Museum to Honor Notable West Enders of Irish Descent During Irish Heritage Month

FOR RELEASE: March 17, 2015

Boston, MA—As part of Irish Heritage Month, The West End Museum is celebrating notable West Enders of Irish descent. On Tuesday, March 29, the Museum will host its Irish Honoree Night from 6:30 to 8:00 p.m. Refreshments will be served. The event is free and open to the public. The honorees are Mary E. "Nellie" McGrath Jackman, William “Bill” Cuddy and George J. Leary, all whom are being honored posthumously.

George J. Leary [1903-1992] Born in Boston, George graduated from Boston College High School in 1919. He later received his law degree from Suffolk University Law School and served the West End in the House of Representatives from 1936 to 1939. From 1941 to 1943, he was a member of the Massachusetts Special Commission on Primaries and Election Laws and on a sub-committee that sought to improve laws around campaign expenditures. George also served as executive vice chairman of the Democratic National Committee from 1948 to 1950. He was a member of the West End House, the Holy Name Society of St. Joseph's Church and—until 1983—the West End Bowling League. He may be best remembered by West Enders for describing the community as “the greatest neighborhood this side of heaven.” George had two sons, 18 grandchildren and 12 great grandchildren.

Mary E. "Nellie" McGrath Jackman [1902-2003] A well-connected figure in West End Democratic politics, Nellie attended political rallies all her life and personally knew Martin Lomasney and members of the Kennedy family. She was a close associate of Maurice Tobin, who had a distinguished political career as Boston Mayor, Governor of Massachusetts and U.S. Secretary of Labor. She met Tobin through his wife, Helen Noonan, a classmate at Mount St. Joseph Academy, from which Nellie graduated in 1921. She spent her career in the Boston School Department, retiring as Head Cashier. Nellie never held political office, as there were no such opportunities for women in her time. She raised five children during her eventful life. Nellie passed away at age 101, survived by four of her children, 20 grandchildren and 35 great grandchildren. She often said she loved every bit of the West End.

William "Bill" Cuddy [1865-1938] The eldest of four boys, Bill was born in a carriage house on Beacon Hill the year the Civil War ended. He graduated from The Phillips School in the West End, one of the city’s first racially integrated schools. At age 19, he married and ultimately fathered 11 children. Bill was heavily involved with St. Joseph’s Church, participating in religious services and volunteering for many church activities. He became a member of the Hendricks Club and a very close friend of Ward Boss Martin Lomasney. Lomasney reportedly spent time at the Cuddy home every evening, except on Sundays, which Bill reserved for church and family. Bill himself served the West End in various political roles, including Alderman, Representative and Deputy Assessor—a position he held for 17 years until age 70. During his time in the House, his prowess in the legislature earned him the nickname "Father Bill." He also put the West End on the map for amateur boxing. He established matches that would eventually take place in The Boston Garden and involve international competitors. Consequently, he was named manager of the 1924 US Olympic Boxing Team.

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About the West End Museum:  
The West End Museum is dedicated to the collection, preservation and interpretation of the history and culture of the West End neighborhood. The Museum’s permanent exhibit, “The Last Tenement,” highlights the immigrant history of the neighborhood through its decimation under Urban Renewal in 1959; two additional galleries feature rotating exhibits. The Museum is located near North Station at 150 Staniford St. Suite 7. Hours: Tuesday - Friday 12:00pm - 5:00pm; Saturday 11:00am - 4:00pm. Admission is free.

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