

KILTUBRID BAND ON 5th AVENUE

As we packed into the coaches to take us to Shannon, you could almost feel the pride in the air over Lough Scurl that the local band was on its way to represent Kiltubrid and Leitrim at the largest parade in the free world — the St. Patrick's Day Parade in New York.

The official invitation had come from Frank Beirne, a native of Jamestown, the Chairman of the 1987 New York Parade. This was the encouragement we needed to finally do what had been in the backs of our minds for some time.

P. J. Meehan

RECALLS AN HISTORIC
VISIT TO THE
U.S.A.

So many people helped to make a dream become a reality. New kilts, plaids, caps, banners, instruments cost plenty of money — but would have cost more but for the generous work of many ladies in particular — fund-raising events and collections were supported by people at home and abroad. Members of army and civilian pipe bands assisted and advised us in our hectic training programme. Kiltubrid, Leitrim and Ireland were doing their best for us — it was now up to the band to be worthy ambassadors. No one could accuse us of not having made proper preparation.

Half of New York seemed to have turned out to greet us at Kennedy Airport and we were soon on our way to our "head-quarters" in the Big Apple — the Tara Hill Bar, owned by Aughavas man, Mel Cooney. It was in Mel's bar that the Kiltubrid Band played for the first time on foreign soil and our friends gathered there from all over the state of New York and many acquaintances were renewed as we gave an up-to-date account of all parish activities to our emigrants.

Our first official engagement was in the Astoria Manor Ballroom on the Saturday night for the annual Leitrim Society Dance.



P. J. Meehan (centre) on drums, with pipers Noel Canning and Sean Canning preparing for the historic parade.

Sufficient to say that the band will never forget the tumultuous reception received from the eleven hundred people present — it was a very nostalgic occasion for all of us.



Mel Cooney — proprietor of the Tara Hill Bar, New York.

Sunday morning — after a hectic night's entertainment we were on our way to New Haven, Connecticut where Kiltubrid man Gerry Reddy had made top class arrangements. As we tuned up in Church Street, New Haven, after having dressed for the parade in Mary Sweeney's home, hundreds of Leitrim people lined up behind us and again it was photographs and videos galore with Willie Donnellan and Declan Tierney recording everything for *The Leitrim Observer*.

At the parade in New Haven everything seemed to have been painted green and from all sides came cheers of "Up Kiltubrid" and "Up Leitrim". In fact, someone had erected a signpost stating "Leitrim 2 miles". If the reception we received was anything to go by, then we certainly must have put on a top class performance.

After the parade we were treated to an American St. Patrick's Special — corned beef and cabbage in St. Mary's Hall. Then it was on to The Knights of St. Patrick's Hall for more entertainment and finally to The Irish