

# Nixons Hold 'Irish Evening at White House'

By CHARLOTTE CURTIS

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WASHINGTON, March 16 —

President Nixon entertained Ireland's Prime Minister, John M. Lynch, at the White House tonight, toasted his wife's 59th birthday and was expected at long last to confirm officially his daughter Patricia's engagement to Edward Ridley Finch Cox, a Harvard law student.

The occasion, a St. Patrick's Eve salute of sorts, was called "an Irish evening at the White House." It came at the end of day-long festivities that included everything Irish but leprechauns.

In the morning, when Mr. Lynch arrived, the President reminded him that "tomorrow, on St. Patrick's Day, everybody in

America will be just a little Irish." A girls' choir sang "When Irish Eyes Are Smiling."

By late afternoon, Philadelphia's Friendly Sons of St. Patrick had made Mr. Nixon an honorary member, mostly on the ground that an ancestor, a Sir John Nixon of Philadelphia, was one of the organization's founders in 1771.

President Nixon and Prime Minister Lynch also found time for private talks. They were reported to have discussed such international problems as the Middle East, Vietnam, East-West relations, the strategic arms meeting in Vienna and turmoil in Northern Ireland.

Asked at a news conference about Bernadette Devlin, Northern Ireland's militant Roman

Catholic member of the British Parliament, Mr. Lynch said he thought Miss Devlin had lost her support among the majority of the Irish people.

If the day was filled with sentimental songs, flags, plenty of blarney and tributes to and from the Irish of all races, creeds and color, the evening was more so.

## Nearly 300 Guests

The party began with the arrival of nearly 300 formally clad guests, all of whom paraded through the high-ceilinged corridors and into the East Room, where they settled themselves on little gilt chairs.

Once they were seated, a United States Army band, which had been playing background music, moved on to the traditional "Ruffles and Flourishes" and "Hail to the Chief." Everybody got up and the Nixons and the Lynches appeared.

While Mrs. Nixon and her guests sat down, the President walked to the front of the room. There were those who thought this might be the moment for the engagement announcement. But it wasn't.

The President merely introduced the program. Before long, the East Room platform was knee-deep in costumed Irish performers.

## More Irish Songs

The Shannon Castle Entertainers, a group of 10 singers and seven dancers, began with "Mise Eire" (I Am Ireland), an elaborate mini-pageant dealing with Irish history. An expanded version of the pageant appears regularly at Knappogue Castle near Shannon Airport in County Clare.

Then came something called "An Irish Stew," with more Irish songs. Terry Wilson, a balladeer from Miltown Malbay on the coast of County Clare, went on to sing more ballads and play the guitar.

The program ended with Everett J. Morrison, an Irish

tenor from Jersey City. He sang "Galway Bay" and "Danny Boy."

Afterward, the partygoers went through a receiving line set up in the Blue Room and on into the State Dining Room. Predictably, the buffet table was covered with Kelly green velvet, ribbons and bows and decorated with bouquets of white and green-dyed pompons and bells of Ireland.

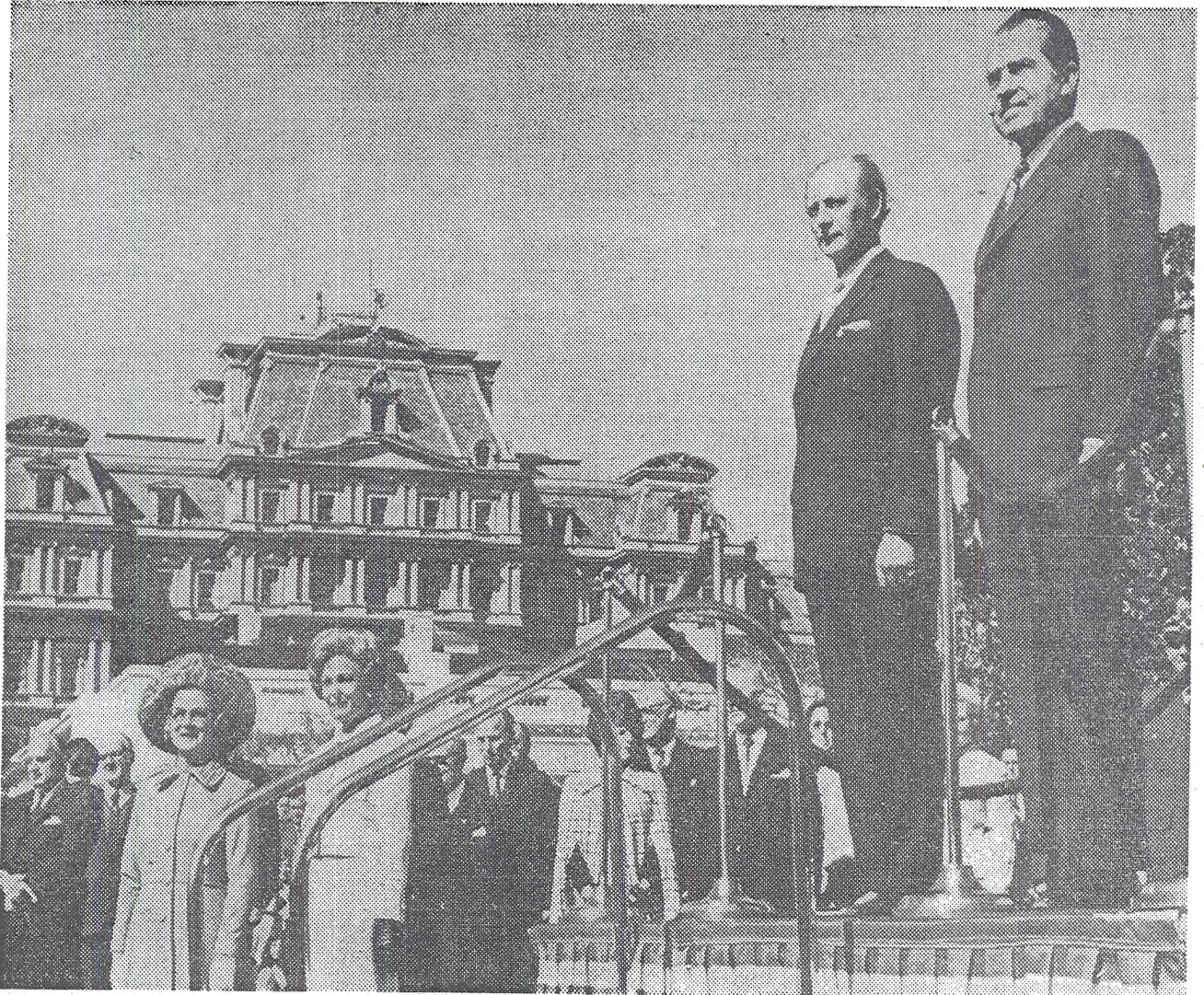
The guest list ran to Irish-American leaders of one sort or another, Cabinet officers, Republican tycoons, generals, admirals, personal friends and members of the Cox family.

Besides the prospective bridegroom, a Princeton graduate who once worked for The New Republic and Ralph Nader's Raiders, there were his parents, Col. and Mrs. Howard Ellis Cox of New York and Westhampton Beach, L. I., his brother, Howard Ellis Cox Jr., a Washington lawyer, and his sister, Mary Ann Delafield Cox, a graduate student at Yale's School of Architecture.

The Coxes, as virtually everybody has been reading for months, are an old, distinguished and financially comfortable family.

Young Mr. Cox's maternal grandfather, the late Judge Edward Ridley Finch, served on the New York State Court of Appeals. An ancestor, Chancellor Robert Livingston, administered the Presidential oath of office to George Washington and served as Minister to France.

Vice President and Mrs. Agnew were among the guests, and the list included James A. Farley, one of the Democrats' grand old men; Robert H. Abplanalp, the multimillionaire industrialist from Bronxville, N.Y.; Charles G. Rebozo, the Florida banker, real estate dealer and Presidential pal; George Champion, the New York banker, and Jack Drown, a Los Angeles newspaper and magazine distributor.



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**NIXONS WELCOME DUBLIN GUESTS:** President Nixon stands beside Prime Minister John M. Lynch at upper right and Mrs. Lynch, left front, beside Mrs. Nixon.

Today, Mr. Nixon said, everybody will be "a little Irish." He was alluding to the St. Patrick's Day observances in various parts of the country, including the parade here.