

## The New York Irish, An Historic Book Is Launched

In January 1990, the Irish Institute and the New York Irish History Roundtable announced a joint project to produce a one or two volume history of the Irish in New York City. The book, tentatively titled *The New York Irish*, will trace the history of the Irish in New York from the seventeenth century to the present through several essays, maps, appendices, and bibliography. The projected date of publication is Spring 1993.

A Board of Advisors, comprised of scholars prominent in Irish American and New York City history, was formed to help coordinate the project and maintain high standards and consistency. The Advisors held their first planning meeting on January 13th at The Princeton Club to discuss structure, themes, contributors, and editors. Participating scholars were Ronald H. Bayor (*Neighbors in Conflict*), Dennis Clark (*The Irish in Philadelphia*), Hasia R. Diner (*Erin's Daughters in America*), James S. Donnelly, Jr. (*Landlord and Tenant in Nineteenth Century Ireland*), William D. Griffin (*A Portrait of the Irish in America*), Leo Hershkowitz (*Tweed's New York*), Timothy J. Meagher (*Urban American Catholicism*), Kerby A. Miller (*Emigrants and Exiles*), John Ridge (*The St. Patrick's Day Parade in New York*), and Sean Wilentz (*Chants Democratic*).

Also participating were Kevin Morrissey and Paul O'Dwyer, officers of the Irish Institute, and Marion R. Casey and Angela Carter, officers of the New York Irish History Roundtable. Advisors who were unable to attend but who offered encouragement, comments and suggestions were Jay P. Dolan (*The Immigrant Church*), Kenneth T. Jackson (*Cities in American History*), and David M. Reimers (*Still the Golden Door*). The day long meeting was followed by a special dinner at Harbour Lights, South Street Seaport, to launch the project.

The proposed book, *The New York Irish*, will serve as an overview in which certain themes, or constants, are explored through discussion of changes in historical time, in the city, and in scholarship on the Irish. Emphasis will be placed on the interaction between the expanding city on the one hand and the role of the Irish as they effect and are affected by the city's maturation and relationships to other groups. The book will be divided into six chronological sections each with specially commissioned essays in areas where little or no previous research has been done.

Despite the duration and significance of their involvement in New York life, the Irish of this city have never received a full-length, in-depth historical treatment, a surprising gap in Irish-American and urban historiography. There are histories of the Irish in Philadelphia, Chicago, San Francisco, Boston, and even New Orleans and Butte, Montana, but there is no history of the Irish in New York. The sheer size and complexity of the task is a challenge to historians.

Through a unique arrangement, the Irish Institute will provide financial support and the New York Irish History Roundtable will administer the joint project which will provide an historic legacy for future generations and scholars. The Irish Institute, founded in 1950 and since 1982 largely a philanthropic organization supporting cultural ties between the United States and Ireland, approached the New York Irish History Roundtable in early 1989 about realizing such a one or two volume history. In June, by a unanimous vote of the Irish Institute, initial funding for the venture was approved. In December, Irish Institute President Kevin Morrissey presented Roundtable President Marion Casey with a

cheque for \$31,000. *The New York Irish* is a three year endeavour and this grant represents approximately one third of the total cost of production. The Irish Institute intends to solicit other funding sources to help realize the project.

The New York Irish History Roundtable, since its foundation in 1984, has sought to bring together thoughtful researchers to promote an exchange of information and ideas, to point to areas still requiring investigation, and to assist in the publication of preliminary research reports. These efforts have demonstrated a seriousness of purpose and a responsible commitment to quality historical scholarship. It is pleased to be able to sponsor this collaborative work which will bring together the expertise of scholars in the wide variety of periods and themes that comprise the New York Irish experience.

Further information on this project is available by writing to The New York Irish History Roundtable, P.O. Box 2087, Church Street Station, New York, New York 10008. Writing samples and chapter proposals are welcomed (please include a resume) before May 31st. Contributions to the project, which will be acknowledged, are tax-deductible; make cheques payable to *New York Irish, Inc.*

-Marion R. Casey



Photo by Tom Matthews

On 27 December 1989 Irish Institute President Kevin Morrissey presented a cheque for \$31,000 to NYIHR President Marion Casey at a small reception at Reidy's Restaurant on East 53rd Street. The grant is to be used to produce a one or two volume history of the Irish in New York.

The NYIHR is grateful for the encouragement and support of the Irish Institute, especially that of Kevin Morrissey and Paul O'Dwyer, Chairman of the Board of Trustees, who continue to inspire the Roundtable to strive towards ever higher goals. We are honoured to work with such a visionary organization as the Irish Institute on this historic project.