



# Ancient Order of Hibernians

JOHN CARDINAL D'ALTON DIVISION 3

*April 2024*

## Brother Hibernians



I hope everyone had a wonderful Easter. Our next meeting is Friday, April 26<sup>th</sup> at 8pm.

We have a number of events coming up in the next month – see the list of upcoming events following for details. Two quick plugs: First, note that our Hibernian Mass and Communion Breakfast will be on Sunday, May 5<sup>th</sup> with Mass being at 9am at St. Margaret's. As an Irish Catholic organization, we should have a strong showing at the Mass and the breakfast, where we will be awarding our scholarships. Second, our annual Golf outing will be Friday, May 10<sup>th</sup>. We need donations and volunteers – see the full article that follows.

Congratulations to Dennis Madigan and team for another successful Comedy Night. He's created quite a following (when do we start hosting HBO 'new talent' specials!?).

**Good & Welfare** –Please keep the following people in your prayers: Jim Spink's father, James G. Spink and Joe Ayres' father, Joseph "Buddy" Ayres – may they rest in peace.

As always, we pray that you and your family are healthy and safe.

Yours in Friendship, Unity and Christian Charity,

**Chuck Parnow**

## Upcoming Events



- **Golf Committee Meetings** – Meeting each Monday and Thursday at the pub at 7pm until the outing. Right now, our biggest needs are for prizes for the raffle drawings and for volunteers. For the many who have signed up to golf, please get your money in as it will make registration the day of the event much easier. (see the full article for more article)
- **NYS AOH Board Meeting** – Saturday, May 4<sup>th</sup>, East Durham (Shamrock House)

- **Hibernian Mass and Communion Breakfast:** Sunday, May 5<sup>th</sup> – 9am Mass at St. Margaret's followed by a Communion Breakfast at the Hibernian House.
- **Division 3 Golf Outing** - Friday, May 10<sup>th</sup>, at Blue Hill golf course. See the article and links for all the details.
- **Pearl River Memorial Day Parade:** Monday, May 27<sup>th</sup> – 10am kicking off from Key Bank on North Middletown Road. Let's take 90 minutes out of our long weekend to recognize those who made the ultimate sacrifice.



*Some Division members at the 60<sup>th</sup> Pearl River St. Patrick's Day Parade.*

## Annual Golf Outing



Our annual golf outing this year is in memory of our brother, Patrick Moore, whom we lost this past August. We want to make this a great event, both as a memorial and as a fundraiser.

It takes a lot of work to pull off such an all-day event – we need volunteers to:

- Supply or collect donations to be included in the tricky tray raffles to be held after golf. Also – consider corporate sponsorship if you've got the connection.
- Help with setup the day before.
- And the many tasks the day of the event – from working the registration table at the beginning to helping with the raffles and making sure everything runs smoothly in the after-golf cocktail hour and dinner.

Involvement doesn't have to mean dedication of a full day – lots of people providing 2-3 hours will get us where we need to be – and it's a great way to meet other division members. If you want to get involved, please reach out to [Moore.Joan523@gmail.com](mailto:Moore.Joan523@gmail.com).

If you're a golfer, this is a day not to be missed. Your \$175 buys an 18-hole scramble, refreshments on the course and dinner afterward. See the following links for details (and sign-up soon – spots are going fast!) –

<https://praoh.org/come-out-for-a-day-of-golf-remembering-a-brother-and-support-good-causes/>



*Our youth volunteers at the end of the St. Patrick's Seniors' Luncheon.*

# Hibernian House



Best time of the year? Baseball season is on and the NHL playoffs present a great game every night. Drop by the pub to watch your teams in action with your crew. Stop by!

Keep in mind, the Hibernian House monthly drawing continue each month. Winners at our March meeting were: 1st place (\$1,000): 3, 2nd place (\$250): 42, 3rd place (\$150): 219. Note, these are drawing numbers and aren't necessarily related to your AOH number. Next drawing is tonight at the Division meeting.

We've had great participation, but there's always room for more to join. If you want to join for the April drawing and future 2024 monthlies, it's \$90 dollars (\$10 per month you're in). Just see a bartender or drop us a note at praoh3@gmail.com.

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# The First Fenian Raid, Ireland's Exiled Children Put Britain on Notice



In June 1866, a battle-hardened group of Irish-American Civil War veterans embarked on a daring mission: to invade British-controlled Canada and use it as leverage to secure Ireland's independence. The group of Irish veterans had christened themselves "The Irish Republican Army" (IRA), the first time that name would enter the lexicon of the Irish-British conflict. This was the first in a series of incursions known as the Fenian Raids, which would occur between 1866 and 1871.

The invasion was organized by the Fenian Brotherhood, an Irish American organization dedicated to Irish independence. They drew

their name from the Fianna, the legendary warriors of ancient Ireland. The Fenians in North America were an extension of Ireland's Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB) and mustered 125,000 members, many recent veterans of America's bloodiest conflict, ready to fight for Ireland's liberation.

No one was more emblematic of how committed and capable the Fenian force was than their commanding officer. Their chief strategist was Thomas "Fighting Tom" Sweeny. A famine-era immigrant from Cork, Sweeny had fought in the Mexican War and was wounded in the groin at the Battle of Cerro Gordo and lost his right arm at the Battle of Churubusco. While this may have ended the military career of most men, Sweeny stayed with the army and fought with distinction in the American Civil War, attaining the rank of Brigadier General.

It also appeared that the Fenians had support from the U.S. government. President Andrew Johnson thought that the Fenian activities could serve his political interests. The Johnson government was seeking reparations from Britain for its support of the Confederacy during the American Civil War, particularly the damages inflicted by the Confederate raider CSS Alabama, which had been built in England and was highly successful in preying on U.S. shipping, resulting in hundreds of millions of dollars in losses. There was also a strong sentiment for revenge in the administration for Canada being a safe haven for the Confederate Secret Service and a base where the Confederacy had launched raids into the United States, including the raid into St. Albans, Vermont, where Confederate soldiers robbed three banks and attempted to burn the town.

The Johnson administration, including Secretary of State William Seward, was reported to have tacitly approved of the Fenian plans, allowing the Brotherhood to arm and organize within U.S. borders. The support was part of a broader political game between the U.S. and Britain. Johnson was prepared to "*recognize the accomplished facts*" should the Fenians successfully establish a foothold in Canada.

Colonel John O'Neill commanded the actual raid. Born in Monaghan and having witnessed the devastating effects of the Great Hunger, he had grown up on tales of resistance by his O'Neill ancestors. O'Neill was driven by a fierce desire to strike back at British imperialism. O'Neill had declared, "The governing passion of my life apart from my duty to my God is to be at the head of an Irish Army battling against England for Ireland's rights." When his men assembled, he boldly proclaimed, "Wherever the English flag and English soldiers are found, Irishmen have a right to attack."

On June 1, 1866, led by John O'Neill, the Fenians executed their plan. Approximately 800 men crossed the Niagara River into Ontario, engaging in what would become known as the Battle of Ridgeway. Against a far larger but less experienced Canadian militia, the Fenians, leveraging their Civil War combat experience, secured a victory. It was the first military victory by Irish forces against imperial Britain in half a century. The initial success showcased Fenian military capability and audacity but was not enough to sustain a prolonged campaign.

Despite their initial success at Ridgeway, the broader Fenian strategy began to unravel due to logistical issues and dramatically shifting political support. As British and Canadian forces mobilized in response, the political climate in the United States took a decisive turn against the Fenians. As diplomatic pressures mounted and the prospect of a favorable settlement of the Alabama claims became feasible, Johnson's administration shifted its stance. It now moved to prevent any further escalation that could jeopardize these negotiations. Consequently, the U.S. government now strictly enforced neutrality laws, effectively cutting off critical support to the Fenians.

At a crucial juncture, Johnson blocked the movement of approximately 4,500 Fenian reinforcements who were poised to cross into Canada to support O'Neill's forces. Had it joined O'Neill, this significant force might have sustained the campaign longer and with greater military effectiveness. The prevention of these reinforcements left O'Neill's men isolated and significantly under-resourced.

Ironically, the Fenian raids did directly lead to the formation of a new country: Canada. In Canada, the threat of these invasions contributed to the movement toward Confederation and strengthened national defense. The Fenians would try to invade Canada again, but the opportunity had passed. For Irish nationalists, the raids underscored the persistent struggle for Irish independence and put Britain on notice that "Ireland's exile children in America" had not forgotten Ireland.

Sadly, few events are more subject to poor and misleading history than the Fenian invasions. Far too often, Historians present the topic to their audience for a laugh through a stereotypical lens as a "whisky-fueled" delusion. They omit pertinent facts, such as Canada at that time being only the provinces of today's Ontario and Quebec, the disparity in the leadership and training of the forces, and the difficulties and expenses Britain would incur if they needed to launch a military response. We owe it to these men to remember and tell the real story.