

# U.S.A. Leitrim in the Mid-West U.S.A.



Kathleen and Jim O'Connell, Chicago, with their daughters Fiona, Marita and Aileen.

Among the most regular visitors to their native Leitrim are the O'Connell and Gaffney families of Evergreen Park, Illinois — a suburb of Chicago.

Jim O'Connell, a native of Killadough, Ballinamore, worked for some years at Ballinamore Railway before deciding to emigrate, like many other young men of his age. In Chicago he entered the construction industry and now he has built up a formidable contracting business. His wife Kathleen — formerly Kathleen Gaffney — was actually a near neighbour of Jim's for she comes from Aughaleague, Ballinamore. The O'Connells have four children, one son, Kevin, who is at present studying in the University of Minnesota, and three daughters; Fiona who is studying to be a Court Reporter at the University of Florida; Aileen and Marita, both of whom are still in High School in Chicago.

The three O'Connell sisters are typical of American young ladies — attractive, and excellent conversationalists — and while holidaying in Leitrim this year, Aileen was selected as Ballinamore Festival Queen, an honour of which she was very proud.

The O'Connells and Gaffneys are in-laws, for Noel Gaffney is Kathleen's

brother, Noel's wife, also Kathleen, formerly Kathleen Keon, is a native of the Kinlough area and her sister Maureen is married to Michael Sweeney in Ballinamore, so the Keon family has done its bit for the unification of North and South Leitrim.

Leitrim Guardian readers are already aware of the generosity of Noel Gaffney, for he is the sponsor of The Gaffney Award which brings a member of The Leitrim Guardian Committee to the United States on a promotion trip each year.

Noel and Kathleen, who run a very successful travel agency in Oaklawn have five daughters, Genevieve, Noelle, Maeve, Brenda and Lorna.

Like all emigrants, the Gaffneys and O'Connells miss many things in their exile — they miss their relatives and friends at home, their native place with its many happy memories. But they are happy in their homes in the United States. They have settled there and woven themselves into the community, their children are American born, and indeed, neither family could envisage returning on a permanent basis to Ireland.

We tend to think that people in the United States are not involved in community activities like we are in Ireland. But this is not so. Noel and Kathleen — both excellent singers — are members of a vocal group that entertains regularly — free of charge — at parish concerts and socials and various fund raising efforts on behalf of their local community. Noel, Jim and their wives are actively involved in the running of Benefit Dances for various Missionary Groups like the Medical Missionaries of Mary, Columban Fathers, S.M.A. St. Patrick's Fathers and also indeed for many Irish families in their community who may be in need



Genevieve Gaffney, Chicago.

due to death or injury of the family bread-winner. There is a deep loyalty between the Irish people in the Chicago area, and while there are no County Associations, as in many other cities the Irish population keeps in touch and meets frequently at various social occasions. The excellent telephone service they enjoy, makes it easy to retain frequent contact with their associates.

While on holiday this year, Noel frequently added his vocal talents to many Festival cabaret sessions, and was willing, as always, to be of assistance to the community. Jim took part in an interview on Ballinamore Radio and gave an interesting and humorous insight into many aspects of life "on the other side". It was nice to hear him express the love of emigrants for the "Leitrim Guardian" magazine and their appreciation of the work of its committee.

The Leitrim Guardian extends good wishes to the O'Connells, Gaffneys, McCartins, Duignans, Kelleghers, O'Reillys, Plunketts, and all Leitrim and Irish people in Illinois and again expresses its gratitude to Noel Gaffney for his generous sponsorship of the Gaffney Leitrim Guardian Award.

The tenth Annual Dinner Dance of the Leirrim Football Club took place at the Tower View Ballroom, Woodside on Sunday, February 19th, 1978

Paddy McGreevy from Drumkeerin was selected to receive the Club's 1978 Award in recognition of his many contributions to Leirrim football in New York. Since his arrival in 1953, Paddy, after a few years service with the junior football team, has served the Leirrim Club as President (1958-59), as G.A.A. delegate from 1957 to 1969 and Vice-President on several occasions. Under his direction, Leirrim won the 1958 New York football title. Leirrim's only other championship victory was in 1932. Before emigrating from his native Drumkeerin he played football for Sean McDermott's, Manorhamilton, lining out at half back against the famous Blacklion, Glenfarne, Dromahaire and Ballaghameehan teams of the early fifties.

Leirrim footballers arriving at Kennedy airport for the first time in the 1950s and 60s were usually greeted by Paddy. All vouched for his tremendous hospitality, his friendship extended to them, ensuring that they got settled as quickly as possible in their new surroundings.

When Leirrim had trips to Philadelphia, New Haven or Hartford, Paddy was the first to volunteer his services as chauffeur the members of the team to their scheduled game.

Paddy is married to the former Maura McInerney from Lurganboy, Manor-

hamilton and they have two sons, Brendan and Malachy.

Among the many friends who came to honour Paddy that evening were former Cavan All Ireland footballer, Mr. John Wilson, Minister for Education, on his way to San Francisco to open the Irish Art exhibition in that city. Gearoid O'Clerigh, Consul General of Ireland in New York, Padraig Collins, Deputy Consul General; Eugene Hutchinson, Vice Consul; Detta Walsh of Irish Air Lines; Dorothy Hayden of W.E.V.D. radio station, New York City, Leo Heslin famed dental surgeon and lecturer in dentistry at U.C.D., who was lecturing at Boston College; Peggy Howard Bany, President of the Leirrim Society, and Jack Sammon, President of New York G.A.A.

John Byrne, Sports Editor of the "Irish Echo" newspaper, was the recipient of a plaque from the club to show its appreciation to him for his many contributions to the Leirrim football club over the years. The Player of the Year Award for 1977 went to Pat McKeon from Dromahair, and Pat's acceptance speech was the highlight of the affair.

The presentations were made by Club President, Paddy Faughnan from Annaduff.

Of course we have problems and will continue to have them as long as the present immigration law exists. But as long as we have men like Paddy McGreevy in the Club we may be down but will not die.



Raymond Murray, Sunnyside, New York, whose parents are Pat and Pidgie Murray, from Killaneen and Aughnasheelin. Raymond is a skilled Gaelic football and ice hockey player and is a leading player with the Auburndale Strikers in the Long Island Junior Soccer League.



Paddy McGreevy

a native of Drumkeerin, receiving the New York Leirrim Football Club's 1978 Award.



Dolan family, Bergenfield, New Jersey

Back row, l. to r. — Maureen (13), Kevin (15), Sheila (17).

Front — Deirdre (10), Tom (8), Kathleen (11)

Kathleen and Kevin qualified at the Oireachtas in New York for the World Championships in Dublin, where Kevin won the Aer Lingus U.S. and Canada Overseas Trophy in the Senior Competition. The parents of the Dolan dancers are Noel and Sheila (nee Maguire) from Ballinamore and Newtowngore.

The Dolan children are pupils of the Peter Smith School of Irish Dancing. Noel Dolan is a Life Patron of The Leirrim Guardian.