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## KELLIGREWS SOIREE

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Dating back to the 1883 opening of St. Michael and the Angels Roman Catholic Church; over 700 people came from all over via the old Newfoundland Railway, dating back to 1894 when the Coopers' Union, a society of St. John's barrel makers took the train to Kelligrews to celebrate the formation of their guild. Church leaders and even newspaper editors decried the sojourn, predicting the trip to Kelligrews would corrupt the morals of the young men taking trains to the South Shore. From here Newfoundland's most prolific songwriter, Johnny Burke, took notice and immortalized the 'Newfoundland Party'. So, while there appears to have been local Soirees of some sort in the first half of the 20th century, it looks like it was not until 1957 that the Kiwanis Club held the first official "Kelligrews Soiree." St. John's resident Johnny Burke wrote the popular song, Kelligrews Soiree. Johnny, known as the "Bard of Prescott Street" penned hundreds of ballads in the late 1800s and early 1900s. The song's content was parodied as an outport celebration, and over the years Burke adjusted the song to meet his needs. The Kiwanis Club of Kelligrews has the exclusive rights to the name, The Kelligrews Soiree, but has no problem sharing it for the benefit of the entire Town. The Club, along with the Town of Conception Bay South, is now involved in coordinating the annual event, and their members volunteer throughout the weekend. Today the Soiree's events are held over a four-day period throughout the Town, but the Sunday folk festival remains in Kelligrews. The Town of Conception Bay South plays a major role by providing funding and other resources to ensure the success of the weekend.