

BRIEF HISTORY OF THE IRISH INSTITUTE 1948 TO 1984

by PAUL O'DWYER

FOREWARD

The Irish experience in the United States dates back to the earliest days of European colonization. Some had come with the Spanish and French settlements in the South and Southwest. Some had escaped from penal servitude in the Caribbean Islands. Others were seafaring men coming from Liverpool and Irish ports. The greatest number, however, came in immigrant ships. They were members of the Established Church, Presbyterians, Methodists, Quakers and other small Christian groups, but Catholics made up the largest part of the immigrant population.

Before the Revolution the practice of Catholicism was forbidden in all of the colonies except in Baltimore and Quaker areas of Pennsylvania. In New York, as the passage of the Stamp Act drew resentment from the Colonists, the Irish community grew bold enough to celebrate St. Patrick's Day. Historian Thomas Jefferson Westenbaken (Father Knickerbocker Rebels) notes that ten years before the Revolution that "the Irish were numerous enough to celebrate a very elegant breakfast at Hulls Tavern." The population of New York Manhattan was then less than 30,000. (Hulls Tavern was the place Washington dined when he stopped off here on his way to take up his duties as head of the Rebel Forces on June 26, 1775.) The same Historian also noted that, "Some of the Royal Irish Regiment...discarded their Red Uniforms to join the Americans."

Even after the Revolution restriction against Catholics persisted. It was several years after that the first Roman Catholic Church (St. Peter's) was organized in New York. Its boundaries extended to the Canadian border, took in all of New York State and part of New Jersey. During the next century discrimination against the Catholic Church and its adherents continued. Millions of Irish emigrants came to our shores in the latter half of the 19th Century. Their very presence provoked fierce antagonisms which persisted until their numbers made it possible for them to pry their way into politics, and their persistence and energies finally catapulted them into business and the professions.

These conditions resulted in the development of mutual assistance associations a necessary part of Irish American life. Societies like the Knights of Equity were created to fight the discrimination in employment which had made life so difficult for the victims, and the Ancient Order of Hibernians established its first American division in St. James Parish in downtown Manhattan in 1832. The Ancient Order of Hibernians as well as the Knights of Equity limited their membership to Irish Roman Catholics and their descendants.

Irish immigrants tended to settle in the cities and towns or along the canals or railroads. In the period following the Great Hunger, other fraternal organizations were formed for the purpose of rendering assistance to each other. Under the influence of the Young Ireland and the Fenian Movements in

Ireland, these later organizations were created on a non-sectarian basis.

The necessity of maintaining life was the first priority of the early Irish assemblies. As Irish soldiers returned home after service in the Civil War, more militant organizations were formed aimed at ending British Rule in Ireland. Following the 1916 Rebellion, Irish Americans in various parts of the United States formed the Friends of Irish Freedom (which was the brainchild of the Clann Na Gael, a secret society with a military discipline.)

In the period following the establishment of the Free State (1921) and the rupture of Ireland by the establishment of a Six County Government under British control, societies, such as the American League for an Undivided Ireland, were formed to keep the torch of Liberty alive until inevitably other Freedom movements would spring from the ashes of the past. This Society bridged the period from 1922 to 1968 when the Civil Rights Movement in the North of Ireland added the latest dimension to the age-old struggle.

With the end of the Civil War in Ireland (1921 to 1924) and the great depression (1929 to 1941) there was a significant diminution in political activities within the Irish American community. Attention turned to the study and promotion of Ireland's ancient culture and modern writings in both English and Gaelic. In 1932 the first Feis on American soil was established by the U.I.C. The strict rules under which the contestants had

competed in Ireland during the previous centuries were strictly enforced. Children of Irish and non-Irish extraction competed. The Abbey players made a visit to the United States and produced several plays by Sean O'Casey and other Anglo Irish contemporary writers and dramatists, who had revived interest in Ireland and its people.

By the end of World War II, it became apparent to many Irish Americans in the New York region that financial assistance to cultural pursuits was badly needed here and in Ireland. The significant advance in technology and in industry in the Irish Republic was brought about through the grants of millions in aid to foreign companies and young Irish industries to enable them to compete in world markets. At the same time government allocations to cultural pursuits were almost non-existent.

#### THE BIRTH OF THE IRISH INSTITUTE

It was in this context that during 1948 to 1950 a number of Irish Americans met at the O'Dwyer home at 350 Central Park West to plan for developing a center for Irish activities in New York for the promotion of cultural pursuits in the United States and for extending some financial assistance to newly formed cultural groups in Ireland. It was the purpose of our New York group to form a separate society which would, among other things, help the reconstruction of such ancient edifices as bore evidence of centuries-old Irish artistry.

The Founders of the Institute (most of whom are still

serving on our Board of Governors) had in mind the purchase of a building which would give evidence of substance to their movement. For two years they looked over various buildings in various parts of Manhattan. For two years the waters were being tested. The decision to go down that road was more daring than what it might seem. There were those who remembered the Wakefield Park adventure early in the century which collapsed midstream without any accounting for the money collected. Then in 1928 the United Irish Counties Association emptied its treasury into the open hands of Stanley Howe, a promoter, and later an aide to Mayor LaGuardia, who promised that with his technique the seed money which the Association provided would be multiplied ten-fold in no time at all, and a massive Irish Center would be established. The scheme failed, and the treasury of the U.I.C. was left empty. The Founders were constantly being reminded of these failures, but remained undaunted. Another day had come.

It was decided that Irish Americans who had met with success in the business world would be personally contacted and requested to sign their names to the Certificate of Incorporation. That plan took a tremendous effort. Appointments had to be made with private secretaries, who had to be briefed before arranging the appointment. Finally, it was done and several Irish leaders of the town penned their names to the certificates. They were: Orie Kelly, Vice President of the Manufacturers Trust Company; former Supreme Court Judge Jeremiah

T. Mahoney; Supreme Court Justice James B.M. McNally; Frank S. Hogan, District Attorney, New York County; Edward F. Cavanagh, Fire Commissioner; William O'Dwyer, former Mayor; Thomas F. Corrigan, Addams Real Estate Company; William T. Collins, Surrogate, New York County; George V. McLaughlin, President, Brooklyn Trust Company; John A. Coleman, former President New York Stock Exchange; James A. Farley, former National Democratic Committee Chairman; Thomas J. Shanahan, President, Federation Bank and Trust Company; James McCunn, President, McCunn Liquor Importing Company; William O'Riordan, President, Hearns Department Store; Edward J. Flynn, former National Democratic Committee Chairman; James Reeves, Reeves grocery chain; James McGurkin, President General of the American Irish Historical Society; William J. Tracy, President, Tracy Towing Corporation; Joseph V. McKee, former Mayor of the City of New York; Robert W. Dowling, President, Investment Trust Company; Thomas L.J. Corcoran, Justice of the Supreme Court; Sylvester J. Ryan, Federal Judge; John J. Reynolds, Reynolds Real Estate Company; Gerard McAllister, McAllister Towing Company; William J. McCormack, McCormack Contracting Company; John S. Burke, President, Altman's Department Store; William F. Bleakley, Supreme Court Judge and former Republican candidate for Governor; Edward J. Glennon, Justice of the Appellate Division, First Department; Gregory F. Noonan, Federal Judge, New York City; and John M. Murtagh, Chief Magistrate, City of New York.

The Certificate of Incorporation, bearing these as well

as the Founders' names, was signed by the Secretary of State Thomas Curran on December 11, 1950. It was to be hoped that these prestigious endorsers would have helped with the collection of sufficient money to buy an edifice suitable for our purposes. It did not turn out that way.

However, there were things to which we could attend that did not require the use of a building. We had a special pamphlet printed which would be a guide to any group seeking to establish a Feis in areas where experts were scarce. Our first effort was to answer the call for the establishment of the Greater Boston Feis. It was held in August of 1950 and met with great success. A delegation from New York went to Boston to help and we received a letter from its Chairman thanking us for our assistance. In the years that followed Feiseanna were established in over fifty communities in the United States.

After meeting around for another year, we concluded that the skepticism about our dream would have made it difficult to raise the money unless we had an actual building and had contracted to buy it. We decided in 1952 to purchase a building on 48th Street. We had as yet no money in the treasury, and I advanced \$5,000 which was to be the down payment. (It was later paid back to me.) The building cost \$45,000. We had prevailed on the seller, a Hispanic Masonic Society, to postpone the date of closing for almost a year during which time they continued to occupy the building. It was truly a shoestring operation with no money, but much energy and determination. We sought a donation

or an advance from the rich Friendly Sons of St. Patrick but were refused. We applied to the Emigrant Savings Bank for a mortgage in the amount of \$25,000. Our application was rejected. Frank Brereton, one of our members, had a friend in Cohoes, New York, and the Cohoes Savings Bank advanced us the necessary \$25,000. It enabled us to take title to a four-story building at 326 West 48th Street. We had established a small - but the first - Irish building in New York devoted to the promotion of the arts.

The \$20,000 which we had raised did not come easily. We went to Joe Gillespie, a well-known and respected Irish American leader, who had earlier sought to establish a center. It was during the depression period, and he got very little cooperation. After years of collecting he had raised about \$5,000. He had tried to improve on that and was not able to do it and gladly turned the whole sum over to us. It was a great help. Through John (Kerry) O'Donnell of Gaelic Park, we were able to get the four breweries to contribute \$1,500 apiece, and through the good offices of Barney Prendergast, a well known and much beloved restaurant and bar owner, the distilleries contributed an equal amount. The Founders each made significant personal contributions.

We made a personal appeal to each of the Irish organizations. Among other things, we agreed to have each conduct their meetings, installations and social functions there at a cost which was far below the going rate and for the next thirty years we lived up to that commitment. We arranged with



the United Irish Counties Association to use its welfare office on a daily basis and to permit the use of the premises to prepare for the Feis and social functions. The cost, which was never increased through the years, was even then substantially lower than the rental they were then paying at the Henry Hudson Hotel. The Association enjoyed these advantages for the next thirty years. Several of the organizations responded to the extent their treasury would allow. Other organizations were not in a position to pay any money for the use of the premises for meetings. They were given the use of the building without charge during the period of their existence.

Now we had a building to heat and maintain and taxes to pay. With so little money coming in from the societies we were carrying, it seemed doubtful if we would be able to make ends meet and we were in crisis before we took title to the property. Nathan Math was a young and highly regarded political and had come to the attention of my brother, the then Mayor, who was on the lookout for bright young men to serve in his administration. Math had been appointed as one of the tax assessors and was still serving in that capacity years after Bill had left office. I sought him out and put the problem before him. "We can stay afloat," I said, "if we get tax exemption on the property." "Paul," he said, "I don't know if you qualify." The application was made and we were summoned before the total Board for a hearing. "If you are non-political," one Commissioner remarked, "would you explain why you urged the establishment of a United

Ireland among your purposes." "It is a phrase widely used at all such gatherings indicating what is the most desirable state. It's like "next year in Jerusalem." It's a fond wish rather than a political program," he was told and the analogy was noted.

One of the problems was the County Organizations were not tax-exempt organizations, but rather fraternal associations which did not make application for either state or federal exemption. By a split vote in the Board we gained exemption and having once obtained it we enjoyed it from that point on. In the latter years we were asked by Mayor Koch to volunteer to make a contribution in lieu of taxes which we did.

Finally we had a viable institution but the mortgage was a burden to which we addressed ourselves. In order to keep afloat we conducted an annual fundraising dinner. Tom Shanahan, President of the Federation Bank, was impressed with our determination and decided to help us.

In 1953 we attempted to raise funds by putting a game of chance in various taverns with a prize attached to the game. There was a law against this kind of gaming which had been more honored in the breach than in the observance. In our case, however, the police came down on us. A Polish gentleman by the name of William Miski had an Irish waitress at his Tavern at 98 Third Avenue. Two plainclothes patrolmen came in to play the game, both of them Irish American. The waitress took their fifty cents. They placed her under arrest. We had to appear in the Magistrate's Court in her defense. An Irish judge said a case

had been made out and held the hapless girl for higher court where we finally had the charge dismissed. That was not all. We then had to appear to defend Mr. Miski before the Civil Court where the landlord wanted to cancel his lease on the pretense that he was running a gambling establishment. We had to come to Mr. Miski's defense before the Liquor Authority, where he was brought on the carpet for violation of the Authority rules. We were fortunate to win all the court battles. Otherwise, our simple efforts to raise a few dollars would have proven to be disastrous to our benefactors. That was the end of our tavern adventures.

In 1956 we approached Congressman Charles Buckley, established Bronx County Boss, who was then Chairman of the powerful Ways and Means Committee of the House. He was a very close friend of President Roosevelt and the National Democratic Establishment. He consented to be a guest of honor at a fundraising dinner at the Hotel Commodore on January 14th and as a result of that we practically paid off the mortgage. About 1700 people paid \$25 each, a very high figure for that period of time. The following year, 1957, we prevailed upon Congressman Buckley to get us Senator John F. Kennedy from Massachusetts as our honored guest. Buckley had attempted to nominate Kennedy for Vice President at the Democratic Party Convention in 1956 but failed in the attempt. In contrast to the dinner for Buckley the year before, only 700 people showed up to hear the man, who, three years later, was elected President of the United States.

In Kennedy's speech that night he made reference to Owen Roe O'Neill, who had been preparing to meet Cromwell in battle but was assassinated. His death was a disaster to the Irish people. A defeat for Cromwell would have changed the history of both England and Ireland. Six years after that dinner Kennedy's assassination totally changed the course of American and world history. The 1956 dinner gave us a building free and clear and money to use for our other pursuits. That night Kennedy was introduced as the next President of the United States. None of us believed it except Charlie Buckley, his sponsor.

With help of further annual fundraising dinners we were able to meet the expenses of the building and to put money aside for appropriate grants. In December 1960 we were in a position to make a first donation of \$5,000 to the Irish Arts Council in Dublin. A trust was set up by the Council in our name. We later added another \$5,000 to the trust.

We arranged with the Arts Council to use the income from the trust to buy a painting from a struggling and as yet unknown artist in order to help him to remain in Ireland. This worked out fairly well for several years. We were then able to sell the painting and to reimburse the Arts Council to that extent. We were having difficulty disposing of the paintings. We left it up to the Arts Council ultimately to make their decision as to what use they were to put the income from our trust.

In 1962 Sean Keating was our guest of honor. He was one of our Founders and at that time held a pretty important position

in the Government of the United States. He had become the Regional Director of the New York Post Office by appointment of President John F. Kennedy. As a result of that dinner, Keating was able to aid the fund drive of the Trinity College Library. Fred Boland, who had been the Irish Ambassador to the U.N. and President of its General Assembly, had returned to Ireland and was appointed as one of the Board of Trinity. He made a personal appeal to us to help the library which is one of the oldest and most complete libraries in Europe. It had been one of the staunch Anglo-Irish Institutions having been created in the time of Elizabeth. Under an Irish Government it lost much of its British atmosphere and Irish Catholics were now attending it. In his next visit to Ireland, Keating presented the Provost with our check for \$5,000.

By 1964 the U.S. Treasury Department came down hard on us and we were subjected to an audit. Hugh O'Rourke and I attended to that. We were pressed to justify our failure to pay an income tax on the money we received as a result of the charter tours to Ireland which we conducted for several years through which we had raised money for our other purposes. It was the government's contention that we were simply engaging in business and should pay a tax on the profits. We succeeded in convincing them that the tours to Ireland were designed to encourage Americans to visit Ireland and see for themselves the artistic treasures to restoration of which many had made contributions and which were really part of our cultural objectives. On August 17, 1964 we

received a letter from the District Office of the Director of Internal Revenue relieving us from tax liability.

We thought we were through with the Internal Revenue, but the very next year while Sean Keating was still President, we again heard from the Internal Revenue Service in New York and again we had to explain that in addition to encouraging visits to Erin, we used any profits from these flights to accommodate various County and other organizations then using our building. We explained that these societies were engaged in charitable and cultural endeavors, but could not afford the high rental prices prevailing in mid-Manhattan at that time. They finally accepted the explanation, but it was only after months of examination of our record that they gave us full exemption.

In 1966 we received a letter from the Society of the Preservation of Historic Ireland in Westport, Connecticut, calling our attention to the conditions which prevailed in Ballintubber Abbey. The Abbey which had been in existence long before the Cathedral of Westminster was built, was being restored by Father Thomas Egan of Ballintubber, who engaged in a massive effort to dig out the stones that had been mutilated by Cromwell's soldiers. They were craven images and had to be destroyed. That was the edict of the great hero of the liberals then and since. The restoration process was costly but well worth it, and we were able to give \$5,000 to the project.

During the following years we responded with a check in the sum of \$2,500 to the Yeats School in Sligo; an additional \$2,500 for the renovation of Kilmainham Jail in Dublin, where so many of Ireland's Freedom Fighters had been confined and where some were summarily executed. It is now a museum. We also allocated \$1,500 for establishment of the Joyce Memorial in Dublin and an additional \$500 went to Ballintubber Abbey.

After the assassination of President Kennedy we set up a separate committee to establish a suitable memorial to the fallen leader. We decided that a forest in Ireland would be more suitable than a statue or a plaque and contacted Michael Moran, who had visited here frequently. He was then the Irish Minister for Lands. We pledged \$100,000 to the effort. Moran not only adopted our idea but spent another million dollars on the project. We exceeded our goal by another \$50,000. Moran took over a 700 acre farm in Slieve Coilte, County Wexford, and the John F. Kennedy Memorial Park was dedicated by Eamon DeValera. It is quite near the birthplace of the first Kennedy to migrate to Boston. The Kennedy family were there in numbers and our Sean Keating represented us at the opening ceremonies. Now every year 100,000 visitors come to see the Park and beautiful Arboretum where over 7,000 species of trees and plants are growing. It provides seedlings for Ireland's massive reforestation program. During the centuries-old struggle for its Freedom, the woodlands of Ireland were deliberately destroyed by the British. They had been used to provide shelter for the Rebels.

The following year (1968) we awarded \$1,000 to the Kilkenny Design Workshop and \$2,000 to maintain the last harpmaker in Ireland; Ciste Colmcille received \$2,000, making the total \$6,000. The Ciste Colmcille fund was created to help aging artists and writers who were in need of help. It has been sponsored by the Irish Government to take the place of a similar fund which was cut off when the Republic of Ireland was established. The Merriman School in County Clare, named after the famed Gaelic poet, received \$1,500.

A silverware concern here was going out of commission and Eileen McPeake, who had worked for the designer, was able to get all their designs which were valued at approximately \$30,000. They were presented to the Kilkenny School which acknowledged their value. That neophyte establishment had been created to help small struggling businesses in Ireland with designs which they could not otherwise afford.

We awarded \$1,000 to Galway University to help their research into the cause of the disease which affected the oyster beds in Galway Bay.

Also in 1968 Mike Mann, President of the Loyal League of the Yiddish Sons of Erin, informed us that a Cork born Jewish writer, then living in Israel, named Louis Hyman, had written a history of the Jews of Ireland, but because of lack of funds was unable to publish it. We gave \$2,500 to the B'nai B'rith in Dublin which was promoting the project and the history was completed. It is a scholarly work.



The restoration of the musical instruments for the Artane Boys Band was a project sponsored by John O'Donnell of Gaelic Park, and we contributed \$2,000 towards the replacement of the instruments which were destroyed in a fire. Artane is the name of a well-known orphanage in Dublin.

In 1969 we also granted \$1,250 to the Sligo Library and that same year we granted an additional \$12,500 to the Kilkenny School of Design.

On October 24, 1969 we conducted a fundraising dinner for the victims of oppression in Northern Ireland, and Grenville Temple Emmett, III, who is a direct descendant of Thomas Addis Emmett, brother of Robert Emmett, was the guest speaker at our dinner at the Americana Hotel in New York City. Thomas Addis Emmett had taken part in the Rebellion of 1798. He came to the United States, became active in New York politics and served New York State as its Attorney General.

The purpose of the dinner was to relieve distress in Northern Ireland following the brutal treatment suffered by the Civil Rights marchers and the pogroms in Belfast. We granted \$12,000 to the Belfast Rehabilitation Committee; \$12,000 to Northern Relief Committee; and \$2,400 to the Derry Relief Committee.

In 1970 we granted an additional \$15,500 to the Kilkenny School of Design and we also made the following grants: A group of young poets and dramatists known as New Irish Writers, could not get their works published. They found an old printing press.

We gave them \$1,500 to buy it. Sean Moylan Scholarship Fund, County Cork, honoring a hero of the Black and Tan War, made application for our help. They received a grant of \$2,400. The Georgian Society is devoted to the preservation of architecturally beautiful homes in Ireland known as Georgian homes. The Society is sponsored by Desmond Guinness. We allocated \$500 towards their activities. That same year we granted \$240 to the Universal Bulletin; \$500 to the Yeats School, \$2,500 to the Wexford Pageant, an additional \$2,500 to Ciste Colmcille, and to County Roscommon Cooperative - \$240.

In 1971 an appeal was made to us to help the Wolfe Tone Museum in County Kildare. We responded with a grant of \$1,500. Another landmark in Dublin - St. Catherine's Church - in front of which Robert Emmett was hanged, was about to be torn down to make way for a commercial enterprise. A group of citizens offered a plan to convert it into a People's Theatre. We awarded \$750 towards the Project. That same year we allocated \$1,250 to the restoration of the renowned Holy Cross Abbey in County Tipperary. The ruins had withstood many Irish winters since its destruction. We also gave \$750 to Academy for Celtic Studies and \$750 to assist the Ulster Poets.

In 1972 we granted \$750 to the Merriman School; an additional \$500 to Kilkenny School of Design; \$1,250 to Ciste Colmcille and a further \$1,250 to the Yeats Summer School which by this time was attracting Yeats scholars from many parts of the world.

1974 and 1975 saw the beginning of a decline in our activities. The flights to Ireland were no longer profitable and had to be abandoned. By 1972 cooperating Irish political leaders had disappeared from the political scene and we had to greatly reduce our grants. We had to concentrate on the rehabilitation of the building which was in constant need of repairs. It was a drain on our treasury. The Irish American population in the City had been substantially reduced. Time had decimated our ranks and many of the survivors were now living in the suburbs.

The First Methodist community in the United States were Palatines from County Limerick. Several generations earlier they had been persecuted for their (Protestant) Faith in Germany. A Limerick landlord had invited them to his estate. By 1765 they were as impoverished as their Catholic neighbors and came to New York before the Revolution. Their leaders, Philip Embury and Barbara Hecht, had been converted to Methodism by John Wesley, great Christian crusader, who had preached extensively in Ireland. We called it to the attention of Charles Rice of the Irish American Historical Society, who joined with us in erecting a plaque to the memory of these early colonists.

In 1978 Amnesty International's Report on the conditions in prisons in Northern Ireland warranted an award of \$5,000.

In 1980 we answered a call from Alfred O'Hagan, leader of the Brooklyn Ancient Order of Hibernians, who were seeking to expand the center which they had established to serve the dwindling Irish population in Brooklyn. We loaned them \$5,000 on

very favorable terms taking back a mortgage on the property. Repayment will commence on January 1, 1985.

That same year we awarded the Irish Theatre \$750 and responded to an appeal from the prestigious Wexford Light Opera. We granted them \$2,500 and we responded to an appeal from Dr. Eoin McKiernan, President of the Irish American Cultural Institute of St. Paul, Minnesota granting \$2,500 to that body. The Committee for Legal Justice in Belfast needed help in its inquiry into the use of plastic and rubber bullets against the civilian population. We allocated \$2,500 to their work and encouraged Denis Dillon, District Attorney of Nassau County, and Peter King, Controller of Nassau, to become panelists in the subsequent inquiry. An additional \$2,500 was allocated in 1983 to aid a similar inquiry into the shoot-to-kill policy of the British Security Forces which accounted for 14 people being shot to death in the streets of Northern Ireland within a space of six months.

In 1981 we expended \$900 to renew a plaque at the Methodist Church on John Street, New York City. The previous plaque had been stolen.

In 1982 various societies joined the Irish government in erecting a monument to the memory of Rev. Francis Makemie at his birth in Ramelton, County Donegal. Makemie had contributed greatly to Freedom of Religion in America. We struck a plaque to mark his courageous defiance of Lord Cornbury, the Colonial Governor of New York who had forbidden him to preach the

Presbyterian creed in New York and had him indicted for doing so. Makemie tried his own case and was acquitted by a New York jury. The cost of the plaque and the ceremonies was \$1,000.

In 1982 we also joined with the American Irish Cultural Institute in an award to Peadar O'Donnell. O'Donnell, then in his eighties, was a revolutionary soldier and the Editor of the revered "The Bell" which had helped so many young Irish writers. The total grant was \$10,000. We received \$1,000 from William Marx, an American versed in Irish letters and a friend and admirer of O'Donnell, and we gave an additional \$2,500. We've received \$100 from journalist James Coleman McCoy of Cleveland, an additional \$1,400 from Joe Malone, Irish enterpreneur, and Hotelier P.V. Doyle. President Mulvey attended at the award in Ireland.

In 1982 we began to contribute to the United Irish Foundation here. This organization is funded by the City of New York and receives outside help for its Rockaway project. It helps the elderly and the disabled in the Irish American community, who are caught up in the inflation. The Institute is committed to contribute \$3,600 annually to help pay their rent. Their headquarters on West 48th Street also constitutes our own office and mail drop.

In 1983 we awarded \$2,500 to the Library at St. John's University to microfilm the various papers dealing with the Irish experience in America which we had forwarded to their Irish Department. That year we received \$20,000 from the Irish Palace

Fund. Charles Rice was the motivating force behind that Foundation. Other directors included our own James FitzPatrick and Kevin Coffey.

In 1984 we gave that \$20,000 and as much more to St. John's University and the Irish American Cultural Institute of St. Paul, Minnesota, to set up scholarships which will be awarded to students who will, under the control of the Irish American Cultural Institute and ourselves, create theses each year dealing with the contributions of the Irish and Irish Americans to America in the arts and sciences, labor, business and the professions. \$40,000 is part of a total of \$100,000 which we have committed for this purpose. The accumulation of these and other theses, according to Dr. Eoin McKiernan, will be one of ten such projects in ten universities which will in the next decade accumulate much needed historical material.

The upswing in our expenditures comes from the sale of the building which had become such a drain on our resources during the last decade. Our sources of income had all but dried up and the population shift and conditions in the city made the continuance of the building impractical, if not impossible. It was only a matter of time until it would be put under the auctioneer's hammer. It had served the Irish community well for over a quarter of a century. Private charitable endeavors were conducted there, without cost, over the years. It housed a welfare office conducted by the United Irish Counties, until that organization discontinued the services.

It was necessary to embark in a more effective means of expanding the activities of the Institute. We had been hampered by the extraordinary time we had to devote to the maintenance of a building which seemed to be in constant need of painting and repairs. In addition, it was being burglarized all too frequently. We were required to make constant appearances before the Criminal Court to answer summons issued by the Fire and Building Departments for minor violations. In earlier days the building was maintained by one or other of our members to our satisfaction. The quality of help in recent years, however, resulted in constant complaints from the users and indeed from the local police.

With the sale of the building and the acquisition of \$500,000 we are able to maintain meetings for \$1,200 per year eliminating almost all other heavy expenses and embark on some new and exciting programs which we hope will include the use of Cable Television to bring examples of Irish and Irish American culture to our fellow Americans and to break down the wall of silence which has been imposed on news from Northern Ireland. It would indeed be a very necessary educational adventure.

This year (1984) the Institute sponsored a plan, in cooperation with St. John's University, to award a fellowship to a young Irish American writer, James Mulvaney, who was anxious to do research in Ireland where he would be in a position to follow happenings of note and report them to St. John's University and to us. The communication between Ireland and the United States

is hampered by official or actual censorship in both Ireland, England and the American media. The cost of the program (\$16,050) was underwritten by Dan Tubridy, one of our Board of Governors, and Mike Brosnan and Jim Delaney of San Antonio, Texas contributed the other half. At this writing, July 25, 1984, Mulvaney is in Ireland. He will be away for a year. While this project will not cost any money to the Institute, it could not happen without our initial sponsorship and the active support of Sister Marie Melton, St. John's University Librarian.

I dedicate this history to the present Board of Governors of the Institute and those who have guided us from the beginning. I attach to this history the names of our present Board of Officers and a list of our Past Presidents.