



As our ferry sailed the Irish Sea and approached the Emerald Isle, it seemed some stagemaster had opened the skies for us, and we went ashore in sunny Ireland and all yelled, "Hooray, hooray, it's the first of May. Ireland touring starts today!" Well, something like that.

We passed through many towns with typical Irish names, including Kilarney, Limerick, Tipperary and Kilkenny. Then we saw the little post office (photo), we realized that not all of the today's blarney is confined to Chicago and Washington DC.

As our bus wound its way through the countryside to Dublin, we were enthralled by blossoming flowers and the sparkling bright green of the hills and farmlands. We had to stop several times while shepherds led hundreds of sheep and lambs across the roadways.

We asked the bus driver why some of the cute little lambs had big red dye marks on their flanks. He laughed and said they would be lamb chops, lamb shanks, rack of lamb or lamb stew within a couple of days. We wished we had never asked.

One feature of the tour was a dinner at a private home just outside of the historic city of Dublin. First, the tourists were each given a glass of wine, and we toasted famous world leaders and rock stars. The host next had us join in on some familiar Irish songs, including "Mother McCree" and "My Wild Irish Rose." Finally, we all sat down to dinner. You can guess what the main course was ... rack of lamb. Many of us just ate veggies, thank you.

The next night we all attended the famous Abbey Theatre in Dublin. The play was, "Playboy of the Western World." It was about an Irish ne'r-do-well farm boy who goes to the big city, not Hugh Hefner's magazine. The dialog was in 17th Century rural Celtic, and none of the Americans in the audience had any idea of what the play was all about. So, we laughed, clapped and cheered whenever the other members of the audience did.

Ireland in the early spring is the best time to visit, but don't make the mistake of getting too sentimental about the little spring lambs you see frolicking on the green. The next day one may be on your dinner plate.