Exploring Irish history, culture

Robust website needs polish

The Irish diaspora in Pennsylvania goes back to colonial times when immigrants from Ireland settled in the Philadelphia area. Later, in the mid 1800s, the combination of the potato famine in Ireland and the growth of coal mining in northeast Pennsylvania drew many Irish to our area.

Because of this long history of Irish heritage, the St. Patrick's Parade and St. Patrick's Day are always celebrated enthusiastically by those of us with a touch of green in our blood. Interest in Irish culture and history also tend to spike in March.

Ireland-information. com is a website that covers a wide range of topics concerning the Emerald Isle. If you want to learn more about the old sod, this site is a good place to start.

KEVIN O'NEILL
InSites

Links across the top of the home page connect you to the various sections. There also are more elaborate, illustrated links arranged in a grid below the navigation bar. Photos, drawings, maps and other artwork, as well as a brief description of the section's content, accompany these links.

The Genealogy & Names section lets you research the origin and meaning of Irish first and last names. You also can look up your family's crest and begin a search for your roots.

The Tourist Information section contains maps and travel guides. A variety of maps covering all the major tourist sites can be downloaded for free. There also are recommendations for sites to see and answers to frequently asked questions.

The Culture & Reference section covers a lot of ground. You can learn about Irish music, food, holiday traditions, mythology and the island's patron saint, Patrick. There's also a collection of Irish sayings, blessings and jokes. Information on Ireland's economy, politics, geography and more also is available.

The Irish Stories section features some of Ireland's famous writers. You can download free texts of the works of Oscar Wilde, George Bernard Shaw, Bram Stoker and others.

The Irish History section has abridged articles on pivotal events and people. It's full of tales of invasion, rebellion and starvation. It's a marvel that the Irish have such a good sense of humor considering their dark past.

The last three sections are News from Ireland, Free Downloads and Irish Gift Shop. You can keep up with the latest news from Ireland; download free goodies such as photos, fonts and clip art; or do some shopping.

This site has a lot to offer for those interested in all things Irish, but it's not presented well. This site is in desperate need of a redesign. The home page is cluttered. The inside pages lack visual unity. The typography needs more consistency and structure. The photos are poorly used, being too small in many cases and sometimes distorted. The navigation is unpredictable. You never know when a link is going to take you off the site. The site is a rough stone that could be polished into a gem.

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