

The Indestructible Irish, 1845-1922

Exhibit Scope and Plan

This exhibit tells the story of the Indestructible Irish from 1845 to the 1922. The exhibit shows essays, specimens, proofs, labels, postage stamps, and postal history, starting with the Great Hunger, to the struggle for independence and subsequent Civil War, related to the effort to unite Ireland. The exhibit is arranged chronologically from 1845 to 1922. Inspired by John Philip Cohane's book where he speaks of the Irish enduring for centuries a state of equilibrium. His perspective is about equally divided between history and philosophy, and the exhibitor has tried to weave Cohane's thoughtful piece and the Irish Struggle with historical events. Cohane condemns what he refers to as aspects of the hierarchy: the Anglo-Irish are running a "closed shop" (the Protestant Ascendancy), the six post-Partition counties with their rigged politics (Orange Order of the North); and particularly the Catholic Church with its attitude and suppressive strictures.

Better items are outlined in Green.

Exhibit Outline

1. The Great Hunger
2. Fenian Uprising
3. Home Rule
4. Easter Rising
5. Rise of Sinn Fein and the IRA
6. War for Independence
7. Ireland's Civil War



From Dublin to Belfast, Northern Ireland, franked with diagonal right half of 2-1/2p blue overprinted. 1 of 4 known, 2 others are in exhibit. IRA disrupted mail services.



American political label (1918). Father Paul Anderson, a supporter of Irish independence. Political labels like these were sold both to raise funds for Irish nationalist groups as well as raise awareness for the cause.

"No single fact attests to the unique indestructibility of the Irish than that, after 739 years of attempts by the Danes and the Normans to conquer them, in 1534 the Crown out of some 32,000 square miles, was in effective control of only four hundred square miles around Dublin and extending a short distance into Kildare...

By then you will be caught up in the lyric spirit of Ireland, the softly blended backdrop of landscape and climate, of woods and streams and fields and mountains that has formed all of her poets and playwrights, regardless of blood or heritage, into creative instruments whose expression, in spite of strong individuality, has been uniquely Irish. By then you will understand in their very essence the Irish are indestructible. Seemly incapable of improving their lot. Yet at the same time indestructible...

Excerpts from "The Indestructible Irish" John Phillip Cohane 1969

The Indestructible Irish 1845-1922

Synopsis by Tim Carey

This exhibit reviews the social and political events in Ireland starting with the Great Hunger in 1845 and concluding in 1922 with the Irish Civil War. The exhibitor was inspired after reading John Phillip Cohane's book "The Indestructible Irish" written in 1969.

1969 marked a significant period of social unrest in the world including Ireland and especially Northern Ireland, often seen as the beginning of the Troubles. The unrest stemmed from increasing tensions between Unionists and Nationalists, and the eruption of violence in August 1969, including the Battle of the Bogside, is widely considered to have launched the thirty-year conflict known as the Troubles. This was the backdrop for Cohane's book.

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The exhibit starts with the tumultuous Irish Famine which led to devastating loss of life, and it began an exodus of people from Ireland. Two covers with contents related to the Great Hunger, one from Black '47 and one having philatelic added significance of being from a six-week pre-retaliatory treaty rate to the US.

The exhibit continues with the Fenian Uprising of 1867, a Fenian label, a rare piece, issued during this time probably as a fund raiser for Irish Independence activities.

The exhibit looks at the various Home Rule Bills an attempt to appease dissatisfaction within Ireland, but it only served to polarize the country. Certified Erin Go Bragh and Colonial Designs are scarce.

Escalating violence of the Easter Rising and the shelling of the General Post Office is covered next. A full sheet of the Sinn Fein is one of two known by the exhibitor. The rise of Sinn Fein and the militant IRA led to the establishment of programs that would hurt the treasury of the British, an Irish Republican Army Local Post handstamp is perhaps unique.

Irish Independence became a reality in 1922 and the Irish set about production of postage stamps, first by overprinting current British issue and stamps and then developing essays for the first all Irish issues.

Ireland broke out into a civil war because the terms of independence namely an oath of loyalty to the King and the partition of six northern counties. As a result, the IRA continued to raid mails, disrupt postal operations, and the resulting stamp shortages. Two bisect covers are shown, they are of four known.

The Epilogue is items from the period not within the scope of the exhibit, the Troubles from 1960's to 1998. Future exhibit expansion will include these areas.

The Indestructible Irish 1845-1922

Synopsis by Tim Carey

Readings and references

John Philip Cohane: *The Indestructible Irish*: Meridith Press 1969
Seumas MacManus: *The Story of the Irish Race*: The Devan-Adare Company 1992
Roy Hamilton-Bowen, *Hibernian Handbook and Catalogue of the Postage Stamps of Ireland*: Rodgau Philatelic Service 2002
David MacDonnell and Ian Whyte: *Stamps of Ireland*: Ian Whyte and MacDonnell Whyte 1991
Paul Buchsabayew: *The John Pendneault Collection of Ireland*: Cherrystone Auction Galleries 2015
Joseph Foley: *The "Taylor -Made" Fenian Essays*: American Philatelic Society and Erie Philatelic Association 1971
Richard Winter: *Understanding Transatlantic Mail Volume 2*: American Philatelic Society 2009
Joseph Foley: *British Stamps Overprinted by the Irish Republican Philatelic Office*: American Philatelic Society 1972
Joseph Foley: *The Origin of the "Imperial Union" Labels*: EPA Revealer Spring 1972
J. J. Brady: *The Origin of the 1914 Unionist 1d Label*: EPA Revealer Spring 1979
C.I. Dulin: *Ireland's transition: The Postal History of the Transitional Period, 1922-1925*: MacDonnell Whyte 1992
Note: Important items are outlined in green.
All images are from Library of Congress unless otherwise noted.

Changes Since the Last Show (St. Louis Stamp Expo, 3/25)

1. Revised title page adding discovery of Famine references in the pre-retaliatory rate cover added Black '47 with Famine reference.
2. Revised and expanded Synopsis.
3. Addition of block of 8 of narrow crown Sinn Fein Propaganda Label.