

# Resident-owned 'Celtic Crossroads' is last Irish gift shop in city

By Sabina Mollot

It's always St. Patrick's Day at Celtic Crossroads, an Irish gift boutique that has become a favorite place for Irish New Yorkers and those who work near Grand Central Station, to shop.

Owned by Stuyvesant Town resident Pat Foley, the little store, which has been open since 1998, was once one of five Irish gift shops in Manhattan. It is now the only one left.

Foley, an Irish-American lass who stocks her shop with a variety of items, from handmade pottery to homemade jams to silver Celtic knot jewelry, said, she believes she made the "after 9/11" cut, which put so many retailers out of business, because her shop doesn't sell typical Irish souvenirs.

"You can get things like sweatshirts or beer mugs anywhere, like at any street festival," she said. "I found that it's

better to have a small amount of quality items than to stuff the store with random things that I don't like and don't reflect the image I want," she said. Foley said she thinks of Celtic Crossroads as a "neighborhood store," but also a mid to high-end boutique.

However, this doesn't mean that the merchandise is unaffordable.

"We have items that are anywhere between one dollar and two thousand dollars, depending on what you need," said Foley. "I often ask customers what their gift budget is and we take it from there."

In fact, Foley has become such a trusted shopping consultant, that she is often requested to supply favors from her shop for weddings and corporate events, like homemade chocolates and jams and small handcrafted goods. Part of what makes each item personal, she said,

whether it's a plaid cashmere cape—one of the boutique's most expensive items at \$325—or a crystal beer stein with Celtic style engravings, is that everything is made in Ireland, mostly by independent craftspeople.

"It's not just villages and fairy tales any more," said Foley. "(Irish people) have changed, and their educations are their best assets."

Along with the businessmen and women who stop by the store along their daily commute, many of Foley's fellow Stuyvesant Town residents often stop by to see what's new. Foley orders new items, changing the store's stock on a regular basis to keep customers interested.

Currently, Celtic Crossroads has hand-knit baby clothes, silver and gold jewelry from cuff links to wedding bands, cups and pottery, Irish music CDs, books, woven baskets, knit caps.

Silk scarves and ties with subtle patterns, are a particularly popular item.

Made by designer, Patrick Francis, the ties from far away look like they're striped or a solid color, but actually, are each adorned with subtle Celtic knot-work or clovers.

"They're very popular with the fellows, because they can show pride in their heritage without being over the top," said Foley.

The store's most popular item for St. Patrick's Day is an item Foley designed herself and patented. A baseball cap that reads, "Bennaght dia America" or "God Bless America" in Irish, and the same thing in English on the back has been flying off the shelves at \$20 apiece.

Other gift items range in price from \$12.50 for a handmade purse to \$16 for a small box of truffle chocolates to \$40 for a set of champagne glasses



Pat Foley, of Stuyvesant Town, holds up an imported ladies' cape, one of the many unique items in her midtown store, "Celtic Crossroads."

adorned with pewter knot patterns, a popular choice for wedding gifts.

"It's the fact that the gifts are from Ireland and have meaning that make them special," said Foley. "I'd rather see someone spend \$10 and be happy than buy something for \$50 and say what do I need this for? It's the thought. You don't need to spend a lot."

Celtic Crossroads is located at 60 E. 42nd Street in the lobby of the Lincoln Building, between Park and Madison Avenues. The shop is open Monday through Friday and can be reached at (212) 490-0848.

Foley has lived in Stuyvesant Town for the past 16 years with her husband Dan, a court officer.