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Shiverin' shamrocks at St. Patrick's Parade

By [Kim Ring](#)
Telegram & Gazette Staff

WORCESTER - They've braved snow-covered streets and rainstorms in the past, but an icy wind and frigid temperatures Sunday may have been too much for many of the people who typically line the streets for the annual St. Patrick's Parade.

The parade stepped off around noon, traveling along Park Avenue toward Elm Park, following a road race run by hardy souls, many of whom ran in costume. Die-hard parade fans, collecting swag thrown from floats and handed out by markers, said they hadn't seen such a thin crowd in years.

"Less of a crowd was better," said Sarah Trueblood of Worcester. She and others said they were able to see more of the parade than in years past, when crowds were five and six deep along Park Avenue.

Ms. Trueblood and Brianna McNamara, a friend Ms. Trueblood refers to as "the Irish one," were at the tail end of a line waiting to get into the Blarney Stone on Maywood Street. There was an equally long line outside Mahoney's Pub on Park Avenue and reports of a large crowd at Leitrim's Pub, as well.

Ms. Trueblood said she was looking forward to green Jell-O shots and green beer being served at the Blarney Stone.

"We'll wait as long as it takes," Ms. Trueblood said as she shivered in her green T-shirt.

New in this year's parade were the stone gargoyles that once graced the roof of the Chestnut Street Congregational Church. The figures were missing for years after they were taken down for renovations and [were recently located](#). One of the returning gargoyles, all 3,000 pounds of it, mounted on a flatbed, was dressed in a jaunty green hat.

Always popular, the Melha Shriners from Springfield drove tiny cars and miniature tractor-trailers. The cars made their way up and over a ramp attached to a moving truck, delighting children along the parade route.

Many marchers tossed handfuls of candy, a linen service handed out towels and Fallon Health representatives handed out beach balls.

Also marching were troops of Girl Scouts, including some who were dressed as the popular cookies they sell, such as thin mints and Samoas. Not only was it a day for celebrating the Irish, March 12 is also Girl Scout Day, which commemorates the day the organization was founded.