



The Museum of Newport Irish History MNIH

Michael F. Crowley Lectures

Second Program of the 2021-2022 Series ~ Our 20th Annual

The Irish Bridget: Irish Immigrant Women in Domestic Service in America, 1840-1930

With Spotlight on Irish Servants of the Newport Mansions

Guest Speakers:

Margaret Lynch-Brennan & Leslie B. Jones

Monday, October 25, 2021 at 6:00 p.m.

The Wayfinder Hotel and Live-Streamed via Zoom

151 Admiral Kalbfus Road, Newport, R.I. 02840

Who was the Irish Bridget? What relevance does her story have to the history of Irish immigration to America? Dr. Margaret Lynch-Brennan will answer these questions and share insights from her book, “The Irish Bridget: Irish Immigrant Women in Domestic Service in America, 1840-1930.” She will discuss the work and social lives of these young Irish immigrant girls who labored as cooks, maids and nannies in middle and upper-class homes in urban America, their impact on Irish-American life, and their contribution to American ethnic, labor, and women’s history.

As a seasonal resort community, Newport’s employment opportunities expanded with the annual summer sojourn of the wealthy from cities to seaside during the Gilded Age. Eager Newporters sought jobs in the mansions, the majority of which were female positions in domestic service. Women like Bridgett McGinn, owner of a well-reputed employment agency, educated and prepared many young Irish-born and Irish-American women for such roles. Leslie Jones will share the research the Preservation Society of Newport County has produced to spotlight the life experiences of Irish immigrant women in servitude at The Elms and other Newport Mansions.

MARGARET LYNCH-BRENNAN earned a Ph.D. in American history from the University at Albany, State University of New York. She has given presentations in Ireland, Australia, Germany and throughout the U.S. In addition to “The Irish Bridget,” Dr. Lynch-Brennan is the author of chapters in several other books and journals. She worked as a consultant with the Lower East Side Tenement Museum in New York City regarding the interpretation of Irish immigrant Bridget Meehan Moore in the Museum’s Moore family tenement. She also consulted for Lindenwald, the Kinderhook, N.Y. home of President Martin Van Buren, regarding the Irish domestic servants who lived and worked there. From 2015-18 she served as a Public Scholar for the N.Y. Council for the Humanities. Dr. Lynch-Brennan taught at the elementary, secondary, undergraduate, and graduate levels, and retired from the N.Y. State Education Department after 30 years of service. She lives near Albany, N.Y.

LESLIE B. JONES is the Director of Museum Affairs and Chief Curator for The Preservation Society of Newport County, where she oversees curatorial, conservation, collections management, site stewardship, exhibitions, interpretation, the annual research fellows program, and public programs. Previously, Jones was the VP, Museum Affairs & Curator of Decorative Arts at Cheekwood Estate & Gardens, a 55-acre botanical garden, art museum, and historic house in Nashville, Tenn. As an independent consultant, Jones has provided advice and leadership in all areas of museum administration to many clients. A native of St. Louis, Missouri, Jones received her Bachelor’s degree in the history of art and architecture from Miami University in Ohio, a Master’s degree in the history of decorative arts from the Smithsonian Institution’s joint program with the Corcoran College of Art + Design, and another Master’s in the appraisal of fine and decorative art from New York University.

A reception with light hors d’oeuvres will be held following the lecture. Cash Bar

Reservations Required for In-Person & Zoom Participation → *in-person attendees must be fully vaccinated* ←

Visit www.NewportIrishHistory.org, click “Lectures,” then the link to reserve for either in-person or Zoom. You will receive an e-confirmation. If you do not see this email, check your SPAM. This lecture, including speakers’ slides and Q&A, will be videotaped and a link to view will be available on the “Lectures” page of our website after the event. \$5 fee/donation per person, payable at the door via cash or check to “MNIH.” There is no fee to participate via Zoom.

Questions or Assistance with Registration (non-computer users): Contact Ann at (401) 841-5493 or tpm1@earthlink.net.

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