

Saint Patrick's Day Celebrations Have True Meaning

By Toby McClary

It will soon be Saint Patrick's Day and for some of you that means wearing green (to avoid being pinched), drinking green beverages, and eating shamrock-shaped cookies with green frosting. But for the deep-rooted, Ireland-born Irish, the reason for celebration is much more spiritual and religious.

The Irish celebrate the name of Saint Patrick and the religious icon that he became. Saint Patrick is believed to have been born in Britain sometime in the late fourth century. At the age of 16, Patrick was taken prisoner by a group of Irish raiders that were attacking his family's estate. He was transported to Ireland where he spent six years in captivity. During his captivity, Patrick worked as a shepherd and was not allowed to be around people. He geared his focus strongly towards his religion and became a devout Christian. Saint Patrick later became the patron saint and national apostle of Ireland and is credited for bringing Christianity to Ireland. He is also known for driving the snakes from Ireland. And that is a fact; there really are no snakes in Ireland.

Saint Patrick's Day, to those who celebrate its intended

meaning, is a traditional day of renewal and an offering of prayer for missionaries worldwide. Until the 1970s, Irish laws mandated that pubs be closed on March 17, but beginning in 1995, the Irish government began a national campaign to use Saint Patrick's Day as an opportunity to drive tourism and showcase Ireland to the rest of the world. Today, Saint Patrick's Day is celebrated annually in the United States, Canada and Australia. Although North America is known for the largest celebrations, Japan, Singapore and Russia have also been known to wear a little green and pinch those who don't.

It is believed that Saint Patrick died on March 17, 460 A.D., which marks the day for his celebration. The holiday began in Ireland and as the Irish have spread out around the world, they have carried their history and their celebrations with them. Saint

Patrick's Day is also a very big deal in American cities that have a large Irish pop-

the "wearing of green," music, Irish food, and drink among other Irish-rooted activities.

The biggest of the Saint Patrick's Day celebrations is held unsurprisingly in Dublin, Ireland. It is a five-day festival and in 2006, there were more than 500,000 people in attendance for the parade.

The largest of the Saint Patrick's Day parades; however, is held in New York City and is watched by more than 2 million spectators annually. The first ever Saint Patrick's Day Parade was held in Boston, Massachusetts in 1737.

When people think of Saint Patrick's Day, shamrocks, leprechauns, and the color green come to mind, but one little-known fact is that orange and blue were once the symbol colors of this day.

So on Saturday, March 17, while you are wearing your shamrocks, drinking your favorite green-colored blended beverage, or trying to avoid being pinched, don't forget to raise a toast to good ole Saint Patrick himself. ■



ulation. From the smallest to the largest of American cities, Saint Patrick's Day is celebrated each year with parades,

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