

'Hearty' celebration for new D.C. Emmet Park

By Peter Kissel

At a ceremony led by Senator Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), former New York Congressman Joe Crowley, and Irish Ambassador to the United States, Daniel Mulhall, the newly-named "Robert Emmet Park" in Washington, D.C. was heartily celebrated on Sunday, September 22.

The Irish American Unity Conference's annual commemoration of Irish freedom fighter Robert Emmet served as the inauguration of the park under its new name, thanks to Crowley's sponsorship of H.R. 4564 and Murkowski's lead on S.47, signed into law on March 12, 2019 by President Trump.

On a beautiful day fitting for the occasion, the National Park Service, under the guidance of Rock Creek Park Superintendent Julia Washburn, assured that the park looked its best, with new plantings and the installation of a temporary version of the new sign facing Massachusetts Avenue proclaiming the site as "Robert Emmet Park."

Speakers included Park Superintendent Washburn, Ambassador Mulhall, and the two sponsors of the naming legislation, Joe Crowley, who led the effort in the House, and Senator Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), who sponsored the final Senate bill.

IAUC Board members Rich Lyon read Emmet's Speech from the Dock and Bill Black read Thomas Moore's poem "Oh! Breathe not his name."

Superintendent Washburn stated that the National Park Service was very honored to care for Robert Emmet Park on behalf of the American people, and noted that the park serves as testimony to Emmet's sacrifice for the ideals of freedom and democracy.

The superintendent also reaffirmed NPS' commitment to continued preservation of "this important space which honors the ideals for which Emmet's life stood."

Ambassador Mulhall extolled the importance of Irish America to Ireland and to the United States.

He recognized that Emmet is symbolic of the struggles of generations of Irish people for independence, and that Emmet was inspired by the ideals of the American Revolution.

The ambassador expressed his appreciation for the key role of Irish Americans in keeping the flame of independence alive and that Irish



Senator Lisa Murkowski speaking at the Robert Emmet commemoration with former congressman Joe Crowley and Ambassador Dan Mulhall seated.



Ambassador Dan Mulhall addresses the gathering in Robert Emmet Park.

Americans "have always had Ireland's back" with their proud history of contributions to the U.S. and Ireland.

Joe Crowley credited Senator Murkowski for getting the legislation over the finish line, action which had demonstrated true bipartisan support.

He especially thanked the senator for being at the event as it showed how important Emmet is to America as well as Ireland. Crowley's father was a great admirer of both Robert and Thomas Addis Emmet with Robert's portrait on his office walls.

Senator Murkowski lauded Emmet as "an extraordinary man in a short life."

She thanked Joe Crowley for starting the legislation by noting that nothing gets over the finish line unless someone starts it.

She also stressed the significance of working across the aisle and recognized that "some strategy sessions over a few pints at the Dubliner" facilitated the bipartisan effort.

She said that the national parks are a symbol of American freedom and by rededicating this park others will stop and reflect on Emmet's impact and ability to inspire and spread freedom and democracy around the world.

IAUC and AOH member Jack O'Brien was honored by the speakers for his tireless work in conceiving and advocating for the legislation, which also received a big boost from the Irish Embassy.

The Virginia State AOH presented the color guard, led by Terry Riley, and Tony Ziselberger (O'Neill) provided a

background of traditional Irish tunes on the button accordion.

Among those attending were William Emmet, descendant of Robert's brother Thomas Addis Emmet and several other members of the Emmet family, many members of the Irish Embassy staff, in-

cluding Ambassador Mulhall's wife Greta, new Deputy Chief of Mission Emer Roche, and Irish-American Democrats leader Stella O'Leary.

Many congressional staffers were also among the large crowd.

After the ceremony, pints

were raised in celebration at the Across The Pond pub on Connecticut Avenue, this during a lunch hosted by Ambassador Mulhall.

Peter Kissel is National President of the Irish American Unity Conference.



County Carlow Association of New York

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