



For Immediate Release

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Family of Celtic Jewelers Open Store in Fairport

As his family grows, so does the business for Celtic jewelry designer Stephen Walker. Walker will be moving his Park Avenue Rochester store to Fairport's Packets Landing. Walker's Celtic Jewelry is a satellite store for Walker Metalsmiths of Andover, NY. The Walkers celebrated their 25th anniversary in business this year, although Stephen Walker's work with precious metals and Celtic design goes back much earlier. The store will feature their original gold and silver designs authentically crafted in the living tradition of the Irish and Scots as well as some of the finest old world craftsmanship in this style being created in Ireland and Scotland.

"Walker's, with their unique, original designs and the hand-made jewelry they create, is precisely the one-of-a-kind shopping experience for which Fairport is known" said, Scott Winner, Director of the Fairport Village Partnership. Winner, who assisted Walker with his search for the best available location within the village, believes they are a perfect fit with the existing retail mix in Fairport "They fit in nicely with our emerging Celtic theme in Fairport: first Donnelly's Public House, then Mulconry's Irish Pub, and now Walker's Celtic Jewelry. It's a theme that, over time, has evolved organically" said Winner.

Walker acknowledges that it was the Irish restaurants that first brought Fairport to his attention. His son, Andrew, who was then managing their Park Avenue location, attended St. Patrick's Day festivities at the two Fairport pubs. He told his father of his experience, including the incredible volume of foot traffic in the village. Walker decided to investigate and liked what he saw. It was then that he contacted Winner. "We visited the village a number of times, did our market research and decided it was the place for us to be" said Walker.

Unlike some modern Celtic jewelers, the Walkers are very innovative with the traditions of interlaced knotwork and spiral designs, not simply copying designs from ancient sources, but actually mastering the intricate tradition. Stephen Walker explains, "Many feel that authenticity comes from faithful reproduction of historical Celtic designs. I was fortunate to have been taught at a very young age that true authenticity comes from being so immersed in the tradition that you can create original work that is good and true without plagiarizing all your designs from the past. This is the tradition I am passing on to my children and apprentices".

Soon after he was introduced to the mystical designs of the medieval Book of Kells by his Irish-American grandmother, he was hooked. His Scottish immigrant grandfather encouraged his mother to learn bagpipes, a tradition Stephen also followed. " Shortly after Grandma Walker made a visit to Ireland in 1968", Walker explains, "my family moved to Andover, NY, where the art teacher, William MacCrea, was very accomplished in Celtic art. MacCrea did a lot to teach and inspire a number of other artists who continue to work in the Celtic tradition". After High School, Stephen spent a year in Ireland and the British Isles playing his bagpipes as a "busker" or street performer. Returning to the States he attended Syracuse University for a BFA degree in Silversmithing and jewelry design and then went on to earn his masters degree in Metalsmithing from Southern Illinois University at Carbondale in 1982.

Stephen's wife and business manager, Susan, is also of both Scottish and Irish heritage. Her grandmother was an immigrant from Co. Tipperary and her father's family claims descent from Nova Scotia Scots. Susan was a math and business major at Syracuse, where the couple met. It is claimed that her mathematical specialty is multiplying, as the family has six children. All of their children have taken their turns at helping with the family business beginning when they were very young. Andrew, the oldest, began the Rochester Park Avenue store in 2007. He is returning to school and his sister Jeannie is ready for her turn to enter the business as the manager in Fairport.

"Since I was a little girl I have been tagging along with Dad to art festivals and trade fairs", says Miss Walker. "I really enjoy talking to people and helping them choose jewelry from my Dad's designs that will mean the most for them and compliment their looks and style." Jeannie is a 2006 graduate of SUNY Fredonia. Several of the Walker's most popular jewelry designs are adapted from concepts originally drawn by Jeannie. There will be a workshop on the premises to accommodate custom orders, sizing and repairs.

The four younger children are still in school. Two are in engineering programs and the two youngest have already begun following their father's footsteps as craftsmen. All of the children have traveled to Scotland and Ireland with their parents to keep in touch with relatives and craftsmen that supply the shop.

Walker's Celtic Jewelry at 140 Packetts Landing in Fairport is open and will be hosting a visit by renowned Irish Metalsmith Aiden Breen who will be doing live demonstrations of his craft during Canal Days, June 6 & 7.

Walker's Celtic Jewelry, 140 Packett's Landing, Fairport, NY 14450 Phone: 585-223-7033
www.walkerscelticjewelry.com Store Hours: 11am-7pm Tues-Fri., Sat., Sun., Mon. 11am – 5pm.

Photo Caption: Proprietor Stephen Walker installs a new sign in front of his new location in Fairport's Packett's Landing.