

IRISH AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH

WHEREAS, by 1776 nearly 300,000 Irish nationals had emigrated to the American colonies and played a crucial role in America's War for Independence; and

WHEREAS, five signers of the Declaration of Independence were of Irish descent and three signers were Irish born; and

WHEREAS, Irish Americans helped to fashion a system of governance for our young Nation; and

WHEREAS, twenty-two Presidents have proudly proclaimed their Irish American heritage; and

WHEREAS, in 1792 Irish born James Hoban provided the architectural plans for the White House and served as one of the supervising architects for the construction of the Capitol; and

WHEREAS, Irish born Commodore John Barry was recognized by the United States Congress in September of 2002 as the "First Flag Officer of the United States Navy"; and

WHEREAS, Commodore John Barry fought the last sea battle of the American Revolution off the coast of Florida; and

WHEREAS, in 1813 Captain Oliver Perry, an Irish American, achieved a major naval victory in the Battle of Lake Erie; and

WHEREAS, in 1942 the Sullivan brothers made the ultimate sacrifice for democracy and freedom during the Naval Battle of Guadalcanal and later had the Destroyer USS Sullivan commissioned in their memory; and

WHEREAS, the Irish first came to Spanish "La Florida" in the 1500's – first as missionaries and mercenary soldiers and then as planters, traders, businessmen, doctors and administrators; and

WHEREAS, three of the Spanish Governors of "La Florida" were actually Irish military officers; and

WHEREAS, Fr. Richard Arthur, an Irish-born priest from Limerick who was appointed parish priest for St. Augustine in 1597 and ecclesiastical judge of "La Florida", established the first public school in America and opened it to both boys and girls of all races; and

WHEREAS, Andrew Jackson, whose family came from County Antrim, served as Florida's military governor following its acquisition by the United States; and

WHEREAS, Irish Americans, since America's inception, have provided and continue to provide leadership and service to this nation's political, business and religious establishments; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting and proper to celebrate the rich cultural heritage and the many valuable contributions of Irish Americans.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, MIKE WILKINSON, Mayor of the TOWN OF BELLEAIR, FLORIDA, do hereby proclaim the month of March as IRISH AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH.

*GIVEN under my hand and the Seal of
the TOWN OF BELLEAIR, FLORIDA,
this 17th day of FEBRUARY, 2026.*

MIKE WILKINSON, MAYOR