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THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT
OF THE
IRISH REPUBLIC
TO THE PEOPLE OF IRELAND.

1916 2016

PROCLAIMING THE AMERICAN STORY

LEADING HISTORIANS REVEAL THE AMERICAN STORY BEHIND IRELAND'S EASTER RISING.



“NO PEOPLE EVER BELIEVED MORE DEEPLY IN THE CAUSE OF IRISH FREEDOM THAN THE PEOPLE OF THE UNITED STATES.”

President John F. Kennedy, Leinster House Dublin, June 1963

**NEW BOOKS AND
EXHIBITIONS EXPLORE
AMERICA'S ROLE IN
THE 1916 RISING,
REPORTS
TURLOUGH MCCONNELL**

On April 24, 1916, carrying a new tricolor flag, a small group of Irish revolutionaries rallied around their Proclamation for independence. The seven radicals who signed the Proclamation were a vivid group of idealists whose collective dream of a free nation was the latest manifestation of an ancient yearning. Though all seven, and seven more, were executed by firing squad within days of surrender, their action was the

to be told and remembered. Historians shape the public imagination and order the public memory of events long past. Such a revolution in remembering is happening today, as historians are retelling the story of Ireland's Easter Rising of 1916 during this the centennial year.

During the century since the Rising, historians have reassessed the central cast, creating an historical consensus on the American affiliations these players shared. Until recently, the story of the Easter Rising has been told as a Dublin City pageant, with Clarke, Pearse, Connolly,



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first step toward the birth of sovereignty. This ancient civilization would become a nation once again.

History emerges from the active memories of those who become its storytellers. According to Nobel laureate Daniel Kahneman, we create our future by crafting the narrative of how we wish to be remembered. This record is a conscious effort to become heroes in a good, even inspiring story. Professional historians are perhaps the ultimate storytellers, charged with the responsibility for instructing current and future societies on which stories deserve

MacDiarmada, McDonough, Plunkett and Ceannt as its heroes, carrying banners and marching to their executions. Today, that picturesque tale has yielded to a narrative whose complexity is energized by an emphasis on their American connections.

In this new, layered telling of the story, the revolutionary activity of the signatories was nurtured by their connections to the Irish-American community. Five of the seven were either citizens of the U.S., lived in America, had family in the States or, in Éamon de Valera's case, was born in New York.

American support for Irish independence was problematic for the British, who sought a commitment from President Woodrow Wilson in the erupting war with Germany. One of the leaders, Sir Roger Casement, captured on Good Friday before the Rising, was executed several months later for his part in the rebellion.

The swift decision by the British government to execute the now-famous leaders of the Rising served not to remove the threat to the Empire but rather made martyrs of them. With blood on their hands, the British executioners in due



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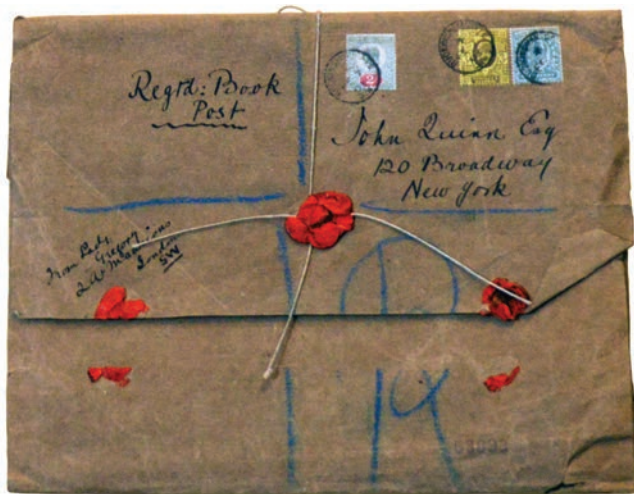
time were denounced for their atrocities in the world's media led by *The New York Times*. Journalist/poet Joyce Kilmer covered the story intensely, contributing to the *Times* general coverage of the First World War that won the paper its first Pulitzer Prize.

The story of the Rising has evolved, both as it happened and as it is remembered. The seven key revolutionaries, five of whom were published poets and playwrights, knew the importance of the narrative and housed their headquarters in Dublin's General Post Office, the center

of the country's communications. From the moment it happened, the story of the the rebellion was told and retold.

In his book *The Insurrection in Dublin* (featured in a new exhibition in Dublin's National Gallery of Art), the author James Stephens reports his day-by-day account and personal experiences of Easter week. The book, one of the first books about 1916, has since become a seminal chronicle of the Rising. Pages from the original manuscript, on view in New York's Morgan Library, highlight real-time reporting of the events.

1. The original "Irish Colors" of the 69th New York Volunteers carried in the American Civil War.
2. Christopher Cahill, Executive Director, with (left) Georgette Keane, and Sophie Colgan, prepare 1916 exhibition at the American Irish Historical Society.
3. Peter Quinn, novelist, *Banished Children of Eve* and *Terry Golway*, author, *Irish Rebel: John Devoy*. Photographed at the New York Public Library.
4. Maureen Murphy, Professor at Hofstra University and Chair of 2016 Greater New York Centennial Program.
5. Robert Schmuhl, Professor of Journalism at Notre Dame. Author, *Ireland's Exiled Children*.



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ca's *Fight for Ireland's Freedom*, has been revised and reissued by Merrion Press. The importance of Devoy must not be underestimated, says Golway, who depicts him as a skilled tactician with unwavering dedication to Irish independence. Exiled from Ireland in the mid-1800s, Devoy made New York his base of operations. These included organizing a dramatic rescue of Fenian prisoners from Australia, rallying Irish America behind the Land War, serving as middleman between Sir Roger Casement and the German government, and driving Irish-American opinion. When



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“ALL THE WHILE, HE (JOHN DEVOY) ASKED OF AMERICA ONLY WHAT AMERICA DEMANDED OF ITSELF: GENUINE DEMOCRACY AND AUTHENTIC REPUBLICANISM.”
TERRY GOLWAY,
IRISH REBEL, JOHN DEVOY

Through the years many writers have told the story, including the doomed leaders themselves, who left behind notes and letters. Many of these are on view in a brilliant online exhibition from the National Library of Ireland. Now, in the year of the centennial, the remembering has intensified. Six new books by contemporary historians highlight the American connection and enhance the remembered history of the Rising by acknowledging the role of America.

Terry Golway's acclaimed 1999 biography, *Irish Rebel: John Devoy and Ameri-*

he died in 1928, Devoy was accorded a state funeral and hero's burial in Ireland under a tricolor flag.

Golway, a journalist and historian, explores the legacy of the Famine, which inflamed the ancestral drive for Irish independence in Ireland and America, where key players seized opportunities to advance their cause. At seizing opportunities, Devoy was unparalleled, staging a public relations coup with the funeral of Fenian rebel Terence Bellow McManus in 1861. New York Archbishop John J. Hughes officiated at the funeral

Mass and in an impassioned eulogy that echoed in Ireland, Hughes said, “there are cases in which it is lawful to resist and overthrow a tyrannical government.”

Devoyn used the McManus funeral as the precedent for another explosive public funeral, that of Jeremiah O’Donovan Rossa, whose remains were returned to Ireland for a pageant burial in 1915 – an event widely considered the trigger for the 1916 Rising. Recently a review in the *Irish Times* stated, “It should shock... the conscience of this nation that practically no one in Ireland can identify the man

language as a strategy to achieve their aims. The uniqueness of Schmuhl’s account derives from his examination of the reportage of the Rising; he looks at the ways journalists sought to drive public opinion and muster support for their cause through their words, both spoken and published. Professor Schmuhl is Walter H. Annenberg-Edmund P. Joyce Chair in American Studies and Journalism at Notre Dame, and director of the John W. Gallivan Program in Journalism, Ethics and Democracy.

Schmuhl highlights the tension for those who rose for Irish independence in



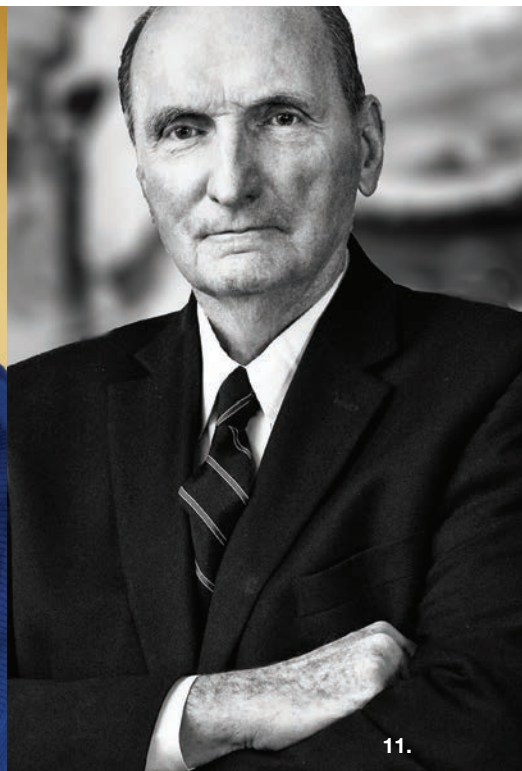
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Photograph by Xanthe Elbrick



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Photograph by Barry Wong



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[Devoyn] who had a public life dedicated to Ireland spanning over 60 years and whom the Times of London... called “the most dangerous enemy of [the British Empire] since Wolfe Tone.”

In *Ireland’s Exiled Children: America and the Easter Rising* (Oxford University Press) Robert Schmuhl reveals the complexities of American politics, Irish-Americanism, and Anglo-American relations during and after WWI. His book focuses on four key players – John Devoyn, Joyce Kilmer, President Woodrow Wilson, and Éamon deValera – who used powerful

a Europe poised for war. Irish republicans had long looked west for help, for good reason: the Irish-American population was larger than the population of Ireland, with familial ties on both sides. Irish exiles in America provided financial support and the inspiration of example: that life independent of England was achievable. Ireland’s “exiled children in America” were acknowledged in the Proclamation announcing “the Provisional Government of the Irish Republic.” April 24, 1916, was a poignant moment, for despite American support for the rebels, the U.S. was mov-

- 6. Package from Lady Gregory to John Quinn. John Quinn papers. Courtesy of Manuscripts and Archives Division. New York Public Library.
- 7. Christine Kinealy, Professor of History, and Director of Ireland’s Great Hunger Institute, reviews 1916 exhibition plans with John L. Lahey, President, Quinnipiac University.
- 8. Geoffrey Cobb, author, *Greenpoint: Brooklyn’s Forgotten Past*.
- 9. Lucy McDiarmid, Professor of Montclair State University, author, *At Home in the Revolution*.
- 10. Timothy Egan, Pulitzer-Prize-winning reporter, New York Times columnist and author, *The Immortal Irishman*.
- 11. Charles Cushing, grandson of Captain Robert Monteith, photographed at the New York Yacht Club.

“WOMEN CAME IN THROUGH THE WINDOWS, ENTERING THE PUBLIC SQUARE, DECLARING THEMSELVES READY FOR REBELLION.”

ing closer to joining the Allies in the war against Germany. For many Irish-Americans, loyalty to American war policy or Britain’s granting of Home Rule was a choice against their deepest desires.

The Easter Rising occurred at a moment of social redefinition for women in both Ireland and America. In her lively and provocative book, *At Home in The Revolution: What Women Said and Did in 1916* (Royal Irish Academy), Lucy McDiarmid reimagines that moment when women were finding themselves amid rebellion.

At Home in the Revolution begins from

consequence. We witness the delightful vignette of Catherine Byrne, who “jumped into the General Post Office of Dublin” on 24 April 1916. Women came in through the windows, entering the public square, declaring themselves ready for rebellion.

McDiarmid, Marie-Fraze-Baldassarre Professor of English at Montclair State University, follows a cast of characters - some whose spirit of independence was energetic and heartfelt and others who were not. In his review for *Irish America* magazine, Adam Farley writes “As a study of women in 1916, the book is both



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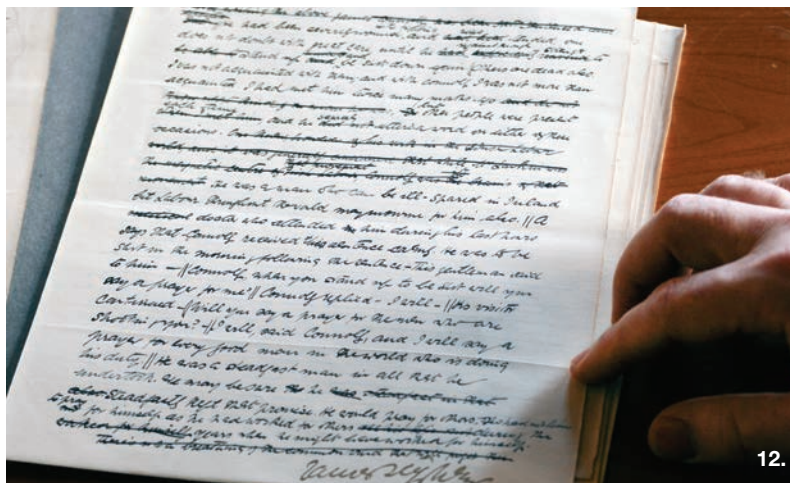
the premise that women were involved. Prior to the Rising, women had organized themselves by forming groups such as Cumann na mBan, dedicated to the Republican cause. But the Rising was a viral sequence of events, and McDiarmid captures the atmosphere of spontaneous unity that characterized a time when “women’s civic position was in the process of altering.” The women – and the men with whom they rose – made it up as they went along. We learn of the “small behaviors” of women such as Boston-born Molly Childers that led to major

situated within and outside of the discourse of feminism... at once a political study of shifting gender relations as well as a thoroughly researched, vivid, emotional, and often comic look at forgotten stories of the Rising that will entertain as much as it will enlighten.”

Thomas Francis Meagher, the dashing Irish orator who became a hero on three continents, roars to life in *The Immortal Irishman: The Irish Revolutionary Who Became an American Hero* (HMH). As told by Pulitzer-Prize-winning *New York Times* columnist Timothy Egan, Meagher’s

story dazzles. The story is the stuff of fiction: as a young man in Ireland, Meagher was arrested after a fiery speech during the Great Hunger and sent to Tasmania. After his eventual escape, he made his way to America, where he assumed leadership of his brethren, whom he inspired with impassioned rhetoric to join the Union cause in the fight against slavery. After the Civil War he moved to Montana with his wife, where, as Acting Governor appointed by his friend Abraham Lincoln, he died in mysterious circumstances.

Egan calls him the “immortal Irishman”



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because his words endure. Exhorting the Irish, and Irish America, to remember, Meagher insists on drawing strength from Ireland’s broken past. “That burden of memory is our history, and we will not forget... the famine, we’ll not forget the centuries of oppression. And Meagher, even at his most joyous, would say that there’s a skeleton at this feast. That skeleton is that burden of memory.”

It has been said that great historians recognize the past as “shaped by vices and virtues of flesh-and-blood people.” The tale of Thomas Clarke, a naturalized

U.S. citizen, told in historian Geoffrey Cobb’s *Greenpoint: Brooklyn’s Forgotten Past* (NBNH), affirms this statement. At age 25, Clarke, a recent immigrant to the U.S., was sent to London on a dynamiting mission that was hatched in a Greenpoint dentist’s office. Clarke and his comrades were betrayed and arrested. After serving fifteen years, Clarke moved back to New York to work for Devoy. He returned to Ireland in 1907, and was the first signatory of the 1916 Proclamation. He is considered the father of the Rising.

Such intense attention on the Rising

- 12. Manuscript pages of *The Insurrection in Dublin* by James Stephens, courtesy of Morgan Library & Museum.
- 13. Marion Casey and Miriam Nyhan coordinate 1916 program of activities at Glucksman Ireland House, New York University.
- 14. J.J. Lee is Director of Glucksman Ireland House, Glucksman Professor of Irish Studies, and professor of history at New York University.
- 15. Claire Curtin, Board member of The New York Irish History Roundtable.
- 16. John Ridge, President of the New York Irish History Roundtable, author, *United Irish Counties Association and 1916*.
- 17. Declan Kiely, curator of the Morgan Library & Museum, with Barbara Jones, Consul General of Ireland New York.

might not have continued long after the events of Easter Week without Sir Roger Casement, the focal point of world media interest. When he dedicated himself to Irish independence, Casement was already well known, knighted for his humanitarian work. From New York, with the help of John Devoy, Casement sought support from Germany, and in 1915 went to Berlin to make an ill-fated arms deal; he was captured before he could call off the Rising. His capture came despite the presence of Captain Robert Monteith, sent to Berlin to see to his safe return; Monte-

of American democracy. Schmuhl reminds us that Thomas Clarke, a naturalized U.S. citizen, occupies the first position on the list of signatories of the 1916 Proclamation and “a narrative of U.S. connections to the Easter Rising comes full circle with several accounts identifying Diarmuid Lynch, another naturalized American citizen, as the last person to leave Dublin’s General Post Office (GPO) when it was engulfed with flames following nearly a week of fierce fighting.”

Golway captures this spirit for all as embodied by John Devoy. “By sheer

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THAT SKELETON IS THAT
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TIMOTHY EGAN,
THE IMMORTAL IRISHMAN

1916 RISING

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A Photo Exhibition featuring America’s links to the 1916 Rising.

Opens April, 2016



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ith managed to escape. Charles Cushing, the American grandson of Monteith, is working to have his grandfather’s memoir, *Casement’s Last Adventure*, reissued. Casement historian Angus Mitchell has compiled and edited *One Bold Deed of Open Treason; The Berlin Diary of Roger Casement 1914-1916*, which has just been published by Merrion Press.

These new books, like those that preceded them, bring to life men and women who seized the moment to declare Irish independence. The players shared a goal and a spirit that echoes the primary values

force of personality and determination, he [Devoy] had made Ireland’s cause a transatlantic crusade, enlisting American support on behalf of a small and strategically insignificant island in the North Atlantic. All the while, he asked of America only what America demanded of itself: genuine democracy and authentic republicanism. He never ceased to be disappointed. But he never surrendered.”

These new books about the Rising offer an opportunity to revisit and renew interest in the meaning of those events for Ireland and America. ■