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Fall 2014, Musicking on the West Coast of Ireland

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University of
New Hampshire

International Educator



The Newsletter of UNH Global Engagement

Fall 2014

MUSICKING ON THE WEST COAST OF IRELAND

Rachel Ladrigan is the first recipient of the **Stanley A. Hamel Traveling Fellowship**, established in 2013 and funded by an endowment from Stanley A. Hamel through the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation. The fellowship provides **\$3800 for travel in Europe to observe and absorb the culture that influenced the history of the United States**. It is open to UNH graduating seniors and recent graduates. For more information and this year's deadline, please visit the [CIE scholarships page](#).

Contributed by Rachel Ladrigan '14 (Music Education)



Rachel Ladrigan in Ireland

On my trip to Ireland, financed by the Stanley A. Hamel Traveling Fellowship, I found a plethora of connections between New England and Irish culture, experienced life in an Irish cottage, and learned to play the Irish flute. As an Irish-American, I had no idea how much of my life was still connected to Irish tradition and has been since my childhood. Each step of the way I found another gem of Irish culture, new to me but long in my heart. Nineteenth century New Hampshire composer Amy Beach also found Irish music to be close to home. In 1893, at the Chicago World's Fair, she discovered Irish folk music on the Midway just as Dvorak did. Dvorak wrote the "New World Symphony," after his experience at the fair, using African-American folk melodies. After hearing his symphony, Beach wrote to Dvorak with her own opinions, deciding she felt "composers should look at their own heritage," that "[w]e of the

North should be far more likely to be influenced by the old English, Scottish, and Irish songs, inherited with our literature from our ancestors."* After this, Beach began orchestrating Irish melodies, including a tune by blind Irish harpist Turlough O'Carolan, and eventually wrote the "Gaelic Symphony" in response to Dvorak's symphony. I discovered Amy Beach was right; it is simple to find connections between New England and Irish culture.



Blarney Castle

Irish immigrants brought their music with them to New England when they left Ireland in the potato famine. On a tour with Paddy Wagon, an Irish tour company, I visited Glendalough and Kilkenny. Along the way, our guide would sing songs to pass the time while we watched thousands of sheep on green rolling hills. One particular song, *The Rattlin' Bog*, jogged my memory: I used to sing this song with my uncle around the campfire in Maine growing up. It so happens this uncle is named Daniel Ladrigan after our original ancestor, off the boat from Tipperary, Ireland. Thousands of miles from home, I found a piece of my own New England family traditions. Most likely, Amy Beach heard many similar Irish tunes living in New Hampshire and Boston.



Rachel Ladrigan with flute teacher John Wynn

During my last week in Ireland, I attended The Willie Clancy Summer School where I took Irish flute and Gaelic lessons. I studied with John Wynn, an Irish flutist from Roscommon. For this part of my journey, I stayed in Milltown Malbay with an Irish lady in her home, which she called *Yellow Cottage*, with incredible views of the Aran Islands and Cliffs of Moher. Milltown has become a mecca for those who play Irish music from all over the world. In class I played tunes such as *George Brabazon* by Turlough O'Carolan, *This is My Love Do You like Her*, and *Up Leitrum* by flutist John McKenna who immigrated to New York. I rejoiced to play with musicians from all over the world, connected by our love of Irish music. At the festival one evening, I also learned Irish set dancing. I have enjoyed contra dancing here in New Hampshire for over a year and was amazed that the tunes and many of the steps

were the same. With a little bit of instruction, I briskly danced the night away to *John Henry's Reel*, (yes, the one from Titanic) and waltzed to *The Rose of Tralee*.

Upon returning to New Hampshire, I now cherish the bits of Ireland that have always been around me: the two Celtic stores in Portsmouth, the Irish festival in Dover, the now familiar tunes at a contra dance. Just this week I played *Molly on the Shore*, an Irish jig arranged by Percy Grainger, with the Southern New Hampshire University Wind Ensemble. Ireland will forever have a place in my heart. The Irish taught me where all of my favorite New England and family traditions come from and about the struggles the Irish people went through to bring them here. Just as Amy Beach did, I discovered Irish music as a voice for my life in New England.

Here are two of Rachel's recordings:

- [George Brabazon and This is My Love Do You Like Her](#) 
- [Excerpt from Button Accordion Recital](#) 

* Block, Adrienne Fried. *Amy Beach, Passionate Victorian the Life and Works of the American Composer, 1867-1944*. P. 87. New York: Oxford UP, 1998. Print.

