

Buffalo has key role in film about James Joyce

BY ANNIE DECK-MILLER
BUSINESS FIRST

How many people know that Buffalo is home to the world's largest collection of manuscripts and personal effects by perhaps the most influential author ever?

Not nearly enough, believes Buffalo lawyer Patrick Martin.

That conviction underlies Martin's role as co-producer and co-director of the documentary film "Following James Joyce ... Dublin to Buffalo."



Martin

In the Buffalo area, says Martin, a partner in Kennedy Stoeckl & Martin PC, "We have a lot of very major assets that, in terms of the cultural life of the city, we've inherited from a very active, savvy

group of forbears (and) that have just spent a few decades in the attic, essentially."

The film brings some of those treasures out of the the Poetry Collection at the University at Buffalo's Undergraduate Library, exposing them to a global audience.

The film traces the Irish-born author's travels from Dublin to Paris and to Pola, Croatia; Trieste, Italy; and Zurich, Switzerland — all cities where he made his home at some point. It charts also the fate of two collections of Joyce's manuscripts, notebooks, private library, correspondence and family portraits — one rescued from wartime Paris, a second procured from Joyce's friend and publisher, Sylvia Beach — as they made their way to an unlikely final destination: Buffalo.

The back story

Martin's involvement in the documentary is rooted in his earlier efforts to publish and

promote the Mark Twain novelette "A Murder, a Mystery and a Marriage."

A group of European Joyce enthusiasts who were aware of Martin's work on the Twain project asked for his input on ways to commemorate the June 16, 2004, centenary of Bloomsday, the fictional date on which the events of Joyce's masterpiece novel "Ulysses" take place.

"The first thing I thought was, 'OK, well, Buffalo should be part of this,'" Martin says.

He contacted Joyce scholars Stacey Herbert and Luca Crispi, a couple who'd moved from Buffalo to Dublin in 2003 to help create a "Ulysses" exhibit for the National Library of Ireland.

The three of them quickly conceived ways to appeal simultaneously to hard-core Joyce scholars and casual readers, and compiled a list of possible contributors to the project. Largely in order to avoid copyright concerns, they opted for a documentary film format over a printed work.

"Nobody had to tell us that you want to present this thing in a way that is focusing on James Joyce and the integrity of the story, not on Buffalo," he notes.

The next step was to secure funding for the project. Martin first approached Catherine Schweitzer, executive director of The Baird Foundation, who agreed to support the film financially.

With added contributions from the Constance Stafford Charitable Trust, Cameron Baird Foundation, Zemsky Family Foundation, James Joyce Foundation, the Brioni Co. in Italy and the government of Croatia, the filmmakers had a \$90,000 budget.

Getting it together

From conception to completion, the 55-minute film was created in less than a year. Filming began in Europe in February and

wrapped up in Dublin and Buffalo in March, with cinematographer Marc Degeenaar behind the camera.

Herbert and Martin wrote the film's script with input from Crispi and from Buffalo State College English professor Laurence Shine, who provides the documentary's narration.

The team edited the film from three continents, using the Internet as common ground. Martin would begin work at 4:30 a.m. EST, where it was 9:30 a.m. in both Dublin and Capetown, South Africa, where Degeenaar is based.

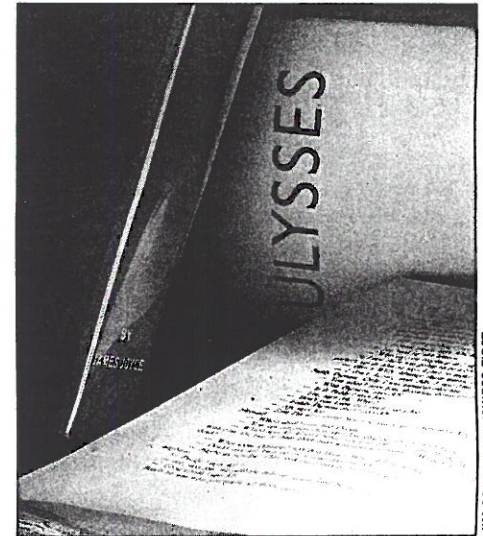
"Following James Joyce" presents commentary from more than 20 people, most of them Joyce scholars and historians. The Buffalo segments of the film include footage of Frank Lloyd Wright's Darwin Martin House and Graycliff Estate, the Albright-Knox Art Gallery and Kleinhans Music Hall and an interview with UB President John Simpson in the room where the Joyce materials are on display.

The film premiered in Buffalo and Dublin in June, coinciding with the Bloomsday centenary, and has since traveled to Trieste. It will be shown in Croatia and Paris in August, and it's a centerpiece of exhibitions by both the Trieste Joyce School and the National Library of Ireland in Dublin.

"The film has been really well-received in Europe. It's gotten more attention in Europe than it's gotten here," says Martin, who estimates that more than 75,000 people will see the film in Dublin alone this summer.

"There's an enormous amount of interest in Europe about our Joyce archive," Martin says. "So all you have to do is provide the means for somebody to recognize these things in an enjoyable way and then the means to make use of it."

There's a chance that that opportunity will come in the not-too-distant future. UB has contacted the International James Joyce



JIM COURTNEY/BUSINESS FIRST

Three unique editions of "Ulysses" from the James Joyce archive, part of The Poetry Collection at the University at Buffalo.

Foundation in hopes of attracting the North American James Joyce Conference here in 2007, says Poetry Collection curator Michael Basinski.

If that happens, it will be an opportunity to "rebrand" Buffalo as a locus with considerable cultural allure, says Susan Scholterer, director of cultural tourism for the Buffalo Niagara Convention & Visitors Bureau.

"It's another activity that positions the Western New York region as very rich in culture and history," Scholterer says. While the convention might not draw a significant number of people here — perhaps 200 scholars — she believes it might change widely held misconceptions about Western New York.

"These are people," she says, "who would really revel at some unique cultural experiences, should they come."