BAS 063 Easter Rising Welcome to Butte, America’s Story. I’m your host, Dick Gibson.

In April 1916, Butte’s newspapers were full of front-page stories of the war in Europe and General Pershing’s unsuccessful expedition to Mexico to capture revolutionary Poncho Villa. Meanwhile, Ireland was boiling.

Irish republicanism and the fight against English rule go back centuries, but it came to a head during Easter Week, 1916. On April 24, about 1,200 rebels attacked buildings in Dublin and elsewhere in a concerted attempt to establish an Irish Republic. The revolt was put down within a week, but it marked the start of three bloody years of revolution. In Butte, with at least 20,000 residents of Irish heritage, many Irish-born, the impact was huge.

The *Anaconda Standard* and the *Butte Miner* both reported using essentially the same telegraphed information, and the texts of the early reports are close to identical. But the *Standard*, in typical restrained fashion, had a sedate two-column front-page article headed “Ireland Faces a Revolution of Proportion.” The *Miner* on the other hand had a banner headline the width of the front page, in two-inch-high red type: “REVOLUTIONARY OUTBREAK OCCURS IN IRELAND.”

Through the week reports were carried on the front pages, until the revolt was effectively over with the surrender of most republican forces on April 30 and the execution of most of the leaders on May 3. Those sent to a firing squad after courts-martial for treason included Patrick Pearse, provisional president, and James Connolly, the activist who had visited Butte in 1910.

As the revolt ended, Butte’s Irish began to organize. The Friends of Irish Freedom was established in New York in March 1916. More than a thousand Butte Irish met April 30 at the Hibernia Hall, 949 North Main in Centerville, to organize the Butte chapter—the Patrick Pearse Chapter. Judge Jeremiah J. Lynch presided at the meeting, and gave an inflammatory anti-English speech. He was careful to pronounce that his and all Butte Irishmen’s “first duty was to America,” but his support for Germany’s submarine warfare against the British blockade was met with cheers from the crowd. The second speaker, Reverend English, assistant pastor at St. Mary’s Church, went so far as to say “today we recognize Germany as an ally.”

The Butte Friends of Irish Freedom elected Timothy J. McCarthy its first president. He was a grocer and butcher with a shop at 64 East Broadway, and home at 522 Caledonia. First vice-president was the well-known undertaker, Larry Duggan, who lived at 31 East Copper, and the treasurer was James J. McCarthy, secretary of the Centennial Brewing Company with a home at 212 North Crystal. The latter two homes are still standing.

The first meeting garnered $976 in cash and $1500 in pledges to be paid within ten days. The Friends of Irish Freedom set a goal of $20,000 to raise in support of the Irish rebellion, to be used to help widows and children of the 1916 rebels.

Jeremiah Lynch, the primary speaker at the Friends’ meeting, was born in County Cork and according to David Emmons in *The Butte Irish*, “was unquestionably the dominant force in the Butte Irish community” until his death in 1961. He lived at 517 Silver Street.

As writer Edwin Dobb has said, "Like Concord, Gettysburg, and Wounded Knee, Butte is one of the places America came from." Join us next time for more of Butte, America’s Story.