

# Colm Sullivan Art Gallery



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## **BACKGROUND**

The **Colm Sullivan Art Gallery** opened to the public on Friday, 18th April 2008. The opening occurred nearly seventy-five years to the day after the death of its namesake Colm Michael Sullivan, a condition which was stipulated in his last will and testament in 1933.

Colm's last will and testament also stipulated that any proceeds earned from the display of his artwork must go to a worthy cause. Profits are currently distributed between the *Fishermen's Benefit Fund*, the *Larkin Medical Relief Association* and the *Animal Life Centre* (Larkin City's no-kill animal shelter).

The **Colm Sullivan Art Gallery** is housed in a cottage on Cove Hollow Circle in Larkin City, Maine, once the private home of Colm Sullivan.

Megan Larkin is director of the **Colm Sullivan Art Gallery**. She is also the proud great-great-great-granddaughter of both John Larkin, founder of Larkin City, and Colm Sullivan, former lighthouse keeper and artist extraordinaire.

## THE ARTWORK

The paintings on display at the **Colm Sullivan Art Gallery**, which number at 121, are classified into several categories.

- ❖ **Formal portraits:** Still-life canvas portraits of Colm Sullivan's friends and family members, including Larkin City founder John Larkin.
- ❖ **Landscapes:** Such as the Irish boat docking in New York City in 1880, along with the lighthouse and keeper's cottage on the Larkin estate and the vast gardens and private family cemetery.
- ❖ **Seascapes:** Views of the Atlantic Ocean from Banshee Point in all seasons, and portraits of Larkin Harbor.
- ❖ **Urban:** Colm Sullivan's view of Larkin City from 1880 to 1933, including the original *Amber Whale Tavern*, *Wee Book Shop*, *Larkin City Hall & Courthouse*, *Larkin Grocery & Mercantile*, *Larkin City University (LCU)*, *Bruno's Café*, *Quinn's Forge*, *Larkin City Cemetery*, and much more.
- ❖ **Visionary:** Portraits painted long after actual events, rendered into art form by Colm Sullivan from personal memory.

The collective value of Colm Sullivan's artwork is estimated to be at \$301.5 million, according to Gleason Appraisers in Portland, Maine. The paintings are often on loan to other galleries, such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City, the National Gallery of Art in Washington DC, and the Art Institute of Boston.

When the art gallery first opened, only original Sullivan portraits were on public display. Since 2010, the gallery has offered faithful reproductions of the artwork for sale as painted by local artists Jayne Fleetwood and Declan McCoy. Please see our catalogue for more details.

## **INSIDE THE GALLERY**

The **Colm Sullivan Art Gallery** is located on Cove Hollow Circle in Larkin City, Maine, once the private cottage home of Colm Sullivan.

The **Colm Sullivan Art Gallery** is open Monday-Thursday from 10am to 6pm; and Friday-Saturday from noon to 7pm. The gallery is closed on Sundays.

### **History:**

After Colm Sullivan's death in 1933, the cottage was occupied by his grandson Jean-Claude Sullivan for seven years. Roddy Larkin purchased the cottage in 1940. The cottage was maintained for several decades by the Larkin family, but was never leased or occupied until it was designated as the site for the art gallery in 2007.

The two-story structure was refurbished to accommodate the artwork and other items, including books, brochures and informative documents.

The first floor of the gallery contains landscapes, seascapes and views of Larkin City, most of which are fitted with pewter frames and captions. The second floor houses personal portraits, such as Colm's renditions of friends, family members and visionary art. The second floor also has professional shots of various related headstones, mainly of Colm and people depicted in the artwork.

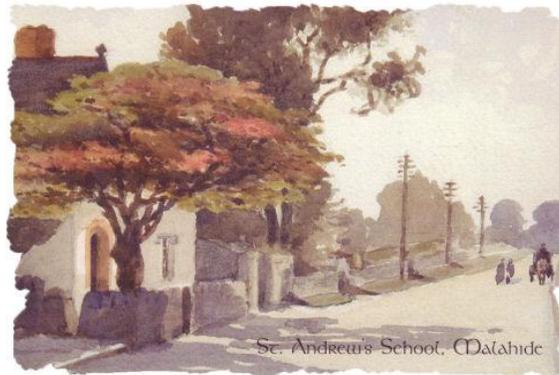
A gift shop was added in 2009, which sells coffee mugs, tee-shirts, hats, key chains and spoons, all designed with imprints of Colm's art.

An extension was added to the gallery in 2010, which now features faithful reproductions of Colm's artwork for sale as painted by local artists Jayne Fleetwood and Declan McCoy.

In 2011, the seasonal *Garden Café* was opened to the public. Guests can enjoy tea, sandwiches, snacks and soft drinks in the lush cottage garden where Colm Sullivan painted during the last years of his life.

## ABOUT COLM SULLIVAN

Colm Michael Sullivan (*Colmcille Mícheál Súilleabháin*) was born on St. Patrick's Day, 17th March 1860 in Malahide, County Dublin, Ireland. His interest in art began at an early age. He was sketching and drawing people and landscapes by the age of seven. He attended St. Andrew's School in Malahide, where his portrait of the school (*pictured below*) won first prize in 1873.



Colm became keeper of the Robswall Lighthouse in Malahide in 1878, shortly after his eighteenth birthday. Colm's parents, Michaleen and Eibhlín Sullivan, were killed by British soldiers in 1879. Later that same year, Colm's younger sister Bridget died in a house fire. With no family left, Colm set his sights on America.

His boat arrived in New York Harbor in June 1880, when he was hired by wealthy businessman John Larkin to become the first lighthouse keeper at Banshee Point, Maine. It is believed the photograph of Colm below was taken by Larkin family chef Claude Mondoux shortly after his arrival in 1880.



Colm kept a journal from June 1880 to January 1890. The diary was lost after his death in 1933 but was rediscovered in 1995, hidden in a roll-top desk inside the lighthouse keeper's cottage at Banshee Point. It was found by

author Angela Larkin Page, who is Colm's great-great-great niece and John Larkin's great-great-great granddaughter.

In the diary, Colm recorded his private musings, dreams and desires. The *Private Journal of Colm Sullivan* is now available in paperback in the art gallery gift shop. The book is a faithful reproduction of Colm's actual words, taken wholly from his original ten-year diary, and includes small snapshots of his artwork pertaining to specific journal entries.

As well as being the lighthouse keeper and continuing to paint, Colm fell in love with John Larkin's daughter, Molly. They kept their romance secret from John Larkin, who was keen for his only daughter to marry a wealthy man with impeccable social position. Colm and Molly conducted most of their trysts in the lighthouse keeper's cottage, where Colm also painted his lover in a variety of settings.

Their love affair was revealed when Molly became pregnant in late 1880. John Larkin forbade his daughter from seeing Colm Sullivan again, and forced her to bear twin sons in secret to avoid public scandal. The boys, named Michael Kevin Sullivan (*Mick*) and John Rory Sullivan (*Johnny*), were given over to Colm shortly after their birth on 30th June 1881.

At the time, John Larkin compelled Colm to sign a legal document as to the truth of the twins' parentage:

*Thursday, 30 June 1881  
To whom it may concern:*

*I, John Kevin Larkin, do attest that the legally recorded offspring of Colm and Maureen Sullivan born today, are in fact the children of my youngest child, Mary Margaret Larkin, known also as Molly, and my lighthouse keeper, Colm Sullivan. The children born today are twin boys, named Michael Kevin and John Rory Sullivan. Molly gave birth to the children in her room in my home on the hill above Banshee Point.*

*This true parentage of these children will be withheld from public knowledge, and I declare it here so they may know their true heritage. It is legally recorded that Colm and Maureen Sullivan are the natural parents of the boys, but they are, in fact, my grandchildren. Since Molly has chosen not to see or raise her children, and since she is not wed or likely to be in the near future, I thought it*

*best that these innocent children have a decent home. I also wanted them close enough so I could watch them grow for as long as I live. Deep in my heart I rejoice at my flesh and blood continuing in this fairly new world.*

*Witnessed this day of 30 June 1881 by myself, John K. Larkin, by my patient and understanding wife, Anne O'Quinn Larkin, and by Colm and Maureen Sullivan. May God assoil our souls.*

Colm married Molly's personal maid Maureen Kelly on 1st November 1880 at the suggestion of John Larkin. The marriage, which was initially a matter of convenience, was undertaken to provide a proper home for the twin boys. For the sake of propriety, both Colm and Maureen claimed to be the biological parents. Sadly, Johnny Sullivan died at the age of five in 1886.

Colm and Maureen went on to have one child together, son Aidan Jack Kelly Sullivan (born in 1886), who later became a Catholic priest.

After giving birth to the twins, Molly Larkin suffered from severe depression for many years. She languished in the attic of the family mansion, a stone's throw from the keeper's cottage where Colm lived with Maureen and the children. Molly became addicted to laudanum, rarely leaving the attic space she called home.

On 26th November 1886, Molly left the attic one final time. She visited Colm in the lighthouse, afterward throwing herself from the cliffs at Banshee Point. She was buried in the Larkin Family Cemetery on the estate grounds.

Maureen Kelly passed away in 1910, while Colm went on as lighthouse keeper until his retirement in 1919. He moved to a cottage in Larkin City, which is now the home of his same-named art gallery.

When John Larkin passed away in 1926, he acknowledged his illegitimate grandson Mick Sullivan:

*Those of you hearing me know about the liaison between my late daughter Molly and my former lighthouse keeper, Colm Sullivan. The result of their union was two fine young boys, Michael and John. At the time of their twin birth, Colm and his new wife Maureen claimed the children as their own. Molly bore the boys in secrecy and handed them over, an action I'm convinced added to Molly's mental state. But that is another matter, and I digress.*

*I am neither ashamed by my grandson Mick Sullivan or abashed by his presence. I was dismayed by the events that culminated in his and little Johnny's birth, but I am so proud of Mick I could burst at the seams. This is the reason I am leaving him \$250,000, which his father Colm was already aware of, plus another \$200,000. Mick's son Jean-Claude will also receive the sum of \$100,000 when he turns thirty years old in 1937.*

Colm Sullivan died in 1933, at the age of 73. He is buried in the Larkin City Cemetery, between his wife Maureen Kelly and his son Johnny Sullivan.



Colm Sullivan (circa 1927).

## ARTISTIC LEGACY

Colm Sullivan's last will and testament stipulated that his artwork not be publicly displayed until seventy-five years after his death. He originally left the paintings to his friend and Larkin family chef Claude Mondoux for safekeeping, noting:

*The Larkin's gave me much upon my arrival in America, so I feel they should have the humble largesse of my artwork. Molly and John always admired it so. However, my desire to keep the artwork from public display until seventy-five years after my death insures that no one depicted in the paintings will be alive to judge or react in anger. One day everyone will understand my actions, and it is my earnest hope that no one will think too harshly of me.*

After Claude Mondoux passed away in 1936, the artwork was passed to Roderick (*Roddy*) Larkin, John Larkin's only son, to be followed by Colleen Larkin (*wife of Roddy's son Patrick*) and Claude's chef successor, Nicholas Bertrand. Claude appointed Nicholas as a guardian to ensure Colm's last wishes were carried out implicitly. When Nicholas Bertrand was murdered by Patrick Larkin in 1947, Colleen Larkin became sole keeper of the artwork.

Colleen had a stroke in 1958, which rendered her speechless until her death in 1962. She did not have a will, but her money and possessions went to Brian and Rory Larkin, her only children. All mention of Colm's artwork ended with Roddy's will in 1946, in which he left Brian and Rory his estate but with Colleen as executor.

The artwork was rediscovered in the attic of the Larkin family mansion in the autumn of 2006.

## PATRONS OF THE GALLERY

- ❖ Amber Whale Tavern
- ❖ Mayor David Azoulay (*ret*) & Lydia Azoulay
- ❖ Banshee Point Hotel & Golf Course
- ❖ Banshee Point Winery
- ❖ Kipling Bathers
- ❖ Bennett Blueprints
- ❖ Brickyard Square
- ❖ Bruno's Café
- ❖ The Byre Resort
- ❖ Clamshell Employment Agency
- ❖ Finley Cooper
- ❖ The Coven Nightclub
- ❖ Harbor View Catering
- ❖ KXLC Television
- ❖ Larkin City University (*LCU*)
- ❖ Larkin Lumber & Hardware
- ❖ Brose Larkin & Bridget Gallagher
- ❖ Diana Larkin & Andy Gilyard
- ❖ Kevin Larkin & Mariko Fujiwara Woods
- ❖ Liam & Petra Larkin
- ❖ Sean & Dana Larkin
- ❖ Shannon Larkin & Leonard Gunther
- ❖ The Nook & Cranny
- ❖ Angela Page Cimorelli & Tom Cimorelli
- ❖ Jamie Page
- ❖ Silver Tassel Restaurant
- ❖ Wee Book Shop

A special thank you goes to Mr. Ben Webb (*aka George Sullivan*) for donating Colm Sullivan's original journal, personal letters and family photographs.

## **GALLERY STAFF**

The **Colm Sullivan Art Gallery** is staffed by the following:

### **Director**

Megan Larkin

### **Floor Manager**

Zara McWilliams

### **Gallery Assistants**

Jason Curtis

Peter James

Lena Roark

Melanie Wright

### **Gift Shop**

Leslie Kirk

Jennifer Nolan

### **Garden Café**

Josh Ashton

Nancy Smythe

Penny Vicario

### **Reproduction Artists**

Jayne Fleetwood

Declan McCoy