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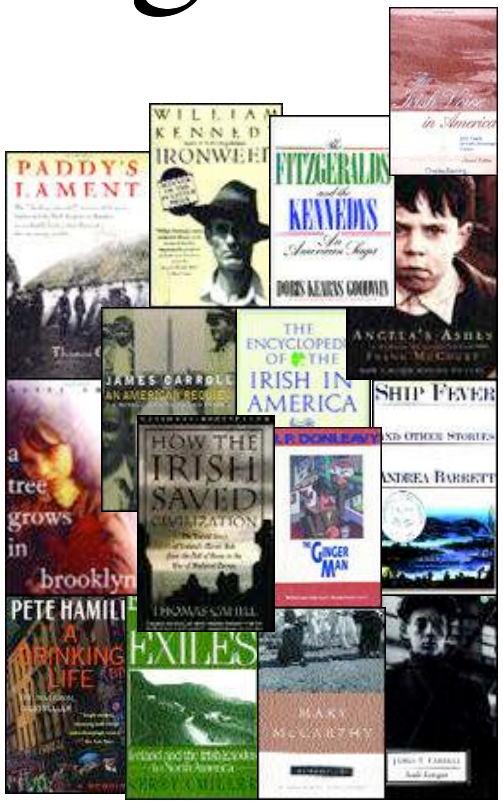
Tom Deignan

DISCUSSING

Twenty Books Every Irish American Should Read



SATURDAY, APRIL 19TH, 2008
2:30 P.M. ON THE 6TH FLOOR

Mid-Manhattan Library
The New York Public Library
40th Street and 5th Avenue
New York, NY 10016
212-340-0951

Which books best capture the humor and drama, the triumph and tragedy of the Irish American experience? Explore over a century of brilliant immigrant history, fiction, memoirs and more as Tom Deignan discusses the "*20 Books Every Irish American Should Read.*"

From the horrors of the Irish famine to the tidy suburbs of Long Island, the Irish experience in the U.S. has been rich and complex. Which 20 books best capture and reflect this journey? Designed to provoke discussion and debate, the writers on this list explore saints and sinners, the famous and the obscure, beautiful fantasies and harsh realities. Is your favorite Irish American author on the list?

Producing a list of 20 books which every Irish American should read was both joyous and painful. The joy, obviously, came pouring over the many volumes, revisiting the beautiful sentences, and the haunted memories. The pain, however, was knowing that, inevitably, some brilliant books would have to be excluded.

Authors who should have, but could not make this list did so for a variety of reasons. Focus was solely on books in which the author and book itself had a fairly explicit Irish American connection. The brilliant fiction of John Kennedy Toole, J.F. Powers and Flannery O'Connor (not to mention John Steinbeck, F. Scott Fitzgerald, John O'Hara and William Faulkner) were left just outside the fence.

Authors such as Jimmy Breslin, Dennis Smith and Tom Fleming, meanwhile, have produced such an impressive body of work that it was tough to single out just one of their books.

Other books of great merit are sadly out of print or very difficult to find .

TOM DEIGNAN is the author of *Irish Americans: Coming to America*. For almost a decade, he has written the weekly "Sidewalks" column for *The Irish Voice* newspaper. He also writes columns about movies, books and history for *Irish America* magazine. He is currently a contributing writer for *The Irish American Chronicle*, a history book due out later this year.

Mr. Deignan's writing has appeared in *The New York Times*, *The New York Observer*, *The New York Sun*, *The Newark Star-Ledger*, *The Irish Independent*, *Publisher's Weekly*, *Commonweal* and *America*.

He has taught history, cinema and English at St. John's University and the City University of New York. He is currently a teacher at Automotive High School in Brooklyn.

He lives on Staten Island with his wife Kate and children Maggie, T.J., Timothy and Rose.

Elevators access the 6th floor after 6 p.m.
All programs are **FREE** and subject to last minute change or cancellation.