

## Director's Statement - Rita Davern

One of the first things I learned about filmmaking was the magic that happens when you adjust the focus on a camera. Put the subject in focus and one story emerges. Highlight the background and a different story comes to light. The making of this film required focusing on the background of my family's history in St. Paul, Minnesota. What external forces shaped the lives of my ancestors, both in Ireland and in the U.S.? It has been a good, hard trip through history. I am thrilled to share ***Stories I Didn't Know*** with others interested in taking that path less travelled.

What I've most loved about this exploration is the new conversations and connections it has made possible. That opportunity - to discover and reflect on our past - is a healing and rewarding thing. It is at the core of ***Stories I Didn't Know***. I am deeply hopeful about what's possible when we find our past, face it and learn from it.

## Director's Statement - Melody Gilbert

Rita hired me to help her make a historical documentary about her grandmother. It didn't take me long to realize the film was actually going to be about Rita. She just didn't know it yet. It took me almost three months to convince her that she should be the narrator and tell her story. Once she agreed, I knew we could be partners and co-directors on this film that would focus on Rita's journey of questioning and healing.

I saw so many layers to her story. It was a storyteller's gold mine! I also suspected that the bigger story in here was not always what we do as humans, but that we try. You don't need to be Irish or Native American or Minnesotan to appreciate this film because this story could be about anyone trying to understand their family history and the stories that get uncovered along the way. This is not a film that gets wrapped up in a nice bow, but I do hope it does make people think.