West End Museum to Honor Former Boston Mayor Raymond Flynn at Inaugural Irish Heritage Month Celebration

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Boston, MA—The West End Museum will host its inaugural Irish Heritage Month celebration on Monday, March 31, from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. The event is free and open to the public, and will include light refreshments. Former Boston Mayor Raymond L. Flynn (1984-1993)—who left City Hall to serve as the United States Ambassador to The Vatican (1993-1997)—will attend as an event honoree. The Museum will also honor Martin Lomasney and Daniel Whelton.

Before Boston’s Old West End was razed in the name of 1950s urban renewal, displacing tens of thousands of immigrant families, the neighborhood was home to many Irish-Americans who blended with other ethnic groups, giving the West End its unique character. The Museum’s Irish Heritage Month celebrates those Irish immigrants and the contributions they made to the West End.

“The West End was one of Boston’s first Irish immigrant communities, dating back to the 1840s where it was a refuge for those escaping the potato famine and economic hardships in Ireland in pursuit of a better life,” according to Duane Lucia, West End Museum President and Curator. “As guardians of the history and culture of the West End, it is imperative that we formally recognize and honor the legacy of Irish immigrants in the neighborhood.”

As Mayor, Ray Flynn worked tirelessly to knit together the neighborhoods of the City of Boston, especially in the tumultuous years after busing. In the West End, Flynn pressed for completion of a long-awaited residential building at 150 Staniford Street. The building included a number of condominiums set aside for former West Enders to purchase at below-market rates, thus enabling displaced residents to return to the old neighborhood. Later, the West End Museum was chartered at the site. Now, the Museum is honoring Flynn for this crucial contribution, along with his Irish heritage and his work on behalf of all Boston neighborhoods and at the Vatican.

Martin Lomasney is one of the central figures in West End lore. Born in Boston in 1859, he was the son of Irish immigrants who fled to the U.S. during the great potato famine. Martin and his brother Joseph started the Hendricks Club in 1885, which politically represented not only the thriving Irish immigrant community, but also a new wave of Jewish and Italian immigrants. Martin became the undisputed boss of Boston’s Ward 8—which encompassed the Old West End—from about 1885 until his death in 1933.

Daniel Whelton became the first native-born Irish-Catholic Mayor of Boston and remains the youngest person to hold that political office to date. While living in the West End, Whelton became an associate of Lomasney’s, joining the Hendricks Club and beginning his political career by registering new voters in the neighborhood. Whelton also served as Chairman of Boston’s Board of Aldermen and on the City’s Common Council.

Media Contact: Matt Ellis
matt@ellisstrategies.com
617.278.6560

Museum Contact: Duane Lucia
westendmuseum@gmail.com
617.416.0718

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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