



Irish American Archives Society Inc.

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## Save the Date!

March 22, 7:30 pm

Kilbanetown Comeback  
Documentary

Cleveland International Film  
Festival

Capitol Theatre  
1390 West 65th Street,  
Cleveland, Ohio 44102

See page 3 for details

March 29, 7 pm and 11 pm

Fighting Heart Documentary  
Broadcast on WVIZ TV

For inquiries, contact:  
Margaret Lynch  
(216) 941-5727 or  
iaasadmin@gmail.com

Taimid ag suil le do comhlúadar  
We look forward to your company!



# Preserving Our Heritage, Sharing Our Stories

The Newsletter of the  
Irish American Archives Society of Cleveland & Northeast Ohio

Volume 18, Number 2 Winter 2015

## Documenting the Johnny Kilbane Sculpture Project

Given the focus of the Irish American Archives Society on historic preservation, it seemed imperative that the IAAS document the making of the Johnny Kilbane Sculpture *Fighting Heart* for posterity. Looking back at other community initiatives to commemorate the Irish presence in the city—such as the Irish Cultural Garden and the Famine Memorial—all too little information has been preserved about the people and processes that led to the development of these projects.

A “home movie” of the dedication of the Irish Cultural Garden in 1939 was retrieved at a yard sale and donated to the Western Reserve Historical Society a few years ago, but very few of the people who can be seen in the short movie can be identified. (The 1939 film footage can be viewed on our website on the Mystery Photo page at [www.irisharchives.org](http://www.irisharchives.org).) What were the sacrifices made to accomplish the ambitious garden project in the midst of the Depression? Who made these projects happen and what was their motivation? Some of the answers can be reconstructed; a history of the original development and more recent renovation of the Irish Cultural Garden can also be found on our website on the Local History Links page.

However, the IAAS wanted to be able to leave behind a fuller and readily accessible record of the Johnny Kilbane Sculpture Project. We had many of the events associated with the project filmed and photographed, including sculptor Rowan Gillespie at work in his studio outside of Dublin and during the installation of the sculpture in Battery Park. The “raw” video footage of Gillespie at work, split in seven short segments, can be found on our website on the Johnny Kilbane Sculpture Project page. The documentary film and commemorative book, described on page 2, incorporate this “raw” material, along with interviews, background information, and more.



The sculpture installation team was drawn by Terry Joyce from the Laborers International Union Local 310, the Bricklayers Local 5 Ohio, Norris Brothers Company, and MK Masonry. All of the labor and equipment for the installation itself were donated—though the creation of the plaza and landscaping surrounding the sculpture were part of the project costs.

## Teacher Resource Task Force Meets

In 2015, Irish American Archives Society plans to convene a Teacher Resource Task Force to assist with the creation and dissemination of teacher resource materials that take advantage of research and information about aspects of Cleveland history that surfaced during the Johnny Kilbane Sculpture project. IAAS will work with local teachers and historians to pull together a resource packet that will address such topics as Johnny Kilbane and Boxing, artist Rowan Gillespie and his process of bronze casting, the public art process, aspects of the history of the Detroit Shoreway Neighborhood. A grant from Cuyahoga Arts and Culture will help to launch this initiative, which starts with an attempt to offer contexts for understanding the Johnny Kilbane Sculpture in Battery Park. But long-term, we’d like to call attention to the Irish American Archives Society as a resource for local history instruction in general. Any teachers interested in participating should contact Margaret Lynch at [iaasadmin@gmail.com](mailto:iaasadmin@gmail.com).



Educators Task Force Members: Matt Wallenhorst of Central Catholic High School, Colleen Corrigan Day of Holy Name High, Jim Brennan of St. Ignatius High School, Dan Guion of St. Joseph Academy. Not pictured: Pat Kyle of St. Ignatius High School and Sherri Pittard of Newton D. Baker Middle School.



**Board Members:** James G. Brennan, Sr. Maureen Burke, SND, Hon. Ken Callahan Jr., Dan Conway, Thomas D. Corrigan, John Coyne, Ray Daull, Brendan Doyle, Rosemarie Feighan DeJohn, Terence P. Joyce, Thomas Lynch, Margaret (Meg) McGarry, John Myers, Erin O’Toole, Kevin O’Toole, Max Rieker, Thomas J. Scanlon, J. Gerard Sheehan. **Trustees Emeritus:** Kevin McGinty, Mary Karen O’Neil, Gerald Quinn.  
**Executive Director and Newsletter Editor:** Margaret Lynch.  
Photographs of sculpture project participants courtesy of Marianne Mangan.

## Kilbanetown Comeback: A Documentary Film about the Making of the Johnny Kilbane Sculpture



Director Des Kilbane during the installation of the Johnny Kilbane sculpture in September 2014.

Galway-based filmmaker **Des Kilbane** has family roots in Achill Island, where Johnny Kilbane's father came from, and is distantly related to the boxer. He'd heard about his famous relative as a child, but started thinking seriously about telling his story after reading as an adult that heavyweight champion Mike Tyson classified Johnny Kilbane as among the top featherweights of all time. Des Kilbane created a documentary about Johnny's career as a boxer, filmed on Achill and in Cleveland and titled *Fighting Heart*, to honor the centenary of Kilbane's first featherweight boxing championship in 2012. The documentary was a hit at the Cleveland International Film Festival in 2013. When the director heard about the sculpture project in Cleveland, he quickly proposed to document the process. With the assistance of cinematographers in Ireland and Cleveland, he conducted interviews and shot footage that illustrated three intertwining story strands—of the descendants of Johnny Kilbane, of sculptor Rowan Gillespie, and of the Cleveland community. *Kilbanetown Comeback* is the result, and it's also screening at the Cleveland International Film Festival--this year! (See details about the screenings of *Kilbanetown Comeback* on page 3.) In the meantime, the original documentary, *Fighting Heart*, can also be seen this month on WVIZ TV on March 29 at 7 pm and 11 pm.



## Fighting Heart: A Commemorative Book about Rowan Gillespie's Sculpture

To commemorate the sculpture project in print, IAAS turned to Roger Kohn, sculptor Rowan Gillespie's longtime biographer and friend. Kohn has written and designed publications about individual works by Gillespie and has also authored *Rowan Gillespie: Looking for Orion*, a monograph about the sculptor's work to date in 2007. Roger Kohn and Rowan Gillespie were in the US for the funeral of a dear mutual friend in January 2014, when Gillespie was also scheduled to come to Cleveland to make a design presentation for the Johnny Kilbane Sculpture project. Kohn accompanied the sculptor to Cleveland and visited the potential sculpture sites with Gillespie and also sat in on Gillespie's presentations, to IAAS supporters and to Detroit Shoreway community members, of two different approaches to the Kilbane commission. Having met the "players" involved and observed the community process, Kohn was subsequently able to write about the project with the insight of firsthand experience. The 24-page, full-color book will be available for sale to coincide with the documentary screening.



Roger Kohn (left) with Cleveland cinematographer Richard Walsh, who contributed to the Kilbanetown Comeback documentary, and sculptor Rowan Gillespie at Stone Mad Pub in January 2014.

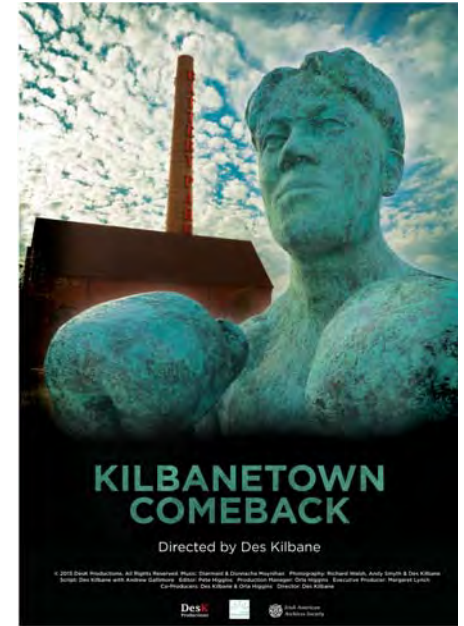


## Kilbanetown Comeback at the Cleveland International Film Festival

CIFF Screenings		
Saturday, March 21, 2015 at 7:15 PM Preceded by: Hidden In Plain Sight Tower City	<b>Sunday, March 22, 2015 at 7:30 PM</b> <b>Preceded by: Hidden In Plain Sight</b> <b>Neighborhood Screening @ Capitol Theatre</b>	Monday, March 23, 2015 at 5:00 PM Preceded by: Hidden In Plain Sight Tower City

### Buy your ticket to the March 22 Capitol Theatre Screening through IAAS and benefit the Johnny Kilbane Sculpture maintenance fund!

- \$20 (\$10 donation to IAAS): Documentary screening, March 22, 7:30 pm at the Capitol Theatre (1390 W 65th Street)
- \$50 (\$30 donation to IAAS): Documentary 7:30 pm at the Capitol Theatre, "Meet the Director" afterwards at Stone Mad Pub (1306 West 65th Street)



**CIFF39** MARCH 18-29, 2015  
TOWER CITY CINEMAS  
**THE HOME FOR INSPIRATION**  
CLEVELAND INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

PRESENTED BY DOLLAR BANK



### JOHNNY KILBANE AT THE CLEVELAND INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL---ORDER FORM

Mail with check payable to Irish American Archives Society, P.O. Box 91756, Cleveland OH 44101-3756

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

City State Zip \_\_\_\_\_

**Option 1:** \$20 (\$10 tax-deductible donation to IAAS)  
Includes film

#attending \_\_\_\_\_ x \$20

**Option 2:** \$50 (\$35 tax-deductible donation to IAAS)  
Includes film, dessert reception at Stone Mad Pub

#attending \_\_\_\_\_ x \$50

Commemorative Book at "advance" price of \$25

Copy \_\_\_\_\_ x \$25

Please accept my donation as I am unable to attend

\_\_\_\_\_

Total enclosed \_\_\_\_\_

