

No appreciation of Irish heritage would be complete without devoting some space to the St. Patrick's Day Parade, a joyful event that each year brings together Montrealers of all stripes. In the same spirit, visitors will be invited to share their own "Irishness," regardless of their actual roots, by adding a message to the exhibition's digital guest book.

*Being Irish O'Quebec* was produced by the McCord Museum with the support of the St. Patrick's Society of Montreal and the Irish Protestant Benevolent Society, and with the generous collaboration of Quebec's Irish community. The McCord also thanks the Ministère de la Culture, des Communications et de la Condition féminine du Québec; the Ministère de l'Immigration et des Communautés culturelles du Québec; Power Corporation of Canada; the Zeller Family Foundation; Aéroports de Montréal; James Cherry and Thomas Brady.

Images available on request. For more information about the exhibition or to arrange an interview with a Museum specialist, please contact:

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