

When Ireland meets Lowcountry

By Kelly Conn
For The Crier

Peachtree Corners' own national bestselling author Patti Callahan Henry explores the depths of first love in her latest novel, "When Light Breaks."

The book tells the story of young Kara Larson, who is busily planning an elaborate wedding to the man of her dreams. When Kara meets 96-year-old Maeve Mahoney, Maeve recounts memories of her first love in Ireland, which stirs in Kara memories of her own childhood love, Jack Sullivan. As she moves toward her future, Kara realizes she must revisit her past with Jack.

Callahan Henry, who resides in Neely Farm with her family, said she wanted to write a book that focused on self-fulfillment and the power of personal stories.

"Other people's stories can affect us and change our lives," she said. "The Irish woman seemed like a natural choice, because they are such storytellers."

Callahan Henry, who is of strong Irish decent, relied on a lot of research and her own experiences in Ireland to create images of Galway and other parts of the country.

"I wanted it to feel real," she said.

The author has visited the country several times, and her daughter is an Irish dancer.

Like Callahan Henry's first two novels, "Losing the Moon" and "Where the River Runs," her latest book also takes readers to South Carolina's Lowcountry. The seaside setting is another natural choice for the author, who as a child growing up in Philadelphia, spent summers in Cape Cod. When she was 12, Callahan Henry's father, a Presbyterian preacher, moved the family to

Ft. Lauderdale to start a new church, and she was introduced to Southern seashores.

"I love the Lowcountry," said Callahan Henry. "I have such a natural desire to be near the water, so it's a natural (story setting). Setting, to me, should be a character."

The former clinical nurse



Patti Callahan Henry

specialist, wife and mother of three children, realized her dream of writing about four years ago. Since that time, she has penned three books, which have taken about a year to complete, and contributed to the anthology, "Summer at Mossy Creek." Her fourth novel, "Between the Tides" will be in bookstores next May, and another novel—already is the works.

Callahan Henry also just finished a multi-city Southeast book tour for "When Light Breaks."

Like her heroines, the author's journey to creative self-fulfillment has been exciting and challenging, and she wouldn't have it any other way.

"It's harder to quit writing," she said.