

In the minutes of that same June 3rd meeting the exact founding date of the New York Gaelic Society is indicated as being 21 years previous to the year 1899 on June 24th. This, of course would be June 24, 1878. This reference is important since the minutes of this society are not available previous to December 12, 1894.

A great deal of work and research will have to be undertaken even in this relatively small of ascertaining the names and founding dates of some of these societies. An obvious difficulty also arises when one tries to imagine why the individuals involved felt it necessary to found in the one year 1878, two societies, namely, The Gaelic Society and The New York Philo-Celtic Society, having as they do, such similar ideas and purposes.

There is information available in Philo-Celtic Society records that suggests that these two societies were but branches of the same group.**

There is also the very intriguing question what facts and events surround Douglas Hyde's conception of this idea of Gaelic revival as being applicable to the Home of the Gael itself. There is a photograph in possession of the New York Gaelic Society showing eight men in a field. On the frame of the photograph in very careful handwriting the following lines are written:

The day this photo was taken these men decided to organize the Gaelic League. Left to right, James Mitchell, Patrick Reynolds, Mr. Higgins, Thomas O'Neill Russel. Seated: Henry Magee, Dr. Douglas Hyde, "Padraig" O'Byrne, John Haggarty. Gaelic Society Grounds, Hicks Estate, Woodside, Long Island, N.Y. 1891.***

Another interesting aspect of this unwritten history is the introduction of Irish dancing into the Gaelic Society programs. When and how did it come about? The teaching of the Irish language has always been the kernel of these efforts on both sides of the ocean. Today, however, we find the Gaelic societies, with the exception of An Fainne, all actively engaged in the teaching of traditional Irish figure and set dancing. Philo-Celtic records have an interesting notation as to how some of these dances were first brought over from Ireland to America. In 1902, a member of Philo-Celtic was sent to Ireland, with the expressed purpose of learning these dances and of bringing them back to America. By 1905 knowledge of certain of these dances had spread to societies in all the Boroughs of New York. By 1907, there were active dancing classes being conducted in "seven branches of the Society".****

Some where in this city lies sufficient material to write a history of the Gaelic society movement in America. Much of it is in the form of newspaper, magazine and other published reports, much in the libraries of the societies themselves or in the private collections of members. A large portion of the needed material is still in the living memories of individuals who shared in the actual development and growth of the movement. It is hoped that in the near future all of these sources will be tapped and the complete history of these societies will be written.

There is no doubt that the remarkable appearance, growth and persistence of these societies in America, in the midst of a large metropolitan cultural center in many ways so different from the setting of the Gaelic life which they endeavor to preserve, is a subject of study that should hold great attraction for both Irishman and American,

** Information supplied by Mae McManus

*** N.Y. Gaelic Society Records

****Information supplied by Mae McManus, Philo-Celtic Society