



LOVE - IRISH STYLE

No man on God's green earth can woo a woman with more passion and ardor than an Irishman. The gift of gab, highly seasoned with the spice of blarney is never more effective than during the practice of courtship. What lassie could resist the invitation to "come live in my heart and pay no rent?" Delivered in a velvet soft brogue, poetic words of love and undying devotion are impossible to deny. Irish men adore their women, and they will tell you as much without an apology or fear of appearing overly sentimental. An early wedding custom was for the groom to abduct his bride, literally snatching her from her family's house, carrying her off and marrying her. As barbaric as this custom may sound, usually the abduction was with the enthusiastic consent of the woman. In 1707, the British made such an abduction a capital crime, punishable by hanging, but love-besotted suitors risked their necks to do so anyway.

A more safe, though less colorful, method of obtaining a bride was to hire a matchmaker. Although matchmakers were used in some circumstances, the parents usually conducted the negotiations at a meeting at the groom's parents' home. The woman's dowry would be discussed as well as the man's material worth to see if they were reasonably equivalent. Marriage dates were carefully chosen, as ill luck would befall those marrying when the moon was waning rather than waxing. No one in their right mind would schedule their nuptials on a Saturday - to do so would guarantee an unhappy union. Marrying during harvest time assured that the couple would spend their lives gathering. The most fortunate of all omens was the sound of a cuckoo's call on the morning of the wedding or the sighting of three magpies.

It is traditional for the bride and groom to incorporate the ringing of the "Irish Wedding Bell," which is then kept close at hand in their new household. Whenever an argument or difference of opinion arises, the wedding bell is brought out in order to remind the couple of their solemn wedding vows. Traditional Irish wedding cakes are fruitcakes. This type of rich cake is believed to symbolize blessings for wealth and prosperity. The top layer is customarily saved for consumption until the celebration of the christening of the couple's first child. And the prize for my choice of the most unusual custom was to tie a laying hen to the bed on the first honeymoon night to encourage fertility.

HAPPY VALENTINE'S DAY!



HAPPY 13TH ANNIVERSARY LAOH DIVISION #87!

Submitted by: Anne Foody
Irish Historian, Division #87
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See: *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Irish History and Culture*