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HANDING DOWN THE HERITAGE: PRESERVING IRISH DIASPORIC IDENTITIES IN
THE FESTIVAL CITY OF MONTANA

By

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B.A. University of Notre Dame, IN, 2018

Thesis

presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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in Anthropology, General

University of Montana
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Butte, Montana is a tough, historic industrial town in western Montana known for its mining, its Irish, and strangely, its festivals. The city boasts countless parades and community events each year for a variety of holidays as well as for showcases of traditions and ethnic pride. Three celebrations in particular, St. Patrick's Day, Fourth of July, and An Rí Rá, attract visitors from all over the country – and world – who seek to experience the enthusiasm and splendor of these celebrations. So, what can these popular celebrations in Montana's Festival City, Butte, reveal about the Irish community living there? Relatedly, has this negotiation of cultural identity changed over time, and if so, how? Finally, this research specifically investigates what the growing popularity of Irish dance at Butte's various festivals reveals about the identity of the Irish community in Butte. Using interdisciplinary archival and ethnographic research methods, this thesis explores how the Butte Irish community navigates and expresses ethnic identity, in particular through their parades and festivals. As a work of anthropology examining the Butte Irish community's identity through the lens of festival, this research provides a unique vision of the Butte Irish, who have been studied historically but not contemporarily or even cross-temporally. Additionally, this research relies on oral histories from Butte residents which will create a distinctly personal and local understanding of Butte Irish identities.

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When I moved across the country to attend the University of Montana, I was completely unsure what I would find, who I would meet, and how I would possibly complete the rigorous requirements of a master's program. To my surprise, in all that unfamiliar, I found wonderful mentors, inspiring places, and a deeper appreciation for my incredible support system back east.

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“Butte, America, I mean, the Irish would come to Ellis Island and they'd ask them where they were going...Well, they just said Butte. Butte, America, you know, like, what's wrong with you?”

Doesn't everybody that comes from Ireland go to Butte, America?”

-Monica Evans Cavanaugh



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Introduction: Butte, America

Butte, Montana is a tough, historic industrial town in western Montana known for its mining, its Irish, and strangely, its festivals. The city boasts countless parades and community events each year for a variety of holidays as well as for showcases of traditions and ethnic pride. Three celebrations in particular, St. Patrick's Day, Fourth of July, and An Rí Rá, attract visitors from all over the country – and world – who seek to experience the enthusiasm and splendor of these celebrations for themselves. So, what can these popular celebrations in Montana's Festival City, Butte, reveal about the Irish community living there? This thesis explores how the Butte Irish community navigates and expresses Irish ethnic identity, in particular through their parades and festivals. Relatedly, has the negotiation of Irish American cultural identity changed over time, and if so, how? Finally, this research specifically investigates what the growing popularity of Irish dance at Butte's various festivals reveals about the identity of the Irish community in Butte.

This research offers valuable additions into a significant body of research surrounding the Butte Irish community and the Irish American community in general. As a work of anthropology examining the Butte Irish community's identity through the lens of festival, this research provides a unique vision of the Butte Irish, who have been studied historically but not contemporarily or even cross-temporally. Additionally, this research relies on oral histories from Butte residents which will create a distinctly personal and local understanding of Butte Irish identities. The interviewees were specifically chosen for their knowledge of Butte's festivals, thus documenting the organization process for these important traditions in Butte. The inclusion of the festival An Rí Rá, as well as the popular Irish dance school in Butte, both of which have not yet been studied in a scholarly capacity, provide novel insights into the current state of the

Butte Irish community and can possibly help to develop a vision for the future of Irish identity in Butte.

Many would find it surprising to know that Butte, Montana has the largest Irish diaspora population per capita in the United States.¹ Upon visiting Butte, however, this fact would no longer seem so shocking. On Park Street in downtown Butte, there is a successful little Irish shop, Cavanaugh's County Celtic, inviting customers to visit with its large green, white, and orange signage. Shamrocks or Irish flags can be spotted throughout many Butte neighborhoods. Some historical context of the Butte Irish community and its festivals is useful in beginning to interpret the significance of the Irish in Butte through these research questions. In the mid- to late nineteenth century, the booming mining industry prompted droves of immigrant workers from a variety of ethnic backgrounds to move to Butte. A large portion of these immigrant workers were Irish. As Butte's mining industry proved consistently profitable, these transient workers made their homes in Butte more permanent. Catherine Dowling notes that the Irish community specifically was strengthened by the fact that friends and family in Ireland would reunite and settle together in Butte.² Butte quickly became a magnet for Irish immigrants seeking steady work and a vibrant Irish community. By the turn of the century, the Irish accounted for over a quarter of Butte's population.³ Not only were they the largest ethnic community in Butte, but their proportion of Butte's population was higher than the Irish population in any other city in the United States during that period, a statistic that is still true today. Over time, a large Irish

¹ Boster, Mark. "Celebrate St. Patrick's Day in the Most Irish Place in the U.S. – And We're Not Talking About Boston." *Los Angeles Times*. <https://www.latimes.com/travel/la-tr-montana-irish-meagher-20170312-htmlstory.html> (accessed February 3, 2020). Cavanaugh, Monica. Interview by Margaret Walsh. Oral History. Butte, October 15, 2019. McDonough, Brendan. Interview by Margaret Walsh. Oral History. Butte, November 14, 2019.

² Catherine Dowling. "Irish-American Nationalism in Butte, 1900-1916." *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 39, no. 2 (1989): 50-63, 55.

³ *Ibid.*, 51.

community – sustained primarily by active social organizations – flourished in Butte.⁴ For these reasons, Butte offers a particularly good case study for examining larger patterns of Irish immigrant identities and cultural allegiances in the United States.

Saint Patrick's Day is a popular holiday all over the United States, almost more so than in Ireland, whose patron saint is actually Saint Patrick. In Ireland, Saint Patrick's Day was originally a religious holiday, but was adopted by Irish Americans as a means of celebrating pride in their ethnic heritage and culture. This new meaning was subsequently exported back to the holiday in Ireland.⁵ Before Irish independence especially, the holiday was an opportunity to support Irish nationalism and independence from the British. In Butte, St. Patrick's Day notably features symbols of American patriotism alongside icons of Irish pride. This indicates the influence that American values such as freedom and liberty had on the Irish nationalist cause. Additionally, this suggests that the Irish community in Butte subscribed to both cultural identities simultaneously, Irish and American, using the freedoms available to them in their new American home to further Irish republicanism.

Historically, the Irish in America might have embraced the Fourth of July in an effort to assimilate and to prove their American loyalty to their Protestant neighbors who deemed them Papists. In Butte, however, this does not seem to be the reason that the holiday became so popular. Part of the reason for this might be because Butte was a town of immigrants that had been built by the Irish. The Fourth of July, although lacking in physical displays of Irish pride, reveals, especially historically, the same hints of a hybrid Irish American identity. Tellingly, the Butte Irish used it to celebrate American independence from Britain and as inspiration for Irish freedom. The Butte Irish social organizations in particular were involved in planning and hosting

⁴ David M. Emmons, *The Butte Irish*, 13, 6.

⁵ Kevin Danaher. *The Year in Ireland*. (Cork: Mercier Press, 1972), 58.

Fourth of July celebrations in the late nineteenth century. Fundraising for Irish republicanism and Butte newspaper articles demonizing the British on the Fourth of July suggest that the Irish community in Butte embraced and celebrated the holiday so fervently in part because they saw it as a political opportunity to ascribe American values onto the Irish cause. For them, the Fourth of July symbolized not only ideals such of freedom and independence, but also the triumph over British colonialism.

An Rí Rá is a much newer celebration than many of Butte's other festivals. In fact, it has only been located in Butte since 2003. Prior to its move to Butte, the festival was held in Missoula, Montana. Missoula could not sustain the role as host for long because of the fundraising and commitment required to successfully hold the festival. The festival consists of seminars, lectures, and performances featuring various authentic Irish traditions such as dance, language, and literature. All are presented and taught to attendees alongside concerts of authentic Irish traditional music, often from musicians actually visiting from Ireland.⁶ The festival has found overwhelming success in Butte each August and, due to its summer timing, attracts tourists visiting the surrounding national parks in search of a unique day trip. Although An Rí Rá is very much considered a new festival when examining the longevity of the various other celebrations held in Butte each year, it has become both a popular tourist attraction and a cornerstone celebration of Butte's Irish heritage.

Finally, in order to fully understand the research question, it is important to define the concept of identity in Irish America (both cultural Irish American and ethnic Irish).

Anthropologist Pinggong Zhang defines cultural identity as "A shared memory and continuity of a given population, their shared history and the collective belief in a common destiny of that

⁶ McDonough, Brendan. Interview by Margaret Walsh. Oral History. Butte, November 14, 2019.

culture.”⁷ Throughout this research, the term cultural identity will be used when referring to the Butte Irish community’s Irish American identity, while ethnic identity will be used to describe Irish identity. This distinction was created based on Zhang’s definition of cultural identity – an individual or group’s place of belonging and the values or customs to which they connect – while the term ethnic identity more specifically refers to a person or group’s ancestry.⁸ Following the research of scholars such as Gindro and Moore (2003) and Munasinghe (2018), ethnic identity also can connote belonging to a group that is distinct from society as a whole, sometimes characterized by an us versus them mentality.⁹ The Irish in America have historically faced the all-too-common challenge of assimilating into a less than welcoming culture, all the while maintaining the traditions and culture of their homeland. Butte’s many festivals are an example of a public display in which the Irish in Butte negotiated, and continue to negotiate, this transformation from ethnically Irish to culturally Irish American. With these questions of assimilation and the definition of cultural identity in mind, it is no wonder Irish Americans delineated blended and fluid boundaries of identity, as opposed to rigid, singular identities. Historically and currently, the Butte Irish have sought to find an identity where Irish heritage could be celebrated, yet there is simultaneously a consistent sense of American pride. Over the years, this identity became a more local cultural identity than a national one, a distinct sense of Butte pride that encompasses the Irish, the American, the town’s mining heritage, and much more.

⁷ Zhang, Pinggong. "Parade, celebration and representation of identity." *China Media Research* 7, no. 2 (2011): 26-34, 33.

⁸ Umaña-Taylor, Adriana J. "Ethnic Identity." In *Handbook of Identity Theory and Research*, by S.J. Schwartz et al.. Springer (2011): pp. 791-809.

⁹ Gindro, Sandro, and Robert Moore. "Ethnicity." In *Dictionary of Race, Ethnicity & Culture*, by Guido Bolaffi, Raffaele Bracalenti, Peter Braham, and et. al.. Sage UK, 2003. Munasinghe, Viranjini. "Ethnicity in Anthropology." (2018): pp 1-12.

This research covers a range of subjects and time periods in order to explore the topic of festivals and their place in the expression of Irish identity in Butte. This thesis looks at the plethora of previous research completed. As mentioned earlier, an extensive body of research already exists on the topic of the Irish in Butte. In order to properly review the previous research, this thesis surveys a range of fields, including history, anthropology, and Irish studies. Next, the project explores the methods employed to answer these research questions. In order to answer these research questions, two separate methods of research were used. First, a historical, archival approach, and next a collection of contemporary oral histories. Both methods are typically used in cultural anthropology research as they are useful to a wide array of topics, including history, music, dance, and festival, all of which are so salient to this research. This thesis then discusses the results of the historical and contemporary research completed. The thesis concludes with further directions that the research might take, especially considering a fact that will be discussed later: Butte's Irish community is not only flourishing, but it appears to be seeking a connection to its Irish roots like never before.

Dynamic Cultural Identities

The question of how festivals and public celebrations influence the expression of cultural identity among the Butte Irish can, in part, be answered by abundant existing scholarship in the relevant categories of Irish studies, history, music studies, and anthropology. Within Irish studies and history, research on Irish Americans, the Butte Irish, and Irish immigration will inform this research. Relevant studies from the field of music studies compliment the fields of both Irish studies and anthropology by examining the significance of the Irish folk music and dance that is now internationally loved. Finally, anthropology research covering the topics of festivals, cultural identity, parades, and diaspora culture will be useful to the exploration of this topic. Though this wide array of literature will provide some historical context and a theoretical framework, the previous research on the Butte Irish tends to be rather rigid on the topic of cultural identity and, additionally, does not cover topics such as Irish dance in Butte and the festival of An Rí Rá. For these reasons, this research makes a worthy contribution to the impressive existing literature.

Many scholars have already written historical works about Irish American communities in general and, more specifically, the Irish in Butte. Many scholars of the Irish in America have focused on the industries that Irish Americans gravitated towards, which, in the west, predominantly centered around mining. In his book on the Irish in America, Dennis Clark specifically mentions Butte as an example of an Irish-led western mining town. By solely focusing on the occupations and industries of the Irish in the American West, he misses complexity of culture that cities like Butte maintained. Clark even goes so far as to claim that, “For the Irish as a social and cultural group, the West is a ghost town.”¹⁰ This research hopes to

¹⁰ Clark, Dennis. *Hibernia America: The Irish and Regional Cultures*. New York: Greenwood Press, 1986: 160.

complicate that claim by revealing a long-standing depth of culture in Butte, illustrated by their numerous parades and celebrations.

Other researchers such as Fallows (1979), Everett (2000), and Tully (2010) have written on Irish Americans in the context of their religion, a fervent Catholicism that was simultaneously an opportunity for discrimination upon their arrival in the United States, and also a point of pride and a marker of Irish nationalist identity.¹¹ These claims are crucial to this research question and guided this project towards considering a more religious and social framework.

Specifically considering research on the Butte Irish, the most influential piece is the extensive work by David Emmons called *The Butte Irish: Class and Ethnicity in an American Mining Town, 1875-1925*. This thesis attempts to build upon his excellent work in several ways. First, arguing that that the Butte Irish used celebrations to continuously revise their ethnic identity over time, and second, that this community trended towards a hybrid Irish American cultural identity as opposed to solely an Irish or American identity. Whereas Emmons' work is a broader historical overview of the Butte Irish, this project will focus specifically on the public celebrations on St. Patrick's Day, the Fourth of July, and An Rí Rá, past and present. Catherine Dowling is another notable scholar who has written about the history of the Butte Irish community. Dowling's piece on Irish Nationalism in Butte is particularly relevant to questions about cultural identity through the lens of public space. Through the sites of schools and parades, Dowling recognizes the presence of both Irish and American identities but seems to favor the idea that some Butte families, especially women, "abandoned the traditions and memories of their homeland and more readily concentrated on becoming Americans."¹² Looking carefully at

¹¹ Tully, John D. *Ireland and Irish Americans, 1932-1945: The Search for Identity*. Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2010: 17.

¹² Catherine Dowling. "Irish-American Nationalism in Butte, 1900-1916." *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 39, no. 2 (1989): 50-63, 59.

St. Patrick's Day parades, Fourth of July, and An Rí Rá celebrations reveals a more dynamic process of cultural identity formation involving retention, selective adaptation, and blending, rather than a linear story of abandoning Irish traditions in favor of American ones.

Although festival studies are considered to be an emerging subfield within anthropology, historians have contributed valuable research regarding the history of parades and celebrations throughout the United States. Some scholars, such as Fabre and Heideking (2001) and Bodnar (1994) broadly consider festivals to be a reflection of the character and public memory of the community. This idea is particularly useful to the research question at hand because it suggests that the cultural identity of the community is reflected in their celebrations. Other historical research, including Danaher (1972), is more specific to the unique features of certain Irish holidays. Another example is Peter De Bolla, who writes extensively on the history of the Fourth of July. He outlines the common characteristics of a Fourth of July celebration, including orations, banquets, and fireworks – all features visible throughout the many years of Butte's Independence Day celebrations. De Bolla observes that the large-scale festivities of this holiday have gradually been replaced by more intimate, private family celebrations. This is not the case Butte, where even today, the community partakes in a grand celebration that spans multiple days. Most interestingly of all, De Bolla uncovers religious undertones to the Fourth of July, which is traditionally understood to be a political holiday celebrating a country that prides itself on the separation of church and state. He compares the Fourth of July festivities to a "Sabbath day service," arguing in favor of both secular and religious dimensions to the holiday. Finally, he points out the common presence of a priest or preacher in the proceedings.¹³ These observations are all the more intriguing when considering the aforementioned connection between Irish

¹³ De Bolla, Peter. *The Fourth of July and the Founding of America*. Woodstock: The Overlook Press, 2008: 50-64.

identity and Catholicism. In this way, Butte complicates – or perhaps amplifies and perpetuates – the religious element of a seemingly secular holiday like the Fourth of July.

Music studies is an interdisciplinary field that allowed this research to interrogate the concept of cultural identity through music. Reed (1998), for example, discusses how dance can reflect identity. This idea is clearly visible in Butte, where dance has become a way to perpetuate the area's Irish heritage and identity in younger generations. Reed also suggests that dancing can reflect the desired image of a culture and even come to represent a particular culture. While this argument will not be covered within the scope of this paper, it is interesting to consider given the theatrical, invented reputation of popular Irish dance forms like Riverdance. Despite the arguably inauthentic nature of modern-day Irish dance, with its influences from the polka and other imported dance forms, many perceive Irish dance to be an authentic and admirable way to celebrate Irish heritage. Dancing can also have political connotations: "In many postcolonial nations, the dancer of the valorized national dance comes to be idealized as an emblem of an authentic precolonial past."¹⁴ Reed's point is especially relevant to Ireland, where the Gaelic League sought to restore Irish language and culture following Irish independence, but additional research was needed in order to find the effect of music and dance on the expression of identity in immigrant cultures.

Scholars such as Foley (2011) and Rapuano (2001) have explored music as a central element of Irish identity specifically in diaspora cultures, which is an important piece of this research question. Foley reflects on the importance of community and cohesion that an activity such as céilí dancing creates. Céilís are gatherings of Irish folk music and dance and served as an

¹⁴ Reed, Susan A. "The Politics and Poetics of Dance." *Annual Review of Anthropology*, vol. 27 (1998): 503-532, 511.

opportunity to preserve both Irish music and Irish community in diaspora communities.¹⁵

Although céilís are different from the more formalized and individualized Irish dancing classes geared towards children in Butte today, Foley's point that music and dance are essential elements in preserving a sense of community and culture remains the same. Rapuano similarly discusses the importance of music in Irish culture. She argues, however, that music has increasingly become important in recent years as a means of reclaiming "ancestral roots."¹⁶ Rapuano points out that although some of the Irish music and dance that are viewed as traditional today are not actually traditional, they still serve the purpose of connecting communities to their Irish heritage, perhaps in a more unique way that blends the identities of their new community with their heritage. This is a crucial point for this thesis' line of research, as it reflects the continued pursuit of a connection to Irish heritage in diasporic communities. This also suggests that perhaps an activity, such as Irish dance, that inspires the feeling of connecting and belonging to an Irish ancestry is more important than the authenticity of the activity itself, especially in a post-colonial Irish culture, where the traditions and identity are being both reclaimed and invented simultaneously. Rapuano believes this desire to connect to Irish heritage is especially pervasive among Irish Americans.¹⁷ Music and dance are important parts of Butte's public celebrations. This thesis will expand upon the idea of music as an expression of identity by specifically considering public celebrations, of which music is inextricably a part, as a place of identity expression and exploration.

¹⁵ Foley, Catherine E. "The Irish Céilí: A Site for Constructing, Experiencing, and Negotiating a Sense of Community and Identity." *Dance Research: The Journal of the Society for Dance Research*, vol. 29, no. 1, 2011, 43–60, 44.

¹⁶ Rapuano, Deborah L. "Becoming Irish or Becoming Irish Music? Boundary Construction in Irish Music Communities." *The Journal of American Culture*, vol. 24, no. 1-2, 2001, 103–113, 103.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 111.

Perhaps the most important discipline to review is anthropology, the field that connects and structures all the previously mentioned subjects in this project. Most broadly, Frost (2016), Picard (2016) and Falassi's (1987) (1997) observations of festivals served as a foundation for this thesis in understanding festival from the angle of cultural anthropology. They all note that festivals tend to occur cyclically and can appear either as a day outside of normal activity or as an amplified reflection of daily life. Each scholar also points out that festivals can affirm or explore cultural identities and reflect a community's political and social values. Picard sees festivals as an opportunity to encourage the improvement of the community with social change.¹⁸ Falassi outlines several different phases – or rites – of a festival, including rites of valorization (delineating the beginning and the end of the special time), rites of conspicuous display (important symbols to the community displayed or processed throughout the festival space), rites of conspicuous consumption (feasting, where indulging in excess amounts of food and drink are acceptable and encouraged) also mentioned by Taheri, et. Al. (2019), and finally, rites of competition (opportunities to demonstrate talent or athletic ability to other members of the community).¹⁹ Falassi's proposed structure of festivals, including many of the rites he describes, can certainly be found in Butte's celebrations of St. Patrick's Day, Fourth of July, and An Rí Rá.

Other scholars within the field of anthropology have narrowed their research to focus on a geographic region or a particular holiday or topic. This research will contribute to this category of scholarship, given its specific focus on the impact that three particular festivals held in Butte, Montana have on the ethnic identity of the community. As an example of geographically focused case studies, Zhang (2011) discusses the place that festivals have in the construction of a Chinese

¹⁸ Picard, David. "The Festive Frame: Festivals as Mediators for Social Change." *Ethnos: Journal of Anthropology*, vol. 81, no. 4 (2016): 600–616, 603.

¹⁹ Falassi, Alessandro. "Festival." In *Folklore: An Encyclopedia of Beliefs, Customs, Tales, Music, and Art*, by Thomas A. Green, (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 1997): 295-302, 296-300.

national identity, whether determined by the people or by the government. Leal (2014) (2016) examines diasporic Portuguese communities and how festivals not only maintain group cohesion but also preserve a sense of nationalism. The Portuguese immigrant community in Toronto, for example, experiences a sense of nostalgia throughout their Portugal Day festivities, but also an enduring involvement, albeit long distance, in Portuguese politics. This pattern is certainly visible in Butte's historic involvement in the fight for Irish independence; perhaps the political undercurrents of some festivals allow attendees to feel more connected to their heritage.

Researchers focusing on specific holidays or topics were equally important as those geographically focused, and included Stoeltje (2017), who considered the place that Catholicism has in festivals, Pantazatos and Silverman (2019), who studied the importance of festive participation in the creation of identity and community cohesion, Harnish (2017), who examined the symbolism and impact of various features of processions on the community, and Clopot and McCullagh (2019), who wrote about festivals as a form of Intangible Cultural Heritage where culture and a sense of belonging are both created. Each of these papers reinforced the idea that there are many angles from which to examine festivals, but ultimately, community and religion are behind the creation of both identity and festivals. One of Laurent Fournier's discussions revolved around the impact that festivals have on tourism in a community, and how this economic growth can in turn can preserve a local sense of identity.²⁰ Fournier's contemplation of the economy's impact on heritage was useful as it was an angle not previously considered in this research question. His findings helped to shape some of the oral history interview questions designed to probe into the future of Butte's festivals.

²⁰ Fournier, Laurent Sébastien. "The Anthropology of Festivals: Changes in Theory and Practice" in *Public Performances*, edited by Jack Santino. Logan: Utah State University Press, 2017.

Woven throughout the previous cultural anthropology research relevant to this project is the overarching theme of the importance of community and religion in both supporting the construction of ethnic identity and strengthening festivals and celebrations. The festivals in Butte confirm this connection of festivals and identity to community and religion.

Given the recurring importance of religion and community in this research, the works of several scholars are particularly valuable in framing this research. Firstly, Durkheim's significant work on religion in his book, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* unite the religious with the social. Next, this thesis considers Appadurai's research on locality as a feeling or an intangible concept, rather than a geographic or physical boundary. Finally, this project examines Santino's expansion of Bakhtin's concept, the carnivalesque, which was particularly impactful on the analysis of this research project. Ultimately, these works pair well together as they unite the religious with the social, and particularly focus on defining a more local form of community. Both of these concepts are central to questions of identity within the Butte Irish community because these festivals reflect the fact that religion is still central to this Irish Catholic community and that the sense of community palpable in Butte, particularly at these festivals, is unique.

Émile Durkheim's famous research on the basic elements of religion reveal some interesting connections between the religious and the social, which is particularly useful to an Irish community like the one in Butte, since, as will be discussed, the Butte Irish community was strengthened by the fact that their social and religious networks were interrelated. Durkheim sought to find the most basic elements of religion by observing what he considered to be primitive religions: the beliefs of the Australian Aboriginal tribes. His primary argument points to the inherent social nature of organized religion, which typically requires group ceremonies,

feasts, and various rituals.²¹ Conversely, daily secular activities, such as mealtimes, follow the format of a religious ceremony and have the same effect that a religious ceremony has on the unity of a community.²² Perhaps most riveting is his discussion of rites, which he describes in a similar manner to Falassi, mentioned above. Specifically, Durkheim examines the cyclical patterning of ceremonies and feasts, which creates a religious calendar and therefore simultaneously organizes a social structure that revolves around these collective gatherings.²³ His distinction, like that of Falassi's, is that rituals and ceremonies take place outside the norm of everyday life, to the point where sometimes mundane tasks are forgotten – or even prohibited – during these religious rituals.²⁴ He points to this as the origin of feast days, wherein days or times are set aside from everyday life and solely dedicated to ceremonies and religious celebrations. Although he was describing the traditions of the Australian Aboriginal tribes, he argues that “No society which has not known and practised this division of time into two distinct parts.”²⁵ This observation is certainly true of the Butte Irish community, where every year on the feast day of St. Patrick, normal life halts to allow for parades, performances, and dinners in celebration of the saint. Finally, Durkheim's description of the atmosphere of such celebrations is also true of the mood of the Butte Irish community on days like St. Patrick's Day: “At this time, their thoughts are centered upon their common beliefs, their common traditions, the memory of their great ancestors, the collective ideal of which they are the incarnation; in a word, upon social things.”²⁶ Durkheim's connection of the social with the religious frames the analysis

²¹ Durkheim, Émile. *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1912, 10-11.

²² *Ibid.*, 348.

²³ *Ibid.*, 11.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 306.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 308.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 348.

of this research question well because it helps to explain the strength of the Butte Irish community, particularly in connection to their numerous festivals.

Arjun Appadurai's writing on the meaning of the word local also positions these research questions in a new light. Where Butte was once a largely ethnically divided town, in recent years it has become a cohesive and spirited town, using nicknames like Butte Rats and titles such as Butte Tough or Butte, America to signify a distinctive sense of pride and unity. Appadurai's interpretation of locality provides a useful angle from which to understand this unique sense of community. He distinguishes between locality in a spatial sense, which he refers to as physical or virtual neighborhoods, and locality in a relational sense.²⁷ In other words, locality is more a sense of feeling connected to people or place. As Rodney Harrison points out in his analysis of Appadurai's writings, this sense of belonging to a place or group of people must be cultivated and shaped over time.²⁸ Appadurai laments the modern neighborhoods, where locality is instead orchestrated by the nation and disturbed by the rise of technology. He sees modern locality as "Either a site of nationally appropriated nostalgias, celebrations, and commemorations or a necessary condition of the production of nationals."²⁹ While this is likely true for many local communities, Butte is one of the exceptions to this observation. Instead, their sense of locality is still quite strong and rooted in the town's history and heritage. Harrison points out that heritage is, in fact, one of the many ways in which locality is preserved. He argues that rooting a place in its history and heritage "Gives [it] greater legitimacy in the present."³⁰ Harrison believes that

²⁷ Appadurai, Arjun. "The Production of Locality" in *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996, 178-179.

²⁸ Harrison, Rodney. "Heritage as Social Action" in *Understanding Heritage in Practice*, edited by Susie West. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010. 240-273, 243.

²⁹ Appadurai, Arjun. "The Production of Locality" in *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996, 190.

³⁰ Harrison, Rodney. "Heritage as Social Action" in *Understanding Heritage in Practice*, edited by Susie West. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010. 240-273, 243.

another way locality created is through festivals. Festivals allow a community to strengthen their connections and honor their history and heritage. Harrison continues by introducing the Notting Hill Carnival as an instance of a community using their heritage to reconnect with their community and succeed in “producing ‘the local.’”³¹ Harrison’s example is actually a diasporic community and their descendants. Such a community makes Appadurai’s concept of creating the local all the more important as a method of maintaining group cohesion and appreciation of heritage while far away from the home country. The use of a diasporic community not only provides a great example of creating locality, but it is particularly relevant to Butte’s diasporic descendant community: “Diaspora creates a very real need for communities to develop practices of heritage with which to bind themselves both to their homeland and to the new places in which they settle.”³² This creation of locality in a diasporic community might explain the enduring cohesion and tight knit nature of Butte’s community. In addition, the importance and popularity of festivals in Butte serve as some of the main tools in creating Butte’s strong community and specifically local sense of cultural identity.

Jack Santino’s expansion of carnivalesque, a concept originally introduced by Mikhail Bakhtin, is the most significant concept in the analysis of Butte’s festivals and cultural identity, as it presents both religious and social aspects as distinct phases in a festival. Bakhtin’s concept of carnivalesque encompasses the ideas of both inversion and subversion of everyday or official life that occur during holidays or times of celebration.³³ Santino himself defines the carnivalesque as “Celebrations of great abandon, social inversion, public excess, sensuality, and

³¹ Harrison, Rodney. “Heritage as Social Action” in *Understanding Heritage in Practice*, edited by Susie West. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010. 240-273, 243.

³² *Ibid.*, 245.

³³ Stoeltje, Beverly. “Protesting and Grieving: Ritual, Politics, and the Effects of Scale” in *Public Performances*, edited by Jack Santino. Logan: Utah State University Press, 2017, 71.

the temporary establishment of an alternate society, one free of or even in opposition to the norm.”³⁴ Most importantly in Santino’s definition of carnivalesque is the word “temporary.” Carnavalesque’s excess and inversion of everyday life is understood to be without consequences and short lived. This concept of carnivalesque is plainly visible in many different festivals, including Butte’s celebration of St. Patrick’s Day, Fourth of July, and An Rí Rá, where activities such as public excess and social inversion are visible throughout the festivities, but do not have a lasting impact or penalty. In addition to Bakhtin’s concept of carnivalesque, Santino introduces the concept of the ritualesque, which is intended to compliment or pair with the carnivalesque, not contradict it. He defines ritual as “‘Sacred ceremony,’ ... constructing and reinforcing social categories.”³⁵ Moreover, he understands ritualesque as “Symbolic public actions that are enacted to cause social change, not merely performed as ends to themselves.”³⁶ Santino differentiates the ritualesque from the carnivalesque by pointing to the meaningful and lasting influence of ritualesque activities. While the two elements of festival can occur simultaneously, they are distinct. The ritualesque is also visible in the various festivals of Butte. One of the effects that Butte’s ritualesque elements have is to perpetuate the history and heritage of Butte. Events such as Handing Down the Heritage on St. Patrick’s Day can be considered ritualesque as it is a symbolic expression of Irish heritage that is both memorable and inspirational to the community. Santino’s concepts are crucial throughout the analysis of Butte’s festivals and cultural identity. These two aspects of celebrations, both carnivalesque and ritualesque, are central elements to the success and impact of Butte’s many festivals.

³⁴ Santino, Jack. “From Carnavalesque to Ritualesque” in *Public Performances*, edited by Jack Santino. Logan: Utah State University Press, 2017, 4.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 4.

³⁶ *Ibid.*,12.

The historical focus of this thesis complicates the necessity for a theoretical framework in the anthropological sense, however the work of Durkheim, Appadurai, and Santino all provide valuable considerations to the research questions, especially the more contemporary portion of the research. Each of these scholars addresses overarching themes of community and religion in relation to celebration, holidays, and festivals. Their writings have informed many of the questions asked during the oral history interviews and certainly much of the analysis for this project.

Historical and Ethnographic Methods

In order to answer questions about the role that public celebrations such as Saint Patrick's Day, the Fourth of July, and An Rí Rá play in the expression of Butte Irish identity, this project followed a qualitative, historical model of research. Historical and contemporary research methods from a range of disciplines were necessary to look at how the expression of ethnic identity among the Butte Irish has changed over time.

This project was interdisciplinary in nature since the field of Irish studies itself requires research methods from multiple disciplines. Combining methods from fields such as history, ethnomusicology, and cultural anthropology answered this question of Irish identity in Butte from different angles and over the course of Butte's history. Historical methods, such as archival research, were crucial to understanding the change in the celebration of Irish identity that occurred over time. Studying the music and dance popular at public ethnic celebrations in Butte provided examples as to how this Irish identity is expressed and passed on to younger generations. Ethnographic methods and participant observations are two cultural anthropology research strategies that provided some insight into the current state of Irish identity in Butte, in particular how the community and leaders in the community see their city, their celebrations, and their ethnic identity. Irish studies research covers a broad range of disciplines, revealing an overwhelming amount of information, but at the same time, multiple disciplines help to answer this specific research question, covering not only a span of time, but also the many different aspects of the community that ethnic identity impacts.

Historical research on the Butte Irish and their cultural identity took the form of primary source research in newspapers and archive collections, including the Butte Irish Collection in the Mansfield Library Archives and Special Collections at the University of Montana. This historical

research into Butte's past parades and public celebrations spanned from the late nineteenth century – when the tradition of the Saint Patrick's Day parade in Butte was established – to the mid-twentieth century – when World War II prompted the town of Butte to temporarily abandon their immigrant pride in favor of a more cohesive American identity.

The newspapers proved exceedingly insightful as they offered a vision of Butte as described by local reporters nineteenth and twentieth centuries. They reported on various orations given during Butte holidays and relayed the scheduling of the various events that took place during public celebrations such as St. Patrick's Day or the Fourth of July. Newspapers such as the *Anaconda Standard*, which later became the *Montana Standard*, served as the primary underpinning for the historical portion of this research.

The Butte Irish Collection provided a window into the prominent and active Irish Social Organizations in Butte, such as the Ancient Order of Hibernians. This collection of letters, invitations, and meeting minutes highlighted the values and priorities of these social organizations as they planned events such as Saint Patrick's Day or assisted in the celebration of the Fourth of July. This historical research into the long-established Irish community in Butte created an informed basis for studying Butte's modern Irish identity.

Both Irish music and dance are intrinsic elements to the celebration of Irish identity on Saint Patrick's Day and during the An Rí Rá ethnic festival. For this reason, I decided to focus a portion of my research on Irish dance. I observed an Irish dance class and interviewed the founder of the Tiernan Irish Dance group in Butte in order to understand how dance and music can be used to express Irish identity. It became apparent over the course of my research that Irish music and dance were seen as sites for the perpetuation of Irish identity in Butte by the instructors and the dancers alike. The study of the relationship between music and identity

therefore addressed the broader question of Irish identity as expressed by public celebrations in Butte.

I used participant observation and oral history interviews to complete the contemporary research on Butte's Irish community. These two research methods are common in the field of anthropology, and are specifically useful to a cultural anthropology project, such as this one. Research into the modern expression of Irish identity in Butte rather than solely the historical elements illuminated several valuable results, one example being the previously unresearched Irish ethnic festival that takes place in Butte each August, An Rí Rá. The use of these ethnographic field methods not only revealed the current state of Irish identity in Butte, but also gave a sense of how residents of Butte see the future of ethnic identity in Butte.

It would have been impossible to write about the various parades and celebrations in Butte without attending or participating in some of them. In order to document my time at Butte's various Irish celebrations, I recorded videos and took notes and photographs. On St. Patrick's Day 2019, I stood on Park Street in the frozen snow to capture photographs of the painted green revelers and understand why the whole community – not just the Irish population of Butte – finds this parade to be an unmissable event. I spoke to visitors and locals alike, which confirmed the iconic nature of this celebration to the city. An Rí Rá proved to be of similar importance, perhaps even more so, than St. Patrick's Day. I found it hard to find a spot to sit on the packed festival grounds and ended up standing next to – and speaking at length with – a family of Irish dancers from Butte, an enlightening conversation which unfortunately ended in a brutal sunburn covering exactly the right half of my body. This festival is similarly attended each year by both visitors and locals. This phenomenon is also evident in the lineup of the festival, which welcomes international, national, and local performers each year. Photographs and video

recordings that I took throughout the festival capture the distinctly local expression of Butte Irish identity, which is not properly represented without also considering Butte's mining history and the city's unique position nationally, and perhaps internationally, as one of the most concentrated Irish populations in the United States. The opportunity to spend time, not only at these two festivals, but also wandering Butte itself prepared me to fully appreciate the oral history interviews that I conducted throughout the fall of 2019.

The oral history interviews were intended to capture an aspect of Butte culture that previous oral histories, and research projects more broadly, had not covered extensively: Irish celebrations in Butte, and specifically, An Rí Rá. Each oral history interview was recorded using an audio recording device either in person or over the telephone. I interviewed five people, starting with Ellen Crain, the Director of the Butte-Silver Bow Public Archives, who then connected me to others in the community who she thought might help to inform my research. I also interviewed Chris Fisk, Monica Evans Cavanaugh, Cindy Powers, and Brendan McDonough. Each interviewee completed two different oral history release forms, one for the Butte-Silver Bow Archives and the other for the Mansfield Library at the University of Montana. Both of these repositories have the completed oral histories on file.

These oral histories were intended to be casual conversations, rather than structured interviews, however I did prepare a number of questions to guide the conversation. The conversations generally began with broader inquiries and eventually became more specific to the expertise of the interviewee. The interviews took less than an hour each, loosely following the questions below:

1. Please describe each of these festivals, particularly An Ri Ra, for someone unfamiliar with Butte.

2. There are a variety of other ethnic festivals in Butte. What are they and why do you think ethnic festivals are so important to the community?
3. How are Butte's celebrations (of St. Patrick's Day, Fourth of July, or An Ri Ra), different from events in other U.S. cities?
4. Have you ever been to Ireland? If so, did you attend any festivals there and how do they compare with festivals in Butte and/or elsewhere in the U.S.?
5. How long have festivals been going on in Butte?
6. In the past, these holidays were used to fundraise for different political and social causes. Does Butte still use these celebrations to fundraise and spread awareness for political and social issues?
7. How have these celebrations changed, in form or function, over the years?
8. Can you tell me how these holidays have changed for you personally, as a child and now as an adult?
9. Out of the three (St. Patrick's Day, Fourth of July, or An Ri Ra) what is your favorite, and why?
10. What element of these celebrations (e.g. music, dance, parade floats) do you value most, and why?
11. Do you feel more in touch with your roots and your community during these celebrations and why?
12. Do you remember a particular year's parade or celebration as memorable?
13. Why do you think Irish dance has gained so much popularity in Butte, to the point where it is a centerpiece of An Ri Ra?

14. What do you think St. Patrick's Day means to Butte? Is it still a day to celebrate heritage or is it more of an excuse for revelry?
15. In the past, the Irish clubs used to get involved in July 4th, hosting picnics and fundraisers. Does this kind of involvement as distinct communities happen still or is July 4th more blended now?
16. Is there anybody you know who might be interested in an interview that you would be able to introduce me to?

Following each interview, the recorded audio was directly transcribed into a document (Appendix A-E). Although most of the interviews went smoothly, the microphone malfunctioned for Brendan McDonough's interview, resulting in an unusable recording. Fortunately, he agreed to redo the interview over the phone, which resulted in a longer and more detailed interview as he remembered more anecdotes that he wished to share.

These transcripts were then analyzed for patterns and themes that might help answer the question of identity expression in the Butte Irish community. I looked at specific memories or facts that were continually mentioned by multiple interviewees as a measure of importance to the celebration and evolution of Butte Irish heritage. I also wanted to examine specific elements of the community that I knew were either unique or important, such as An Rí Rá or the Tiernan Irish Dance group. Finally, I learned to critically examine the interviewees themselves for patterns that might inform an analysis of their responses. For example, one pattern among the interviewees is the fact that they are all somehow involved in the organization or leadership of these Irish public celebrations, which gave them a different perspective than those who simply appreciate these events as attendees. While this pattern was an inadvertent choice on my part

when selecting interviewees, acknowledging this factor allowed for a more complete analysis of the interview transcripts.

This historical and contemporary interdisciplinary research created a cohesive look at the way celebrations and festivals have contributed to the evolution of Irish identity in Butte over time. This research is also relevant when considering future celebrations in the Butte community so as to better understand the direction Butte's Irish identity will take in years to come. The use of these qualitative, historical research strategies allowed for a multi-faceted and personal examination of the expression of Irish identity in Butte.

“Monstrous Parades” and “Patriotic Celebrations”: The Nineteenth and Early-Twentieth Century Butte Irish

In his seminal book on the Irish community in Butte, Montana, historian David Emmons briefly describes Butte’s extraordinary Saint Patrick’s Day parade of 1915. Emmons depicts this particular parade, the first St. Patrick’s Day since the Great War began, as purposefully weaving through the German and Austrian neighborhoods of Butte. The large contingent of Irish participants marched alongside a smaller, but no less enthusiastic, cohort of German immigrants: “In this annual festival of an Irish saint... German, Irish, and American flags were carried, prompting one Butte newspaper to report... ‘for the first time in the history of the world, perhaps,’ the flags of three nations were flown on St. Patrick’s Day.” Just as tellingly, Emmons points out that the following year, 1916, was the first time in over a decade that Butte’s St. Patrick’s Day festivities were canceled, citing the negative reactions to the previous year’s overt expression of Irish-German community alliance.³⁷ While Emmons used this anecdote to explore the relationships between the Irish and German immigrants in Butte at the start of the Great War, the incident also speaks to the dynamic nature of the Butte Irish community’s cultural identities.

As Emmons’ story confirms, from the late nineteenth century through the mid twentieth century, parades and public celebrations stand out as particularly revealing of the public values and community interests in Butte. Two specific celebrations, St. Patrick’s Day and the Fourth of July shed considerable light on the identities and values of the Irish community. Just as public discussion led the Butte Irish people to redefine their relationship with their German neighbors for the 1915 St. Patrick’s Day parade and then again after it, both St. Patrick’s Day and the Fourth of July show a continuous revision of ethnic identity over time within the Irish

³⁷ David M. Emmons. *The Butte Irish: Class and Ethnicity in an American Mining Town, 1875-1925*. (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 348.

community, trending towards a blended Irish American cultural identity as opposed to solely an Irish or American identity. This blended cultural identity essentially becomes a new identity, influenced by local culture and economy, distinct from both Irish and American identities.

Some political context is necessary in order to understand the significance of the Butte Irish community's celebrations throughout history. Irish social organizations were instrumental to the establishment of many Irish communities around the country, but these organizations were especially significant to Butte. The Irish social organizations, such as the Ancient Order of Hibernians, allowed the Butte Irish community to maintain their Irish identity, values, and tradition in a new country. While branches of these organizations did exist in cities all over America, Butte's Irish social organizations seemed particularly active and enthusiastic. Through their shared heritage, these social groups created a cohesive and united Irish community in Butte. Some of these organizations functioned as social clubs, while others more actively focused on the political issues facing Ireland.³⁸ As the members of the Butte Irish community thrived, their friends and family at home in Ireland continued to struggle for independence from the British.

Butte's Irish took great interest in the Irish politics, hosting lectures and fundraisers in support of Irish nationalism. The Irish republican cause gave coherence and urgency to the activities of Butte's Irish community. In his well-known piece on the Irish in America, Henry Childs Merwin argues that the difference in quality of life between the Irish and Irish Americans led to Irish American arrogance and prejudice, but the Butte Irish interest in Irish politics and culture reveals that in some communities, Irish Americans maintained close relationships with their family and friends who remained in Ireland through consistent communication and passionate political advocacy. Various Irish community organizations held lectures in which

³⁸ Catherine Dowling. "Irish-American Nationalism in Butte," 55.

guest speakers, either directly from Ireland or recently returned from a visit there, would discuss relevant political news from Ireland. One 1921 letter between the Ladies Auxiliary Ancient Order of Hibernians and the Robert Emmet Literary Association extends an invite to such a lecture in which the guest speaker is a woman who “is a very close friend of the leaders of the Republic of Ireland.”³⁹ This detail speaks to the value that the Butte Irish community placed on information and connections to Ireland and the current events there. Another lecture invitation by the Ancient Order of Hibernians in 1920 boasted a guest speaker named Reverend M.M. English who spoke “on his recent experiences in Ireland and to protect against the British atrocities in that country.” Notably, the invitation was signed “Yours for the Irish Republic.”⁴⁰ This invitation not only shows an interest in Irish current events but also contains clear nationalist undertones. These lecture invitations, as well as the lectures themselves, illustrate the level of involvement that the Butte Irish maintained in their home country’s political and social issues.

The Irish in Butte maintained their Irish roots by participating in these lectures and contributing to fundraisers for the Irish cause, but at the same time they also adopted an American identity. The following excerpt from a letter asking for money in support of the newly independent Irish nation encapsulates this duality well: “As true Americans we owe it to Ireland to come to her aid in this crucial hour... No true American can fail to respond to the appeal made by President de Valera on behalf of the Irish people, wherein he so eloquently says: ‘Americans of Irish blood you will not refuse to renew your filial ties... She is your Motherland as well as ours.’”⁴¹ This appeal revealingly uses the term, “true Americans,” twice. For Irish immigrants

³⁹ Lecture Invitation from L.A.A.O.H to R.E.L.A, 3 April 1921, Reel 1, Butte Irish Collection, Mss 112, Archives and Special Collections, Maureen and Mike Mansfield Library, The University of Montana-Missoula, 1983.

⁴⁰ Lecture Invitation from A.O.H to R.E.L.A, 23 September 1920, Reel 1, Butte Irish Collection, Mss 112, Archives and Special Collections, Maureen and Mike Mansfield Library, The University of Montana-Missoula, 1983.

⁴¹ Financial Appeal to Butte Irish, 15 November 1919, Reel 1, Butte Irish Collection, Mss 112, Archives and Special Collections, Maureen and Mike Mansfield Library, The University of Montana-Missoula, 1983.

and the close descendants of these immigrants, a term such as “true American” would have been both flattering and inspiring of obligation. Cultural identity was likely a point of confusion in the Butte Irish community with the desire to maintain their heritage conflicting with their hope of fully making a home in America. This letter’s use of “true American” inspires a sense of belonging as authentic, accepted Americans, which was no doubt reassuring to the Butte Irish community. There is also clear sense of duty – as “true Americans” – intended in the fact that this letter was sent to an immigrant community that had escaped the political turmoil of Ireland. This letter shows that the Irish American hybrid identity was not only felt within the Butte Irish community but used by outsiders, such as Eamon De Valera, as an emotional appeal for the Irish republican cause.

Eamon De Valera, the newly independent Republic of Ireland’s president, not only wrote to Butte but also visited the city in late July of 1919. His visit, met with massive crowds gathered to hear the political hero, further illustrates the obvious cultural hybridity both experienced within the Butte Irish community and seen by outsiders. As seen from the letter above, Eamon De Valera evoked the people’s Irish roots and their American privileges and ideals in order to raise money for the Republic of Ireland. In a piece in the *Anaconda Standard* written directly by De Valera, he compared the injustices of British imperialism to the wrongs of Germany in the Great War. He asked for “justice that will look upon Britain as scrutinizingly as it did on Germany,” reflecting both the anger in Ireland felt against Britain and the huge change in opinion of Germany following the Great War.⁴² The ability to bring such justice to Britain and Ireland, De Valera believed, was in the hands of the American people. The American values of freedom and independence could be used as a weapon against the imperialistic British in the

⁴² “On All Things For Which Britain Arraigned Germany Irish People Arraign Britain, Says De Valera.” *Anaconda Standard*, July 26, 1919.

Irish fight for sovereignty. This is evidenced by De Valera's appeal for support, in which he dubbed Americans as "natural leaders in the cause of human liberty." He proclaimed that "The cause which American public opinion aligns itself behind today as being just, the whole world will accept and support tomorrow."⁴³ Newspaper articles such as these acknowledge the duality of Butte Irish identity; to the Irish community in Butte, these words would have inspired a sense of duty to their homeland. Not only did they feel obligation to support Irish republicanism as Irish immigrants, but they also saw their opportunity as Americans to stand up for the ideals of liberty and justice and use them rhetorically as weapons against Britain.

De Valera's appeals show an outsider's perception that Irish Americans were in a unique position of influence politically. For Irish Americans themselves, such as the Butte Irish community, there were clearly some parallels between American independence and Irish independence. In some ways, this must have made it easier to support the Irish cause as Americans. One article in the *Standard* praises De Valera as a leader for Irish freedom by making the comparison between him and a particularly famous American president and revolutionary leader, declaring, "The Standard fails to see any difference between George Washington and Eamonn De Valera."⁴⁴ George Washington was a leader in the war for American independence over the British, he was the first president of the independent United States, and over time he has become synonymous with classic American values such as liberty and independence. Bestowing this same heroic, near-legendary status on Eamon De Valera reflects his importance in the Butte Irish community and their desire to connect the revolutionary destinies of both nations. In addition, this complementary blending of an American and an Irish political figure is representative of the hybridized identity of the Butte Irish community: the

⁴³ "Irish Question is World Issue De Valera Says." *Anaconda Standard*, July 26, 1919.

⁴⁴ "De Valera." *Anaconda Standard*, July 26, 1919.

people responded to – and perhaps even idolized – the actions of both Irish and American political leaders.

With this political and social context in mind, it is now possible to fully understand the place of public celebrations in exploring and expressing the cultural identity of the Butte Irish community. Not only did the Butte Irish community claim a mixture of American and Irish cultural affinities, but they were able to assert one identity or another more prominently in order to best suit the situation. The examples of St. Patrick’s Day and the Fourth of July will illustrate this blended and dynamic ethnic identity in the context of public celebrations.

“Monstrous Parades:” Butte’s St. Patrick’s Day

Irish immigrants brought many traditions to America in order to preserve the culture of their homeland; one originally religious holiday that grew to represent Irish pride was St. Patrick’s Day. Within Ireland, Saint Patrick’s Day was traditionally a religious, national, and to a lesser extent, agricultural celebration. March 17th was seen as the midpoint of springtime, the point at which many farmers planted their potato crop.⁴⁵ Across Irish America, St. Patrick’s Day served as an opportunity to display symbols of Irishness.

In Butte, the holiday seemed to grow more elaborate each year, starting in the late nineteenth century. At the height of its magnificence, Butte’s St. Patrick’s Day involved numerous public events over the course of multiple days, to which all were welcome, including parades and banquets. Irish social organizations in Butte planned these St. Patrick’s Day events and sought to make them large, exciting events. One letter from the Ancient Order of Hibernians dating to 1919 asked for the help of all Irish societies in Butte in order to make their “monstrous

⁴⁵ Kevin Danaher. *The Year in Ireland*, 65-66.

parade” a success.⁴⁶ The community notably placed a higher value on events hosted by Irish born or first-generation Irish Americans, with those hosted by the authentically Irish selling out of tickets quickly.⁴⁷ Not only were the St. Patrick’s Day parades of Butte impressively exuberant and well attended, they also contained intriguing, and possibly conflicting, expressions of identity.

Acts and symbols of American patriotism such as songs and flags were prominently performed and displayed alongside icons of Irish identity in many of Butte’s St. Patrick’s Day celebrations. This pattern suggests that St. Patrick’s Day in Butte was also, strangely, an opportunity to pledge allegiance to America. As Dowling observes, “Elaborate displays of Irishness, both in rhetoric and action, were inseparable from conspicuous demonstrations of their loyalty to the United States.”⁴⁸ Contrary to Dowling’s argument, this did not necessarily mean that the fervor of Irish pride was replaced by American patriotism. The two cultural identities, Irish and American, coexisted, blending into a hybrid Irish American identity, and trending more towards one identity or the other depending on the political or social circumstances of the time.

One example of this hybridity is in the music performed on St. Patrick’s Day in Butte. During the parades and other events throughout the day, performers from Irish societies played Irish religious and folk tunes alongside patriotic American songs. Dowling does note this pattern, finding that “No St. Patrick’s Day celebration was complete without a rendering of ‘You’re a Grand Old Flag’ and the ‘Star-Spangled Banner.’”⁴⁹ The presence of American patriotic tunes during this holiday for the patron saint of Ireland persisted over many years. One 1886 article

⁴⁶ Call for a Monstrous Parade, 20 January, 1919, Reel 1, Butte Irish Collection, Mss 112, Archives and Special Collections, Maureen and Mike Mansfield Library, The University of Montana-Missoula, 1983.

⁴⁷ “Irish Women Will Sponsor Banquet.” *Montana Standard*, March 11, 1934.

⁴⁸ Catherine Dowling. “Irish-American Nationalism in Butte,” 58.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 58.

recounts the story of St. Patrick's Day mass' music featuring both "Killarney" and "Yankee Doodle."⁵⁰ This is especially notable because this expression of American patriotism was more private or limited in terms of audience, as part of a Catholic mass, than as part of a parade or public banquet, suggesting a truly independent choice to play American songs on an Irish holiday, rather than an obligatory display of patriotism. These performances of American patriotic tunes continued until at least 1951, when the *Montana Standard* reported that a St. Patrick's Day banquet hosted by the Friendly Sons of St. Patrick ended with the singing of "God Bless America."⁵¹ The music of St. Patrick's Day, although containing a large portion of Irish religious songs and folk tunes, also featured a clear presence of American patriotic tunes, indicating that this holiday in Butte was an opportunity to showcase an enthusiastic American cultural identity. Butte's use of American songs on an Irish holiday indicates the local character that Butte imbues into their Irish identity.

Through the orations and celebrations of St. Patrick's Day, the Butte Irish community was able to further the Irish cause from their own position in a free country. The celebrations and orations before Irish independence reflect a prominent focus on Irish political causes. The community used the holiday to inform and inspire the support of non-Irish people of Butte. In summarizing the events and speakers of St. Patrick's Day 1886, the *Butte Daily Miner* reported that the day will be memorialized to the Irish community of Butte, "as a day which helped their common cause and awakened new interest in Irish affairs in the breasts of those fellow citizens to whom the Emerald Isle is not endeared by ties of birth or ancestry."⁵² The events on St. Patrick's Day reflected sentiments of appreciation for American ideals of freedom and

⁵⁰ "Ireland's Patron Saint: How St. Patrick's Day Was Celebrated in Butte." *Butte Daily Miner*. March 18, 1886.

⁵¹ "Stirring Oratory Marks Annual Dinner Held by Friendly Sons of St. Patrick in Butte" *Montana Standard*, March 18, 1951.

⁵² "Ireland's Patron Saint: How St. Patrick's Day Was Celebrated in Butte." *Butte Daily Miner*.

independence while simultaneously hoping for Ireland's escape from political oppression, cultural suppression, and religious persecution. One speech from a local priest, Father Tremblay, asked for prayers for "the fate of the Irish church."⁵³ The people of Butte freely celebrated St. Patrick's Day mass in the United States, but used the holiday to reflect on Ireland's religious persecution suffered at the hands of the British and to pray for a change. The beliefs of the Butte Irish community, as expressed in the speeches and various events on St. Patrick's Day, reveal a strong desire to assist Ireland in their political and cultural struggle against Britain while in a position of power as free, independent Americans.

The decorations displayed at the various St. Patrick's Day events contained both American and Irish national symbols. These decorations act as a physical manifestation of the Butte Irish community's loyalties: honoring a dual identity as both Irish and American. The *Daily Miner* described a banquet hall decorated with "the green flags of Erin blending harmoniously with the red, white and blue banners and streamers of Uncle Sam."⁵⁴ The article's choice in using Erin and Uncle Sam instead of Ireland and the United States serves to personify these nations. In Irish poetry, Ireland, especially when referred to as Erin, is typically represented as a woman. The description of Erin's compatible union with masculine America, or Uncle Sam, couples these personified nations. This symbolic pairing language used by the newspaper and the decorations in the banquet hall are both representative of the Butte Irish community's hybrid cultural identity as children of Erin and Uncle Sam.

While St. Patrick's Day was originally an Irish religious holiday, then a holiday celebrating national pride, the public celebrations of St. Patrick's Day in Butte indicate that American identity was also present throughout the holiday. In fact, in an effort to boost morale

⁵³ "Ireland's Patron Saint: How St. Patrick's Day Was Celebrated in Butte." *Butte Daily Miner*.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

during World War II, the city of Butte decided to forgo their 1942 St. Patrick's Day festivities and instead solely focus their celebration on America. The *Standard* reported on that particular St. Patrick's Day, that the Irish community kept Ireland in the back of their minds but devoted "their first and main thoughts to winning the war, fighting for a country that gave them freedom."⁵⁵ This active choice on the part of the Butte Irish community reveals a fluid cultural identity, where they hold their Irish ancestry close, but allow their American citizenship to dominate during a time of global political unrest. Compared to the more fervent and overt St. Patrick's Day celebrations that took place before Irish independence, this decision to cancel the holiday to instead support American efforts in World War II reveals an Irish American hybrid identity that was constantly shifting.

The prominence of American identity on St. Patrick's Day can be attributed to an embracing of American ideals, politics, or culture, but it can also illuminate the aspirations that Irish Americans such as the Butte Irish community had for the Republic of Ireland. Henry Childs Merwin wrote about the changes that Irish immigrants experience in their sentiments towards Ireland, proposing that "the Irish... have always exhibited a certain shame at being Irish instead of American."⁵⁶ The pride and enthusiasm displayed on St. Patrick's Day in Butte refutes his point. Before Irish independence, St. Patrick's Day was a day of hope for Ireland. Even after Ireland's liberation from Britain, the tone of many news articles on St. Patrick's Day was one of excitement and optimism. The *Standard* nostalgically described the thoughts of the Butte Irish turning "to the beautiful isle over which there now floats a flag of freedom."⁵⁷ This article represents the hope felt in Butte on St. Patrick's Day, but it also reveals a value which was not

⁵⁵ "Sullivans Not to Celebrate Today." *Montana Standard*.

⁵⁶ Henry Childs Merwin. "The Irish in American Life," 290.

⁵⁷ "St. Patrick's Day." *Montana Standard*, March 17, 1938.

taken for granted by the Butte Irish community: freedom. While simultaneously celebrating Ireland's sovereignty with a sense of relief, this mention of freedom evokes America with gratitude as well.

The Butte Irish celebrated St. Patrick's Day, typically a day of Irish national pride, with displays of both Irish nationalism and American patriotism. The day was also an opportunity to hope for American values, such as liberty and justice, for their home country of Ireland. The constantly changing hybrid identity of the Butte Irish community becomes obvious in the music, events, and decorations of St. Patrick's Day.

"Patriotic Celebrations:" Butte's Fourth of July

The Fourth of July has always been celebrated enthusiastically by Americans. Independence Day is a time to remember the values and beliefs that Americans fought for in the Revolutionary War. Even before Montana received statehood status, the Territory celebrated Fourth of July heartily. Butte's celebrations were equally as enthusiastic as the rest of Montana, if not more. The *Daily Miner* described the plans for 1883 Fourth of July celebrations in Butte as "the most extensive and beautiful ever witnessed in the Territory."⁵⁸ An advertisement from the same year described a day filled with music, speeches, fireworks, and dancing. The schedule included a sunrise salute with thirty-eight guns and a reading of the Declaration of Independence.⁵⁹ Similar to the St. Patrick's Day celebrations, the Fourth of July was a holiday meant to appreciate American values such as liberty and independence. The fireworks display of 1883 was titled "Goddess of Liberty" in a tribute to these classic American values.⁶⁰ More

⁵⁸ "Local News." *Butte Daily Miner*, June 26, 1883.

⁵⁹ "July Fourth: How the Nation's Day Was Celebrated." *Butte Daily Miner*, July 7, 1885.

⁶⁰ "Local News." *Butte Daily Miner*.

actively than St. Patrick's Day, the Fourth of July shows the constant renegotiation of identity among the Butte Irish community to match the cultural context or political climate.

One form that the Fourth of July celebrations in Butte often took was as both an opportunity to fundraise for Irish republicanism and to review American history as an inspiration for the Irish struggle for independence from the British. Such a celebration of freedom and independence inspired the Irish Americans in Butte to help Ireland achieve the same autonomy. One 1886 *Daily Miner* article declared that "the enthusiasm engendered by the Fourth of July should help along the Irish cause. The desire for freedom is contagious."⁶¹ The use of the Fourth of July as a fundraising opportunity for the cause of Irish freedom also illustrates this active exploration of cultural identity within the Butte Irish community. Seeing the need for Irish political action, the Butte community used their American identity to support their Irish heritage by projecting American values that the Fourth of July represented onto the Irish republican cause.

Historical reflections about Independence Day in newspapers suggest that the Irish community in Butte sympathized with the American struggle for independence and hoped to achieve the same for Ireland. A large piece on the Fourth of July from the *Daily Miner* in 1885 reflects on the injustices and wrongdoings of England using direct quotes from a speech given during the holiday's proceedings. One of the main points of this retrospective article was the continued importance of freedom of religion and civil liberties in America. The piece described America as a place of refuge and freedom from tyranny, but also as a place of power, exerting "influence... over the destiny of other nations."⁶² The idea that America has the power to impact the future of other nations conveyed a sense of hope to the Butte community as they thought of

⁶¹ "Meeting of the Territorial Democratic Committee." *Butte Daily Miner*, July 7, 1886.

⁶² "July Fourth: How the Nation's Day Was Celebrated." *Butte Daily Miner*.

their struggling and oppressed homeland. The excerpts from this inspirational speech on the Fourth of July show that the Butte Irish community could continually shift cultural allegiances in order to best address current issues, such as the Irish republican cause.

As Irish social organizations performed in parades and hosted picnics, dances, and banquets in celebration of the Fourth of July, the community claimed the hybrid identity as Irish American. As Dowling points out, “Patriotic displays became a common feature of public life in the Irish community. The RELA Fife and Drum Corps, the AOH Fife and Bugle Corps, and the Meagher Guards took part prominently in the Fourth of July parades.”⁶³ The participation of the Irish social organizations in Fourth of July festivities is notable not because it symbolized a replacement of Irish national pride with American patriotism, but rather it evidences a seamless blending of Irish and American communities and traditions. These Irish bands became a valuable part of the Fourth of July celebrations, with Irish bands, such as the Emmet Guard Band, performing twice in the programming for the year 1886.⁶⁴ In the same program were picnics, hosted by some of the many different Irish social organizations. This wholehearted participation in Butte’s Fourth of July festivities shows the Irish community’s willingness to incorporate American traditions and holidays into their own culture.

The Butte Irish community of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was not purely Irish, nor was it completely American. The community was able to shift its allegiances and adopt a more overtly American or Irish identity depending on the cultural and political context. Public holidays and celebrations were not only a site of expression for this dynamic identity, but also a way to actively explore identity. Before Irish independence, the Butte Irish community used both St. Patrick’s Day and the Fourth of July to raise money for the Irish

⁶³ Catherine Dowling. “Irish-American Nationalism in Butte,” 58.

⁶⁴ “To-day’s Celebration: A Revised Programme of the Day’s Festivities in Butte.” *Butte Daily Miner*, July 5, 1886.

republican cause, to support America in times of war, and also to speak publicly about Irish and American issues. Dowling argues that Irish culture in Butte was damaged because families showed preference to American traditions and children were instructed to learn how to be more American at school, but the evidence suggests, contrary to Dowling, that the Butte Irish community's culture did not suffer as a result of selectively adopting American customs: it was possible to hold two different cultural identities simultaneously.

“More to Us than the Pit Water:” The Current State of Butte Irish Identity

The modern-day Butte Irish community maintains a similar identity to the Butte of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The city is still profoundly Irish, with St. Patrick’s Day celebrations still taking place in full force each spring and the newer festival of An Rí Rá enjoyed in early August annually. Yet the community, now generations removed from Ireland, is fully American, with multiple days of Fourth of July events and active participation in the nation’s politics year-round reinforcing this fact. It is clear that Irish and American identities are still equally important and compatible within the community, but Butte in the present also celebrates a distinct local identity, a sense of pride in being “Butte Tough” that is in part defined by the town’s mining heritage.⁶⁵ Following Appadurai’s understanding of locality, the Butte Irish community has created a unique space of both American and Irish identity that honors both and is dominated by neither. This regional identity and enduring sense of community both encompasses and eclipses the Irish American identity so famous in the city and characterizes the sentiment of the remaining celebrations that make Butte known as Montana’s Festival City.⁶⁶

In order to fully understand the current state of Butte cultural identity, it is first necessary to realize the extreme sense of community present in Butte. While there is no one reason for the tight knit nature of the Butte community, some explanations offered by the locals include a selfless, hardworking mentality that can only be found in a mining town and the Irish Catholic history of the town. From fundraisers for ailing members of the community, to parades and other public celebrations, the people of Butte see themselves as a uniquely unified community. Chris Fisk, a history teacher at Butte High School sees this community-wide cohesiveness as a salient

⁶⁵ Fisk, Chris. Interview by Margaret Walsh. Oral History. Butte, October 3, 2019.

⁶⁶ “Events & Festivals,” City and County of Butte-Silver Bow, 29 Jan. 2020, <https://co.silverbow.mt.us/490/Events-Festivals>.

part of Butte's identity now, pointing out that historically, Butte was divided extensively into ethnic neighborhoods. Although the neighborhoods were divided by immigrant groups, the mines united the town underground. The dangerous nature of mining demanded that miners across ethnicity work as a team.⁶⁷ It is clear that the people of Butte feel that this ideology has remained to this day. Despite the historically divided neighborhoods, many citizens believe that the roots of this community sense lie in the values of the original immigrant communities in Butte. In fact, Ellen Crain, director of the Butte-Silver Bow Archives, attributes this sense of community to the Irish immigrants who came to Butte as the largest ethnic group in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries:

I think in Butte, we come together as a community a lot more than other places. And I think we look forward to those opportunities where we can be together, which I have always felt... that sort of communal belief of taking care of your neighbor and coming together and celebrating together is a distinctly Irish thing. And so, when they're the largest population, they tend to have an influence.⁶⁸

It is impossible not to consider Durkheim's analysis of the religious and the social when reflecting on the influence of the church on the Irish community in Butte. The Irish community in Butte was sustained by the communities created through the Catholic church, including the previously mentioned Irish social organizations. Clearly this sense of community still exists in Butte today, whether or not the Irish can truly be credited with the strong communal values present. The importance of community stands at the heart of nearly every public event held in Butte. "In Butte you could have a good time. They knew how to celebrate. They knew how to celebrate holidays; they knew how to celebrate family; and they know how to celebrate community."⁶⁹ Butte citizens' generosity and active participation in the community and the

⁶⁷ Fisk, Chris. Interview by Margaret Walsh. Oral History. Butte, October 3, 2019.

⁶⁸ Crain, Ellen. Interview by Margaret Walsh. Oral History. Butte, September 17, 2019.

⁶⁹ Fisk, Chris. Interview by Margaret Walsh. Oral History. Butte, October 3, 2019.

numerous celebrations bringing the community together shows just how Butte could be seen as “the center of the universe” to many.⁷⁰

Modern day Butte uses an interest in Irish politics as a means of maintaining their Irish heritage in a similar way to the earlier generations of Butte Irish. In the early twentieth century, Butte raised a significant amount of money for the Irish cause.⁷¹ One example of this involvement in and support of Irish endeavors in the modern day is Project Child, a program in the late twentieth century that brought Protestant and Catholic children from Ireland to Butte, Montana, in an effort to unite the children during a time of political unrest in Northern Ireland, especially. “In Ireland these guys are throwing rocks, bricks, and bullets at each other, and in Butte, they’re playing soccer and baseball and fishing. And then they go back to Ireland and, well... it isn’t that bad.”⁷² This direct involvement in the politics of Ireland mirrors the fundraising that occurred for Irish independence in the early 1900s. The fact that Butte took such an active role in the Irish Troubles illuminates the connection that Butte and Ireland still maintain many generations removed from the original Irish immigrant connections.

Ireland and Butte’s Irish community also maintain their connection to Ireland by continually welcoming politicians and important figures from Ireland as visitors. Eamon de Valera’s son and grandson visited Butte on Thursday, September 19, 2019, echoing the state visit of de Valera himself one hundred years earlier. Mary McAleese, former president of Ireland, visited Butte as well. Monica Evans Cavanaugh, owner of the popular Irish store in downtown Butte, Cavanaugh’s County Celtic, and Cindy Powers, a first-grade teacher and founder of Butte’s Tiernan Irish Dance group, both quoted McAleese as stating, “You cannot tell the story of

⁷⁰ Powers, Cindy. Interview by Margaret Walsh. Oral History. Butte, October 15, 2019.

⁷¹ Cavanaugh, Monica. Interview by Margaret Walsh. Oral History. Butte, October 15, 2019.

⁷² Fisk, Chris. Interview by Margaret Walsh. Oral History. Butte, October 3, 2019.

Ireland without telling the story of Butte. And you can't tell the story of Butte without telling the story of Ireland.”⁷³ The quote reveals Butte’s inextricable connection to Ireland, past and present, as seen through the eyes of Ireland’s president. It suggests that although Ireland and Butte are thousands of miles apart, their communities and histories remain intertwined. McAleese’s words are particularly interesting considering the history of the term Butte, America, which, during the mining boom, was well known to Irish immigrants as a city with guaranteed work and a strong Irish community. Following McAleese’s visit, Butte was referred to as both Butte, America, and Butte, Ireland representing the fusion identity that still exists today within Butte’s Irish community.⁷⁴

In addition to Butte’s enduring connection with Ireland by way of an active interest in Irish politics, the cultural identity of Butte’s Irish community cannot be discussed without considering the inseparable relationship that Butte’s mining industry has with the Irish of Butte. Although many of the mines in Butte are now closed, the mining industry continues to benefit Butte’s economy by attracting tourists. Monica Cavanaugh mentions that her store, Cavanaugh’s County Celtic, profits from tourists who stop in Butte to sightsee on the campus of Montana Tech or explore the many mining headframes that pepper Butte’s skyline.⁷⁵ One of the highlights for performers who play at An Rí Rá is a tour of Butte’s mines. Festival organizer Brendan McDonough explained that he thinks the mining tour really gives these visiting musicians a sense of Butte’s true identity. “[The performers are] so taken aback by the impact of the Irish in Butte, that a lot of them have written songs, original songs, about the miners’ experience or the immigrants experience, and we’ve had a lot of spin off projects because of the festival.” To

⁷³ Cavanaugh, Monica. Interview by Margaret Walsh. Oral History. Butte, October 15, 2019. Powers, Cindy. Interview by Margaret Walsh. Oral History. Butte, October 15, 2019.

⁷⁴ Cavanaugh, Monica. Interview by Margaret Walsh. Oral History. Butte, October 15, 2019.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

highlight the impact this mining tour has on the An Rí Rá performers, McDonough mentioned the song “Butte, Montana,” which was written by The Whileaways immediately following their mining tour one year. According to McDonough, their performance of this new song at An Rí Rá was so meaningful to the locals that there were many misty eyes in the audience.⁷⁶ The Irish connection to Butte and its mining past clearly remains, and even years after the mining industry itself left the area, Butte’s Irish population draws their identity in part from the mining history of the town.

The mining industry has also indelibly influenced Butte’s public image, unfortunately in a negative way. Butte’s citizens feel a condescending sense of exclusion from Montana, and possibly the rest of the country, in part because of the remnants of the city’s mining past. When asked about the value of festivals in bringing tourists into Butte, Ellen Crain asserts that the many parades and celebrations in Butte help to reeducate the public on the reality of Butte.

It occurs to me in the last ten years, we have become very misunderstood. So, people think we drink pit water, which is interesting because they must lack a great deal of education. People do not understand mining people, do not understand Superfund.... So, when people come here for a festival and see that there's more to us than the pit water, it I think helps us in some ways.⁷⁷

Crain’s statement that there is “more to us than the pit water” refers to one of the largest scars left over from the booming copper mining industry in Butte, the acidic mining waste pond in the center of town known as the Berkeley Pit. Crain uses this infamous landmark to make the thoughtful point that outsiders judge Butte on unfounded rumors, but that Butte’s growing reputation as the Festival City of Montana can help to rewrite Butte’s public image. Butte constructs its identity around its strong history and multitude of ethnic backgrounds, and now Crain believes the festivals of Butte play a major role in projecting this complex, vibrant image

⁷⁶ McDonough, Brendan. Interview by Margaret Walsh. Oral History. Butte, November 14, 2019.

⁷⁷ Crain, Ellen. Interview by Margaret Walsh. Oral History. Butte, September 17, 2019.

to the public. Thus, the feeling of marginalization created by these negative stereotypes brings the community closer, while the festivals and celebrations that bring tourists and locals alike into town serve to demystify Butte by showcasing its rich history and plethora of cultural traditions.

Another important, and very visible, element not only to the various parades and celebrations that occur in Butte year-round, but also to the architecture and structure of the town itself, is the importance of authenticity. Most visibly, as Cindy Powers points out, Butte still boasts the historic buildings and original mining frames.⁷⁸ The visibility of the town's roots is important to the people of Butte as it instills sense of history that is palpable to both tourists and locals. More intangibly, Butte residents are aware of their multi-cultural heritage and they seek to celebrate it properly: "In Butte when you say you're Irish, that has a meaning. You say you're Italian or you're Serbian, that's got a meaning, you know, even to the kids."⁷⁹ One way that the Butte Irish keep their heritage fresh and their roots authentic is by learning about Irish culture, as Monica Cavanaugh did with her love of music and history: "I started listening to Irish music, and then I started reading the lyrics, and when you find out the lyrics, you want to find out more about James Connolly and Robert Emmet, and all these heroes and why. And pretty soon, you've Irish History-ed yourself to death!" Cavanaugh also spent extensive amounts of time and money learning how to embroider Celtic knots, an artistic representation of her Irish heritage.⁸⁰ Another example of Butte's valuing of authenticity is An Rí Rá, which is purposely designed and touted as an authentically Irish festival, where Irish traditions such as dance, language, and literature are all presented to attendees alongside authentic Irish music concerts. These examples show the ways in which Butte maintains its heritage and history as authentically as possible. As Ellen

⁷⁸ Powers, Cindy. Interview by Margaret Walsh. Oral History. Butte, October 15, 2019.

⁷⁹ Fisk, Chris. Interview by Margaret Walsh. Oral History. Butte, October 3, 2019.

⁸⁰ Cavanaugh, Monica. Interview by Margaret Walsh. Oral History. Butte, October 15, 2019.

Crain explains, “One of the things about Butte is... we could still touch our country.”⁸¹ The importance of authenticity in celebrating ethnic heritage among the Butte Irish community indicates a true, lasting connection with Irish roots by showing that the Irish in Butte see their Irish identity as more than just superficial.

Butte’s Irish community, although many years removed from their Irish roots, have managed to maintain their Irish identity in unique ways because of the rare qualities of their town. Community is valuable to Butte – which is something that does not necessarily apply to every town in America – and perhaps this has something to do with the many celebrations that earned Butte its unofficial title as Montana’s Festival City. Chris Fisk credits Butte’s many celebrations and parades with creating this community pride and perpetuating the many cultural traditions of Butte. “Butte people like their celebrations. They like to play as hard as they work, and they work very hard here. And it’s an ethnic community... There are a lot of those identities been handed down through family traditions and neighborhood traditions year, after year, after year.”⁸² Butte’s residents are making a strong effort to carry its multicultural past authentically into the future, especially the Irish Americans of Butte, who clearly still maintain contact with Ireland and their mining roots. With all this contemporary context in mind, it should now be clear how celebrations such as St. Patrick’s Day, Fourth of July, and An Rí Rá play an important role in the expression of cultural identity for the Irish community in Butte.

⁸¹ Crain, Ellen. Interview by Margaret Walsh. Oral History. Butte, September 17, 2019.

⁸² Fisk, Chris. Interview by Margaret Walsh. Oral History. Butte, October 3, 2019.

“Roots and Wings”: Today’s Saint Patrick’s Day

Saint Patrick’s Day was first documented in the early days of Butte as a day for both prayer and celebration.⁸³ While these traditions have certainly carried through the centuries – there is still a St. Patrick’s Day Mass and a jubilant parade following – the Irish community in Butte have found new ways to celebrate their Irish heritage away from the revelry of uptown Butte. This takes the form of Handing Down the Heritage, a program started by Tom and Cindy Powers dedicated to Irish music and dance. The St. Patrick’s Day celebrations, which notably occur on the day of St. Patrick’s Day rather than the closest weekend like many other cities in the United States, offer a variety of activities, new and old, for all attendees, including the Friendly Sons of St. Patrick Dinner, the St. Patrick’s Day Mass, the parade, the Silver Dollar singalong, and Handing Down the Heritage.⁸⁴ Among the locals in Butte there is an underlying sense that the true Irish celebration lies away from the “spring breakers” and “Plastic Irish” in uptown Butte.⁸⁵ Referring back to Jack Santino’s theory and the carnivalesque and the ritualesque, events such as the Silver Dollar Singalong and Handing Down the Heritage reflect the ritualesque side of St. Patrick’s Day, while the parade and the ensuing revelry uptown are the more carnivalesque portions of the holiday. The many varying elements of Butte’s St. Patrick’s Day, but most especially the ritualesque elements, highlight the ways in which this celebration allows the Butte Irish to continue to preserve their Irish roots and explore their own cultural identity.

The Friendly Sons of St. Patrick banquet is one of the oldest traditions in Butte and allows the Irish community to come together in the same manner as the old Irish social organizations. The banquet has been held on March 16th, the day before St. Patrick’s Day, for over one hundred

⁸³ Crain, Ellen. Interview by Margaret Walsh. Oral History. Butte, September 17, 2019.

⁸⁴ McDonough, Brendan. Interview by Margaret Walsh. Oral History. Butte, November 14, 2019.

⁸⁵ Powers, Cindy. Interview by Margaret Walsh. Oral History. Butte, October 15, 2019.

years. The banquet is an example of Falassi's aforementioned elements of festival, specifically rites of conspicuous consumption, as it is a time in which excessive drink and feasting is encouraged and expected. It is also one of the ritualesque elements of St. Patrick's Day, following Santino's definition of the ritualesque, as it is an influential, meaningful, and memorable element of the holiday. One of the highlights of the banquet is a speech by one of Butte's locals. Brendan McDonough describes the criteria for the speaker as "Someone that has really great stories of how the Irish customs and traditions were celebrated in their house growing up, and it's usually very humorous."⁸⁶ This tradition reflects the older practice of oration that occurred on various Butte holidays, but the content of the speech reveals a form of Irish cultural identity unique to Butte, where the Irish traditions were personal to homes and neighborhoods. The Friendly Sons of St. Patrick serves to unite past and present traditions of the Irish community in Butte, reflecting a distinctly local, community based cultural identity.

On March 17th, 2019, the St. Patrick's Day Mass at St. Patrick's Church reflected many symbolic references to a hybrid and local cultural identity. Both the American and Irish flags were prominently displayed throughout the Mass. Butte's chapter of the Ancient Order of Hibernians served various roles throughout the Mass. The homily, from an Irish-born priest who now lives in Butte, spoke of preserving Irish identity through cultural elements like language and religion, but using American resources and universities to do so. This Mass was a community event: the church was a gathering space for the more devout to begin the day's festivities. This Mass speaks to Durkheim's teachings on the relationship between the religious and the social: the popularity of the Mass reflects the social cohesion of the Irish community. It also indicates once more the importance of an authentic cultural identity to the Butte community, who continue

⁸⁶ McDonough, Brendan. Interview by Margaret Walsh. Oral History. Butte, November 14, 2019.

to celebrate both the religious and the festive aspects of St. Patrick's Day. Although it has not always been celebrated as fervently, modern day St. Patrick's Day Mass exposes the importance of community and authenticity to the Butte Irish community in the construction of their cultural identity.

Following the Irish Civil War, Butte's Irish community found itself split politically as a result of the contested Ireland and Northern Ireland split, causing the temporary dissolution of both the Irish social organizations and, most surprisingly, the St. Patrick's Day parades. The parades did not resume again until the 1960s, when a group of men from the community gathered with students from St. Patrick's School to reinstate the parade.⁸⁷ Now, each St. Patrick's Day in Butte, celebrants can attend both the Butte and nearby Anaconda parades and find reflections of American and Irish identities still simultaneously present in the Irish holiday's celebrations. The 2019 parade through Anaconda highlighted the Ancient Order of Hibernian's Pipe and Drum band performing "America, The Beautiful" as they march past Irish Copper King Marcus Daly's hotel and home, a visual and aural reminder of the two towns' blended Irish American identity.

Despite the several decades long hiatus of Butte's St. Patrick's Day parade, the current parade in Butte is an energetic and enthusiastic event each year, with political, religious, and cultural elements uniting seamlessly. Although the parade no longer serves to fundraise for Irish independence as it did in the early twentieth century, local and national politicians still participate in Butte's St. Patrick's Day to fundraise and advertise during election years. Ellen Crain notes that while the state legislators march only occasionally, the governors are nearly always present. "Governor Schweitzer was an [Ancient Order of Hibernians] member, he'd

⁸⁷ Crain, Ellen. Interview by Margaret Walsh. Oral History. Butte, September 17, 2019.

always participate in the parades. I think he still participates in parades... I think he's in the Anaconda AOH which is the oldest AOH in the state.”⁸⁸ Crain also spoke about the yearly St. Patrick's Day fundraising event for the Democratic party known as the Shillelagh Shindig. The fundraiser's use of an Irish holiday and clear branding as an Irish event indicate the value of the Irish community in Butte's politics, the anticipated popularity of the St. Patrick's Day festivities, and the relationship of community and politics to festive celebrations.

Despite the carnivalesque nature of the St. Patrick's Day parade, religious and meaningful cultural elements appear throughout many of the parade floats. Many churches choose to enter floats into the parade, such as St. Patrick's Catholic Church, whose float includes one of the several St. Patricks that march in Butte's parade. Monica Cavanaugh features another St. Patrick on her store's float; she considers herself to be the first person to introduce St. Patrick performers into Butte's parade: “I always have St. Patrick in the parade here in Butte... I said, ‘How do we have a St. Patrick's Day parade in Butte and there's not a St. Patrick in there?’... Let's put him on the float. It's a St. Patrick's Day float... We could have six St. Patricks in the parade and give a prize to the best one. I don't care. It doesn't matter, he just needs to be in it.”⁸⁹ St. Patrick's presence in the parade is important to people like Cavanaugh, suggesting that for some members of the community, in addition to the revelry of the parade, there is an expectation of tradition rooted in religion. The homemade nature of the costumes and parade floats also introduces a local, community-based expression of Irish identity. Cavanaugh's design for the St. Patrick costume – deep green, intricate Celtic knotwork lined with copper thread – serves as an unintentional but clear visual representation of Butte's copper mining history intertwined with its Celtic heritage. Cavanaugh used a skill she connected with her own Irish heritage, knot

⁸⁸ Crain, Ellen. Interview by Margaret Walsh. Oral History. Butte, September 17, 2019.

⁸⁹ Cavanaugh, Monica. Interview by Margaret Walsh. Oral History. Butte, October 15, 2019.

embroidery, to create a distinctly Butte version of Irish identity that is displayed yearly in the St. Patrick's Day parade. A final notable element of the St. Patrick's Day parade in Butte is the claiming of Irish identity through cultural activities, such as Irish dancing. Cindy Powers' Tiernan Irish Dancers dance throughout the entire parade route, in all weather.⁹⁰ Floats, costume, and dancing are all features of typical festival, but in the case of Butte's St. Patrick's Day parade, there appears to be meaning and significance in addition to the revelry. This pairing of the carnivalesque with the ritualesque allows Butte's Irish community to share and express their cultural identity with the rest of the community. Crain mentioned that, in her eyes, "It's a community thing... Everyone is Irish on St. Patrick's Day."⁹¹ This appears to be a shared statement with the rest of the Butte Irish, where these various political, religious, and social elements of their parade allow the community to share their identity with others.

The Silver Dollar singalong is a Butte tradition that bridges the St. Patrick's Day parade and the Handing Down the Heritage event, transitioning attendees from revelry to honoring the town's Irish American legacy. Dublin Gulch, a local traditional Irish band named after a historically Irish neighborhood in Butte, performs each year at the Silver Dollar Saloon, often accompanied by an Irish dancer. The event is organized by Cindy Powers and her husband Tom. "After the parade, we scurry down, they've taken all of the furniture out of the Silver Dollar, we are front to back, side to side. Everybody has been coming all those years, we all know the words to all the songs, everybody's singing along."⁹² This St. Patrick's Day tradition is viewed by many to be one of the more significant, memorable activities of the holiday, as it places an emphasis on appreciating Irish music and dance over the drinking and raucous carousing. Powers argues that

⁹⁰ Powers, Cindy. Interview by Margaret Walsh. Oral History. Butte, October 15, 2019.

⁹¹ Crain, Ellen. Interview by Margaret Walsh. Oral History. Butte, September 17, 2019.

⁹² Powers, Cindy. Interview by Margaret Walsh. Oral History. Butte, October 15, 2019.

the Silver Dollar singalong is an example of one of the more authentic celebrations available in Butte on St. Patrick's Day: "It is the best part of St. Patrick's Day. So, [the parade uptown] is kind of the plastic Irish. You saw spring break."⁹³ Powers' use of the term "plastic Irish" speaks to the importance of authenticity in the Butte Irish community. Where the carnivalesque elements of St. Patrick's Day are attended by a wide variety of people, the more ritualesque events are only attended by the genuine members of the Butte Irish community, creating a sense of cohesion among the Butte Irish and a sense of authenticity in claiming their Irish heritage.

Perhaps the clearest way that Irish heritage is preserved and explored among the Butte Irish is at the Handing Down the Heritage event in the evening on St. Patrick's Day. The event, once again organized by the Powers family, is an Irish music and dance exposition where the public gathers to enjoy Irish culture and the talents of members of their community. The event began as a series of assemblies for the various schools in Butte. Dublin Gulch and the Tiernan Irish Dancers both performed at the assemblies, in order to "give school kids something other than those drunk Irish people to think about when they're thinking about the Irish."⁹⁴ Eventually these assemblies evolved into a well-attended concert at Butte's Civic Center. The name of the event did not emerge until Cindy Powers observed John "the Yank" Harrington, a well-known accordion player and local Butte man, playing with Dublin Gulch on St. Patrick's Day:

At about ninety-five, he would come and sit in with the band on St. Patrick's Day. And of course, he didn't ever marry so there weren't kids, but there were grandnieces and grandnephews. So, the grandnieces start dancing. And the first year we were at the Civic Center, the first of the nieces was three years old, and she danced while he played. And I thought in my head, that is handing down the heritage, right before our very eyes, that's handing down the heritage. So that's where that name came from. And so now we have the next generation of those grandnieces who are a dancing now.⁹⁵

⁹³ Powers, Cindy. Interview by Margaret Walsh. Oral History. Butte, October 15, 2019.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

This importance of this story to the legacy of the event itself speaks to the value that the community places on the perpetuation of their Irish identity. The event allows the community to gather and enjoy Irish traditions and their meanings. The organizers see this event as an opportunity to show students at Butte's schools originally – and eventually the broader public – that there is more to this holiday than “Beer and drinking and carousing uptown. It was about Irish music and Irish dance and the culture.”⁹⁶

Beyond a concern for the image of St. Patrick's Day in the minds of school children is a continuing need for the separation or distinction of these events, accepted as authentically Irish, from the more carnivalesque aspects of the holiday, including the parade. Ellen Crain described Cindy Powers' intention in creating Handing Down the Heritage as a desire to create a more profound cultural experience on St. Patrick's Day. There is also a similar eagerness from attendees to leave the uptown and begin the more authentic celebration: “Handing Down the Heritage... has been a really good thing... The community people now have a place to go and celebrate their culture without being involved with young college students doing, you know, what young college students do.”⁹⁷ Both the attendees and the organizers, therefore appear to be at a consensus: Handing Down the Heritage is a crucial element of Butte's St. Patrick's Day celebrations because it allows the town to celebrate its community and its Irish heritage.

St. Patrick's Day has changed significantly since the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Although traditions such as the Mass and the Friendly Sons of St. Patrick Banquet remain, the parade has evolved to include a more religious, cultural angle in addition to the political and community spirit of the event. The holiday now includes events such as the Silver Dollar Singalong and Handing Down the Heritage, both seen by both the organizers and the public as

⁹⁶ McDonough, Brendan. Interview by Margaret Walsh. Oral History. Butte, November 14, 2019.

⁹⁷ Crain, Ellen. Interview by Margaret Walsh. Oral History. Butte, September 17, 2019.

more authentic, meaningful alternatives to the revelry uptown. Cindy Powers mentions that her goal for these events is to “Give kids... roots and wings.”⁹⁸ By introducing ritualesque events alongside the existing carnivalesque aspects of St. Patrick’s Day, the community encourages children to preserve Butte’s Irish heritage. Although now most Butte Irish are many generations removed from their Irish heritage, it is clear that Irish identity is still important to the community and will continue to be in subsequent generations.

“A Lot of Dynamite”: Fourth of July in the Mining City

Butte’s Fourth of July remains a grand, multiple-day event, where fireworks and community are the most important components. While many other communities in modern day have transitioned to a more intimate, family-oriented celebration of Independence Day, as discussed by Peter De Bolla, Butte maintains the original community nature of the holiday by holding a parade, a public picnic and baseball game, engaging with local and national politics, and, most importantly, a variety of fireworks displays.

Historically, the Irish community in Butte distinguished itself on the Fourth of July by hosting its own picnics and fundraisers for the public; now, the majority of Independence Day activities occur as a cohesive Butte community, rather than a distinct Irish ethnic group. This movement away from remaining in a distinct ethnic group speaks to the assimilation that occurred over generations of Irish families remaining in Butte. Despite the fact that there are no longer overt signs of the Irish gathering and differentiating themselves from the rest of the community, Irish groups such as the Ancient Order of Hibernians still contribute to the creation of the parade route and march in the parade.⁹⁹ The Tiernan Irish Dancers do not dance in the

⁹⁸ Powers, Cindy. Interview by Margaret Walsh. Oral History. Butte, October 15, 2019.

⁹⁹ McDonough, Brendan. Interview by Margaret Walsh. Oral History. Butte, November 14, 2019.

parade due to the heat, but the notion of community – which, as mentioned earlier, was made stronger in part by the presence of the Irish – is at the center of the Fourth of July festivities in Butte. Also still at the heart of Independence Day is an interest in politics. President Barack Obama and his family spent the Fourth of July in Butte the summer before he was first elected. “His daughter had a birthday party at the community picnic, and it was a big deal.”¹⁰⁰ Although the fundraisers and speeches no longer involve Ireland and its political endeavors, there remains a clear investment in the community and its politics. The traditions popular on the Fourth of July in Butte still reflect the remnants of an Irish heritage alongside a strong sense of American patriotism.

Ellen Crain points to 1864 as the earliest documented year that Butte celebrated the Fourth of July with a mining town’s version of community fireworks: “They celebrated... by blowing things up. A lot of dynamite. In mining there’s a lot of dynamite.”¹⁰¹ Crain also stated that while there were usually no parades during the World Wars, Fourth of July was still patriotically celebrated with the annual picnic and baseball game. Today, the Fourth of July has become a multiple day event, where the festivities start on the weekend and the biggest fireworks display takes place on July 3rd: “Butte’s always notorious for not being able to wait for the party... the third of July is almost bigger than the Fourth. The party really starts in Butte on the third.”¹⁰² The popularity of the fireworks in Butte is significant. While fireworks are certainly a popular Independence Day activity all around the country, in Butte it unites the community more than most. “It’s really community wide. People getting together, doing things together. Not just with their own family.”¹⁰³ The importance of community is already obvious in Butte, but the

¹⁰⁰ Crain, Ellen. Interview by Margaret Walsh. Oral History. Butte, September 17, 2019.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² McDonough, Brendan. Interview by Margaret Walsh. Oral History. Butte, November 14, 2019.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

opportunity to come together as a community for the large fireworks event makes Fourth of July more important to the cohesion of the community. When asked about the reason behind the popularity of the fireworks display, Chris Fisk used the word tradition to explain its importance to the Fourth of July and perhaps, address the adoption of the fireworks as a symbol of the town's mining history. "It's a tradition. It's downtown shock and awe. You want to make money in Butte, Montana? Open a fireworks stand! Butte people love to blow things up!"¹⁰⁴ The gathering of the public that occurs during events such as the fireworks, the community picnic, and the baseball game is what makes the Fourth of July so valuable in the minds of the community.

Although Butte's Irish identity is harder to distinguish on the Fourth of July than it is on St. Patrick's Day, the importance of community, the enduring involvement in politics, and the significance of the fireworks indicate a distinct version of American identity expressed on this holiday. Following Appadurai's definitions of locality, it appears that Butte is a rare instance of a physical locality uniting with locality in a relational sense. Butte's localized version of identity is influenced by the town's mining history and ethnic heritages, all of which come together on a holiday like Independence Day.

An Rí Rá: An Invented and Reinvented Festival

August 9, 2019 was a warm, rainy day, and the number of people packed into the basement of the Covellite Theater in downtown Butte did not help the humidity. The first day of the three-day Irish festival, known as An Rí Rá, consists each year of a series of workshops, lectures, and ceremonial events. One notable lecture this particular year was given by local historian Jim

¹⁰⁴ Fisk, Chris. Interview by Margaret Walsh. Oral History. Butte, October 3, 2019.

McCarthy, who spoke on a phenomenon he called “The Butte Connection,” a name given to a concept already discussed at length in this research. Throughout the lecture, McCarthy discussed Butte’s predominantly Irish heritage and wondered whether the strong sense of community that has been preserved in Butte to this day in part as a result of the large web of Irish families with Irish values that originally populated the mining city of Butte. In its nearly twenty years of existence in Butte, An Rí Rá has brought Butte national and international attention, illuminated the inextricable relationship between mining and the Irish in Butte, and served as a platform for the growing Tiernan Irish Dance school.

An Rí Rá first began in Missoula, Montana, where it ran successfully for three years before moving to Butte. According to Cindy Powers and Monica Cavanaugh, there were a multitude of reasons for the move to Butte. First, fundraising for the festival in Missoula suffered as a result of the already large investment local businesses had in University of Montana’s football team. Timing also became an issue because of the weekend football games.¹⁰⁵ Another reason that Butte seemed a better fit for the festival was the makeup of the audience: “It definitely did need to move to Butte because I mean it was attended in Missoula, but mostly by Butte people.”¹⁰⁶ Not only was the audience dominated by Butte families, but the performers in the festival were mostly members of the Butte community as well. “Dublin Gulch was kind of the headline act. And we brought dancers over for at least two of those years.”¹⁰⁷ Following the move to Butte – and without a blueprint for creating a festival – the organizers of An Rí Rá made their own decisions and changes. This decision made An Rí Rá into a distinctly Butte festival, where the organizers could use the festival to promote the local Irish music scene in town, but also to

¹⁰⁵ Powers, Cindy. Interview by Margaret Walsh. Oral History. Butte, October 15, 2019.

¹⁰⁶ Cavanaugh, Monica. Interview by Margaret Walsh. Oral History. Butte, October 15, 2019.

¹⁰⁷ Powers, Cindy. Interview by Margaret Walsh. Oral History. Butte, October 15, 2019.

maintain a connection to – and educate the public on – Butte’s Irish roots. Interestingly, many of the festival organizers have chosen a career in education, a fact which no doubt impacts the decisions and the significance of the festival. Chris Fisk, who supervises the Montana History Club in addition to teaching, encourages the students in his club to assist in the setup of An Rí Rá, among other festivals.¹⁰⁸ This is another tangible way in which the community invites the younger generation to become involved with the town’s Irish heritage. Powers explains that the committee created roles based on the skills of the organizers. For instance, Powers herself took the role as the dance committee chair, while her husband Tom became the music director.¹⁰⁹ The festival started on Park Street in uptown Butte, using flatbed trailers as stages. Over time, as the festival grew and the organizers learned more, the stages grew more complex, until eventually An Rí Rá moved locations to a permanent stage underneath the Original Headframe.¹¹⁰ The most notable change was the decision to change the lineup of the event. The committee welcomed popular Irish musicians in addition to local Irish acts, like the aforementioned Dublin Gulch. This decision supports two previously discussed values of the Butte community, first, it reinforced this idea that An Rí Rá was a truly authentic Irish music festival, second, it has created a new reputation for Butte as a destination for visitors in search of festivals with strong lineups.

A globally increasing fascination with Irish music and dance, combined with the decision to expand the lineup to include Irish born musicians in addition to local ones caused the An Rí Rá festival to situate Butte both nationally and internationally as a cultural destination with a complex history and heritage. Establishing Butte as tourist attraction allows the town to present a

¹⁰⁸ Fisk, Chris. Interview by Margaret Walsh. Oral History. Butte, October 3, 2019.

¹⁰⁹ Powers, Cindy. Interview by Margaret Walsh. Oral History. Butte, October 15, 2019.

¹¹⁰ McDonough, Brendan. Interview by Margaret Walsh. Oral History. Butte, November 14, 2019.

new narrative as a place of rich culture. Each year, the festival attracts tourists from all over the country and from around the world.¹¹¹ Ellen Crain attributes the success of An Rí Rá as a tourist attraction to the Irish dancers from Chicago and Butte who both perform throughout the multiple days of the festival: “I think that when Cindy decided to do the Irish dance, it was at a time where Irish dance was becoming more... People were becoming more aware of it in the world. And it was near the same time as Riverdance. So, it was sort of an international event.”¹¹² The organizers of the festival have successfully made Butte a well-known city, and even a tourist destination, through the increasingly expanding lineup. Although the musicians performing at An Rí Rá were originally local, the lineup is continually growing, with the most anticipated acts coming directly from Ireland: “We don’t just have a regional focus, because oftentimes you miss really important and key opportunities if you just focus on bringing people from a geographic region.”¹¹³ Although Brendan McDonough positions this decision as an effort to diversify the lineup, the result of this choice is increased publicity for the festival. Cindy Powers mentions that the festival is almost more popular with tourists than it is with locals; this observation demonstrates the success that the festival has experienced since its decision to strengthen the lineup by inviting nonlocal musicians. Notably, Powers’ point also suggests that the local connection to Irish heritage is not as strong as the appreciation that tourists have for Butte’s strong historic connection to Ireland. Despite this suggestion of the changing value of Irish heritage to the current culture in Butte, the popularity of the Irish dancers and the broadening lineup at the festival have outwardly allowed Butte to correct the negative reputation palpable from the rest of Montana and present its new narrative as the Festival City of Montana.

¹¹¹ McDonough, Brendan. Interview by Margaret Walsh. Oral History. Butte, November 14, 2019.

¹¹² Crain, Ellen. Interview by Margaret Walsh. Oral History. Butte, September 17, 2019.

¹¹³ McDonough, Brendan. Interview by Margaret Walsh. Oral History. Butte, November 14, 2019.

The location of the festival in town is significant to the festival itself, as it speaks to the previously mentioned, vital relationship between mining and Irish heritage in Butte. For several years now, the festival has been located on the grounds of the Original mine.¹¹⁴ Each year, the festival organizers hang a massive Irish flag from the top of the headframe, a physical representation of the connection that mining and Irish tradition have in Butte. Attendees of the festival are therefore continuously reminded of the importance of mining to Butte's history, and the centrality of the Irish to Butte's heritage.

An Rí Rá has become a valuable part of the Butte community for the tourism it attracts, but also as a reminder for locals of Butte's complex history and Irish heritage. As Chris Fisk points out, the Irish had the largest ethnic influence on Butte historically, due in part to the size of their community, but also as a result of their religious and social values.¹¹⁵ The festival serves as a space to see the remnants of Butte's ethnic heritage. Brendan McDonough also considers the festival as an opportunity for the community to experience the diversity of Irish music. In addition to the variety of traditional music at the festival, McDonough also appreciates that the festival invites lecturers who speak on history or literature and, occasionally, a seanchaí, or Irish storyteller. "We want to showcase how authentic the real Irish culture is, but also Butte's contribution to that, and I think we've been able to do that very well."¹¹⁶ McDonough's use of the word authentic and his clear desire to prove the value of true Irish culture suggests that he is both aware and cautious of local interpretations and alterations of Irish culture in diasporic communities. However, the importance of the local interpretation of cultural heritage is evident in the combination of local and national or international acts in the festival lineup. Butte's

¹¹⁴ Powers, Cindy. Interview by Margaret Walsh. Oral History. Butte, October 15, 2019.

¹¹⁵ Fisk, Chris. Interview by Margaret Walsh. Oral History. Butte, October 3, 2019.

¹¹⁶ McDonough, Brendan. Interview by Margaret Walsh. Oral History. Butte, November 14, 2019.

version of Irish heritage is influenced by its mining history and the presence of modern-day cultural activities like Irish dance. The festival is the nexus of these elements, blending Butte's Irish history and ancestry to create a distinctly local form of cultural identity that is as authentic as the community can be to their heritage.

Irish Dance: Performing Butte's Festivals

The Tiernan Irish Dance school, inextricably connected to An Rí Rá as one of the primary attractions of the festival, is yet another way that the town engages the younger generation in the celebration and expression of their heritage. Cindy Powers was inspired to open the Irish dance school after seeing the Trinity Academy of Irish Dance from Chicago perform and thinking of her own daughter: "I can remember sitting in that audience thinking about my little girl at home thinking, 'Oh, man, I wish there was somehow I could get you here to dance and have this for you.'" ¹¹⁷ Not long after, Powers established Butte's own school, originally named the Corktown Dancers after a historic Irish neighborhood in Butte. The first year that Butte hosted An Rí Rá, one of the acts invited to perform were the Trinity dancers, who enjoyed the experience so much that they agreed to form a partnership between the two schools. ¹¹⁸ Powers learned alongside her students, with Trinity dancers flying to Butte each month to instruct. In the years since the school was established, the Tiernan Irish dancers have performed for at a variety of events and festivals. According to McDonough, the school grows in size and talent each year in their showcase at An Rí Rá. "It just shows the acceptance of, to have boys join a local dance group is, you know it's important... It's an activity for all youth." ¹¹⁹ McDonough's comment highlights the value he

¹¹⁷ Powers, Cindy. Interview by Margaret Walsh. Oral History. Butte, October 15, 2019.

¹¹⁸ McDonough, Brendan. Interview by Margaret Walsh. Oral History. Butte, November 14, 2019.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

sees in sharing heritage with all members of the Butte community, as Foley discussed in her research on céilís. Tiernan Irish Dance's popularity in both *An Rí Rá* and *Handing Down the Heritage*, among other events, only reinforces the value the community sees in children taking an active role in their heritage.

Tiernan Irish Dance School's method of teaching is just one more example of passing on the heritage to the younger generations. After deciding to establish the school, Cindy Powers learned to Irish dance with the help of Irish children visiting from the previously mentioned Project Child in combination with guidance from the Trinity Irish Dance Academy in Chicago. Her eventual goal was for students from her school to become instructors. Students have indeed become instructors, including Powers daughter, Kerry. In this way, Powers has successfully created a peer mentoring system, where Irish dance students can develop relationships with their fellow dancers. One student of Powers reportedly mentioned that she particularly appreciated the opportunity to help out with the younger dancers as a way "to pass down the Irish art form."¹²⁰ Powers mentions another example of this phenomenon is the growing Anaconda dance school, where several Tiernan dancers have become instructors.¹²¹ This method of teaching, therefore, is not only an example of passing down Irish culture in Butte, but also a way to sustain the strong sense of community that has become a point of pride among the people of Butte. Generational learning is a way in which younger generations remain interested in their heritage, thus preserving Irish culture among Butte's younger members of the community.

As evidenced by its place in preserving a sense of both community and heritage, cultural activities such as Irish dancing will be the future of Irish identity in Butte. The Irish dance

¹²⁰ Vincent, Maddie. "Honoring Their Roots: Butte, Anaconda Dance Schools Aim to Keep Irish Traditions Alive." *Montana Standard*, March 16, 2019.

¹²¹ Powers, Cindy. Interview by Margaret Walsh. Oral History. Butte, October 15, 2019.

performances at St. Patrick's Day and An Rí Rá show children a tangible form of cultural heritage that they can participate in with their friends. Chris Fisk believes that this local representation of cultural heritage is how Irish culture can survive in Butte so many generations removed from the original Irish immigrants in the area: "That's how it survives. It's not a story out of a book, it's not a video you watch on YouTube, or something your teacher yaks at you in a classroom. It's something that they experience and enjoy, and so if they get something out of it, it's going to last."¹²² Cindy Powers pointed out that the fact that she is now teaching the children of some of her first dance students shows that the Irish dance school is important to the community.

It's one of those things where, as we were talking about before, as we further and further from that primary source generation, it kind of gets diluted... So, when we put all that real Celtic, or as real as we can make it, Celtic stuff back into St. Patrick's Day, it feels like we have done something important for Butte.¹²³

Powers sees Irish dance almost as a necessity in helping to preserve Irish identity in Butte, and she considers the children to be a large part of the legacy of this identity in such a historically Irish town.¹²⁴ As discussed previously, Folely and Rapuano wrote about how music and dance enable diaspora communities to connect with their ethnic identity. It is clear in the case of Butte, Irish dance not only serves to connect the community with their heritage, but it also seems to be a method of preservation of this identity for future generations. Without activities such as Irish dance keeping children engaged and creating a community, it would be impossible to sustain the strong, unique sense of Irish identity in Butte over time.

¹²² Fisk, Chris. Interview by Margaret Walsh. Oral History. Butte, October 3, 2019.

¹²³ Powers, Cindy. Interview by Margaret Walsh. Oral History. Butte, October 15, 2019.

¹²⁴ Vincent, Maddie. "Honoring Their Roots: Butte, Anaconda Dance Schools Aim to Keep Irish Traditions Alive." *Montana Standard*, March 16, 2019.

Conclusion: The City of Celebrations

St. Patrick's Day, Fourth of July, and An Rí Rá have all changed in form throughout Butte's history, but they all reveal different facets of Butte's hybrid and local interpretation of a cultural identity. While the cultural identity of the Butte Irish community in the nineteenth and early-twentieth century was a visibly both Irish and American, over time and generations, this sense of identity became more convoluted. Now fully American, the Butte Irish community enjoys a more local interpretation of their Irish heritage that includes the town's mining heritage. This local version of Irish American identity is reflected in the importance of community in Butte, the connection that endures between Butte and Ireland, and the historic relationship between mining and the Irish. The strength of community in Butte is rare compared to other communities. Some attribute it to the original Irish immigrants, who created a cohesive community through church and family networks, but regardless of cause, this sense of community is extraordinarily visible in Butte's festivals and celebrations: the support for Handing Down the Heritage, the popularity of Butte's Fourth of July picnic, and the thriving Irish dance school. Butte's lasting connection to Ireland is most visible in the eagerness of Irish-born performers to play An Rí Rá but can also be seen in the various visits from Irish politicians and ambassadors, and the Tiernan Irish Dance school, students of which have performed for local and international audiences alike. The Irish flag-draped headframe that serves as the stage at An Rí Rá is the most visible symbol of the interwoven connection between the Irish and the mining industry in Butte. These festivals allow Butte to remember not only its ethnic heritage, but also its history and the importance of the mining industry to the area. Finally, Butte's ethnic festivals also help to rewrite the perceived negative stereotypes that burden many citizens by inviting outsiders and locals alike to experience the rich history of Butte. After attending An Rí

Rá or any of the various celebrations in Butte, outsiders see past the Berkeley Pit and the industrial history of the town, and begin to experience the many ethnic heritages, including Irish, of the Festival City of Montana.

This thesis explored how the Butte Irish community expresses ethnic identity through their many parades and festivals. Additionally, this research suggests that the future of the Irish in Butte will rely on the interest of subsequent generations. Younger members of the community are continuously encouraged to engage with their Irish heritage through cultural activities like Irish dance. The festivals in Butte and the popularity of Irish dance in the younger generations will sustain a sense of Irish identity in Butte for a long time to come.

In order to find these answers, this research first used historic and archival methods, then participant observation and oral histories. Individual examinations of St. Patrick's Day, Fourth of July, and An Rí Rá illuminated the vibrant sense of community and heritage in Butte. Ellen Crain points out that these celebrations, among others, are opportunities to unify Butte across its history as much as it is an opportunity to bring together neighbors and friends:

And it's an interesting thing that we now hang on to those Fourth of July and St. Patrick's days like crazy, because they're the kind of the last vestiges of what had happened here... Folk Festival, Evel Knievel days or Rascal Days, as we called them, and An Rí Rá, were really remarkable opportunities for people to pull together based upon various activities.¹²⁵

Crain's point recalls the previously discussed idea that Butte's Irish heritage cannot be separated from its historic mining industry. This connection and the sense of community created by the relationship between mining and the Irish is continually explored in the many of Butte's festivals. St. Patrick's Day's lasting mix of tradition and revelry allows attendees to experience the rich culture of the Irish while still enjoying the fun of the uptown parade. Fourth of July is

¹²⁵ Crain, Ellen. Interview by Margaret Walsh. Oral History. Butte, September 17, 2019.

perhaps the most community-oriented festival currently in Butte, with the modern, ornate fireworks display echoing the original Butte fireworks display of mining dynamite. Finally, An Rí Rá presents a physical symbol of the union between mining and the Irish in Butte, the Irish flag-draped headframe stage. These three festivals suggest that the Irish in Butte, although fully American, consider their Irish heritage and the town's mining history to be a large part of their identity.

This research made two main novel contributions to the rich body of research on Butte and the Irish community. First, prior to this project, no academic research had studied An Rí Rá as an Irish cultural festival in Butte and its impact on the sense of identity within the community. Also previously unresearched is the Tiernan Irish Dance school in Butte, which has become a large part of the community's celebration of their Irish heritage. These two aspects of Irish heritage in Butte – the festival and the Irish dance school – are considered by Butte citizens to be assisting in the survival of Irish heritage in the town. Additionally, the oral history interviewees were specifically selected to provide insight into festivals and the current state of Butte identity and the Butte Irish community has not been extensively researched contemporarily. Thus, it was crucial to include all of these elements in this project in order to understand the past, present, and tentatively, the future of Irish identity in Butte.

There are many alternative avenues of research on the topic of Irish identity and festivals in Butte, particularly since St. Patrick's Day, Fourth of July, and An Rí Rá increase in complexity and continue to attract tourists each year. Additionally, the Irish community in Butte continues to connect with their Irish heritage by welcoming Irish politicians, like the previously mentioned son and grandson of Eamon de Valera. Brendan McDonough believes this lasting connection to Ireland suggests a growing understanding of Irish identity: "I think that things are

only getting stronger between the cultural link between Ireland and Butte, than they have been before. Than they have been in, maybe eighty or ninety years.”¹²⁶ To illustrate this, McDonough also mentions the eventual goal of creating an Irish cultural center in Butte. Although the fundraising for this cultural center is intertwined with the fundraising for An Rí Rá and is therefore still in its early stages, McDonough believes Butte would be the ideal location for an Irish cultural center and would provide a new way, in addition to the festivals and Irish dance school, for Butte citizens to interact with their Irish heritage. The future of Butte’s Irish community seems to be bright; scholars would benefit from keeping the Festival City of Montana, the most Irish city in America, in mind as a unique, local interpretation of Irish identity.

In spring 2020, the world was disrupted by a pandemic which impacted many aspects of everyday life. One unexpected – and perhaps overall insignificant – casualty of COVID-19 was this year’s St. Patrick’s Day. Ahead of the holiday, many towns, including Butte, Montana made the decision to cancel the festivities in the interest of public health. For Butte, the cancellation of 2020’s St. Patrick’s Day celebration had both cultural and economic impacts. According to NBC Montana, this year’s parade was going to be the largest in the history of Butte, with a record-breaking number of participants planning to march the route. The holiday brings millions of dollars into Butte’s economy each year as a result of the visitors it attracts.¹²⁷ Because of the major impact St. Patrick’s Day has on Butte’s economy, local businesses were left wondering how the cancellation of the festivities will affect the economy. To counteract this, one local

¹²⁶ McDonough, Brendan. Interview by Margaret Walsh. Oral History. Butte, November 14, 2019.

¹²⁷ Haack McKayla. “Butte St. Patrick’s Day Traditions Run Deep, Despite Parade Cancellation.” *NBC Montana*, March 13, 2020.

business owner mentioned the town's plans to recreate the festivities later in the year.¹²⁸ Despite the cancellation of this year's parade and related celebrations, the enthusiastic plans to reschedule St. Patrick's Day reveals the economic and cultural value that the community places on the holiday, as discussed throughout this research. This decision also reveals that, although St. Patrick's Day is a calendrical celebration, the value that Butte places on the social and economic impacts of the holiday transcends its traditional date. A quote from Chris Fisk's interview is now eerily appropriate to Butte's reaction to the pandemic: "Butte people are good at celebrating, and moreover they're good at celebrating themselves. They're survivors."¹²⁹ 2020's canceled festivities are a testament to Butte's sense of community and pride in the town's heritage, both of which have been discussed throughout this thesis, despite hardships or complications.

¹²⁸ De Leon, Kristine. "I Think We're All In It Together': Many Butte Bars Decide On Their Own To Shut Down Over Virus Risk." *Missoulian*, March 16, 2020.

¹²⁹ Fisk, Chris. Interview by Margaret Walsh. Oral History. Butte, October 3, 2019.

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APPENDIX A: Ellen Crain Oral History Transcript

Maggie Walsh: Ok, so whenever you're ready.

Ellen Crain: Okay. So, my name is Ellen Crain and I'm the director here at the Butte-Silver Bow Public Archives and I've held this position for, I believe, twenty-eight, twenty-nine years. So that's a very long time to be in a position. I've loved every minute of it. It's been a really great career. I really enjoy my job every day.

MW: Do you have a certain specialty here or is it more general?

EC: Well, I'm the director, so I do a lot of administrative stuff, you know? Human resource management, budget and finance.

MW: Wow, so you cover it all.

EC: Yes. You know, being sure that everybody is getting taken care of and the projects are getting completed. We get a lot of grants here and that has been wonderful because it diversifies our thought processes, but it also gets overwhelming. Last year we wrote six grants and usually you might write six grants and maybe get one. And this year we got them all.

MW: Oh, my gosh! That's amazing.

EC: I mean, this kind of tipped over our capacity because now you have to do that work and it's on top of your regular work. But we're doing a lot of great work. We're doing a common heritage grant where we're looking at the ethnicities of Butte and we found at the end of about a four-year process that four nationalities who have really made a big contribution to our community have no documentation in our facility. And that is kind of disturbing to us because, you know, we get so many researchers will come, you know, about 5,000 people a year travel here from all over the world to do research and to not have a comprehensive history of the Mexican community or the Jewish community or the German community. And the other community is the Finanders, who are very interesting. And these people are people who have been in our communities since the very beginning. So, we have had marvelous workshops and we just put up the exhibit on the Jewish community.

MW: Oh, I saw that coming in!

EC: Yeah, and so we're going to have a big event. The twenty-seventh of September for them. And so, it's been fun, but it also gets a little bit crazy to do that. On top of that, the ambassadors coming in. Yeah. So, it's like okay.

MW: So, are there, with the different... I know that Butte has historically been very ethnically divided into different neighborhoods, and obviously the Irish have big festivals here. St. Patrick's Day parade is huge, people come from all over, but are there other kinds of ethnic celebrations throughout the year that aren't really just the Irish, maybe other nationalities?

EC: Well, they all do have their events and holidays. And one of the things about Butte is, you know, my friends will say we could still touch our country. We can still touch it. And our people and we have this sort of immigrant memory here and everybody goes to all of the events because the food is fabulous. So, if there is a big event, like the Serbian church is going to have a big wine event and that's going to be in October and that's not their best event, but it's an important event. And it will be packed with all kinds of people because the Serb ladies will come together and prepare the food and then the wine will be there and there'll be lots of opportunities to come together as a community. And so that's fun. And last year, the Cornish Festival of Sostan Fest, they had their first festival and they had a big pasty contest, which I thought was wonderful. And why haven't we done that before? Because it's, you know. It's really our dish.

MW: Yeah, that's a classic Butte food from my research that I've done.

EC: And, you know, in the world, the Cornish went everywhere in the world to teach mining. Because they are the oldest miners. So, in Ireland, in the Beara Peninsula, there's a big Cornish settlement. Yeah, so pasties have a big Irish relationship as well. But we have lots of great holidays and we all love to participate in them, you know?

MW: Do you think those are more Butte community events or do you think they're actually people reaching back to their heritage?

EC: I don't know. You know, I've lived here a long time and I've traveled a lot of places, but I don't know where in at least the state of Montana that they don't have lots of cultural activities where they celebrate their culture, the culture they came from. And it becomes a big community event. There'll be this horrible lutefisk event at the Lutheran Church, which is actually an Irish dish. And it's amazing to me the number of people who will go to that to eat a really bad food.

MW: Just for the sake of community.

EC: Just to hang out with people who are wonderful. And the desserts, of course are what you go for. Because the desserts are incredible. And I think in Butte, we come together as a community a lot more than other places. And I think we look forward to those opportunities where we can be together, which I have always felt, and this is an unresearched, personal feeling is, you know, that the Irish are communal people. And before the famine, they really were a very communal people and lived well together and traded well and took care of kind of, you know, the greater good. Starvation, of course, altered that as it does in many cultures. It's not unique to the Irish, but I feel that in our community, that sort of communal belief of taking care of your neighbor and coming together and celebrating together is a distinctly Irish thing. And that as some cultures came, you know, the Irish and the English were here first, and mostly because of the skill. They had a high skill, the English or Cornish, mostly, to teach the miners and sink the shafts. And then the Irish came because they were experienced miners in the Beara Peninsula and on the Copper Coast in Waterford and other underground workings in Ireland. And they came here because they could work. And so, when they're the largest population, they tend to have an influence.

MW: So, the community feeling is contagious.

EC: It is contagious. So, as the Italians, and the Croatians, and the Slovenians, and the Finlanders came, in order to learn how to work everything, it was the Irish that taught them and they just bring them into the fold.

MW: That's so interesting.

EC: That's how I kind of see it. And then as they intermarried in in later generations, then, you know, you have so many people who have multiple cultures within their family. And so, it's kind of...

MW: Kind of passed down.

EC: Yes.

MW: So, to move into specifically, Fourth of July, St Patrick's Day, and An Rí Rá, I was wondering if you might give a description for each of those holidays for somebody who maybe has never been to Butte for those celebrations.

EC: Ok, so Butte was created as a community in the 1860s, and there were many young Irish that came in the 1860s and they came off the battlefields of the Civil War and they celebrated St. Patrick's Day here in much the same way that they celebrate St. Patrick's Day today, a religious ceremony and a bit of a celebration. And food, not great food, but food. So, we document St. Patrick's Day as being an event with a parade and a Mass and revelry from as early as 1870 in the newspapers. The Ancient Order of Hibernians was an early organization here and they were in charge of that event. And it always was a march from their hall on the corner of Center and Main Street to St. Patrick's Church for Mass. And then the parade. That would be the parade and then the Mass, and then off into the wild blue yonder. And so that has, I think, run to today. There is still a church element. There is still a parade. There is a lot of revelry. Unfortunately, it almost always falls on spring break. And so that is why we get the bad rap. Tom and Cindy Powers, who are two important components of a shift in St. Patrick's Day in the last 20 years have started Handing Down the Heritage, where the dancers dance, and there's Irish music and dance at the Civic Center at, say, five thirty, six o'clock. So, as the Butte people leave the uptown area about three to go eat and then they go to the Civic Center and enjoy each other's company with song and dance, and God knows what happens uptown, because no one would go there. So that is St. Patrick's Day. The Fourth of July is a distinct American event and wonderful event. And in Butte, as early as 1864, they celebrated the Fourth of July by blowing things up. A lot of dynamite. In mining there's a lot of dynamite. And the Fourth of July always had some kind of formal activity. And I was doing a little research on the King and Lowry Saloon, which was an important saloon here, a couple of months ago. And the Fourth of July, always had a parade, a baseball game and a community picnic. And it didn't have a parade in the mid-teens. And I think it's kind of a little before World War One. And I think it was for a lack of organizational... The city government always kind of was in charge of it. And they also had speeches which were interesting to me, because even today, there are lots of opportunities where people have to do speeches. So, the parade always has been kind of a mainstay. These couple of years in the middle of the World War I where there was not a parade, there was still a baseball game and still a community picnic. And there that has maintained as a practice up until today. So that's a pretty

long time. And we love a good party here. And we have got the 4th of July stretched out so far. It's wonderful. So, you can start your Fourth of July activities on the weekend before it goes with fireworks and things like that. But then the major fireworks display is always on the third of July. And I don't know if you've ever been in Butte on the third of July, but if you go to St. James community park, it is a mob. It is packed from one end to the other with people on blankets and kids and all kinds of food. And people will bring music. And it's wonderful. Now, I live very close to this park. So, when the fireworks go off at 10 o'clock at night, you can hear the whole sound of the "Ooh!" And then if it's really great, you can hear them all clapping and honking their horns, if it's cold because it's almost always cold on the Fourth of July, and it's a wonderful thing, because you can hear a whole community together. It's wonderful. So, then the Fourth of July is always the parade and then the picnic and lots of family activity. You know, lots and lots of family activity. So that has stayed the same. You know, as our mining economy rises and falls, it's always up and down. And in the 1980s, we had so many dramatic and drastic blows to our economics that it has really never really recovered to 100 percent. It's shifted a little, but it's never recovered. And it's an interesting thing that we now hang on to those Fourth of July and St. Patrick's days like crazy, because they're the kind of the last vestiges of what had happened here. In the late 90s, the effort to start the Folk Festival, Evel Knievel days or Rascal Days, as we called them, and An Rí Rá, were really remarkable opportunities for people to pull together based upon various activities. And the first summer there was three festivals occurred simultaneously. Uh, no, the An Rí Rá, Evel Knievel Days were simultaneous and that was really wonderful because it gave people more of an opportunity, but it also drew a bigger audience to our community. And I think that's really a remarkable thing. So, you know, those things spur people to have a greater understanding of the place that we are, because it occurs to me in the last 10 years, we have become very misunderstood. So, people think we drink pit water, which is interesting because they must lack a great deal of education. People do not understand mining people, do not understand Superfund. People don't want to come here because they feel they'll get sick by driving by here on the road. It's a very interesting shift and people are afraid of Butte. They feel we're all pretty ignorant, that we're living somewhere that will kill us. There's a lot of misinformation out there that no one is getting their arms around and redirecting. It's interesting to me. But I have seen a real shift. So, when people come here for a festival and see that there's more to us than the pit water, it I think helps us in some ways. So, it's been very interesting to see that whole shift.

MW: I noticed the Butte website that Butte is advertised as the Festival City of Montana, which I thought was really interesting, I guess probably because of all these different events that happen throughout the year, including the Evel Knievel festival, which I didn't know existed!

EC: Yes and no, it doesn't either. It was short lived. It was really something to witness. It was really something to witness because it was people just set themselves on fire and jumped off buildings. It was really something. I am glad I got to see it!

MW: You mentioned earlier that you travel a lot. And I was wondering if you've ever been in another town, whether in the U.S. or even in Ireland or somewhere like that, for Fourth of July, St. Patrick's Day, anything like that.

EC: So yes, I have. I was in Seattle on St. Patrick's Day. They didn't know it was a thing. The only place that you knew it was a thing or a thing that it could have been was Kells. And you couldn't get in. That was very interesting. Just because you know, here, it's such a big deal. I was in Ireland on the Fourth of July. I think I broke my leg on that day. Yeah, I did. So. Yeah. And of course, they don't recognize the Fourth of July at all because it's so American. But I have also been other places on Fourth of July. And it's more of a summer activity, even people's family come together for the Fourth of July. There might be fireworks, a barbecue or a picnic. But not always a community activity.

MW: So, it's almost like Butte is a big family and they come together. Whereas, it's smaller in other cities, maybe?

EC: Yeah, maybe.

MW: I've also heard that there are An Rí Rá's in other cities, which I did not know about.

EC: An Rí Rá means big noise. So it's a you know, it's a big event. So we titled the Irish Festival, An Rí Rá, actually Traolach decided that's what it was called. A lot of times call them a Big Craic, which is also a big party. But An Rí Rá, so it's a loud noise. So that makes sense for it to be other places. That's a very common Irish term.

MW: Wow, so you've traveled so much, I'm jealous that you got to see holidays in so many different cities. Have you noticed that these... Well, I guess you sort of answered this already with the idea that in the past 10 years there's been a shift a little bit. But I was kind of wondering about changing significance of the holidays, and especially with St. Patrick's Day. I was wondering whether it's still a day to celebrate heritage or if it's more just an excuse to kind of party.

EC: Well, like I said, it has really bad timing because it's spring break, which you get all these young kids out from school and they don't have to worry about going to class with a hangover. So that has really shifted with the Handing Down of the Heritage. And that has been a really good thing. I feel that that has brought again, the community people now have a place to go and celebrate their culture without being involved with young college students doing, you know, what young college students do. I mean, it's not like it's a malicious thing. It's just young college students. So, I think it has shifted. Which is good. Yeah.

MW: Yeah, that's true. Do you have a favorite out of all three of them?

EC: Out of all of the holidays? I like St. Patrick's Day.

MW: Do you attend the parades every year? Or is it more...

EC: I do attend the parade every year. I have been the queen of the St. Patrick's Day twice.

MW: Oh, my gosh. What was that like?

EC: Well, it's very wonderful.

MW: And do you sit on the float and stuff like that, or did you walk around?

EC: Yeah. Well, you know, I was the grand marshal. The marshalette. Yeah. That was wonderful. It was a really wonderful thing because you get to you know, it's important culturally to me and it is great to be able to be there. And people are generous and wonderful. And we handed out candy and that was good. And it's fun. Yeah, it's fun. Yeah.

MW: How did you get chosen for that?

EC: Oh, people nominate you and it's not... Well, I'm not really sure.

MW: That's so cool, it's a popularity contest!

EC: Yes. Yes. And not always Irish people get selected.

MW: That's interesting.

EC: Yeah. So, it's a community thing. Yeah. Which is good.

MW: I would agree with that. So, it brings in other members of the community.

EC: Yeah, and you know everyone is Irish on St. Patrick's Day.

MW: That's true!

EC: I don't know if you know this, it's allergy season.

MW: Oh, I have allergies too, so I totally understand! Do you have an element of the parades that is your favorite? Like I gave examples: music, dance, or maybe the parade floats? Or do you find yourself looking forward to a specific aspect of each of the celebrations?

EC: Well, yeah, I think music. I think the music. Yeah.

MW: I was here for St. Patrick's Day and I noticed that a lot of the Drum and Pipe bands were playing American songs on St. Patrick's Day. I thought that kind of struck me as interesting. Just, I guess maybe unexpected or something. You'd think that they would be playing Irish tunes.

EC: Yeah, I don't know. They're Americans. Some are Canadians. Yeah so, I think, you know, it's kind of how you make your own thing.

MW: That makes sense. Do you do you have Irish heritage in your background?

EC: Yes.

MW: Okay, do you feel more in touch with your culture or identity on St. Patrick's Day or is it more a Butte feeling?

EC: I would say it's more of a Butte feeling. You know, I had my DNA done. I'm 97 percent Irish. One percent Scandinavian. Less than one percent Western European Jew, which I thought was so fascinating. And then a little Welsh and a little Scottish.

MW: In this period like this age. It's kind of shocking to me that you would be so like majority Irish. I don't know. It kind of shocks me in America with the idea of a melting pot or whatever.

EC: Yeah. So, all of my contemporaries are coming up about the same. Or they're coming up, Montenegrin, Serbian, Irish or their coming up Italian, Irish-Italian, Croatian. I mean, it's, you know, Butte almost becomes isolated at different times, because it's, in Montana, it's industry and it's very industrial. It had this sort of industrial history. And it also was an agricultural hub of distribution and labor. And, you know, Montana has nothing in common with Butte or Anaconda. I mean, it's just nothing. And it's almost as though we isolated ourselves in that economically and culturally.

MW: Maybe that's why there's kind of a misunderstanding that you were talking about earlier about Butte culture and the people here.

EC: Yes. Yeah. Sort of interesting.

MW: Yeah, it is. I want to shift more to your personal memories really quickly. And I want to talk about if you had a particular parade or year or a moment in a parade that kind of stood out in your mind? And I'm thinking maybe the grand marshal year was probably one of them.

EC: Well, the Grand Marshall year was important. I think I will tell you memorably, there was not a Saint Pat... in 1916, Ireland started the Civil War, you know, to obtain its freedom from England and from '16 to '22-23. The Irish in Butte raised millions of dollars for that event. And in '22. Oh well I guess it was in '21. They split, the community split because there were a lot of Corkonians lived here from Cork where James Connolly – or Michael Collins – was from. I just did a big thing on James Connolly, which is why he's in my head. And Eamon de Valera had come here a number of times and he had been for the... he voted for the split. Give them Belfast and we'll keep the rest. And Michael Collins said no, and the community of Butte did exactly what Ireland did, it split. So, it ended that Ancient Order of Hibernians and the Robert Emmet Literary Association and all those organizations started fighting amongst themselves and they destroyed themselves, essentially. And there was not another St. Patrick's Day parade in Butte until the 1960s. And I want to say it was kind of mid-60s.

MW: Wow, that's super interesting.

EC: It is super interesting. So, my father, Tom Powers, Dan O'Neal, there are four or five others that are... names are escaping me. I want to say, Tim Shea. They decided this one year that they would start the parade again and what they would do is go to St. Patrick's School and get all of the students out and the parade would be them and the students. And they would march over

Park Street and up Main and down Montana and then send the kids back to school. And I was a student at St. Patrick's School and I remember that vividly, because it was the start of a parade again. So, you know, whereas there have been very few breaks between the Fourth of July parade, there was a huge amount of time between parades for St. Patrick's Day. And that, I remember that vividly.

MW: That must have been extra special because your dad helped to organize that too.

EC: Yeah, I don't remember that. I don't remember that. I remember when he was Grand Marshall and we were all in the parade with him and that was wonderful because he was older and, my kids, and that was more, kind of like a family thing. And then when I was Grand Marshall, they, you know, my parents were in it again and that was nice because that was... The second time that I was Grand Marshall, I had just recovered from cancer and that was pretty traumatic and I was feeling very much grateful to be alive and so...

MW: That was probably a special year then, to celebrate that.

EC: Yeah. And it was a shift in the management of the parades, which was a big deal.

MW: So, to go back to your... you mentioned there was a lot of fundraising in the early 1900s with St. Patrick's Day. In my research I've also found that on the Fourth of July, a lot of the Irish clubs also fundraised for the Irish Cause, during that same time. So I guess I'm kind of wondering if there's still a political or social dimension to these parades today? Do people still try to spread awareness about different issues or try to fundraise or stuff like that?

EC: Yes. Well, the politicians come from all over to march in those parades. I mean, Barack Obama marched, in the Fourth of July parade with his family, when he was running for president. And his daughter had a birthday party at the community picnic, and it was a big deal. And all of the congressional people come for those parades, the Senators. I didn't see any Republicans this past year, but Jon Tester was here. The state legislative people, the candidates for governor, they all come and be in those parades, during election years. So, when it's not an election year, there are not so many of them. But the governors always come. Governor Schweitzer was an AOH member, he'd always participate in the parades. I think he still participates in parades. Yeah, I think he's in the Anaconda AOH which is the oldest AOH in the state. Because it didn't break up. Yeah, because they have a parade too.

MW: Yeah, I actually accidentally stopped by when their parade was happening, so I got to see that as well, which was very, very fun.

EC: Yeah, so anyway, the Democratic party has a Shillelagh Shindig on the night of the Friendly Sons of St. Patrick banquet. So, we stretch out the Fourth of July for a number of party events. We have a number of party events on St. Patrick's Day. With the Friendly Sons of St. Patrick happening before and then the Shillelagh Shindig happening after, which is a fundraising activity for the Democratic party. And then also on that day, which is always on the 16th, is St. Urho's Day. Do you know about him? He ran the grasshoppers out of Finland. And we're not really sure about that, but we're working it here really well. So, the Finlanders have a big event on the 16th,

where they crown St. Urho, and he is in the St. Patrick's Day parade too. And he has a big entourage. And that's a very fun event. Those Finlanders are fun. And so that's a big component of that whole timeframe. So, when you think about it you have two cultural events happening and a political event. I don't know of anyone who raises funds during the St. Patrick's Day or Fourth of July parade except for the people who are doing the parade themselves to raise the money. But during a political year, you would have a lot of candidates participate.

MW: That's interesting, when I was here last St. Patrick's Day, I noticed that, that there were a lot of politicians in the parade and I didn't know if that was a normal thing or just happened to be this year, or something like that.

EC: I think you will always find some. Now, this St. Patrick's Day, Mike Cooney will be here and all those other democratic candidates. And they'll be here for those three days, they'll be at the Finlander event, at the Shillelagh Shindig, at the Friendly Sons, they'll be everywhere. Networking. Yeah.

MW: I also in my research noticed that the different social organizations, the Irish social organizations, hosted picnics on the Fourth of July, in the past, and I was wondering if that still continued today or if that's kind of dropped off?

EC: Oh, you know, I don't know. That's a good question.

MW: Yeah, I didn't know, because you mentioned that the AOH broke up for a little bit, so I didn't know if that kind of disrupted things a little bit.

EC: Yeah, and where did they have their picnics, and were they different than where the community picnic was?

MW: I wonder if they just maybe contributed to a big picnic or something like that.

EC: So, you know, when I was little, on Miner's Union Day, there's a big parade and picnics, my father's birthday, and you know, he always said that they had a parade for him. If you knew my father, you'd think that was funny. But, you would go to the Gardens and the Miner's Union, but all of the unions, different unions, the laborers, and the bricklayers, and the carpenters, and the teamsters, would all be having a picnic there, it wouldn't be just miners. They'd all kind of have their own little section of tables and their own food. And you know, it would be like hot dogs, and you could go to anyone of them and it would probably be the same food, but those big picnics would have different places. Like, oh those are the railroad works and these are the... So, I don't know, now I'm wondering, because you would see a lot of advertisements in the, say, 1920s, there would be the Gardens, there'd be Lake Avoca, there's the Basin Creek Reservoir, the Clark's Park, those would all be big picnic areas where people would go, and so it would be interesting to know... Like, the community event would be at the Gardens with the ballgame and the band, the Butte Mines Band, it would be interesting to know if those, like the AOH would sit at the Gardens on this grounds, or something.

MW: Yeah, I wonder.

EC: Yeah, I'd have to look that up. Now I'm curious. I'll go do a little research.

MW: It makes me wonder about the idea of community here. If it's still kind of splintered into ethnic groups, or if it's maybe now not so much. And I wonder if the answer to whether the Irish social organizations host picnics individually would answer that question.

EC: It might, yeah. You could follow that. I think they might still have some kind of summer event. But I don't know. You know, I'm not good at joining organizations.

MW: You have enough to do here already!

EC: Yes, I do!

MW: Kind of winding down here, I have some specific questions about An Rí Rá, mostly because I've just never heard of it until I got here. But I also read something about the fact that there was an Irish dance competition, like a national Irish dance competition, that was hosted here. Recently, I think? A couple of years ago, maybe. And so, I was wondering, why do you think Irish dance has so much popularity here in Butte? And, in my mind, it's kind of the centerpiece of An Rí Rá, so I don't know if you agree with that or if that is true at all, but...

EC: So I really think you need to talk to Tom and Cindy Powers, because you know, I think Cindy, I believe, felt that there should be more depth to St. Patrick's Day, and more depth to this sort of Irish activity. And cultural depth. And she learned, taught herself, how to do Irish step dance. She went to a couple of workshops, and then she started a small troupe. And then she built that troupe to a pretty good size, and then she reached out to Trinity Dancers in Chicago, and asked them to link to her school, so it would raise elevation of her school. And one of her students was the world champ, or national champ, and then went to the world stage, and I think he came in second. I mean this is a big deal. And Tom has Dublin Gulch which is a little band, his band. They do all the dance and music for An Rí Rá. I think you should also talk to Brendan MacDonough and Frank Walsh and Mike Tutty, who are the organizing crew who started An Rí Rá, and are still doing it, and how it evolved for them. I was involved with An Rí Rá early, we did the lectures and the genealogy, and that component, but that just became too much. So, we moved off and other people have taken up the gauntlet, so to speak, which is good. I think that when Cindy decided to do the Irish dance, it was at a time where Irish dance was becoming more... People were becoming more aware of it in the world. And it was near the same time as Riverdance. So it was sort of an international event. Yeah.

MW: I've read in different Irish Studies readings, that people in America found Irish dance to be an easy way to connect with their heritage. Because it's fun to do and it was a way for children to get involved with that as well. So maybe, that's how Cindy found Irish dance here too.

EC: Yeah, I think you're right.

MW: So, unless you have anything else to add, I think that's it for my questions. I don't know if you have anything else on your mind that you might want to contribute. And you've already kind

of answered my last question, which is, if you had any recommendations for anyone I should talk to after this. But, if you have contact information for them, I would love to get that from you, if possible.

EC: Yeah, we do. I have a list. Maggie, I think you should try to come on Thursday afternoon. And we can introduce you to these people and you would have the opportunity to see something in a different light.

MW: That would be great, I would really like to learn more about this. Thank you.

EC: Good, alright.

APPENDIX B: Chris Fisk Oral History Transcript

Maggie Walsh: I'm going to play with this volume on the side.

Chris Fisk: That's fine.

MW: If you don't mind introducing yourself, saying how long you've lived here, saying what your position at the school is, and maybe your own personal interests in history, that would be awesome.

CF: Okay, Chris Fisk, spelled C-H-R-I-S F-I-S-K. I'm in my twenty... oh gosh... twenty-eighth year of teaching now. I've been in Butte for twenty-six years. Married a Butte gal, I'm originally from Dillon, which is sixty miles from here, so Butte's always been kind of a part of our lives. Okay, my interest in history... I don't know. I had to take some in college! I wound up in history and enjoyed that and then went into special ed. Then, I got a master's in technology, started in special ed and then transferred to history a couple of years later, and have been doing it ever since! I've been doing Butte and Montana history for the past twenty-five years, and my specialty is Butte history. I teach Butte history here at Butte High School, with a curriculum that we started.

MW: Mackenzie told me that you were a local historian, expert, so...

CF: Yeah, we did okay! I don't know if I'm an expert, but I've been very fortunate to have good students and a good place to teach history.

MW: Well, that's great! So, to start things out, I was kind of hoping that you could give me a bit of a rundown on the Fourth of July, St. Patrick's Day, and An Rí Rá, and kind of what about these celebrations is particular to Butte, or specific or special to Butte.

CF: Well, Butte's always carried the label, The City of Celebrations, and that started way back in the 1860s. The first celebration they had was a Fourth of July celebration and most of the men were in the parade while the women and children clapped in the small mining city of Butte. I think, for the most part, on our celebrations, it cuts, I think, considerably deeper than just a regular holiday. I think a lot of the celebrations in Butte have a cultural identity tied to them, as well as a way that they as children and within their family sets and subsets celebrated these holidays. Tradition is big in Butte, as you can imagine. Especially when you start throwing around the likes of St. Patrick's Day and An Rí Rá. The Fourth of July celebration, we live in a community that's got a lot of community pride, it's very patriotic. In short, it likes its celebrations. And I've got my own theory behind it, but...

MW: Ooh, share!

CF: Well, I don't know. It's kind of funny. Butte people like their celebrations. They like to play as hard as they work, and they work very hard here. It's an ethnic community. We settled out very similarly to that of New York, with small ethnic neighborhoods. During that period they kept to themselves for the most part, but when they celebrated community-wide, for the things

like St. Paddy's Day and Fourth of July, Miner's Union Day, June 13th. It was a way to come out and, you know, show off your goods, and celebrate the community as a whole, not just of its parts. And each one of those little neighborhoods had its own celebrations as well. That they would celebrate. And so, I think to me, there are a lot of those identities been handed down through family traditions and neighborhood traditions year after year after year. That's just how it is, and that's a part of the fun! I also think, you know, once the big mining boom ended for Butte, you know, beginning in the late twenties, things really started to struggle in Butte. You know, this community has really taken some incredible economic hits that should've just dried it up like a tumbleweed, like so many other Montana communities. But Butte's got this real sense of survival. It really does. It's got a real identity. Different than all the other communities that I've been fortunate enough to visit or be a part of. This town's got a real identity. In hard times, they fall back on that.

MW: And they're hardworking, like you said.

CF: Oh yeah, God, they work incredibly hard. And you know, that's just not a line from the Chamber of Commerce, I mean that's an expectation here. And you give what you can, when you can. You celebrate children. And through that you're going to celebrate your holidays. But the point being, I think for a lot of those years when times were so tough, and including now, celebrations were all they had. You know, they never killed the big economic elephant that was going to put us over the top like other communities in the state, you know, Bozeman and Billings and Kalispell, but by God, you could always go to Butte. In Butte you could have a good time. They knew how to celebrate. They knew how to celebrate holidays; they knew how to celebrate family; and they know how to celebrate community.

MW: Would you say today that it's more of a cohesive community, or would you say that it's still the separate neighborhoods of ethnic identity?

CF: Oh no, I think it's cohesive. Back then they were territorial, they somewhat kept to themselves. I think the times that they didn't were during celebrations. And when they were in the mines, I don't think there was a lot of ethnic celebration. I think underground, especially during emergencies, and you know, fires and cave ins, and troubled times, that they stood together unified underground. They weren't out of Meaderville, you know they weren't Italian or they weren't Irish. They weren't Finns, they were miners. And that's reflected in Miner's Union Day, that they used to celebrated very heavily in Butte. So, I guess, the cohesiveness is definitely a part of Butte's identity now, different than it could've been a long time ago. You don't see a lot of the celebrations that they had in the past like Mesopust and Day of the Wren and, you know, things of that nature. But they still hit the biggies. And of course, one of the biggies in Butte is St. Patrick's Day.

MW: How else have the celebrations kind of evolved over the years, to your knowledge?

CF: Well, I think they've evolved through cultural expectations, let's jump into anthropology and sociology. I think it has changed because of social expectations and norms, but a lot of it has stayed the same. Okay, for example, when I was a kid, if I got sent to the store to get mom and dad a pack of cigarettes, they gave me the money, I went to the store and got them their

cigarettes and brought them back. That did not make me a chain smoker. In the same sense, my daughters are not going to run to the store and get me a Juul. That doesn't go now. Things have definitely changed. I think there's a lot more awareness now of alcohol consumption than in the past. But I also think we have a lot more problems with it now than we did in the past. You didn't see the issues, even with the young kids, when we were younger. I'm not saying we didn't have our issues and our problems, but for the most part, I think that's changed. And so, they've had to kind of strap it down and tie it down.

MW: What do you see as a high school teacher, how the kids are participating? You sort of touched on this in your last answer, but have you noticed that children kind of interact with these holidays in a different way?

CF: Well they do at the Montana History Club, that's headquartered out of this room. We're involved with a lot of those celebrations because we shoulder a lot of the labor where the older folks can't. For example, Oktoberfest, which is called Butteoberfest.

MW: Oh, that's so fun!

CF: We handle a lot of the concessions and set up and tear down for it. Fourth of July, you know, they're involved with the parade if they need help with that, or floats or something. Involved with Butte memorials. If they're going to have a history float in it, they'll be involved with that. St. Patrick's Day, the history club kids are involved with part of that celebration for the older folks called The Irish and Me, and all that is, is simply a place where, I teach an adult ed class, and we do everything we do on St. Patrick's Day without having to fight the painted green, drunk revelers. So, we'll come together at the Depot here in Butte and we get the bagpipers and Irish dancers and Irish singers and Irish speakers, and we have corned beef and cabbage and a potluck, because not everybody likes corned beef and cabbage. And the kids help out and celebrate that with us as well. And it's not a massively booze-charged blowout where you get drunk on green beer and then eat so much cabbage and corned beef you crap your pants. So, they're involved with that. And Christmas, they put up the giant Christmas display that used to be in Meaderville for all these past years. I'm trying to think of all the rest. An Rí Rá, that's really big, because a lot of the students that we have not only in class but in the history club are members of the Tiernan Dance Crew, and so some of these kids, by the time they get to high school, are borderline professionals. And they're really, really good. And so, it's really nice to have that little cultural aspect to draw from. And it's not something you see on TV or a stage once or twice a year. They're in your classroom. And that's part of their Irish heritage as well. So, you don't see that a lot. You're not going to go to Billings and see "Join the Irish dance team." They've got jazz, ballroom, whatever, ballet, hip hop. In Butte, we have Irish. That's very unusual. But it's also a part of their identity. And so, I always say this, you know, in Butte when you say you're Irish, that has a meaning. You say your Italian or you're Serbian, that's got a meaning, you know, even to the kids, to an extent where, I think in most of our culture it's maybe a label or handle on Snapchat or tweet, and there's nothing more to it than that. In Butte, nah, it goes a little deeper than that.

MW: That's so great, I love that.

CF: Well, we're fortunate.

MW: Yeah, for sure. People care.

CF: Yeah, and you know, your Tiernan dancers, good God, I've got eight of them this year. And by the time they get to high school, a lot of these kids have been in this program for ten to twelve years.

MW: Oh my gosh. So that was actually one of my questions, about the Irish dance culture here. I've noticed An Rí Rá kind of centers around it, and I think there was recently maybe a national competition here in Butte or something?

CF: Yeah, as well as a Butte child going to the world's competition. A young man in Irish dance. But, you know, again, it's who's behind it. Obviously the Irish. The Powers family is a real turnkey to that whole experience. I'm not saying the whole Irish experience, obviously not. But they have certainly gone leaps and bounds of carrying that into these new generations. And now it's gone from you know, mother to daughter directing this, and to the kids who now play in the bands. And it's very cool, you know, in that sense, those traditions are being handed down and their meanings are being handed down. And it's not to the select few that choose to, it's something that's shared community wide.

MW: Would you say that the Irish dance community in Butte is growing?

CF: Absolutely. You got little kids, they see it, they want to do it. It's kind of funny, when we were little kids, we played cowboys and Indians, or you wanted to be a fireman. In Butte, you see little kids out in the yard playing football, of course, and other things, but one of the things you see them doing is Irish dance. Here's a little three or four-year-old, you know, popping steps out, and you know right away what they're doing. They've had exposure to that as young children. And to be quite honest with you, that's how it survives. It's not a story out of a book, it's not a video you watch on YouTube, or something your teacher yaks at you in a classroom. It's something that they experience and enjoy, and so if they get something out of it, it's going to last.

MW: Would you say that the children see it as a Butte community phenomenon or as a way to embrace their Irish heritage?

CF: Yes, I would say both. Absolutely both, you know they catch a meaning out of it, they understand its importance. They understand how much the community enjoys it, and when they see that, it brings fulfillment to them. I mean it's not easy, my God, they've got to be as athletic as any sport out there. And when it comes time for March and An Rí Rá, these celebrations, Folk Festival, I mean they've really got to put a lot of work into these. It's not a single performance or a concert or a choir concert. These kids during that four and five days are going to have eight, ten, twelve performances. From the very, very, old at our rest homes, to schools, and the elementary and junior high, to the An Rí Rá that is celebrated at the Butte Civic Center. It's a big medicine. Or Handing Down the Heritage, excuse me.

MW: Is An Rí Rá similar to St. Patrick's Day in that it's a day to reclaim Irish identity?

CF: I think not necessarily reclaim, it's a chance to appreciate what Butte has. And I think it's a chance for folks to appreciate their heritage. By far, the largest ethnic influence to this day, as is in history, are the Irish. There's no doubt whatsoever. And that is incredibly reflective. You can't miss it in Butte. I'm not quite sure why we're called the Butte High Bulldogs and not the Butte High Leprechauns.

MW: That would be a more fun mascot.

CF: Yeah, it would be a more fun mascot. Tailgates would take on a whole new meaning! All that being said, they draw a lot of their identity from that.

MW: Why are there the two different celebrations then?

CF: Well they're different times of year. One represents a state celebration for the state of Montana, and a festival. Where the other is an actual holiday. Now, we don't get the day off to go to St. Paddy's Day. Although a lot of people do celebrate it. There's a celebration called St. Urho's the night before, which is completely made up and bullshit. But people still enjoy it. And it's a chance to come together and forget everything and walk away happy, and I think Butte could use some more of that. I think everybody could use some more of that.

MW: That's true, especially because it's still cold here in March and... dark days.

CF: Oh yeah, you're stir crazy, and cabin fever. Yeah. It definitely plays an important role. But your Tiernan dancers, you know, like for us, we just had them last week at the Schumacher Celebration, we use them for the Ghost Walk.

MW: Oh wow, what's the ghost walk?

CF: Where the kids role play old Butte figures and people tour through them. We usually do it in October.

MW: That's fun!

CF: And they come and do their thing. It's a part of our community. It's something that people like to see. And they take pride in it, not just the ones who do it, but as a community. So, Bozeman, Missoula, you might have green grass, we've got Tiernan Irish dancers. Top that. Because you can't. It's like saying you know, the Berkeley Pit, fifty billion gallons of contaminated acid water. Top that Bozeman, Missoula. Anyhow, you get what I mean.

MW: So you mentioned the separate celebration where there's a potluck, and you said it was at the Depot...

CF: Yeah, the Irish and Me. We do that for the older folks, because obviously a lot of people still go uptown. But uptown, the celebration is definitely geared towards the revelry. Ten thousand people painted green and ninety percent of them are hammered by twelve o'clock.

MW: I was told the first time I went to the parade that I was supposed to look the next day at the police blotter because there's always interesting stuff there!

CF: There is! Some of the things that we've seen during this celebration, it's just... you know. And it's not all bad, it's just a part of Butte.

MW: And do you think that the Irish and Me celebration is more of a serious opportunity?

CF: It's definitely more culturally oriented. It's a celebration, you know, the painting of the green. But we get into the likes of where did the Irish come from? We have Irish born nationalists who come speak and give presentations. Some, many, live in Butte. It gives them more of an insight into a country and a culture that we know is there, but we just don't really study it. Like what is the Beara peninsula and County Cork, and how does that tie to Butte's history and its people? Boy, there's a lot of ties. There's really a lot of ties there. They call it the most Irish community in the country, and I would definitely have a tendency to believe that.

MW: Really? Does Butte still make connections with people living in Ireland?

CF: Absolutely. Family, relatives, where they came from, you know tracing your family tree. And including Ireland coming to Butte. Our archives, Ellen Crain, you know, those people are incredible!

MW: I've interviewed her, so I've gotten to experience her firsthand!

CF: Oh yeah, and her father was a huge Irish influence in the community. And the songs that they sing, and the way that they carry themselves, they've got definitely a communal personality in Butte. And they are a driving force.

MW: Have you personally ever participated in the parades?

CF: Oh yeah! St. Paddy's or Fourth of July or what? All of them?

MW: All of them!

CF: Well the kids have been in a couple of the St. Paddy's Day parades. Doing different things for different people, politicians that needed banners carried and whatnot. We don't let them go to the bars or anything like that. Oh gee, yeah. We've had floats in the parades, I was the Grand Marshal of the Fourth of July parade three years ago, four years ago.

MW: Wow, what was that like?

CF: What was that like? It was neat! It's nice to be recognized by your community and friends, and the adults and kids, and yeah it was a great experience. It made me feel like a Butte person, although I was from Dillon.

MW: Well, you deserve it with teaching Butte history and stuff like that.

CF: We've done very well. We've been very fortunate. You surround yourself by good people, good things happen. And that includes the kids. You can only offer it; they've got to accept it. And when they accept it, good things happen.

MW: It's great that they want to participate in the parades and everything.

CF: Yeah, it's very neat. And it goes way beyond parades, but it's a community that takes care of its own and wants to celebrate its own.

MW: That actually reminds me of another question I had, which was: in the past, I found some articles that mentioned that the Irish social organizations here used to host picnics and fundraisers on the Fourth of July, which I thought was interesting because they were still forming as their Irish club. Do they still do that to this day?

CF: Sure, the Hibernians, they're back. They were absent for a long time but they're back. I couldn't necessarily say if they had their own celebrations, I'm sure back in their day they did, again back to the territorial nature of our neighborhoods. But realize historically, I mean my God, the Irish ran everything. They ran the schools, they ran the courthouse, the police station, the fire station, politics, they ran everything. And interestingly enough, especially when you talk about the Irish, the Irish have an incredibly strong foothold here. Compared to other urbanized areas around the country where the Irish were not welcome. In Butte, they ran it, and they did it on their terms.

MW: Must be why this community is so proud and large to this day!

CF: It must be, you know, this Butte tough thing, I'll tell you where they got it, it was the Irish. And although the Butte tough thing is more of a façade than it ever was, I mean, my God, this town is incredible. If Norman Rockwell was still alive, he would paint Butte, Montana. I've heard it described as a perpetual state of cultural jetlag that is completely endorsed by its participants.

MW: That's so funny! I wonder what is meant by that!

CF: Well, you know, there's a lot of the old that is still respected here, and that is expected. You know, you pick up the newspaper, look at posters, you see fundraisers for sick kids all the time. Sick adults. Let's have an auction. That's nothing new. That's every week in Butte. This kid's got to go on a trip, let's have a football board. Their gambling's a whole different kind of celebration. That tradition's held on quite nicely.

MW: I'm amazed by the strong community here. It's different from anything I've encountered.

CF: Thirty-six thousand people and everybody knows everybody. Facebook's a brute.

MW: Do you still see that happening with younger generations or is it mostly with the older communities?

CF: That's a hard question. Is it being passed down holistically? In some senses yes, in some senses no. I think the level of technology and where that's gone has reduced that need for that face to face, hand in hand community connection.

MW: That's worldwide probably.

CF: It is. I don't think it's all that good. I'm not against cellphones. But kid's got enough to carry around on their shoulders than worrying what they look like or what they're doing every second of every day of every minute. They don't get a break from that, and as you probably heard, Butte's paid the price for that. Our kids got it real tough. Our suicide rate is brutal. And it just happened again this week.

MW: Oh, that's horrible.

CF: Yeah, it makes for a long week at Homecoming. It makes you feel terrible for the kid and his family and, you know, their friends and the ripple effect in the community because it's happened so often. And I think a lot of that has to do with, to be frank, technology, and the way we handle things.

MW: There's a lot of pressure.

CF: Whoa, yeah. And I'm not so sure the older generations, the more seasoned members of our community, always sees that. They remember a time when they played in neighborhoods, when there was a lot of kids. Well there aren't a lot of kids in neighborhoods anymore. That social structure came from being in sports like football and basketball and baseball. And now social interaction is on the end of a cellphone. And we all have it, we live by it. That's neither good nor bad, that's just how it is. And I'm not sure, I keep hearing this term that "we have to embrace technology." I believe that, it's not going anywhere and it's just going to get bigger and bigger. But I don't think we need to let it dominate our lives, and further, dominate the culture. That's where we're tripping up.

MW: Find a place where it fits, not fit everything to it.

CF: Exactly. Yeah, really good. That's a great statement! You ought to do your master's thesis on that!

MW: Change topics now!

CF: Sorry, we digressed there.

MW: No, but it kind of speaks to the fact earlier that you were saying that the Irish dance community is kind of growing and I'm wondering if maybe activities like that for the younger kids maybe helps... Whoa, the lights went out!

CF: It's okay it's on an automatic timer. If it doesn't sense movement... there it goes.

MW: It's eco-friendly!

CF: It is! They've saved thousands. So, anyway, is that the savior? No. But it will be for some.

MW: It forces more social interactions.

CF: Oh, face to face, you bet. You can't Irish dance over the phone. You can't celebrate the fact you're Serbian with Old World dinner and Mesopust and Oktoberfest on the telephone. You know? You can't do that. And I think that kind of interaction is missed. And I'll tell you, I really think a lot of the kids enjoy it in a safe environment. I think there's too much on the safe end of it, you know, where you see kids running around with half a bowling ball on their head because they're riding a bike. I get it, I understand it. None of us had helmets. And some of us paid the price, not all of us, but I guess we know better now? But too much of the better doesn't necessarily make it right. Sometimes it destroys what's right. Too much political correctness. I remember when we were younger, these corny icebreaker games, you know where you grab the ball and say something about yourself and where you're from, and you're sitting there and thinking God, this is torture.

MW: I remember those.

CF: Kids love that. In the History Club when we do those, at the Cabbage Patch or Millionaire's Night, God, the kids love that. They think that's the cat's meow.

MW: I guess that's a good thing!

CF: Where we thought it was the lamest shit ever. So yeah, I think it all boils down to that lack of face to face social interaction.

MW: Stuff like that makes it easier to share yourself.

CF: It is, and it sets the stage or predicates a good support system that's going to be found outside of the homes, or in the peer groups, which is so important. You settle out the dust and figure out where your comfort zone is and you find other children there. So I think that's why the History Club has been so successful. I mean, God, last year we had seven valedictorians in the club, three convicted felons, five students who failed. You know? It's just the whole gambit. Speech and Debate, Bandos, football players. It's nice.

MW: Students get to make friends with people they wouldn't normally meet.

CF: They do, and it's a place to belong. And that's what everybody needs, I guess.

MW: Yes, a mini community.

CF: Absolutely, absolutely.

MW: Do you think that Butte's title... I noticed on the tourism website and you mentioned this at the beginning that they call themselves the Festival City or you called it the City of Celebrations, do you think that is due to the ethnic celebrations?

CF: Oh yeah, that's where it started. There's no doubt. But again, it's the community, they loved it. They absolutely love their celebrations. And they love tradition.

MW: And the celebrations probably preserve the community?

CF: Oh, absolutely. And during tough times, if that's all you have, that isn't something you give up. Even during the Depression Era. The time when the mining shut down and then the pit shut down, those types of celebrations, the grittiness of this town, it tied to their celebrations, you know? They're not little, they're big. They're really big, you know? They put a ninety foot statue up on a ridge. Why? Well, a guy had a dream and then he prayed. And his wife had cancer, well, let's put a statue up there. Didn't cost any taxpayer dollars, it was all done volunteer. Where else? Where else do they do that? They wanted to build a high-altitude Olympic speed skating training facility. Oh, yeah let's just do that. Do you understand? It's nuts, it's crazy. You look at it and you go... You hear the term can-do city, and that's all part of it. And that's not work, that's fun. So when these celebrations do come around, wow, that's big.

MW: It's time to have fun!

CF: The Christmas Stroll, that's huge! You just go.

MW: What's that?

CF: It's in Uptown Butte, usually the last week in November to kick off the holiday shopping season and all that, but they have a kiddies parade and the kids all dress up and they bring their lights and they get to march in a parade and the parents take pictures and then Santa Claus is there and they have bum barrels lit up all downtown so you stay warm. It's not St. Paddy's Day, but it's not St. Paddy's Day, and that's what makes it good! It's complete community. Treat Street, Charlie Judd's Halloween party, I mean who's going to think of that? All the other communities think, "Yeah, this is a good idea, we'll put all the kids in a safe place and they'll get all the candy they need and then they can go home." Shit, Butte's been doing that for sixty years. Anyhow, that's what I think. It's all their operation modem.

MW: It's an opportunity to see everyone in the community but also to get in the mood for whatever time of year it is.

CF: Yeah, it serves a community purpose, more than bringing business in, or "Shop at my store" or "Drink my alcohol" or "Let's drink microbrews and get, you know, shithoused." It's a place to

get together and have fun and celebrate culture. That's all, that's all there is to it. There's no hidden agendas. There's no one running for office, you know, vote for me, I'm Irish, although I'm sure that's happened. Yeah, it's just a neat way to represent a community and its wants and needs, and obviously it's worked, because none of it seems to die. You know, we've had a couple festivals go wayside.

MW: Evel Knievel, I've heard about that one.

CF: Evel Knievel Days, yeah. That one... that was insane. That was something to see, you know, a showcase of stuntmen and daredevils.

MW: I wish it was still around so I could see it.

CF: I do too, I do too. I wish folks could just get along and just let us celebrate a legend from Butte without all the politics with it. But unfortunately, you tie all the money and politics together and it doesn't have a good outcome. You could go into Uptown Butte and watch a gal shoot herself out of a cannon, a block long. An hour later, a guy lights himself on fire and jumps off a building and another guy jumps a semi. I mean, it was just, in true Butte fashion, just a Butte thing. And no one made excuses for it, Butte people don't have to do that, if you don't like it you don't have to be there. But it was fun, it was way fun.

MW: It sounds fun!

CF: It was kind of like the Fourth of July, right? Coming from Dillon, fireworks were always fun, but boy you didn't do it too much and you were damn careful where you lit them off.

MW: Really?

CF: Oh yeah, the farm fields, the wheat and barley, and the dried hay that's curing, I mean, that's a fire waiting to happen. You know, you come to Butte, it's a tradition. It's downtown shock and awe. You want to make money in Butte, Montana, open a fireworks stand. Butte people love to blow things up! It's remarkable. It's an unbelievable sight.

MW: So is the Fourth of July mostly fireworks and barbeques and stuff like that?

CF: Yep, yep. Red, white, and blue, and God bless America and everything that goes with it.

MW: I love that, that's great.

CF: Yeah, yeah. And it's a neat thing to see. Butte people are good at celebrating, and moreover they're good at celebrating themselves. They're survivors.

MW: They deserve to celebrate themselves, too!

CF: Yes, they do, neat thing about Butte, they don't shine anyone's boots, they don't care. They really don't care who you are. But in return, you don't have to shine their boots either. You usually, generally, get what you see.

MW: I like that. So, you mentioned that there aren't usually political undertones to the parades and celebrations...

CF: Oh, well, you know, if you're a politician, your ass is in that, if you're a Democrat, your ass is in the St. Paddy's Day parade, it's in the Fourth of July parade, and we do get Republicans here, sure we do. But no, that's one of the expectations of the community. We want to see our governor, and it's the same thing with our chief executive. Butte's really got a level playing field for the most part, socially. Everybody has their own cliques, but they're not overpowering, right? Chief executive, he isn't riding in the back of the car, his butt's down there helping put the parade on.

MW: That's awesome!

CF: As well as you! You know, if they need kids, you get them kids to help. If you need to help, you are there to help. There are very few that say no. And that makes it work. Sure, sure. And again, those are community binders as well.

MW: I read that in the early 1900s, the Irish kind of used the Fourth of July to fundraise for Irish independence.

CF: That is correct.

MW: I think it's interesting that politicians are still coming through today, even though it's obviously not for independence of a country or anything!

CF: No, no. I don't think we're going to see Mike Cooney run for governor under the RELA banner! I don't think ninety percent of Butte knows who the Robert Emmet Literary Association was. But they're aware of what they did. And their fight, and continuing fight, in Ireland. The conflict between the Catholics and the Protestants, and Project Child that was in Butte years ago, where they took Protestant children and Catholic children from Ireland and put them into Butte homes.

MW: Oh, I didn't know they did that!

CF: Oh my God, Jerry Sullivan. You need to get a hold of Jerry Sullivan. As Irish as Irish can be, and he was part of that program. You know, in Ireland these guys are throwing rocks, bricks, and bullets at each other, and in Butte, they're playing soccer and baseball and fishing. And then they go back to Ireland and, well, shit, it isn't that bad.

MW: That's amazing! Changing their ideologies.

CF: Oh, it is! But you got to do it from childhood. Once you're adults and that's entrenched, there's no changing that.

MW: But hopefully what that movement did is still having an impact in Ireland.

CF: Oh yeah, it's incredible. Those kids are now adults. It was insightful that Butte got to be a part of that. I mean, where else are you going to get the president of Ireland to visit your town, you know? McAleese, I think was her name. She came in and then envoys from Ireland. I mean it's just, you know, again, part of that celebration.

MW: I know a couple weeks ago, Eamon DeValera's son and grandson, I think, were here.

CF: That's right. That was huge! That was colossal!

MW: It's amazing, yeah, that it's still impacting today.

CF: Absolutely.

MW: I'm pretty much finished with my questions, I have one more for you. I was wondering if you had a particular year or memory from a parade that stands out? Maybe the Grand Marshall experience was one?

CF: That was very special to me and my family. That was an incredible honor, from an incredible community. I can't think of a better way for someone to say thank you, than to honor you like that. I really don't.

MW: Yeah, centerpiece of a parade.

CF: Yeah that was incredible. I guess one of my more interesting memories and early impressions... I guess I have two: the first time I saw St. Paddy's Day was with my future wife. It scared the hell out of me!

MW: Really?

CF: Oh my God, yeah. You go uptown at ten o'clock in the morning, and there's ten or fifteen thousand people painted green and they're hammered up. They're rolling! And I don't mean mini rolling, they're going! I saw a lot of fights. So that was one memory. My other memory was the first year they put the parade at the M&M on the world wide web. I mean, that was huge for us. You could get on your computer and dial it in, and you could see what was going on at the M&M all over the world! So as we're watching it in real time here, I had a brother-in-law in Seattle. So we did a sign that said "John and Rob" and "We love you, be watching at 8!" And we took a picture.

MW: Did they see it?

CF: Oh yeah! They took a screenshot of it! And all the changes that went with that... Hey Beck, will you grab this please? It's Lexie. Hold on just a moment, okay... So, I'm standing in line to get into the M&M, so they'd let ten people out, there was so many people. Those ten would go... Are you done, son? Perfect. Just set it right there on the... Anyway, we're standing in line and a guy crawls up on the sign above the M&M. And they're hooting and hollering, cheering him on, and he starts dancing, there's police around. And he kind of looks down at the people below him and he unzips his pants and pees on the crowd!

MW: Oh my gosh!

CF: Well then, the crowd starts throwing beer bottles at him, and now they want to kill this guy! And he's trying to get away, so he crawls through the broken window at the M&M, I thought they were going to kill the guy! I always thought that was amazing, like really, you're not that stupid! You are not going to insure shit! Well, it was nice visiting with you.

MW: That's so funny, thank you so much for doing this. I really appreciate it!

APPENDIX C: Monica Evans Cavanaugh Oral History Transcript

(Note: There is music playing in the background throughout this interview. As a result, at times it might be hard to hear what is being said.)

Maggie Walsh: So first to start out. I was hoping you could just introduce yourself, tell me how long you've lived in Butte, and maybe tell me a little bit about the store, if that works?

Monica Evans Cavanaugh: Okay. My name is Monica Evans Cavanaugh. I was born in Butte, 1949. We moved away when I was four to Helena, left Helena when I was in fifth grade to Denver for a year, back to Helena, and then came back to Butte, where my father's family was from and we used to spend a lot of our holidays, second quarter of my junior year in high school. So, I graduated from Butte Central and I went to Carroll for a year. And then I went to Tech for... I worked for a while and then went to Tech on and off whenever I could work it in with my job. I never did graduate, which is too bad. I worked at a local drug store, Downey Drug, for six years and then I got a job at Osco Drug in Bozeman for two years, which was great. It was a lot of fun. I liked Bozeman at the time, except at twenty-six years old, I felt like I was the oldest person on the planet because it was a college town. So eventually I came back to Butte and went to work for Skaggs here in town and worked for Skaggs Osco for 23 years. Part of my job there was I got to do giftware buying for the non-corporate planning section. So, anything that wasn't automatically sent in for a different holiday by corporate, I was able to order that gift and I was head cosmetician at the time. So, my giftware department kind of gravitated from a little glass gift where section into my cosmetic department. And over time it became a lot more Irish than we ever planned with the graces and blessings of the people. You know, my management, they were all for it. And so that planted the seeds in my head that, you know, I'm almost 50 years old. And I don't know, I'm going to have to work till I'm about 72. And I don't like the way I see the upper echelon in corporate. You know, we had the best district manager you could ever want. We had the best management team you could ever want. But you could see more and more and more coming onto their shoulders and fewer smiles on their faces. And, you know, as a supervisor, that's between management and corporate employee, you knew that stuff was going to roll downhill. And I just thought, you know, maybe if within a year, if I don't see things getting better, I'm not doing this anymore. So, I gave it my two weeks' notice in a year and I left. I had a friend who had a little house on South Montana Street. She gave it to me, well she didn't give it to me, but she asked me to take it, well kind of she did. And said, "Patty and I," her friend Patty O'Sullivan and Sally Bardsley thought, "you should open a store." And Patty said, "Make it an Irish store, Monica!" And then I had a really good friend who had moved here from North Dakota. She was a federal meat inspector. And she got really involved with a lot of us and a lot of it with the Montana Gaelic Cultural Society and the festival, which at that time was in Missoula and eventually moved to Butte. So, Teresa Scott became very involved with all of us and all of the things we were... seed's we were planting and such. And she helped me open this store. God love her. Because my husband was on the road at the time as a driller and he did not want me to do it, really. But he didn't forbid that I... I just kind of did it and then sort of told him. And he was like, "Okay." And that's how this was born. And we've been here 19 years. And within six weeks, we knew we had to move from that location. So, we chose this one. So, I opened down there in November and opened up here in February right before St. Patrick's Day.

MW: Oh my gosh, that was quick. So, it was popular, which is good.

MEC: It was. It was. And I had, my gosh, I had a legion of little ladies. Oh, God love them. I mean, they would come in for every little hiccup holiday, you know, and get something for their grandkids or their great grandkids. And they had a lot of them were members of the Lady Ancient Order of Hibernians, but a lot of them weren't. They were just Irish to the core, you know, and they were so proud of the fact that they had somewhere to celebrate their heritage. I mean, it was unbelievably... Now over the years, people kind of start to take you for granted a little bit. You've been here for 19 years and a lot of my little ladies have passed on. And so, it becomes harder, you know. But my tourist business is phenomenal. My Anaconda support is huge. And Butte support is still, it's steadfast. It just isn't what it was in the very beginning because it was all new and novel. And now it's you know, it's okay. It's just fine.

MW: So, you have a mix of tourism and regulars that come back?

MEC: Absolutely. Absolutely. And even right now, dominantly right now, in September and October, it's the people my age and younger that have retired, that want to still vacation when school is in, the lines are shorter, the tourist attractions – most of them – are open through the 15th of October. So, they're able to come and take part in that. But just see the sights and usually the colors, if didn't freeze like it did. But yeah, tourist support throughout Montana and the region is huge. And incidental tours that don't even know about it, that just are drawn into Butte because of our history. And they'll see the skyline uptown and think, what is this? And at night they see all those headframes lit up and the Lady of the Rockies and the M for Montana Tech. All of those things just draws them into Butte. And then when they come up Montana Street, I mean, if you're Celtic, whether you're Irish or not, if they're Celtic, they're drawn to that shamrock. It's amazing. It's kind of... And a lot of Europeans, regardless of their ethnicities, will come in here because it's a European-based flavor. And then they'll ask me where they should go and what they should do and what they should see. And so, it becomes kind of a... I don't know, a tourism destination stop. Unintended or intended, I guess.

MW: So they seek Butte advice from you because they see a European shop.

MEC: Exactly. You know, they see it's Celtic, because I called Cavanaugh's County Celtic as opposed to Irish, but it's got the shamrock. And then they come in and they'll say, why are there so many shamrocks all over Butte? Well, it just happens to be the most Irish place in America by a per capita percentage. You have to understand its percentage. And it actually includes the Anaconda. And, you know, if it weren't well... They said, "Well, how can you prove that? How do you know that?" I said, "Well it isn't... I didn't make that up. It's not my distinction," I said, "It's in the records." I said, "For heaven's sakes, it's at the county. We have some of the best records in the country in our archives, especially Irish."

MW: Yeah, I've been there to do research and it's great.

MEC: They're phenomenal. The Irish government is in awe with the Butte archives and the Irish government takes care of Butte, they know.

MW: Wow. How so? Do they come visit?

MEC: Well, in 1919, Butte raised the third amount of money in the country for Irish independence. So when Eamon DeValera came to Butte, who eventually became the president of Ireland and was the longest serving president when he died later in his life, and his grandson and great grandson and the new ambassador were just here a couple of weeks ago to Missoula and to Butte and, you know, for the Irish studies program and also to pay homage to Butte. And he... O'Cuiv, Eamon O'Cuiv was so impressed with Butte, he was nearly in tears giving his speeches and when he went to Missoula, they told me that he said, "I can't believe that I'm this old and this is the first visit I ever went to Butte, Montana." We knew he was impressed. But then when we heard what he said when he went to Missoula and he was with those guys at dinner and talking to Terry, Traolach, O'Riordain and all those guys, oh my God! So, Billy Monaghan was at the meeting and he's on the board of Irish Studies. And he was telling me. He's a Butte boy. So, yeah, so they make sure they kind of pay close attention to Butte. And when we had the visit from the president of Ireland in 2006, Mary McAleese, we were at the local Catholic high school gymnasium for her speech. And at one point in it, she says, "I know you people think you're Ireland's fifth province." Well, with that, the air kind of came out of the room. We know you *think* you're... Oh, my goodness, are we not? Of course, we are! Yeah, well, she said, "You are Butte, Ireland. Without Butte, Ireland would not be Ireland as it is today, nor would be Butte be Butte as it is today without Ireland. So those of us that were on the committee with An Rí Rá, here in Butte, specifically Brendan McDonough at the time, who was the chairman, asked her if he could use that. So, we had the picture made of one of the headframes with the two, with two of the headframes with the Irish flags on them. And then underneath it, it's titled "Butte, Ireland." And it's been a fundraiser for An Rí Rá ever since then. I hang it in here and all the proceeds go to the festival. So, I don't make a penny on it when we sell it. And we've sold a lot of them.

MW: I can imagine they'd be very popular.

MEC: Yeah, it's a beautiful picture.

MW: And it's interesting because in the past they called Butte, Butte, America.

MEC: Yes.

MW: And now it's kind of switched it seems to Butte, Ireland, which is wonderful!

MEC: Oh, no, that's just a moniker we can use in Butte amongst ourselves, basically. I mean, we're not trying to do that like the Butte, America. Butte, America, I mean, the Irish would come to Ellis Island and they'd ask them where they were going. Well a lot of them only spoke Irish. So they didn't even know what they were asking them. But they knew when they got there, to say that they were going to Butte. Well, Butte hadn't been a state, well I don't know, when some of them came it wasn't even a state, it was just a territory. So, when they're coming and people say, "What state are you going to?" Well, they didn't know what they were even asking them. And they just said Butte. Butte, America, you know, like, what's wrong with you? Doesn't everybody that comes from Ireland go to Butte, America? Because that's all they knew. It was a Butte and it was America. It was Butte, America. So, it's a moniker that they brought with them

and it kind of ebbs and flows. It kind of would go away and then come back and go away and come back. And since, I'd say that the late 60s, mid 70s, it kind of got a rebirth. One of the professors in Missoula and I asked David Emmons if it was him, and he said he didn't think so, but he said, I can't prove it wasn't. He would call his students his Butte Rats and then would also use the term Butte, America. And I think from Missoula and also from Bozeman, it became big. And this, I don't know this for a fact, I kind of know for a fact, but I don't know how to check it. But the Butte guys in the late 50s, early 60s weren't allowed to be in a fraternity or have a fraternity. Maybe because I thought we were wild drunkards. Oh, no! But so, they got together and they had they called themselves the Butte Rats and it was Butte, America.

MW: Oh, that's awesome! So, they made their own fraternity sort of.

MEC: Exactly. Yeah. So but they did call themselves of the Butte Rats, I'm told. And that they would use the term Butte, America. And then it really became big when Colt Anderson was playing for the Grizzlies because when he would be introduced, he would insist that they introduce him to say he was from Butte, America.

MW: Wow. I love that. That's so great. He had community pride.

MEC: Yeah. So, Colt has brought it back to the young generation. I have a sister who didn't like it. Didn't think it had any basis in history. And I said, "You're kidding!" She said, "Well, it's just something that they made up. Just lately, they just made it up." And I kind of talked to her and she's got a master's, PhD, whatever. She's just a brilliant girl and I thought, what are you thinking? It's been around for a long time. It came from Ireland. Oh, I don't believe that. Well, then she found out that, yeah.

MW: Does your sister live in Butte as well?

MEC: Yes, and it's hard to educate her. And I don't like to try. And I'm older, so I don't really like to try it.

MW: You don't want to be too bossy!

MEC: Yes, and, you know, I don't want to have her perceiving me... So I just didn't say much about it ever since then. And then she'd walk around and see how many things that I had Butte, America on. And people come up to the counter and say to her, because she helps me some. She has a really important job at Northwest Energy, but she helps cover for me on busy holidays and things. And she'd be at the counter and things that keep coming up with Butte, America. And she said, "Okay, I give up. I was wrong on that one."

MW: "I believe you now!" That's so funny! Does the shop participate when the Irish representatives come? Does the shop do anything special for those days or...?

MEC: They're usually only here for a minute. And then it's always at the archives. That's where they need to be. That's the old history and the new history and the history that's being made. It's kept at the archives. And so, whenever they come, if they are giving a public thing, sometimes

it'll be at the Finlan Hotel if it's small. But if it's a big deal, it would be like the Max Center because, you know, so a couple of thousand people can come. But as far as the store, usually I have to almost close so I can go.

MW: Oh true. You would want to see that!

MEC: Yeah. I literally, when the ambassador was here, it was on a Thursday afternoon at like 2:30 or something like that and I normally post 11:00 to 4:30 but usually by four o'clock it's just dead. So, and on a Thursday, for whatever reason Thursday seems to be the dead day of the week. But I just posted that I would be back as close to four as possible. But I was up at the archives for the visit of Eamon DeValera's grandson and the ambassador of Ireland. So, you know, and I thought, anybody that's going to want to shop in here basically is going to be up there.

MW: Yeah, they should be up there at least!

MEC: And if it's accidental, they'll probably come back to try to want to find out about it. I could see one footstep because it was a really rainy day, it was just a shitty Irish rainy day, which they said, "Disappointing, but very appropriate!"

MW: They brought the weather with them.

MEC: Yeah. They said, "Sorry, we didn't mean to do this, but we do feel at home it doesn't even bother us." It was wonderful. So, during An Rí Rá, I have a booth, a big booth.

MW: So, you mentioned that you were one of the organizers or founders of An Rí Rá?

MEC: Well, there was a core group of us. There was about eight of us that were... maybe eight to ten of us that were in the very birthing stages. And at that particular point in time, for only one year, because I was almost made to do it, I was president of the Montana Gaelic Cultural Society. It wasn't because I didn't want to be there, I couldn't do it. It was like, you guys, I've got this store. It's brand new. It's only been here a year. I cannot take this on. I've never been the president of an organization. I don't want to take on the paperwork. I just can't. But I did it because the gal who was going to take over from the one, Mary Lou in Missoula that stepped down, Loretta in Helena, was going to take over for it but she couldn't do it for a year because she was with the newspaper and she was making changes and there were a lot of big things going in her life, too. So, I took it on with her help. So, as president of Montana Gaelic Cultural Society and the owner of an Irish store, it made sense that I was on the board. And then Traolach, Terry, is what we always called him in the day, he was the one that basically, practically, made me become the president of the Gaelic Society.

MW: He knew! He knew you'd be good at it.

MEC: And he knew that Butte needed to be where the festival was. The festival was his vision.

MW: Oh, really? I didn't know that.

MEC: Oh, yeah. It was his vision. And he got together with me and asked me to get a group. And he was doing Irish language here in Butte. And it wasn't part of the whole curriculum up at Tech, but it would be up at Tech, because there were a lot of girls that were taking it that were employees up at Tech that were able to get one of the rooms down in the basement by the SUB and we'd have that on... Oh, I think it was Tuesday night or something. And so, and then he was also giving a history class, which was very well attended. The language class was mostly women, just a couple guys. But there were four guys that started it. None of them hung with it, but the rest of us stuck with it for four years.

MW: It was too hard for them.

MEC: But the history class was very well attended. And so, between the language and the history, we were able to get quite a few people that were able to jump on board. Certainly, Tom Powers with Dublin Gulch, and Cindy Powers, his wife who had the Tiernan Irish dancers.

MW: I'm talking to her later today actually.

MEC: Yeah. So, they were obviously both integral and founding members of An Rí Rá. And Brendan McDonough was one of the original, well he was the original chairman. And there was Mike Tuddy and Frankie Walsh and Shane Wolstein, who's in Missoula right now, Teresa Scott. Well. She's president. She's president of the Montana Gaelic Cultural Society now. And she's in Missoula. She works for... She's a federal meat inspector still and bases out of Daily's bacon. Yeah. So. I'm trying to remember if she was on the... Well, she was. She was with An Rí Rá in the beginning. I'm not sure exactly when she came. It was right about the same time, we got her involved in a lot of stuff anyway, she was on the peripheral. She wasn't actually one of... Most of us that were on that... It wasn't a board at that time, but we're just the original members were pretty much all Butte people. And then we were able to get Larry Maloney, who was a clerk of the court. We were able to get all kinds of other people who had... The head of the apron ladies. They're the ones that wear the tri color aprons and serve food to all of the performers. And they're just the best in it. Oh, Cathy Ryan, who's a musician. She was one to cherish the ladies. She's an alternative member of the Apron Ladies. And with great pride that she had, that they gave her an apron. Instead of the key to the city they presented her with the apron! Still funny.

MW: She deserved it.

MEC: Yeah. And it's the Irish festival is... it definitely did need to move to Butte because I mean it was attended in Missoula, but mostly by Butte people. You know, it was the Tiernan Irish dancers and it was Dublin Gulch. And it was. But then they had other bands that were from Kalispell and Libby, I think, that were Celtic. But it was Dublin Gulch people would go to see because they were the ones that sang the fun songs, not the traditional weepy songs but the fun folk songs. But also, some of the others that were mixed in, so they had the entire repertoire, where some of the other bands that would come, they would have a following, but people would be talking through it, where they'd be singing along with Dublin Gulch.

MW: I saw Dublin Gulch this year and they were amazing!

MEC: Oh yeah, they are. So, Terry realized that it needed to move to Butte. So that's why he made me be the president. And thought that that would help it move here and that he'd be able to get a troupe of people. So, we were able to get some. It was a lot of fun. And I don't think any of us really... Every week after on An Rí Rá, we regret it. And then a month later, we're all ready for the planning for the next year. And I, more or less, step back from it. I, you know, I just want to know what's going on so I don't misrepresent anything. I said, "You've got to keep me in the loop because I don't want to misquote or mis-say or do something that's not what is your plans. You need to keep me in the loop."

MW: Especially because you're a source of information around here.

MEC: I don't mean to be, but I am. Yeah. So people call to say, "Well, what's the date? Who are the bands?" And shoot, this year I didn't even know who the bands were until the middle of May. You know, and people were calling me since St Patrick's Day, asking me "Who are the bands for An Rí Rá?" Because they're trying to make their plans for the summer. I was like, come on, guys. I got to know that.

MW: So is An Rí Rá example of when the shop would be flooded with tourists and stuff like that?

MEC: Oh yeah. Oh yeah. It is, but so is the booth. So, we're running both of them simultaneously. And this is a one man show here. So, it's all volunteers. I have a volunteer that comes in on Friday and I have a friend, Sally, who ended up giving me that building at one time, it was like a little tiny shotgun house. It used to be a Montana highway department place of some sort. I don't know, office of some sort. And then it was empty. And she owned it. They rented from her. And it stood empty for a long time. And she finally just said, "Would you take it?" She put five thousand dollars into it before I walked in the door. So, it was just it was a cute little place. But we were only in there for eight weeks!

MW: You needed to expand.

MEC: It took me six weeks to realize we needed to move. And oh, it didn't even take... Yeah, it took six weeks to know we had to leave it and it was... Maybe we were in it for... I think it was only eight weeks. Well, no, it was twelve. I think it was twelve.

MW: Oh, my gosh. So, does the shop participate in St. Patrick's Day parades?

MEC: Yeah, I always have a float. And with Traolach's help. I wanted to have St. Patrick in the parade. And he said, well, if you make... Because he knew I sewed. He says, if you make a vestment for him, and you know, and the hat thing, and I had the St. Patrick that somebody had drawn for me up here. I was going to have murals put on the wall and instead we had it made into pictures. So, if and when I ever move here, they can be sold. They're just not murals that get painted over. They're part of the store that moves on. Somewhere.

MW: Yeah, they can be bought by fans and stuff.

MEC: Who knows. But anyway, I made that, and it was just beautiful. I mean it was... I had priests ask me where we got that beautiful vestment.

MW: Oh my gosh! And you made it?

MEC: I did. Oh yeah. Terry wore it in the parade in Missoula a couple of years, probably three or four, three or four times he used it.

MW: Really? I wish I'd seen that!

MEC: I mean, it was like in the early... like 2002 or 2000. Yeah, it would've been 2002, three and four maybe? He wore it in the Missoula parades, and maybe one time after that. But I always have St. Patrick in the parade here in Butte. And the Missoula parade is always on the Saturday before. So, it was never a conflict with him wearing it and us wearing it. But the whole idea of when I told them I wanted to put St. Patrick in the parade, I said, "How do we how to St. Patrick's Day parade in Butte and there's not a St. Patrick in there?" There was a guy that used to kind of walk along who was about 6'9", but he'd he left and nobody else wanted to do it. So I thought, well, let's not make him walk, let's put him on the float. It's a St. Patrick's Day float.

MW: And that way you can decorated it.

MEC: Well then, St. Patrick's Church started doing it. And I thought, well, you can do it, too. But I'm not taking St. Patrick out of the parade. I put him in. I'm not taking him out. I'm not trying to compete with you. In a sense, you're competing with me, with every right. And I don't mind. We could have 6 St. Patrick's in the parade and give a prize to the best one. I don't care. It doesn't matter, he just needs to be in it. And for St. Patrick's Church to have him in there is a great idea! But, I'd done it for 17 years or 15 years before they decided to do it.

MW: So you might as well keep the tradition.

MEC: Yeah, yeah. I wasn't going to stop the tradition and I didn't know whether whoever was volunteering to do it for them would choose not to. And I've got this tall, beautiful, redheaded kid who is very happy every year to be St. Patrick because he's very popular. People always have pictures with them. So, he just takes the vestment home with him and his mother has it dry cleaned and we go on for another year. And I said, if it doesn't need to be dry cleaned on a given year, don't, because, you know, we want it to not fall apart or anything over time. Because I said I can't ever replace that fabric. It was beautiful. It was drapery. It was just... It was a deep emerald green that it kind of had... It was a drapery fabric and it had this beautiful satin lining on the back of it. So, when it when it's on, it just flows. And then I got this copper and green Celtic knot work. That was two inches wide and put it down here and across like right here and then embroidered a Celtic cross in the middle of it. It was impressive.

MW: And the copper sounds appropriate to Butte as well.

MEC: Oh, my God. It's just beautiful. It's on a black background and it's copper and kelly green on black on top of that beautiful kind of deep emerald green. It's a deep green. It's not as green as your sweater, but it's got a sheen to it without being shiny. Just because it's a drapery fabric, it was an expensive one that I got in Spokane on a closeout. And I bought just a ton of it, not knowing what I was going to do with it.

MW: Yeah, but you knew it was somehow going to be useful. I bet that costume kind of brightens... Because it's usually pretty gray here in May or March, right? So, I bet that stands out.

MEC: Oh, it can be the most beautiful day in the world. It can be sixty-five degrees, like today, and just sunny and absolutely drop dead gorgeous. And everybody's running around in short sleeves and happy. And the year before and the year after can be the bitterest, coldest, biting, sleety, freezing rain or snow.

MW: That was this year, sort of. It was cold.

MEC: That's most of them. It's probably three out of four years. You know, it got to a point where we were getting some mild ones, but not so many sixty-five-degree ones, but the likelihood is either one. And An Rí Rá is kind of the same way. Because it's monsoon season. And this year we got hailed out. Five o'clock on Saturday night. We had to...

MW: Oh I wasn't there for that. I was there earlier on Saturday and I got the worst sunburn of my entire life.

MEC: I know! It was hot! And then it got freezing cold, and the hail was this big, at five o'clock. First it was rain. I mean, torrential rain. And all day long, you know, there were a couple of storms that would come through and it would... And then the sun would come out and they'd be dry. Everything would be fine. And we watched the clouds go in every direction, but not... Then all of a sudden, we were watching the West, and they called Tom Powers with the band, called the Weather Service, and they said, "You're two minutes away from a hailstorm. You better tell everybody to take cover. If the festival is going on, you best shut her down and take cover." And that's exactly what they did. So, all of the bands that came from Ireland that we're going to perform from 5:00 till 11:00 at night...

MW: Canceled?

MEC: Well, they couldn't. We had to shut it down because the hail was so bad and so heavy and so big that it weighed down all of the tents. And so, there'd be big pockets of water. Fortunately, our tent, Theresa was on one side with a Gaelic society booth, and I'm on the other side of it. And it's like a 40 foot. So, we both...

MW: I think I bought a shirt from your tent.

MEC: You probably did. I mean, it's a big space. And our peak is tall enough that there wasn't that droop. But, I think, people that had the little pop up tents, they were just emaciated. The tents broke.

MW: I wonder if it damaged the things they were selling? I hope not.

MEC: I think everybody had enough warning when they gave them the two minutes to just, seriously, I mean, they said it's about to hit. It was just rain that came first. And as soon as everybody felt the first drop of rain, they started tearing down and packing up. And so, by the time the hail came, I think they were all in totes.

MW: The weather here is very changeable.

MEC: Well, when you have an outdoor event, it doesn't matter where it is. You have to be ready. Your totes have to be underneath your tables, you have tablecloths on your tables, your totes are empty, and if something happens, you just start throwing stuff in totes. And then what doesn't fit in a tote that's lidded, you just put under the table. And you hope that that tablecloth is going to get soaking wet. You put something heavy on that, even if it's a tote, on this end and that end, so that the tablecloth becomes another way to protect whatever you're... Like these kinds of things, they're not going to fit in a tote, but you can take them and stick them under the table, it protects them from the wind.

MW: Right, and you wouldn't want stuff like stickers or postcards or something to get wet. Wow.

MEC: And basically, I'd take that and that and that, all go with me. Most of the rest of it is t-shirts and clothes and hats and stuff, scarves.

MW: I wear the t-shirt I got all the time!

MEC: Which one was it?

MW: It said An Rí Rá on it and it had like a deer?

MEC: Oh that's Theresa's! That was the one next door. Yeah, so she's the friend that lives in Missoula that works at Daily's bacon, bases out of Daily's bacon.

MW: Oh, right! She's the president of the Gaelic Society.

MEC: So, anytime you could go into Daily's bacon and ask for Theresa Scott and, if she's not in Lincoln, because she has to go up to Lincoln every single day. Every day she works.

MW: Wow, that's a huge drive isn't it?

MEC: Yeah. On those roads in the winter?

MW: That must be impossible!

MEC: Terrible, terrible.

MW: Hardworking.

MEC: They make it really hard on her, they do. I think they're trying to make her quit. She's just not going to do it.

MW: Oh gosh. Does she want to come back to Butte eventually? Maybe she should just take this opportunity to do that!

MEC: She's not old enough. Because what am I? Sixty-nine. She's maybe fifty-five, something like that? She's just not old enough to retire. When she retires, she wants to retire when she wants to retire, with all the years she's put in there with full benefits. And the government tries to get you out before you get to that point. And she's just unfazed by it. Well, she's fazed by it, but she's not going to let them know she's fazed by it. She's not going to let them get the best of her, she's just not.

MW: Put on a brave face.

MEC: Yeah. Sometimes I have to say, "Theresa, you're not at the butcher shop and the people you're talking to are not criminals!"

MW: That's so funny!

MEC: Get a little softer. She'll read some of the stuff she writes herself and go, oh yeah, okay.

MW: That's so funny! But it's good she has you to talk about her frustrations.

MEC: Yeah, and it's a tough job for her. Darn good at it, but it's a tough job for her.

MW: So does she still, I know she works at the booth at An Rí Rá, but does she go into the planning of it as well?

MEC: Not so much. She wants to know what's going on with the planning as president of the Gaelic Society, because they're the mothership of An Rí Rá, they're the umbrella that we're under. So yeah, so, we have board meetings, we don't have a lot of board members, you know, but we have what we need to have. And it's hard to get everyone together because everyone is scattered all over the place. We've got Helena, well there used to be two in Helena, two in Missoula, and three in Butte, one in Miles City. He was never able to come in, but he sat on the board and gave his opinions and feelings and he was instrumental. He would forward information to people in Miles City because he was a Butte guy, newspaper guy, that was very well respected in Miles City.

MW: It's good that he was able to be kind of a representative, then.

MEC: Yeah, oh yeah. I forgot my glasses today.

MW: I meant to put in my contacts today, so I kind of have the opposite problem, I did not mean to wear my glasses today!

MEC: These hide my baggy eyes!

MW: You don't have baggy eyes!

MEC: Yes, I do! I never used to and then all of a sudden I do. But I've got cancer and heart problems, so it makes your body really tired because you have to take like seventeen pills or something.

MW: You're fighting.

MEC: So, I don't even care, but there's all these side effects, and exhaustion is one of them. You just get so damn tired.

MW: And especially because you're running this place!

MEC: And that's why they made me cut my hours, but it makes sense in the winter months. I mean it is stupid to be open before eleven. All you're here for is to vacuum, I mean, look at me!

MW: Yeah tourism's down in the winter, I guess it makes sense to cut hours. It's good for you!

MEC: Yeah and then you have a sunny day like this, you'd think that there would be people in here. I don't know! I don't know. Tuesdays have been really busy lately. But all it takes is one tourist. You got to be here, because I was thinking maybe in October, I'll close Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday, and just get some stuff done at home, you know, oh my God, I never have time at home. But I can't, I just don't feel like I can.

MW: Yeah, it's probably a tough decision to keep open or spend some time at home.

MEC: But I was told, if I want to stay here and work until I'm seventy-two or seventy-five or whatever, if I don't slow down, I'm not going to make it. Because you're too tired, and you're body's trying to hard to compensate.

MW: You've got to get your rest!

MEC: Eh! My philosophy is, whatever you've got, get up, take a pill, go to work. Read the paper, have your cup of tea, and just go to work! Because when I get here, it's this place that keeps me alive. I've worked here, basically without a salary, for nineteen years. I could never have done anything that could make me happier. So, because I've pretty much put everything back into the business, not every dime, but pretty much. You know, sometimes we'll pay an occasional bill out of here or I'll buy a new pair of pants or a pair of shoes or something, or we'll

go to a concert because I had a good week. But otherwise, it just all goes back into the business. You meet the best people.

[Break to answer phone call]

MW: Thank you so much for letting me stick around!

MEC: Oh, you're welcome honey.

MW: So, my last question is, what is your favorite Butte holiday and why? Kind of a fun question.

MEC: Well, certainly it would be St. Patrick's Day. When I was a little girl, even when I lived in Helena, I went to Cathedral High School, and their school colors were green and white, and when it changed to Helena Central, it was still green and white. And we always had a St. Patrick's Day parade over there, but it was nothing like they have in Butte. You know? So, when we came back to Butte, it was very exciting for me to be here. And speaking of being Irish, but I'm also, I'm a Celtic knot. Because I'm Irish and Welsh and Scottish, with a little bit of German, supposedly, that's not showing up on the DNA. There's more Irish in there than I thought. My grandmother never knew that. So I asked my dad one day, because my mother died when I was twelve, "Why is it that I have to have a kilt every year?" He said, "What are you talking about?" I said, "I have to have a kilt." And he said, "Why do you think you have to have a new kilt?" I said, "That's what I'm asking you!" I said, "I don't understand why I think I have to have a new kilt, but I always have to!" And he says, "Honey it's in your..."

[Customer speaks to Monica briefly]

MEC: So, he says, "It's in your genes, honey." And I walk away from him thinking, oh he is silly, because I'm Irish, not Scottish! Because, you know, to me, I always had to have a kilt but I never understood why, and then I have pictures of me as a baby and I'm all in plaids. But my mother, her nickname was Bonnie, which was Scottish. So, she was basically half-Irish and a quarter-Scottish and a quarter-German.

MW: Oh, wow, so it really is in your blood!

MEC: Yeah, it's in my blood. "So why do I have to have a kilt?" "Well, you don't have to have a kilt, what are you talking about?" "Yes, I do!" I just knew, when I was a little girl, even though my mother was gone, I had to have a kilt.

MW: Well that's a good way to keep her memory alive!

MEC: Yeah, yeah! So I don't even remember what you asked me!

MW: No, that was a good side story! Thank you so much for taking the time!

MEC: Yeah, it's just that the green is just running through me, and when we came home for holidays to Butte, the roots were just there. They were just planted so deeply, and I have so much pride. I just love it.

MW: You knew you had to move back.

MEC: Yeah, and then when I had the opportunity, it just kept coming out of me. And when I sewed, it always would come out. I bought a sewing machine and invested almost \$10,000 in the programs and everything, just so I could embroider Celtic knots. Just so I could embroider Celtic knots.

MW: And that must be super hard to do, too.

MEC: Well, it's with the sewing machine.

MW: Oh, still! I wouldn't be able to do it.

MEC: But, you know, when I did that vestment and that knot was in the center right here, that's just so impressive, I just... I embroidered all kinds of things, but I mean, it was Celtic knots that I put them on the cuffs of jeans, and in the middle of the back of an old jean jacket.

MW: You connected with that the most.

MEC: Yeah, it just, it took me over. I started listening to Irish music, and then I started reading the lyrics, and when you find out the lyrics, you want to find out more about James Connolly and Robert Emmet, and all these heroes and why. And pretty soon, you've Irish History-ed yourself to death!

MW: Yeah, you practically have a PhD in Irish History!

MEC: And it all started with just Irish songs. Dublin Gulch and Irish songs. And before Dublin Gulch, but definitely they're the ones that planted the fire with the music. And as soon as online had lyrics, I was printing out lyrics. I have notebooks of lyrics printed out. Just so I could learn what the songs were actually. So even though I don't have a voice that can sing, I could sing along in my heart.

MW: Aw, that's so nice! Well, thank you so much, this has been really great to hear all your stories and hear about the history of the shop and everything, so thank you.

APPENDIX D: Cindy Powers Oral History Transcript

Maggie Walsh: Okay, to sort of start things out, I was hoping that you could just introduce yourself and I'm going to make sure the volume is okay, and maybe just say how long you've lived in Butte, what you do here, and your name, and stuff like that. Okay, whenever you're ready.

Cindy Powers: Okay. Well, my name is Cindy Powers. I was born in Great Falls and grew up there. Through high school, went to college in Missoula, where I met my husband, who was a Butte Rat. And when we got married and moved to Butte, where I found it was the center of the universe. And I teach first grade. My husband is the clerk of court, and he has, for almost our whole marriage, thirty-one years almost, had a traditional Irish folk band. So that was kind of the big beginning of the Irish in our marriage. His family was very Irish and celebrated St. Patrick's Day. His dad was mayor here. A lot of years ago, Tom was in about the second grade, I think. And his dad was very integral in bringing the St. Patrick's Day parade back from whatever rest it had taken. So, he, and a number of other politicians and businessmen in town, brought that parade back. So that parade is kind of in our family a bit. So we have had this band. And then when my daughter, that you just met came along, how we could incorporate. So I didn't become a band widow. You know, like you have those hunting widows. So in our early marriage, we were going back and forth every other year to the Irish festival in Milwaukee, which is sort of the mecca of Irish festivals. And so we'd seen a lot of Irish festivals. And I kept seeing this dance school, the Trinity Academy of Irish Dance from Chicago, that you saw this summer. And so, I can remember sitting in the audience and they had such a huge number of girls and the solo dresses like you saw, they'd have forty of them! Forty of them! It just was a feast for the eyes. It was absolutely spectacular. And I can remember sitting in that audience thinking about my little girl at home thinking, oh, man, I wish there was somehow I could get you here to dance and have this for you. But we don't have Irish dance in Montana. So, I just went off on a tangent. Did I say enough about who I was?

MW: Oh yeah, no that was great! Yeah, I'm enjoying the story so keep going!

CP: So fast forward a little bit. A couple of years. And there was a family that moved up to Helena from Denver. And they were very involved in Irish dance in Denver. And the little girl missed it so much that the mom was a physical therapist, so she had some sense of movement and things, well, we'll just start Irish dancing here. So, they started teaching friends in Helena and we got to know them through the music and as the band travels. And so, they were driving over and teaching Irish dance, beginning Irish dance in Butte. And Kerry was about three at that point. And they got tired of making the drive and said to me, well, you do it. So that was interesting because I had never grown up doing Irish dance. But along with all of that, Tom and I, my husband Tom and I, were involved in a project called Project Children, which brought Catholic and Protestant kids out of the north of Ireland, out of their environment into Montana, and put one of each in a home where they spent the summer. So, we did some fundraising with that. And then for a couple of years, they brought older kids who had something that they could contribute. So, like they had carpenters... Kids involved in carpentry, work with Habitat. They had a couple of kids who did Irish dance who could get me enough steps to get me through the next year. And so then that those Céilí dances that you were using, or seeing down there, we

were we were doing Céilí dances and then steps that we were learning each summer from those kids. And that was kind of getting us through the next year. And at that time, we were named the Corktown Dancers. Corktown was an Irish neighborhood in Butte. And my husband's band is named Dublin Gulch, which was another Irish neighborhood in Butte. So we limped along like that for a while until I think 2003, was the first An Rí Rá. So, Tom and I went to the first meeting of An Rí Rá, mostly because we wanted to make sure that any musician coming to Butte got paid. And we went to that first meeting not having been to a festival and I think we maybe were the only ones who had been to a festival. Lots and lots of people came to volunteer. We thought this was a great idea, but I think they had done about three of them in Missoula. But Missoula's businesses that would have supported this are so tied up with supporting the Grizzlies that they really found that the fundraising and even finding a free weekend for it was difficult, so they moved it to Butte.

MW: Which is more appropriate anyway!

CP: Which is a little more. We think so! It's a little more ethnic around here. So, we, like I said, went mostly to that first meeting just to make sure that they had a way to fund that thing so that nobody was no musicians going to leave with a bad taste about Butte. But they didn't that they didn't know they needed a sound company. They didn't know we needed to hire staging. I mean, there was a lot. So, we built that thing kind of from the ground up and just with a little bit that we knew. And so, I fell into the chair of the dance committee. So, I called the dance school I'd been watching over in Chicago and gotten a very nice young man to take my phone call and then I followed up with an email which he passed on to the founder, Mark Howard. And Mark would probably go, oh, I don't think we have time for this. But this guy was kind of intrigued with this whole deal and just kind of kept putting it in front of Mark. And Mark finally said, all right. OK, we'll do it. And so, he found a combination of a small enough group that we could afford. And so, we brought that first group of Trinity [Irish Dance School] out to Montana. And Mark Howard is kind of a history buff. Oh, he was there! Did you ever see him this week? This year? I think I introduced him at one point, but it was the first time he'd been back since one of those first couple of festivals. But by the end of that first festival, being kind of a history buff, we'd figured out a way for them to fly an instructor in once a month. And then the long-term plan was that someone in the dance school would grow up to be the instructor. And at the same time, we had a dance school in Boise that needed an instructor and the Helena dance school needed instructor. They'd been sharing an instructor with Boise, Idaho. So, we started out with three sister schools and that instructor was spending a day here, spending a day here, spending a day here, and then flying home. So, we did that for a lot of years. That's how Kerry, my Kerry, grew up, dancing with those instructors. And so, then for the rest of the classes, I would kind of limp us along. And I'm learning right along with the kids. But it wasn't very long before they surpassed anything that I could do. So, that's when we started this system of the older kids helping to peer coach. So, Kerry was about... and I think maybe because she had grown up with the music, and she just really had a affinity for it, and it came to her, and she could retain it so much better. And so, we had a fifth-grade girl who was peer coaching high schoolers at that time. So it was... She really stepped around that really carefully, knowing, you know, that she was the little kid and should... but she could count the music and she could call the steps as they were dancing. And so, so that's how. That's how she grew up in the dance school. And so, let's see. So now we've been doing our little dance performances. And at the same time, I'm teaching and I

am hearing big kids talk about all those drunk Irish people uptown. So, I certainly go, “That's not right.” So, we started doing school assemblies. So, the band, on whatever day that was right before St. Patrick's Day, nearly, you know, a Friday before St. Patrick's Day, we get a school bus and we pack all the kids in. And Tom would get us a sound system that would be just enough. And they'd race ahead of us and set up in the school and we'd bring in 60 or 70 dancers. And we do our little show and then we'd go to the next school. And so, we've been doing that for quite a long time, trying to give school kids something other than those drunk Irish people to think about when they're thinking about the Irish. So, and then it was a great dress rehearsal for St. Patrick's Day. And we got to work with the band in and kind of get that show together. So, that St. Patrick's Day kept outgrowing the venues, to where we finally got to the point where we're renting the Civic Center and it's not like we fill the Civic Center. In the oblong basketball court shape of the civic center, we set up a dance staged in a band stage, and then we're playing across the room. So the width of the room. Yeah. So that works. That works out great. Then we're hiring a sound company and we've got the staging. And so, it's a pretty big production. So, we're doing that a couple of years and then An Rí Rá is coming. Okay. And at first, I am thinking, man, this St. Patrick's Day show is as big as I really want to deal with and now, I have to do another one. So, I was like, oh, man. But there were people to help. So, Tom is the music chair of An Rí Rá. And he's great with schedules. He's great with emceeing and keeping a show on track and on time. And so, of all of the festival committees, we were the only committee chairs that also had a performance component because his band played, and my dancers danced and we were the only ones who had kids at home.

MW: Wow! It's overwhelming. Because of your kids and your jobs!

CP: Yeah. Because I have a son, too. So, my son, Connor, is a drummer. And he actually when he was 5, he's tried, he did Irish dance and he'd been drumming for a couple of years.

MW: Oh my gosh. I wonder if those skills are related?

CP: They are very related because it's so, so rhythmic. And so, he came and danced one summer and then dance ended up being the same night as soccer, and he said at 5 years old, “Mom, I really want to concentrate on my soccer career.” And so, he didn't dance. He played soccer, but he kept drumming. And about the sixth grade, I think, he started playing with Tom's band. And so, he also has a great singing voice, but he just doesn't like it. He doesn't like it. So, he drums, and he's become a great... So, it's just so great to see the next generation. And the St. Patrick's Day show is actually called Handing Down the Heritage. So, the reason for that is because in the life of the band, they met a ninety-five-year-old button box accordion player. And his name was John “the Yank” Harrington.

MW: Oh my gosh, I think I saw his name on like a sign.

CP: That's the stage, in memory.

MW: Yes, that's it!

CP: And another great friend, too. And so, at about ninety-five, he would come and sit in with the band on St. Patrick's Day. And of course, he didn't ever marry so there weren't kids, but there were grandnieces and grandnephews. So, the grandnieces start dancing. And the first year we were at the Civic Center, the first of the nieces was three years old, and she danced while he played. And I thought in my head, that is handing down the heritage, right before our very eyes, that's handing down the heritage. So that's where that name came from. And so now we have the next generation of those grandnieces who are a dancing now. Yeah, so that's really been a nice thread.

MW: Yeah. The name is holding up throughout the generations! Wow.

CP: Yeah. Let's see...

MW: Does your son still play with Dublin Gulch?

CP: Yeah. He's in college over at the University. So, he's running over for St. Patrick's Day or for whatever he can. Whenever we need him. He plays a drum kit. He also plays a cajón, you know, a box. They sit on the box. And it's much more ethnic sounding. My husband plays a round goatskin drum called a bodhrán, but he's never gotten that wrist thing. And he always played a kit. But this cajón he's crazy about. Yeah. So that's that just it feels like we have mission accomplished. There's my theme of the year this year is that old saying about, "All you can really give kids are two things: roots and wings." And so that's the goal. Give them the roots and then teach them to fly. And so. Yeah.

MW: Leaves their path open to them. But shows where they've come from.

CP: Parenting you will find someday is a minefield.

MW: I can imagine!

CP: This is how we got through. This is how we got through it. I always thought whoever makes it their way through the minefield, you better light the light for the people coming behind you because really it is a tough go, and you really need... Those kids need so much in the way of: where did you come from and where you going?

MW: Right yeah. I'm sure like a physical activity, like Irish dancing, also kind of helps keep them calm and also teaches them their heritage.

CP: More than you know! In high school, especially middle school and high school. I would come home, and Kerry would be pounding that stuff out. A tough day at school, sweetie? And Connor the same way with the drums. A physical way to get it out of your system is critical.

MW: That's true! Eliminate stress in a really stressful time in kid's lives.

CP: Yeah. It's a way to regulate and get all of that angst out. And so, it worked in a lot of ways. And so I passed that out and... "Bring them out if you've got nothing else." Because there's nothing worse than a kid without a passion. That's when the trouble starts.

MW: I was talking to Chris Fisk a couple weeks ago.

CP: Oh yeah!

MW: He's very nice. But he was saying that he's noticed that the uptick in technology use actually is hurting kids' personalities. But he said that he thought activities like Irish Dance are a way for...

CP: Or his Montana History Club.

MW: Exactly, he also mentioned that. Are ways for kids to get face to face interaction and also kind of find their little niche that they belong to when...

CP: Yep, yep.

MW: Which I thought was a really great thing. You know, there's so many different types of activities that you could join here.

CP: Yes. Yeah. Yeah. And you just have to be open to the possibilities because the history of Butte is important to everyone who lives here. And me, I've lived here now longer than I've lived anywhere else. Have you talked a little bit about the mining disaster up at the Granite Mountain Memorial?

MW: No!

CP: So, a hundred years ago, it was the biggest hard rock mining disaster ever, and it still is. 168 men were killed when a fire started, and they couldn't get out. And there's a big memorial up there. And people know about it. Kids know about this. I mean, it's important. It's an important history.

MW: Yeah, Part of the past of Butte.

CP: Right. So, at the 100th anniversary, they asked all the school kids to write an essay. And for a lot of kids it may have been the first time they heard about it. It was the first time they learned about it. So, I don't know as the generations come forward it gets watered down a little bit and not everybody stops to... Because grandpas will talk and talk and talk and talk. But that generation of grandpas is leaving us, you know. So, the next generation of grandpas, maybe they weren't miners, or their dads weren't miners. So, we're just getting a little bit further and further from it. So, yeah. So, it's great that Chris has that.

MW: Yeah, he was very excited about the Montana History Club. He said that they get involved a lot with the different holidays here. I think he mentioned Handing Down the Heritage, actually,

I'll have to look back at that. But he said that sometimes they maybe volunteer or something like that if I remember correctly.

CP: Yeah. He has an adult continuing ed class too. And so, he has a big dinner a couple of days before St. Patrick's Day. So, we would always bring kids there and then we always try to, as kids are coming into high school, "Well what do you do? What are your extracurriculars? Have you tried Chris Fisk's thing?" Because that is really cool. And so, lots and lots of our dancers. They do this ghost walk; did he talk about that?

MW: He might have mentioned it, but I don't think he described it.

CP: So, in the club, kids will take on the persona of people in the history of Butte and they'll go and station in old buildings in Butte and then they'll have a guide with it with a narrative and a lamp. And they'll take like groups of 10 people. And it's a walking tour of Butte in the dark, in the dark. And so, then these kids in his class, they've researched their character and they come into the whorehouse and... you might want to edit that part out! And then it'll be whatever that woman's name was. And she was the madam and she'll give her whole spiel and then they do that. It's very cool. Yeah. It he's been doing this for years.

MW: And this is around Halloween, I assume.

CP: Yeah. It's a fundraiser for his club too. So, it's like five dollars or something. It's a great way for those kids to get that history.

MW: Yeah. Did the Irish dancers ever think about participating?

CP: We have. We have in the past. Oh, my goodness. When Kerry was in the Montana History Club. And another friend, they were both dancers. The other girl's mom and I sat the whole evening in our van powering the speaker for the music, for them to dance on the street corners. They went by our little Irish pub. And so, yes, we've been off and on. He's had our dancers involved in that so yeah.

MW: That's so nice!

CP: It is. It's a good co-op interconnection.

MW: Yeah for sure it's a good connection to have! So, I want to learn a little bit more about An Rí Rá, because that is probably the festival I've had the least amount of research done on. And you've already described it a lot. But I was kind of wondering how it's changed over the years. And I assume it's probably gotten a little easier for you as you've worked out the logistics over time.

CP: Yeah, you'd think there'd be the case. I wish it were. Every year seems to have its own quirks.

MW: It probably gets bigger every year.

CP: Oh, well, let's track back. So, the first three... I think we've decided the first three years they did it in Missoula. So, like one year it was in the street in front of Sean Kelly's. One, maybe two years. One year it was at Caras Park. And in those years, Dublin Gulch was kind of the headline act. And we brought dancers over for at least two of those years. And then, like I say, they lost their funding. So it's moved here. So the first thing we did is we went for an Irish band. We went to Ireland. We contacted bands that we knew about from listening to Irish music, you know. And so we had a couple of hot shot Irish bands that came.

MW: Wow, that's exciting!

CP: Yeah, it very exciting. And then we had the kids of very famous folk band. Clancy Brothers and Tommy Makem.

MW: Oh, my gosh. Yeah, that's...

CP: Do you know them?

MW: Yeah!

CP: Okay so Tommy Makem's kids.

MW: Oh my gosh, they came here?

CP: Oh, my God. Yeah. Oh, they've been here almost every other year. So, Tommy Makem's kids, the Makem Brothers, paired up with the Spain Brothers which are another family. And so, the Makem and Spain Brothers came every other year for a lot of years until they kind of grew up, got married, moved, you know, so the band isn't together anymore. So that was a great connection to that primary history source because the Clancy Brothers and Tommy Makem, they were the ones that really helped with the resurgence of Irish music in the United States. So, like they were on The Ed Sullivan Show, I mean, they really... and that, trailing back to my husband's family. The records of Tommy Makem and the Clancy Brothers were how all of the Powers kids learned all the Irish songs.

MW: Oh, my gosh. So that's how Dublin Gulch got started?

CP: There you go. Oh, that's how Tom knew all the music. So then to have those Makem brothers here and in another real fluke, Tommy Makem has actually had dinner at my house! When Kerry was two he was coming through doing a tour. This was before An Rí Rá. But we someone connected with us, knowing we had that Irish music thing, and we put together a little show for him and he came in a day early and had dinner at my house and it was awesome! It was so great.

MW: That's so cool! Your husband was probably freaking out!

CP: Oh my God. Oh, yeah. Imagine meeting your lifelong hero. Yeah. So, it was just some weird serendipity, you know?

MW: Yeah wow!

CP: Yeah. So, let's see. We're tracking back. So now we've got some pretty hot shot... We've got the Trinity dancers that first year. We've got Makem and Spain Brothers and we have Lúnasa. Man, over the years, it has just blended together so much. I can hardly remember from year to year, but we have quite a lengthy list. My husband Tom did a great job archiving all the bands that have been. So, if you wanted that...

MW: Yeah, I'll have to! Is that in the archives or...

CP: No, he has that just on our computer. But it was funny. We were just recently in the committee having this conversation. Is this the 17th year or what year is it? So, we had to backtrack, and he had the listing of all the bands we've ever had. So, I can have him email that to you if you're interested.

MW: Yeah, I would love to see that. Just because I feel like An Rí Rá is probably such a destination for Irish Americans in this country. I've heard that tourism kind of bumps.

CP: Yeah, I think it is. And funny, it's kind of more of a draw, we have felt over the years, for out-of-towners than from locals.

MW: Interesting, that's weird.

CP: It is weird. It is weird. And I don't think it was always this way. But first year was here An Rí Rá and then the Folk Festival came. And the folk festival now comes before ours. So, I think a lot of local people go to the folk festival and go, "Whoop, check off festivals," and then they go camping or vacation or something. So, we always are kind of holding our breath to see, "are they coming this year? Are they coming this year?" But lots of out of towners. We're almost more well-known around the world than we are around our town, which is a weird happenstance.

MW: I would say, I went to school at Notre Dame and one of my professors told me about Butte and he was the reason I ended up coming out here, is because he knew all about Butte and I had no idea. So...

CP: Wow! Who is it?

MW: Ian Kuijt? I don't know if...

CP: I'll have to ask Tom if he's familiar with...

MW: Yeah. He's a anthropology professor and he's never actually done research in Butte, but he just he focuses on Ireland. So, he obviously has to know about all the happenings!

CP: Well, when Mary McAleese came, was the president of Ireland, and she gave many tremendous speeches around town. But the thing that's stuck with me the most, she said at one point, "You cannot tell the story of Ireland without telling the story of Butte. And you can't tell the story of Butte without telling the story of Ireland." The two of them are just so intertwined. And then you've been in touch with the archives when DeValera's grandson [came].

MW: Yes, I'm so mad I couldn't go to that. I really wanted to go.

CP: Oh! That was just, again, that thread that connection.

MW: Yeah, 100 years later coming back. That's amazing.

CP: It was, it was amazing. But so, so An Rí Rá actually started on Park Street. We were downtown. We had one stage in the parking lot. We can do a little walkabout today. It's a nice day. And I can show you where those were. And so, we had an A stage and a B stage. And at the time we were charging \$20 a day for a whole day of music, which seemed a reasonable amount, until the Folk Festival came along and it was free. And then people didn't want to pay. And so, we had a couple of lean years and a couple of years where we got like rained out on a day. And so, I'd have to go back and find out how many years we've been up at the Original. But it was sort of like, let's give it one more shot. Try it just one stage up at the Original and see how that goes and try it for free. And if we don't breakeven that'll be the last one. But it's sort of crazy how people don't want to give you \$20 at the gate, but they'll put \$50 in a donation bucket. It's nuts! It's crazy. It's counterintuitive. It was just a huge leap of faith that we finally had to get to the point of saying, "Okay, we'll try it one more time this way. And if it was meant to be, we will do it." So really all we need to do is breakeven. None of us are getting paid. Whereas some of the Folk Fest people, they have a paid position, but we don't. It's all volunteer. So, we just need to breakeven. And maybe have a little seed money for the coming year. So, we did. And it was a pretty good year. And so, we've been doing it that way ever since. And then just recently, that church directly across the street has gotten to the point where it's usable. This was the first year we used it as a rainout venue, but we have been using it for dance workshops and things and a little bit of lecture series and stuff. So that's been going on there for a while.

MW: I went to the lecture series! I think it was at the Co... I'm going to say this wrong.

CP: Covellite, right across the street!

MW: Yes! Exactly. And that was really fun. That was an interesting part of An Rí Rá that I wasn't expecting.

CP: Who did you see because I don't get to see any of them!

MW: I saw Jim McCarthy, I think his name was. And he gave kind of a talk about the community in Butte. And I think he called it the Butte connection. And it was really nice to hear. I took notes on it and everything. It was a good lecture.

CP: And he works at the archives.

MW: Oh, I didn't know that!

CP: Yeah, he volunteers there. He was my brother-in-law who passed away the last couple of years, his brother. So, we have a little connection to him. So, yeah, we always say "We've heard it's a great festival, we'd sure like to see it!" Because when you're, you know, working it, you really don't get to see as much of it.

MW: Yeah it probably is all a blur!

CP: It is, it really goes by so fast.

MW: But it's such a great show.

CP: It seems like, you know, every year we're... oh it's so hard to put it together. So as far as getting easier, I don't know that that's the case. It seems hard every year, but there's just so many little pieces. But it is to the point where we're not recreating the wheel every time, you know, we're pretty much putting those pieces back together. So, like the dancers that come from Chicago, they will stay... we'll have dance local dance families that will house them. So, they'll get some really get to know a couple of those dancers and those dancers' dance experience has been way different than ours because they did the Feises. They've been to Worlds, but also, they do world tours. So, there's a group of those Chicago kids that have gone to Japan every year. Then there's an international dance festival that happens, different countries that they've... So, they've really traveled the world with their Irish dance. So, but they always say they love Butte the most!

MW: It does have a really homelike feel here. I have been really homesick since I've moved to Montana, and I will say that every time I come to Butte, I'm like... breathing a sigh of relief!

CP: It's not so strip mall. We still have the original equipment. All of those old buildings are still there, being reused for other things.

MW: That's so nice.

CP: Yeah. Where are you from?

MW: New Jersey, so a long way from home!

CP: And a big city in my mind!

MW: Yeah, yeah, I'm an hour from New York and an hour from Philadelphia. So... and my dad and I drove out here for a roadtrip, so I really felt how far away it was.

CP: Yes, you did! Oh man that's a long way.

MW: Yes, so, I have family from Pennsylvania, and they were all miners in Scranton and stuff like that, so for some reason I just feel like it's in my blood to be in a mining town!

CP: That sounds right!

MW: So, it's nice to come to Butte and feel comfortable.

CP: You've found your people! And then are you Irish too?

MW: Yes, I am, and that's kind of why I'm focusing on the Irish here, so... I was here for St. Patrick's Day; I was here for An Rí Rá.

CP: So, what did you see on St. Patrick's Day, did you get to the Silver Dollar?

MW: No, I didn't. What is that?

CP: Okay so you haven't seen... I don't know if you've really seen... Okay so husband's band has played at the Silver Dollar every single year for twenty-seven years.

MW: Oh, I'm sad I missed that.

CP: Well come back! After the parade, we scurry down, they've taken all of the furniture out of the Silver Dollar, we are front to back, side to side. Everybody has been coming all those years, we all know the words to all the songs, everybody's singing along, and then everyone is back and forth together... Oh my gosh, it is our biggest fun. And then Kerry will get up and she'll dance on this one little tiny corner of this tiny stage and then after that we race down to the Civic Center and we watch that show. We do that show.

MW: Oh my gosh, a busy day!

CP: It's a busy day!

MW: I was here for the parade and I left immediately afterwards, and my car got... people just started running at my car and slapping the hood and I was like, "I need to get out of here!"

CP: Oh, that's why we move our show down to the Civic Center.

MW: And I wish I had known about that, so I could've gone, I didn't do my research!

CP: However, the Silver Dollar is easy enough, we've brought all of our kids there. Just during that one show, the kids can come in. Our youngest baby was six days old. That was sort of the Irish music baptism. Yep, that's how we do it in our family. And so, it is the best part of St. Patrick's Day. So, what you saw is kind of the plastic Irish. You saw spring break. You saw college kids coming to Butte to pee in the streets because, as you maybe have heard around the state, everyone hates Butte.

MW: I have heard that you are supposed to look at the police blotter after St. Patrick's Day in Butte because it's really entertaining to read through.

CP: Yes, what people have done and most often they're kids from out of town! Most often it's kids from out of town. And so, they've tried a couple years to make spring break at not St. Patrick's Day at those universities, and that's helped a bit, but really, they're coming for it. Especially if it's on a weekend, they're coming for it.

MW: Right, and it has the reputation of being fun already so...

CP: But really, it's Fort Lauderdale. So, the part you saw, the St. Patrick's Day parade, was... Let's see, it wasn't a big political year, so on those years, every politician in the state will walk through with their banners, so that's a big thing.

MW: Okay, do they fundraise or is it just more just like advertising?

CP: No, they're just advertising, I'm running for this or that. But last year wasn't a big political year so there wasn't a lot of that. But yeah, it's the plastic Irish. It's, you know, put the plastic shamrock on your little beanie heads and yeah.

MW: Oh, I wish I had seen the more authentic version then.

CP: That's why we started doing that show, because it's Celtic. And we do put our dancers in the parade, and one year, it'll never happen again, but one of the grandpas of our dancer, his heritage in his family is they were float builders. His name is Mike Mazollini and he just passed away. Mike's family made floats for all the Butte parades. And there used to be way more parades than just the Fourth of July and St. Patrick's Day. And one year he says, "I need to build you a float." And he did, and it was the most fun our kids have ever had in that parade. And then last year we had the snow, so much snow that he couldn't build. He was going to do one, he couldn't build it. Couldn't find a garage, couldn't... It just didn't come together and then this summer he passed away. But it was nice to have the one float.

MW: That's true. So, was it an Irish dance float or was it for your family?

CP: It was, no it was for the dancer because his granddaughter was a dancer. And, oh, it was beautiful. And we had kind of a raised centerpiece where the little kids could sit, and then the big girls were dancing along the outside of it. It was wonderful. Because we're always kind of, you know, make sure we don't lose any of the kids along the way!

MW: So they usually walk the route?

CP: We dance it! We dance as much of it as we can.

MW: That's got to be super tiring!

CP: We're going uphill a little bit, but the parade will stop and we'll [sigh]... And then we'll turn to the audience and do a step, a real step, and then we'll get back and they'll skip-two-three down the street.

MW: That's so nice that must be really fun for the kids.

CP: Yeah, they do! They're crazy about that. We don't do the Fourth of July parade. It is a long parade out on the Flat, and I just don't know how to keep enough water in those kids, you know, on those really hot days? That one concerns me. But this one is a shorter parade and it's in the cool, which sometimes works against us, but yeah.

MW: Do you ever coordinate with the Anaconda... is there a dance company in Anaconda?

CP: Oh yeah!

MW: Do you ever work with them to do events together?

CP: So the great thing about that dance school is the gal that started that, and her name is Ashley... Something... Needed help! Remember me telling you about that boy of ours who went to Worlds?

MW: Yes!

CP: He has Anaconda connections! And so, he started helping her put that dance school together. And then, they needed a little more help, so they brought one more of our retired dancers in. So we have the next generation of Tiernan instructors helping with the Anaconda school!

MW: Wow, talk about handing down the heritage! That's amazing, wow!

CP: Yeah, yeah. Oh, it's lovely. We are so excited about that little school. They just are growing by leaps and bounds; their skill set is just growing. They're wonderful, it's great to watch that.

MW: Wow, so attendance is growing too, you would say in Anaconda?

CP: I think so, but because it's St. Patrick's Day, we're both doing things in our own towns, so we don't get to see them until An Rí Rá once a year.

MW: Do you have a favorite holiday here in Butte?

CP: Well, St. Patrick's Day! It's soul-filling.

MW: I understand that, it feels like Christmas!

CP: It does! It feels like we're doing something important. And it's one of those things where, as we were talking about before, as we further and further from that primary source generation, it kind of gets diluted, so this feels like we're kind of...

MW: Continuing.

CP: Yeah! So, my daughter worked at the Mining Museum when she was in high school and so she knew miners. She knew some of those primary source guys. And they've died now. So, she's the last... you know, she'll be twenty-eight in January, last group of the next generation. It's just every year it's diluting. So, when we put all that real Celtic, or as real as we can make it, Celtic stuff back into St. Patrick's Day, it feels like we have done something important for Butte.

MW: That's true. And with the dance you're exposing new generations of children continuously. That's even more important, is passing that on!

CP: And next generation! So, we've got kids of dancers now. So yeah, twenty-five years! A lot happens in twenty-five years.

MW: That's so exciting that they would want to send their kids.

CP: Yes! Yeah, that it meant that much to them. So that feels like a big thing.

MW: Right, yeah. Well I think I've asked all the questions I was really curious about. I would request, if you think of anyone that would maybe be useful to this project that you ask if they wanted to talk to me at all! But otherwise, thank you so much for this. This was really great.

CP: Oh, you're very welcome! And you're welcome to come and see, let's see, who's there now... I think it's the babies, the new guys.

MW: Aw, maybe I'll peek in if that's okay!

APPENDIX E: Brendan McDonough Oral History Transcript

Phone rings.

Brendan McDonough: Hello?

Maggie Walsh: Brendan?

BM: Yep.

MW: Hi, it's Maggie!

BM: How are you doing?

MW: I'm good, how are you?

BM: Good.

MW: Thank you for taking the time to do this again!

BM: Sure.

MW: I'm so sorry about what happened last time. I made sure that the recording equipment is good to go this time.

BM: Perfect.

MW: So, I'm going to start recording, and then to start things off, can you just introduce yourself and talk about your occupation, how long you've lived in Butte, and how you got involved with An Rí Rá?

BM: So, it's Brendan McDonough, I'm a lifelong resident of Butte, forty-four years, I am self-employed at the moment. I worked at the college for several years and they recently restructured so I'm no longer at the college, but I'm taking on some work myself. I got involved with the Irish Festival, I took an Irish class from Traolach O'Riordain nineteen years ago now? Nineteen or twenty years ago now. And at that time, Missoula was looking to transfer or see if they could pass of the An Rí Rá festival. And we were together, collectively, in Traolach's language class, and he brought it to our attention, to see if we would be interested. And we were absolutely interested. You know, I chaired the first festival.

MW: Oh wow, so you've been with the festival since the beginning.

BM: The very beginning.

MW: Wow. That's cool! So, can you describe the Irish Festival for someone who might have never been to the festival or maybe is unfamiliar with Butte as a city?

BM: So, Butte is the most Irish city in the country by population per capita. It's very unique here, and the traditions are still alive, very much so, today. So, things that are found around town, whether it's the architecture or you know, different buildings, you can see the mark the Irish left on Butte, for sure. The neighborhoods they grew up in, and worked, and lived. The areas that they recreated, the infrastructure, and the buildings and the architecture. So, they definitely left an impact that way, but in cultural terms, the customs and traditions. The things that we carry on to this very day, that make it so unique, are very much alive, and we built on that with the Irish Festival. You know, if you've never been to the Irish Festival, it's a very authentic Irish festival. Our committee takes a great deal of pride in our programming. It's not just about beer sales and Celtic rock music, which a lot of festivals around the country have focused on. And they no longer exist, most of them! They kind of come and go, and they're revenue based. We are very focused on the culture, so we bring tradition, music. We always have a song band, guys or ladies who do traditional songs and ballads. We have a tune band, we bring in one plug in band, but we're very particular in who we pick, and we've always brought the best, you know, who we thought were the absolute best in each category. And it's paid off in spades, I mean, now, after a few years, everybody that we would be after, most of them are contacting us. We're not working to reach out to them, they're aware of our event and they reach out to us. And the audience has really appreciated and respected the programming. They're amazed every year. The people say, "Where do you find your entertainment?" They're just in awe of how talented these people are. We've been very fortunate that way. We also have scholars and lectures and storytellers and, you know, we bring in the best in each category too. We reach out far and wide. We bring people from all over the world to the event for the weekend. We don't just have a regional focus, because oftentimes you miss really important and key opportunities if you just focus on bringing people from a geographic region.

MW: I also remember you mentioned last time that it's a huge tourist draw, right?

BM: We do very well. We've had people from all over the world attend the event. We've had people come from Ireland in groups, they're aware of the event. We've had people pass through, that were not aware that we were having the event, that were from Ireland and traveling to somewhere else. They ended up staying. They said it was life changing to them how much fun they had. They just kind of happened upon an opportunity out in Montana. And then we've had people plan family reunions, class reunions, and vacations for the event.

MW: Oh wow! I don't know if I told you last time, but I was at An Rí Rá this past summer and I was able to see lectures, that you mentioned, and also the music. So, I feel like I got the full experience and it was amazing, it was really fun.

BM: Yeah, we're very proud of what we've been able to put together and you know, we have a great relationship with performers. And a lot of them oftentimes reach out to us, we stay in contact on a regular basis. They've become more so friends than just artists or entertainers. We're in regular communication with people that have been here, and they pass on information about other artists that would be interested in coming to Butte, putting us in contact with other people. So, you know, our network is large, and we have a far outreach for such a small, per say small, event.

MW: That's so great. Yeah, one of my favorite moments in the last interview that we had was, you talked about one of your favorite memories of An Rí Rá was when the performers kind of helped save one of the years that it rained out, and I was wondering if you could tell that story again.

BM: Sure. So, we've been bailed out, by the entertainment, several times over the last seventeen years that we've had it. You know, we've never had a complete washout where we lost the entire weekend, but we've had one of the two days rained out with a pretty substantial storm several times. Probably at least seven or eight years that we've lost a day or part of a day due to weather. But the first time it happened, was our third year, and we had planned and we had been on quite a roll, we thought, and we'd had great weather the first two years and the third year, we got it set up, we had an incredible lineup. We had Solas and the Black Brothers, Francis and Mary Black's brothers, they're Michael and Shay Black. And we had a band from Canada. And the Trinity Irish Dancers. But when it was clear that we were going to lose the day, on Friday, we had a complete washout. It had rained so hard it filled the sound equipment and the lights, and our guy shut it down immediately. We were kind of gut punched. We were stunned. We were kind of feeling sorry for ourselves, it was just a huge blow to the committee and the people who had traveled to be there, to be able to play outside. While we were sitting around thinking what we might do, or not do, we were just kind of in a state of shock at the moment. The performers got together and said, "Let's do something, let's not let all of these people go home disappointed." And while we were forming a plan with some of the performers, the Black Brothers actually, Michael and Shay, went out and played to the thirty-five or forty, and they were mostly elderly people who refused to give up their seat during this huge downpour, they played the same songs that they wanted to hear, for the better part of thirty or forty minutes. It was freezing weather, it was absolutely freezing, and those people were very appreciative, and we were so appreciative to the Black Brothers. We ended up moving into a vacant store front, an old department store on Park Street, where we had the Festival, and we had an entire night of entertainment, and it really saved the event. You know, because you had people who were donating money and buying raffle tickets and saw what we were doing. They opened their pocketbooks. We ended up having a beautiful day on Saturday that same year. The crowd grew substantially from the night before. But, you know, we were just taken aback by the generosity and the outpouring of support. Not only from the audience, but especially the performers, who really saved the day. They pulled together, and played, and really put on an incredible performance. So, thankfully, we've had that happen several times over the years. Where, if it rains, the performers are just on cue here in Butte to move somewhere or relocate or have an acoustic set somewhere, so we don't lose the crowd or the interest. So, we've been very fortunate.

MW: That says something not only about the performers you're inviting, but also about how meaningful the performance must be to them, just because I feel like, if you had any old calloused performer, they would not work so hard with you to help reorganize when something goes wrong.

BM: You could see it when you were here this last summer, you know, when we moved across the street to St. Mary's church, we had an incredible, incredible evening. We saw the weather report heading in that was going to change on us, so we developed a plan B, and it turned out so

well, that the performers were like, well let's go, let's make the decision to cancel the outside, and hurry up and move inside. It buys us more time, so we made a quick decision as a committee and moved, and it turned out to be an incredible evening.

MW: And very successful. Yeah, I remember that, it was horrible weather, I could see it from the top of the hill.

BM: It was probably the worst storm that we've ever had, you know, in our seventeen years that we've been having it.

MW: Wow. Well, at least it worked out, I guess!

BM: Yep, yep.

MW: So, you already sort of touched on this with the difference between just an Irish rock festival and the sort of authentic Irish musicians that come in for An Rí Rá, but I was wondering if you could kind of speak about what makes Butte's different Irish festivals, such as St. Patrick's Day and An Rí Rá, unique from the celebrations in other cities?

BM: Well in terms of St. Patrick's Day, if we start there, we're one of the only cities in the United States who does it on the day of. And we have since Butte's been a city. Other large Irish cities, whether it's Chicago or San Francisco or New York and Boston, the obvious places that we identify, they usually do their events the weekend before, on a Saturday. It's always been the tradition in Butte, that if it's on a Sunday or a Wednesday, it doesn't matter. We're going to celebrate St. Patrick's Day, on St. Patrick's Day. And that makes it unique for us, because we're one of very few cities, even though there are lots of huge Irish celebrations across the world, Butte, like Ireland, does it on the day of. Butte and Anaconda, do it on the day of. We still have very long-standing traditions, like the Friendly Sons and Daughters of St. Patrick. I think we've had our 111th or 112th annual dinner, so it's always held on March 16th, the night before St. Patrick's Day. It's an incredible evening, I think it's my favorite part of the celebration for the two days. We have a banquet, and we have a speaker. Speakers are usually somebody that is local or grew up in Butte. Someone that has really great stories of how the Irish customs and traditions were celebrated in their house growing up, and it's usually very humorous. Everyone has a great time. Nobody's safe on the 16th, in terms of not having a story told about themselves! We take the money that we raise from the banquet and we turn around and give it away in scholarships. So that, you know, it's never had a break. It's like 112 consecutive years. That's always great. In terms of the Irish Festival, we just have such a different approach to Irish festivals in Butte than any other festival in Montana, or probably any other Irish festival that you're going to find in the country. You know, we go through such great lengths to make it accommodating for people to come to Butte, so whether we plan the travel or the performers plan the travel, we always take care of their travel. Things like ground transportation. Sometimes they'll have to travel outside to another city, we have people that go out and bring them back to Butte. We cover their lodging, we always have a care bag for each performer, so like essentials that they might need for the weekend, while they're here. We also have gifts that businesses give that are very unique to Butte. We have a hospitality committee that puts on a reception for the performers and the sponsors. We line up a mine tour with a couple of local experts on mining in

Butte. That's probably the most impactful part for the performers, outside of maybe the Festival, is the mine tour itself, with James Dean and Larry Hoffman. After the performers come back from these mine tours that they take during the day, while we're on site setting up, they're so taken aback by the impact of the Irish in Butte, that a lot of them have written songs, original songs, about the miners' experience or the immigrants experience, and we've had a lot of spin off projects because of the festival. The Makem and Spain Brothers filmed a live DVD in Butte at the Mother Lode Theater. Not during the festival weekend, they came out and we had a whole week together and put together a DVD. It's called *Home Away from Home*. That's the title of an original song, "Home Away from Home." It's written by Mickey Spain about Butte and our experience at the festival. Solas did the project, they have the album, *Shamrock City*. It's all about Butte and it's original music, all except maybe one track on the album that's a traditional ballad. Everything else is original. It's all pertaining to Butte. So we've had some really incredible experiences with performers. Outside of Solas and the Makem and Spain Brothers, there's like fifteen performers that have written an original song about Butte. Kind of our most recent ones were Brendan O'Shea wrote an incredible song called "On a Hill" after his experiences here in Butte. This last year, the Whileaways wrote a song, "Butte, Montana," they actually probably set the record! They went on a mining tour on Friday morning with Jim and Larry and went back to the hotel and wrote the song and then performed it, live on Friday night to an audience that was in tears, because it was so impactful and so meaningful. Then they performed it on Saturday night, on stage live, to the church. To a huge crowd in the room, about as much as we could hold in the church. So, yeah, it's those things that make us unique and different. We do things and go out of our way to make sure they experience what Butte really is, and they're appreciative of that and they never forget that. And we never forget what they do for us.

MW: Yeah. The fact that the performers write songs about Butte and that they are asking to come perform in Butte speaks to how impactful the experience must be.

BM: And they state that it's different. They're very open that they have a very unique experience in Butte. That it's not like flying to a gig and, you know, finding your way to the stage and then performing on stage, where you're kind of on your own the whole time. During the Festival, we have a hospitality tent right there on site, where we feed the performers all weekend. So, we have businesses that donate the meals and they bring in all the catering, it's all donated, so they don't have to leave the site or when they're there, they can eat and share stories and sit around and relax and enjoy each other's company. Whether it's with the committee or other acts. We're always together. I know that makes it unique because in other places where they perform, they're kind of on their own.

MW: Right, yeah. Yeah, it's truly a community event. Can you kind of speak to how the festival has changed over the years? I know it probably changed a lot when it moved from Missoula to Butte, but has it become more complicated over the years?

BM: I would say that it's become a much smoother event to run. Based on what we've been able to learn over the years. Unlike other events, they usually have a format that they follow, they're handed a template. When we started the Irish Festival in Butte, we didn't have any event planning experience whatsoever. We actually sat down with notebooks, individually, and wrote

out everything we thought we would need to put on a festival. And then we got together and compared notes for several weeks. We identified big things, though, like having electricity for the stage. They could run a sound system and a light system that would be permanent and not run a generator that would compete with the music. We also put in electricity for vendors, that people would normally not think about when they were starting an event. What sound companies we would need to work with. Who has the best reputation with folk music, as opposed to just plugging bands in and making sure the sound system's loud?

MW: Oh true! It's different depending on the genre!

BM: Completely different based on the instruments that they play and the music they perform. Sound makes a huge difference. And then working with vendors and suppliers and equipment, rental facilities. What would make sense for us to buy and keep in our inventory or rent? We went through all of those things early. As the event evolved, our equipment needs evolved. We started out with flatbed trailers in the beginning for some staging. Our staging set up has evolved immensely. Now we have a permanent stage that we have under the Original Headframe, but Butte-Silver Bow, in a partnership with the event, builds a dance stage out in front. It's very high quality. Our infrastructure has changed over the years. We moved locations up to the mine yard. Our ability to operate the event has become much more efficient. You always pick up things from year to year, you know, what you might do better next year. And we've got a really good knack for that now, I would say, because we've had the same committee that we've had from the very beginning, with very little turnover. We still have like twenty people at the very core of the event that have been there all eighteen years.

MW: Oh my gosh, you guys are committed.

BM: Yeah, so we can see how we evolved, how we might raise money better, new funding sources that we might attract for the event, how we can better suit the travel planning to bring the acts into the area. Just all sorts of things that just adds infrastructure like stage, sound, and lights. What we need to do and how we can improve year to year. So, it's always evolved.

MW: Do you feel that you're still able to fully enjoy the Festival even though you're one of the core organizers?

BM: I'm not sure that I would have the same experience or would have ever had the same experience if I was just an attendee of the festival. It's very unique in Butte, because if you're the audience, the performers are so willing to just walk offstage into the audience. You have so much opportunity to meet them and greet them and have discussions with them. But as an organizer, there's so much more enjoyment for me. We build the relationship and maintain the relationship. We learn so much from the performers, you know, they suggest things that we might think about for the Festival that they've seen elsewhere, so they give us tips to improve the event regularly. But, I mean, I've developed lifelong friendships with some of the most influential people in the industry. And, you know, we've become way more than just associates, or you know, the festival organizer and performer. We're lifelong friends at this point. So yeah, I think that being involved in the nuts and bolts of it, they appreciate what we do too, so it's strengthened the bond of the relationship.

MW: I don't know if you would agree with me when I say this, but I'm kind of thinking back to how you used to be a professor at the University, and now your position as this organizer for this event, and I'm seeing a connection between being an educator and this festival as kind of a way to educate about the heritage of Butte. I don't know if you agree, but I'm seeing this connection.

BM: I would agree! You know, we started the Festival, I was involved in the Festival long before I had a position at Highlands College teaching. So, the Festival preceded, by many years, my position, that I held for six or seven, I think seven years, teaching. But, yeah, I mean, our whole goal with the Festival is to showcase the breadth and the depth of the Irish culture. Folks get preconceived notions about what a festival is. Irish music is so diverse. Irish music and dance is so diverse, there's so many different presentations of traditional music and the lectures, whether it's the historic lectures or the educational lectures, the language. We bring in an author, or we bring in a Seanchaí, you know, a storyteller. We want to showcase what it's really like, and not kind of the Americanized version of it, I guess. You know a lot of times you see Irish festivals that are kind of Irish American festivals. Or they give these preconceived notions of what the Irish are like, you know they put up a shamrock all over the place, and beer gardens, and play rock and roll music all weekend. We wanted to showcase how authentic the real Irish culture is, but also Butte's contribution to that, and I think that we've been able to do that very well.

MW: And I feel that part of Butte's contribution to that is maintaining the authenticity of Irish culture.

BM: Oh, it does. It definitely does. I mean, it's an incredible story. And the bond grows stronger every day. President McAleese was out here in 2006, then we've had every Irish consulate in San Francisco visit Butte on a fairly regular basis. We've had ambassadors, dignitaries out in Butte who want to see Butte for themselves. They've heard stories, or they've heard the high praise from President McAleese when she was here and her staff. And we're always more than happy, willing, and excited to showcase Butte to them. I think that things are only getting stronger between the cultural link between Ireland and Butte, than they have been before. Than they have been in, maybe eighty or ninety years.

MW: I'm not sure if it was you, or maybe it was Monica Evans Cavanaugh, but somebody said that when Mary McAleese visited, she called Butte the Fifth Province of Ireland.

BM: Yep.

MW: That's amazing, that is a hard title to achieve, especially by the President of Ireland!

BM: Yeah, and she was amazing. Not only did she speak and have receptions and give a public presentation, she had a couple of receptions for her visit during the day, but after she left, she had a speaking engagement at the University of Notre Dame, and they gave her an honorarium fee for speaking at the college, and she turned around and donated it back to the Butte Archives.

MW: Oh my gosh! I didn't know that, that's so cool!

BM: Yep, yep. So, she took her honorarium from the University of Notre Dame and donated it all back to the Butte Archives, which is amazing. I think that you're blown away at the quality and how intact the archives in Butte are.

MW: I've had the opportunity to study at the Archives and there's so much. It really got me started on my research, actually.

BM: Yeah, it's absolutely amazing.

MW: That's also a cool connection, because I went to Notre Dame for undergrad, so now I'm out here in Montana studying Butte, so I feel like it's a good connection to have.

BM: Very good!

MW: So, I was wondering what your favorite part of An Rí Rá is?

BM: To be honest, the whole thing. Even the planning of it! Working with the committee, who has developed an incredible bond and friendship. We enjoy working together on the details, kind of evolving over the years. We start over again, we have a system put in place, and we always talk about how we might improve that if we can. And we find things to do that, to improve how we approach it. But we work well together, so I enjoy getting together with the committee throughout the year and working together to make sure that the event is going to be successful. And of course, the buildup to the Festival is so exciting, the performers calling and writing and telling us that they can't wait to get out here. And then when they finally arrive, we have such an incredible time together and an incredible weekend. Yeah, the whole experience for me, it's my favorite week of the whole year, besides Christmas. Christmas and An Rí Rá week are definitely my two most favorite times of the year.

MW: Well, Christmas is coming up! So, a favorite part of the year is coming up! I wanted to switch gears to talk about St. Patrick's Day a little bit. You already talked a little bit about the Friendly Sons of St. Patrick dinner, I was wondering what you know about Handing Down the Heritage, and whether it's connected to An Rí Rá? Or if the organizers are similar or something?

BM: Well, the Handing Down the Heritage is put together by Tom and Cindy Powers and Dublin Gulch. Tom is our music coordinator for the Festival, and Cindy is our dance coordinator for the Festival. And they've been doing Handing Down the Heritage event long before the Festival came to be. And it was their way of, instead of the drinking aspect of the celebration, you know, where the adults and college students would be out celebrating, there was a push to have activities for the kids. Dublin Gulch would play at the Silver Dollar after the parade uptown every year, and still do, to this very day. Then at night, they go down and play at the Civic Center and the Tiernan Irish Dancers perform for their parents, their grandparents, and the community. But yeah, they're directly linked together. It's Dublin Gulch that performs every year, they're our house band at the Festival. Cindy Powers, she founded the Corktown Dancers, and then they became the Tiernan Irish Dancers, and they partnered with the Trinity Irish Dance Academy and Mark Howard. That's a very interesting story. Cindy had the Corktown Dancers and her husband, Tom, was the lead guy or the point man for Dublin Gulch. And they'd been

playing in Butte for years. There was a famous button box player called John “The Yank” Harrington who played until he was 101. He passed away when he was, I believe, 101. He would play with Dublin Gulch every St. Patrick’s Day. And his last public appearance was the Irish Festival on Park Street. It was his idea, along with Tom and the band, John Joyner and Mick Cavanaugh and Jim Schultz, to pass down the heritage to the younger generation. That it wasn’t just about, you know, beer and drinking and carousing uptown. It was about Irish music and Irish dance and the culture. So, while they partake in the afternoon and play at the Silver Dollar, at night they play at the Civic Center, and of course our dance school has grown and grown in size, with the help of Trinity partnering with the Corktown dancers to begin the Tiernan dancers. That relationship happened after the very first year of the Festival. Mark Howard came out with the academy after Cindy Powers had wrote them pretty extensively to come out to Butte and try our festival. They had never been out this far west. So, they really weren’t sure what they were getting into. They came out, and Mark came out with the kids, and they immediately fell in love with the vibe and the culture of Butte and how Irish it is. They went back home after the Festival and made it a plan, on their end, to partner. We’re the only partner in the United States with the Trinity Irish Dancers, we’re their sister school now. And students in Butte and Helena have formed to become the Tiernan Irish dancers. They changed the name and now we’re a partner. Most months out of the year, Trinity sends out an instructor for a week or a few days during the week. They come out for two or three days and instruct the local dance schools. And then they return to Chicago, and they’ve been doing that for years now. And they usually make it out eight or nine months out of the year. In the summer, when everyone’s schedule’s kind of crazy, we see them, of course, we have them every year at the Irish Festival. You know, that really enhanced our local dance school, and our numbers kept growing. The quality of dance improved, so outside of the Irish Festival, the Handing Down the Heritage is their big showcase for the year, where everybody gets to see how incredible the local kids are and the great help with the instruction from the Trinity dance students and instructors.

MW: Wow, yeah, I really see Irish dance as the one of the ways that Butte kind of maintains the authentic Irish heritage identity. So, it’s amazing that it’s so popular.

BM: Not only is it popular, it actually continues to grow. They get more involved every year. We have boys getting in which is exciting. It just shows the acceptance of, to have boys join a local dance group is, you know, it’s important. It’s very important. It’s an activity for all youth.

MW: And didn’t one of the boys from Butte actually go to the World Championships or something?

BM: He did, more than once. I think he went three or four times. Connor Ford, he’s actually a student now at Loyola in Chicago. And he works, dances, from time to time with Trinity in Chicago, where they’re based.

MW: Oh, that’s so cool! Does he come back when Trinity comes to visit in the summer?

BM: Absolutely, he comes home to Butte for the summer. He helps out a bunch at the Festival. In fact, he’s going to take on a role in our committee, an official role on our committee for the first time this year. We’ve kind of seen him full circle as a young student in dance, he was the

first boy that danced in Tiernan. Then all the way through, and other boys have followed his lead here in Butte, which is exciting. And he's gone on to the World Championships. So, yeah, he's a very valuable asset, not only to Tiernan, but to the Irish Festival as well.

MW: Yeah, for sure. Do you think he's going to make changes to the Irish Festival or just participate as a committee organizer?

BM: Oh, he'll participate as an organizer.

MW: That's exciting. Should be fun! So, kind of winding down here, I have two more questions for you. I want to briefly turn to the Fourth of July, which I don't think I did very extensively the last time we talked. I was kind of wondering if there's any Irish involvement in the Fourth of July, in terms of maybe the social organizations, or anything like that? Just because I read historically that that happened, I don't know if it still does today. And then I was wondering if you could just kind of describe what the Fourth of July is like in Butte?

BM: So, on the Fourth of July there isn't really an Irish group, per say. I mean, in the last couple of years, the Hibernians helped with laying out the parade route. That's about it. It was always taken on by a group called Butte celebrations, which was just volunteers from all over the community that would organize the parade every year. The Fourth of July in Butte has always been a big deal. There's several things that Butte allows that other communities don't. We have open fireworks in Butte, so we have firework stands on almost every street corner in Butte, leading up to the Fourth of July, and people can shoot them off in front of their house in the street, which other communities in Montana don't allow. So, it's kind of the wild west in that experience! Butte just takes on the mentality that it's good for Butte and it's good for business, and if people are having fun and their doing it safely, then why not? So, we have a wide-open attitude in terms of fireworks, which is a big thing for residents. Butte's always notorious for not being able to wait for the party, per say, so the third of July is almost bigger than the Fourth. They have concerts on the third. We have our huge outdoor fireworks display from the big "M." Yeah, so, the party really starts in Butte on the third. Butte's always been the town that anticipated and redeveloped the party, while a lot of people wait for the Fourth to have a good time and celebrate. Butte really jumped in, years and years ago, on the third. We have the Town Pump Corporation, which is a huge employer and very successful business in Butte. They stepped in when we had financial troubles, Butte did, in terms of supporting the fireworks. Town Pump pays for the fireworks display from the "M" every year. We get a lot of people from out of town that come in for that. People from all over southwest Montana come into Butte for the fireworks. They camp out up on the hill and find different spots, or they go to their family and friends. There's tons and tons of people up on the hill during the fireworks on the third. It's just super crowded, you know, everyone has a really great time. There's all sorts of parties and barbeques and events. There have been other organizations that put-on concerts. They have a celebration at the hospital on the lawn, which has a great view of the fireworks. But every year, they have a concert and different vendors there. It's just another great way to get people out.

MW: Oh, that's so fun! I feel like that's pretty unique, because at least where I'm from, Fourth of July is very much an individual, nuclear family holiday, where you don't really go out into the community to do much. It sounds like it's really different in Butte, which is cool.

BM: Oh, it's completely different. I mean, there's some blocks in Butte, that, like there's a huge, an absolutely huge fireworks display that one of the local citizens, he just blocks the street himself, essentially, and he has licenses. He puts on a huge display for the neighborhood, and a lot of people that are in town head over and check it out. Two blocks participate, they all chip in and buy fireworks and then put this great, big display together. It's kind of that, it's really community wide. People getting together, doing things together. Not just with their own family.

MW: That's so fun, I want to make a special trip to Butte this summer, then for the Fourth of July!

BM: Yeah, there's lots of activities that go on. But it's also a time, a lot of people now, whether it be the fireworks or the parade, after the parade is over, because of our location and the outdoor recreation, a lot of people head out for an extended week or weekend. There's lots of recreation like, you know, floating and camping and stuff. So, there's a mass exodus out of town for a few days, where people go to their cabins or take the boats out. It's just based on so much opportunity for outdoor recreation.

MW: That sounds like a really nice summertime activity. I'm missing it in this cold weather! So, my final question for you is one that I definitely asked last time, which was, what do you see happening for the future of the Butte Irish community? And I know you mentioned the Butte songs CD already, but last time you also talked about maybe a cultural center happening?

BM: That's always been our main goal, to have an Irish cultural center in Butte. But it takes a huge amount of funding, and while we tried initially to raise enough money each year from the Irish Festival and set it aside towards a building, we got kind of hit by reality that it takes a huge amount of effort to put the Festival on, and we may or may not make money every year. We've remained solvent and successful, but there have been years that, due to weather, we took a pretty substantial hit financially, and then we're back into the bank account, or the coffers, to cover our expenses for the year that we didn't have great luck with weather, primarily. So, we're all working together and hopefully we'll get to a point where we can identify a plan and unite some of the Irish organizations, whether it's the Hibernians or the Friendly Sons of St. Patrick or the An Rí Rá committee and get a building. We've identified three or four in Butte that would make an incredible fit for what we envisioned. But, coming up with the money is the most important thing at this point, so we're going to continue to work on that and keep moving forward, developing relationships and taking on side projects as they come to help promote. So yeah, just stay with it and keep going and not give up what we've been able to develop over the last eighteen years.

MW: I really hope that happens, it's such a great idea, and I really think Butte would be a perfect place for it.

BM: Yeah, we have a lot of support, but we just need to come up with a consistent path for how we'll fund it. That's our challenge.

MW: Yeah, that is a big challenge for sure. Well, before I stop recording is there anything else that maybe I left out that you might want to add?

BM: No, I think we've covered just about everything I can think of at the moment.

MW: Okay good! Well, thank you so much, this was really great, I really appreciate it.

BM: You bet!