



The Museum of Newport Irish History MNIH

4th talk of our 22nd Annual Lecture Series

☞ Lecture made possible by a generous gift from Margaret Armstrong Murray, ☞
given in memory of her husband, Vincent J. Murray

John L. Sullivan, ‘The Boston Strong Boy’: America’s First Irish American Hero

Guest Speaker: Christopher Klein

Monday, February 26, 2024 ~ 6:00 p.m.

A Virtual Presentation via Zoom

Born in Boston’s South End to Irish-immigrant parents, John Lawrence Sullivan (1858-1918) was the last of the bare-knuckle heavyweight boxing champions. He was the first American athlete to earn over one million dollars, the first American sports “superstar,” and an Irish-American hero during the Gilded Age.

Christopher Klein’s biography of Sullivan, *Strong Boy: The Life and Times of John L. Sullivan, America’s First Sports Hero* (Lyons Press, 2013), tells the story of a hard-hitting and hard-drinking boxer against the backdrop of Irish America emerging during the Gilded Age. When Sullivan, known as the “Boston Strong Boy,” captured the heavyweight title in 1882, no Bostonians celebrated more than the Irish, who had felt blistered by Brahmin scorn since their arrival. That legendary spirit of the fighting Irish that was made flesh in Sullivan transformed him into a hero for hundreds of thousands of sons and daughters of the Emerald Isle who had felt emasculated in the wake of the Great Hunger, powerless under the thumb of the British, and slighted in their new homeland. Sullivan’s strength and self-belief were elixirs for a people who had suffered from malignant shame.

Klein’s illustrated lecture will include a plethora of historic photographs from this colorful era in American history. To purchase copies of his books or sign up for his free history-themed e-newsletter, please visit www.christopherklein.com.

CHRISTOPHER KLEIN is the author of four books, including *When the Irish Invaded Canada: The Incredible True Story of the Civil War Veterans Who Fought for Ireland’s Freedom*, *The Die-Hard Sports Fan’s Guide to Boston*, and *The Boston Harbor Islands*. A frequent contributor to History.com, the website of the History Channel, Christopher has also written for *The Boston Globe*, *The New York Times*, *National Geographic Traveler*, *Harvard Magazine*, Smithsonian.com, and AmericanHeritage.com. He lives in Andover, Massachusetts. More at www.christopherklein.com. We are delighted to welcome Chris back for this, his third talk for the Museum of Newport Irish History.

RESERVATIONS REQUIRED

To register, visit www.NewportIrishHistory.org. Click “Lectures,” then the link to reserve under the Feb. 26 listing. You will receive an immediate e-confirmation with the Zoom login info. If you do *not* see this email, check your SPAM. There is no fee to register for this lecture, but donations in support of our lecture series are always welcome via our website’s “Donate” page or check payable to “MNIH” mailed to the below PO Box address.

Non-computer/-mobile device Users: This lecture, including the speaker’s slides and Q&A, will be recorded and a link to view will be available on our website’s ‘Lectures’ page after the event. Please enjoy the lecture with a family member or friend who can provide Internet access.

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

P.O. Box 1378 • Newport, Rhode Island 02840
www.NewportIrishHistory.org • NewportIrishHistory@gmail.com