

Charitably



Speaking

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President's Message

It is hard to believe that my term as President of MCMA is nearly 2/3 over, and I continue to be both honored and humbled by this great experience. I continue also to be deeply appreciative of the cooperation and support I am afforded by our members, committees, Board of Government, Past-Presidents, and especially Ric Purdy, and I sincerely thank all of you.

For the last few years our investment portfolio has suffered along with the economy as a whole, and this year has shown little improvement. So again, we remind that, if you are able to and wish to make a year-end donation to MCMA, your gift will be greatly appreciated. It is tax-deductible (Ric Purdy will send a written acknowledgement), and you may instruct Ric to record it as an anonymous contribution if you so desire. We don't ask that you give until it hurts, but please give until it feels good. All donations help to reduce our dependence on portfolio performance as our sole means of support and survival. (A SASE is enclosed for your use, or you can use the PayPal feature on our website.)

Bill Anderson

Recent Happenings

We held our October Quarterly at the Neighborhood Club in Quincy, where we enjoyed a very nice meal in a comfortable atmosphere. *[The Neighborhood Club has long been one of our favorite venues for these meetings, and although we must apologize for the fact that it is not so easily accessible as some of the other locations we use, it is always dependable and surprisingly cost effective.]* President Anderson conducted the business portion of the meeting, appointed a three-man Nominations Committee (Vice-President Richard Adams plus Trustees Arthur Anthony and John Lordan), and announced that past-trustee Peter Lemonias has agreed to head up a committee to begin the planning for our 2013 Triennial. We were then pleased to welcome our guest speaker Mr. George Chryssis, President of the Benjamin Franklin Institute of Technology in Boston. Mr. Chryssis gave us a brief overview of this 103-year old institution and its long tradition of educating students for technical careers. BFIT offers programs in automotive, architectural, computer and engineering technologies, plus the HVAC and eye care fields, and works to make this education accessible for all students. (More than 90% of its students receive financial aid.) One measure of BFIT's success is that its students graduate at twice the rate of two-year colleges nationally (and three-times that of Massachusetts two-year colleges), but a more impressive reality is that 96% of its graduates are employed in their field of study or continue on to pursue a bachelor's degree. Our members found Mr. Chryssis' talk both interesting and informative, and we very much appreciate that he spent this time with us.

Helping Others

A few years ago we helped **Straight Ahead Ministries (SAM)** launch their Original Gear silk screen printing program in Lynn, and this past year we were pleased to meet SAM's request for equipment that will help them expand this already enormously successful program. Based in Worcester, Straight Ahead Ministries is a national non-profit organization dedicated to reducing recidivism (re-offending) among youthful offenders. They have worked closely with the Mass. Dept. of Youth Services for over 20 years to serve high-risk juvenile offenders. They do not impose any religious practice on participants, but spirit, inspiration and aspiration are part and parcel of the SAM approach. They conduct regular visits to detention centers, and begin working with youth before they return to the community.



Lynn, where SAM operates its Youth Re-entry Project (YRP), is rated the third most violent city in the Commonwealth, and suffers high rates of dropout, crime, substance abuse and teen pregnancy. The Essex County House of Correction currently holds over 140 Lynn youth under 24, but incarceration for high-risk and gang-involved youth is generally just a revolving door, with recidivism within three years averaging 85%. The YRP has demonstrated a rate of *under 15%*. To achieve this success the YRP model is built around carefully nurtured relationships with strong, caring adult staff and volunteers and with positive peers. Youth are given real opportunities for skill-building, educational and vocational growth, community awareness, and leadership, while YRP, in partnership with many local organizations, provides a comprehensive array of supports and services.



The Lynn YRP will serve 160 youth this year. (A similar and growing program in Worcester will serve another 100, and SAM plans to replicate it in other cities as well.) The graphic design enterprise to which MCMA has lent our support employs several youth and trains them in design, finance, and business management skills. This enterprise is only one element in the Lynn program, but it has proven to be a very worthwhile one, and we are pleased that MCMA has been and continues to be involved in it.

MCMA History



Our focus in this issue is on another of the early to mid-nineteenth century architects who were members of MCMA and whose accomplishments are recognized to this day. **Isaiah Rogers**, who joined our Association in 1829, is probably not a familiar name to most of us, but you may feel a bit more of a connection with him after we highlight some of his work and innovations. *[The names of other MCMA members mentioned in this article will be similarly **bolded**.]* Rogers was born in Marshfield in 1800. His father was a farmer and shipwright, but Isaiah in 1822 went to study under **Solomon Willard** in Boston, and in 1826 he began his own architectural practice.

Rogers gained widespread renown for one of his earliest projects, Boston's Tremont House, sometimes called the Tremont Hotel, in 1829. Located on the corner of Tremont and Beacon Streets, this four-story building was the first hotel in the nation to boast indoor plumbing. Water was raised by a steam-driven pump to a storage tank on the roof, then fed by gravity to the taps. The eight water closets were located on the ground floor, while bathrooms (for bathing) were located in the basement. Running water was provided also to the kitchen and laundry. Other "firsts" for Tremont House included a reception area, locked rooms for guests, bellhops and free soap. The hotel was an immediate success *[notable guests in the coming years would include Davy Crockett and Charles Dickens]*, and it was to set the standard for luxury accommodation and become the model for hotels built in other cities. Rogers was to become perhaps the country's foremost hotel architect, and went on to build Astor House in New York City, the Exchange Hotel in Richmond, and Cincinnati's Burnet House, then the largest and most elegant hotel in the Midwest. *[In 1864 Union Generals Grant and Sherman would meet at Burnet House to plan Sherman's devastating march through Georgia.]*



Though he continued to build in Massachusetts, Rogers moved in 1836 to New York City, where, in addition to Astor House, he was soon to complete what would be considered his Greek Revival masterpiece, the Merchants Exchange Building on Wall Street, pictured to the right. *[The building still stands, but it underwent a major expansion in the early 1900s.]* He would go on to practice in Cincinnati as well, but one of his more interesting commissions was the Maxwell House Hotel in Nashville. Though construction started in 1859, work was interrupted by the outbreak of the Civil War, and the unfinished building was used variously as a barracks, prison and hospital. It developed a reputation for being haunted as a result of an 1863 stairwell collapse which killed three Confederate POWs. The hotel finally opened in 1869, and with 240 rooms was Nashville's largest, and



arguably its finest hotel. It was at its height in the late 1800s and early 1900s, and became famous for its Christmas dinners featuring black bear, opossum and other unusual delicacies. Among its noted guests were seven Presidents of the United States, "Buffalo Bill" Cody, Annie Oakley, Enrico Caruso, Thomas Edison and Henry Ford. Teddy Roosevelt famously said of the hotel's coffee that it was "good to the last drop", which of course became the marketing slogan for the coffee served at and named after the hotel.

From 1863 to 1867 Rogers served as Supervising Architect of the United States Treasury, succeeding **Ammi B. Young** in that position. Both Young and Rogers contributed to the design of the South Wing and the West Wing of the U.S. Treasury Building in Washington. Young supervised from the beginning of construction in 1855 until 1862, after which Rogers took over until completion. Both Young and Rogers refined the preliminary design provided by architect Thomas Ustick, and were responsible for all interior details. Rogers actually designed and patented the burglar-proof vaults that were used in the Treasury Building. *[Two layers of cast iron balls were interposed between alternating plates of hardened steel and wrought iron. The balls, held loosely, were designed to rotate upon contact with a drill or other tool, thereby defeating the efforts of burglars.]*

Closer to home, three of Rogers' surviving projects are Commercial Wharf on Atlantic Avenue in Boston, the Captain Robert Bennet Forbes House (a National Historic Landmark) in Milton, and the Egyptian Revival gateway to the Old Granary Burial Ground on Tremont Street. One well known building that has not survived was the Howard Atheneum in Boston. This playhouse, built in 1845, became the home of leading touring actors of the day, including a young John Wilkes Booth who played Hamlet. Vaudeville was introduced in 1869, and by the end of the century the theater had completely switched over to burlesque. Though it was demolished decades ago along with the other buildings in Scollay Square, "The Old Howard" is no doubt fondly remembered by at least a few of our members.



Isaiah Rogers married Emily Wesley Tobey of Portland, Maine in 1823. The couple had eight children, four of whom survived infancy. Two of his sons (one of whom he named Solomon Willard Rogers) also became architects. Rogers died in Cincinnati, where he had spent the later portion of his career. He is yet another member of MCMA whose accomplishments were widely recognized and appreciated in his day, and whose influence extended well beyond this area. *[We, meanwhile, continue to be impressed with the extent to which our past members were connected (in some cases only remotely, but in others quite directly) with so many advancements, characters and events in our country's history.]*