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Guide to the John Byrne Collection

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Guide to the John Byrne Collection

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Date Completed:
October 2008
Encoded by:
Diana Kohnke

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Collection Summary

Title: John Byrne Collection,

Date (bulk): 1886-1987

Accession number: MSS-1971-01-01

Creator: Byrne, John
American Association for the Recognition of the Irish Republic

Collector: Byrne, John
Condon, Mary
San José State College

Collection Size: 13 Boxes11.58 linear feet

Repository: San José State University Library, Special Collections & Archives

San José, California 95192-0028

Abstract: Friends of Irish Freedom (FOIF), the American Association for the Recognition of the Irish Republic (AARIR), the Ancient Order of Hibernians (AOH), the *Irish Press* (Dublin, Ireland), the Irish Republican Prisoners and Soldiers Dependents Fund, and the Celtic Cross Association are among the many Irish American organizations that worked to support and fund Ireland's fight for independence. This collection primarily consists of materials and documents from the AARIR, but it also contains documents from other Irish American organizations that relate to the administrative and fund raising activities in which Irish Americans engaged. Additionally, there are numerous Irish American newspapers, clippings, and pamphlets which document the struggle for an Irish Republic.

Physical location:
For current information on the location of these materials, please consult the Library's online catalog.

Languages:
Languages represented in the collection: English and Irish.Irish

Access

Collection is open for research.

Publication Rights

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Preferred Citation

John Byrne Collection, MSS-1971-01-01, San José State University Library, Special Collections & Archives.

Processing Information

Collection processed by Diana Kohnke. Finding aid EAD encoded by Diana Kohnke. Additional materials in the collection processed and EAD encoded by Lynn Sheehy. Reviewed by Danelle Moon and Erin Louthen.

Project Information

This finding aid was created as part of the Survey and Cataloging Project, a two-year San José State University Library grant project funded by the National Historical Publications and Records Commission. The project began in 2008. The Project Director is Danelle Moon. The Project Archivist is Erin Louthen.

Acquisition Information

This is an artificial collection and has been added to by multiple individuals. However, the bulk of the materials were donated by Dr. Mary Condon, professor of Irish History at San José State University in the 1960s. The remainder of the collection was compiled by San José State University library staff.

Custodial History

The bulk of the materials in this collection were preserved and maintained by the Secretary-Treasurer of the Southern California chapter of the AARIR, John Byrne. John Byrne entrusted these materials to Dr. Mary Condon.

Biographical History

John Byrne was born circa 1866 on a small farm 25 miles south of Dublin near Asford, Wicklow County, Ireland. In 1906 Byrne moved to Los Angeles, California and became instrumental in helping to fund the Irish nationalist movement. Friends of Irish Freedom (FOIF) emerged in California in 1916, becoming the state's primary Irish American organization. Its main purpose was to gain independence for Ireland. John Byrne was the Secretary-Treasurer of the Southern California chapter of the FOIF and worked to promote the cause by writing letters and distributing pamphlets. When the FOIF of California merged with Eamon De Valera's newly founded American Association for the Recognition of the Irish Republic (AARIR), Byrne became the Secretary-Treasurer of the Los Angeles chapter. Although returning only once to Ireland, John Byrne devoted his life to the Irish nationalist cause.

Bibliography

Sarbaugh, Timothy J. *John Byrne: The Life and Times of the Forgotten Irish Republican of Los Angeles.* Southern California Quarterly. 63, no.4 (Winter 1981).

Scope and Content of Collection

This artifical collection consists of materials relating to the activities of Irish American organizations as they worked to support and promote Irish independence. The bulk of the documents represented are mainly from the early twentieth century and are primarily from the Los Angeles chapter of the American Association for the Recognition of the Irish Republic (AARIR). Items from the merging of the Friends of Irish Freedom (FOIF) with the AARIR are also represented. Additionally, there are a significant number of documents from other Irish American organizations which are represented, such as the Ancient Order of Hibernians (AOH), the Celtic Cross Association, the *Irish Press,* the American Trade Defense Commission, the Irish White Cross, the Irish Republican Prisoners and Soldiers Dependents Fund, and the American League for the Irish Freedom Fund. The collection contains financial records, organizational correspondence and personal correspondence, publicity and event documents, newspapers, newspaper clippings, pamphlets, oral history tapes and transcripts, and other printed matter.

Arrangement

This collection is arranged into four series: Series I: Personal Correspondence; Series II: Organizations; Series III: Printed Matter; and Series IV: Miscellaneous Related Material.

Subjects and Indexing Terms

American Association for the Recognition of the Irish Republic

Ancient Order of Hibernians

Friends of Irish Freedom

Celtic Cross (Organization)

Irish Press (Dublin, Ireland)

Irish Republican Army

Sinn Fein

Subjects

Irish Americans--California

Irish American Catholics--California--History

Irish Americans--Newspapers

Irish Americans--Societies, etc.

Republicanism--Ireland--History--20th century

Series 1 **Personal Correspondence 1886-1962**

Physical Description: 1 Box, 14 Folders.

Scope and Content Note

This box consists of the personal correspondence of John Byrne and reflects his lifelong commitment to the Irish nationalist cause. Included are letters to and from prominent Irish leaders, including Eamon De Valera and Sean O'Kelly.

Series 2 **Organizations 1919-1959**

Physical Description:
2 Boxes; Box 2 has 18 folders, Box 3 has 14 folders.

Scope and Content Note

Box 2 contains national, regional, and Californian AARIR documents. Also, documents from the AOH. However, the majority of the documents reflect the activities of the Los Angeles Chapter of the AARIR, and its role in the Irish Republican cause. Box 3 consists of documents from national, regional, and Californian Irish American organizations. It includes financial records, correspondence, and Irish bonds. This series is arranged alphabetically and is deliniated by organizational name.

Series 3 **Printed Matter 1890-1987**

Physical Description: 6 Boxes. Box 4 has 15 folders; Box 5 has 14 folders; Box 6 has 30 newspapers; Box 7 has 30 newspapers; Box 8 has 8 folders; Box 9 has 8 folders.

Scope and Content Note

Box 4 consists of pamphlets, bulletins, speeches, press releases and event documents relating to Irish Americans in the United States. This series reflects the activities of the Irish nationalist movement in the United States and in some cases specifically California. Box 5 contains a variety of general newspaper clippings both cultural and political in nature. Box 6 contains AARIR correspondence and picnic and reunion programs. Also, in this box are American reports on conditions in Ireland and pamphlets about Irish groups and organizations. Box 7 contains Irish American and Irish newspapers such as *The Irish American Review*, *The Republic*, *The Irish Nation*, *The Irish World*, *The Leader* , *National Hibernian*, *The Wicklow People*, *Sinn Fein*, and the *Irish Press*. Box 8 contains newspapers from the *Irish World* and *The Irish Republic* in addition to some unidentified photographs. Box 9 contains newspapers from *The Irish Republic*, *The Irish Press*, *The Los Angeles Examiner*, *National Hibernian*, *Sinn Fein*, and *The Wicklow People*.

Series 4 **Miscellaneous Related Material 1890-1987**

Physical Description: 4 boxes. Box 10 has 8 folders; Box 11 contains 3 reel-to-reel audio tapes and 1 cassette tape; Boxes 12 and 13 contain index cards.

Scope and Content Note

This series contains miscellaneous materials associated with John Byrne and Mary Condon. One box contains the personal correspondence of John Byrne, letters to Mary Condon from Dennis Clark, the death certificate and personal effects documents of IRA member Tom Fay, and materials gathered by Timothy Sarbaugh for personal research purposes. Two of the boxes contain index cards used to organize the collection at an earlier date. One box contains oral history tapes believed to be of Joseph Wehrly, the Murray Family, Margaret White, and John Bryne, Jr.