



The Symbol of the Irish Harp

**The harp that once through Tara's halls
the soul of music shed,
Now hangs as mute on Tara's walls,
As if that soul were fled.
So sleeps the pride of former days,
So glory's thrill is o'er,
And hearts that once beat high for praise,
Now feel that pulse no more.**

The harp has long been a symbol of Ireland. Perhaps the legends of its magical powers comes from the time when the bards would sing and tell stories of famous events to the Irish kings and chiefs.

During the early 1500s, under the rule of Henry VIII, the harp was first depicted on Irish coins. That tradition is carried on today and the harp is also used for other official duties such as the Irish state seal, official documents and uniforms.

To tell the history of the Irish harp is to tell the history of the Irish people. This ancient folk instrument with its beautiful, delicate sound is played today despite being ignored, derided and proscribed for centuries. Harpers, who in earlier days would have been hanged for their art, now flourish throughout the world, as do the Irish themselves.

Sadly, while this oldest emblem of Ireland is still with us today most of the ancient airs and melodies it once produced are long gone, but younger harpers are taking up the challenge to reawaken the pride of former days.

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