

T raditions E xplored

by Erin Wold



St. Patrick's Day has always been a special holiday for me. After all, how could a child not feel special when their name is printed on everything from cheap plastic hats to restaurant signs? "Erin go Braugh!" and "Ireland Forever!" which I eventually learned, is the familiar call of St. Patrick's Day.

This day, St. Patrick's Day, is a holiday steeped in history, with a bit o' myth and legend mixed in for good measure. So, let's explore: St. Patrick's Day.

The Man

The man known as St. Patrick is a bit of a mystery himself. Most historians do agree that St. Patrick began his life as Maewyn Succat, the son of a low-ranking Roman official living in Britain (most likely Scotland or Wales). He was kidnapped into slavery in Ireland at age 16. While a captive, he had his first religious calling. He finally escaped his captivity and returned to England. Later, he spent time in a French monastery. It was after his time in the monastery that he changed his name to Patrick. Eventually he returned to Ireland as a missionary spreading Christianity to the Irish people. It is commonly held that St. Patrick's Day is celebrated on the anniversary of his death on March 17.

The Legend: St. Patrick – Snake Driver

It is said that part of St. Patrick's fame comes from the claim that he drove the snakes from Ireland. The fact is... according to biologists, there are no snakes indigenous to the island. So, St. Patrick couldn't have driven any from Ireland. The story is used as a myth to describe Patrick's good works. It is more likely that snakes, a common pagan symbol, represent St. Patrick's converting the pagans to Christianity.

"Leapin' Leprechauns!" and Other Things

Lucky, the cereal box leprechaun, is the friendly twin of a true leprechaun. Traditional folklore says leprechauns are very solitary beings who prefer to avoid human contact. They are unfriendly, cranky, crotchety and gruff men (yes, all men). They make shoes for the fairies. Leprechauns are also very thrifty by nature, so they are entrusted to protect fairy treasures.

Four-Leaf Clover

The four-leaf clover is actually a mutated version of the more common three-leaf clover. Ancient Druids believed that the rare four-leaf clover was helpful in spotting witches and demons. Today the four-leaf clover is said to bring good judgment and fortune whenever you should happen to spot one.

Shamrock

The Shamrock is the traditional symbol of Ireland. Many religious traditions in Ireland believe the shamrock is a holy symbol due to the shape of its three leaves. The shamrock is also believed to give protection from snakes and scorpion bites. It is even used as an ingredient in some Irish beers.

Today, St. Patrick's Day is celebrated the world over. It is a day of fun and frivolity for people of all ages, cultures and traditions. May the luck of the Irish be with you! If you happen to catch a leprechaun...keep your eyes on him. If he escapes, so does your treasure!

"Erin go Braugh!"

Did You Know?

Corned beef is not a traditional Irish St. Patrick's Day course. It was most likely a substitution by new Irish immigrants because of its price and availability in America. Traditionally, Irish Bacon or Salted Pork was served with the boiled cabbage and potatoes.

You can try corned beef and all the trimmings starting at 9 p.m. on St. Patrick's Day at Sports USA!

Celebrate with MWR

McKellar's

Green beer and finger foods 5-8 pm

Airborne Lanes

Wear Green and Bowl for Gold, Bowl a strike with the GOLD Head Pin and receive a prize.