

Proclamation 6407 of March 2, 1992

Year of the American Indian, 1992

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Half a millennium ago, when European explorers amazed their compatriots with stories of a New World, what they actually described was a land that had long been home to America's native peoples. In the Northeast part of this country and along the Northwest coast, generations of tribes fished and hunted; others farmed the rich soils of the Southeast and Great Plains, while nomadic tribes roamed and foraged across the Great Basin. In the arid Southwest, native peoples irrigated the desert, cultivating what land they could. Each tribe formed a thriving community with its own customs, traditions, and system of social order.

The contributions that Native Americans have made to our Nation's history and culture are as numerous and varied as the tribes themselves. Over the years, they have added to their ancient wealth of art and folklore a rich legacy of service and achievement. Today we gratefully recall Native Americans who helped the early European settlers to survive in a strange new land; we salute the Navajo Code Talkers of World War II and all those Native Americans who have distinguished themselves in service to our country; and we remember those men and women of Indian descent—such as the great athlete, Jim Thorpe and our 31st Vice President, Charles Curtis—who have instilled pride in others by reaching the heights of their respective fields. We also celebrate, with special admiration and gratitude, another enduring legacy of Native Americans: their close attachment to the land and their exemplary stewardship of its natural resources. In virtually every realm of our national life, the contributions of America's original inhabitants and their descendants continue.

During 1992, we will honor this country's native peoples as vital participants in the history of the United States. This year gives us the opportunity to recognize the special place that Native Americans hold in our society, to affirm the right of Indian tribes to exist as sovereign entities, and to seek greater mutual understanding and trust. Therefore, we gratefully salute all American Indians, expressing our support for tribal self-determination and assisting with efforts to celebrate and preserve each tribe's unique cultural heritage.

The Congress, by Public Law 102-188, has designated 1992 as the "Year of the American Indian" and has authorized and requested the President to issue a proclamation in observance of this year.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, GEORGE BUSH, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim 1992 as the Year of the American Indian. I encourage Federal, State, and local government officials, interested groups and organizations, and the people of the United States to observe this year with appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this second day of March, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-two,

and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and sixteenth.

GEORGE BUSH

Proclamation 6408 of March 4, 1992

Irish-American Heritage Month, 1992

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

They trace their roots to "an isle of wondrous beauty," to a place "as kind as it is green." They are the more than 40 million Americans who claim Irish ancestry, and this month as communities across the country honor Saint Patrick, the beloved apostle of Ireland, our Nation joins in celebrating their rich heritage.

The distinct heritage of Irish immigrants and their descendants has long been a vibrant part of American history and culture. Sons and daughters of Erin were among the first colonists in America, and many played key roles in our Nation's struggle for independence. Nine of the men who signed our Declaration of Independence were of Irish origin, as was Commodore John Barry, the first naval commander commissioned by the Continental Congress. Another son of Ireland, Charles Thomson, served as the secretary of that body during all 15 years of its existence. Hailed as "the Sam Adams of Philadelphia, the life of the cause of liberty," Thomson labored to help keep the Continental Congress together until America's freedom had been won and a new government under the Constitution had been established. Scores of other Irish-Americans championed the cause of liberty through service in the Continental Army.

Although a significant number of Americans of Irish descent contributed to our Nation's independence, the largest wave of Irish immigration did not reach these shores until the mid-19th century. When a devastating potato blight in the late 1840s led to a series of crop failures and famine, well over a million Irish immigrants journeyed to this land of opportunity. Boston, New York, and other great cities grew with the influx of Irish labor, as did our Nation's railroads, metal trades, and mining communities. One historical portrait of Irish-Americans quotes a 19th-century journal as observing:

America demands for her development an inexhaustible fund of physical energy, and Ireland supplies the most part of it. There are several sorts of power working at the fabric of this Republic—waterpower, steam-power, and Irish-power. The last works hardest of all.

Such accounts of Irish industry and resolve are, today, inspiring. Yet we know that although it is as glorious as the ancient tales of Brian Boru and as rich as the fields that border the River Shannon, the Irish-American heritage includes its share of hardship.

While farming and other trades were difficult in Ireland, even before the "Black Forties," many 19th-century Irish immigrants faced hard and dangerous work in our Nation's mining towns and cities. The Irish