

Irish Eyes are Waiting

Last year, many of us soothed our disappointment over St. Paddy's related cancellations with what we now know was an erroneous thought: Well, there is always next year.

So, it's *deja vu* all over again. And while the City of Pawtucket went ahead with their parade in 2020 and Newport officials engaged in a much-publicized back-and-forth over whether to hold their famous event, eventually deciding to cancel it, this year it's certain there will be no marching through the streets in March in either city (the Newport City Council is eyeing a September date).

But all is not lost. With some barroom restrictions likely to remain in place come St. Patrick's Day, we can be certain Rhode Island denizens will be searching for whiskies and pints wherever socially distanced seating is available.

And according to the President of the Museum of Newport Irish History, Michael Slein, though the traditional revelry will have to wait a while longer, people can still take the opportunity to learn about the reasons for the annual celebration in the first place. Rhode Island has the fifth largest population of Irish ancestry in the country, after all.

"I tell people [to visit places] that are characteristic of Irish culture and history," he said. "One of them is [the Cliff Walk's] Forty Steps, where all of the mansion workers went on their one night off of work from the mansions to dance and to court and sing songs."

Another Newport site recommended by Slein is the Barney Street Cemetery (officially known as St. Joseph's Cemetery), situated behind the Touro St. Synagogue. "That was the first Irish Catholic parish in all of Rhode Island," he said. "It's a beautiful little park and an enjoyable spot to walk to when you're in town."

But for those determined to eke out as much of the stout, meat and potato tradition as possible, he reminded everyone that the state's plethora of Irish pubs could use all the help they can get.

"There are so many good restaurants that need to be supported," he said.