

Charitably



Speaking

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Quincy, MA 02169

A PUBLICATION OF THE MASSACHUSETTS CHARITABLE MECHANIC ASSOCIATION

President's Message

Did you notice that "Charitable" is our middle name? MCMA does a pretty good job of that, thanks in great part to the benevolence of past members. We all take great pride in that legacy work which our Planning Committee performs annually, but what have each of us done to ensure that there will be enough benevolence left to be cherished by future Mechanics?

An endowment happens because good people believe others helped them get to where they are in life. There is never an opportunity to pay them back, but we can pay it forward. During this time of giving thanks and giving gifts to those we love, I would be gravely remiss if I did not give my deep appreciation to each of you for making MCMA what it has become.

But I am also going to ask that you go beyond your comfort zone and consider making a gift to MCMA this year as a way of saying "Thanks" to whomever may have helped you along on this journey of life. Doing so will continue our cherished legacy of being Charitable. Some may think of MCMA as an all-you-can-eat buffet with one price of admission. We joined a "Charitable" organization, and as such, our charity needs to start at home. Never sharing or giving back only leaves nothing for the future.



Businessman and philanthropist Bill Cummings, above right, guest speaker at MCMA's October meeting, holds the plaque presented by **MCMA president Chuck Sulkala**.

I know the excuses – "it's been a slow year," "the market is down," "I'm on a fixed income." I get it, and I am not at the Biblical tithing level yet either, but I do try to ensure that my percentage of earnings given to charity becomes greater each year. I don't expect everyone to give one-percent of their income to MCMA, but if you could at least give something, maybe starting at .1% and increasing it each year from there. Better yet, how about giving something that reflects the value you put in the pride you have for MCMA?

I just can't help but imagine how much more we could do if we only had more with which we could do. May the charity of the season be both received and given freely. – **Chuck**

Helping Others

For 15 years now we have highlighted in this newsletter the various organizations that receive support from MCMA. The very first to receive that attention was the **Eliot School of Fine and Applied Arts**, and that Jamaica Plain school continues to merit both our attention and support. Founded in 1676 to provide an education to area children (of both the Puritans and the Indians), the school relocated several times before moving in 1832 to its current location on Eliot Street. The curriculum was transformed through the 1800s as government began to assume responsibility for public education, and Eliot began its "manual training" era in the 1870s, introducing classes such as





mechanical drawing, painting, sewing, cooking, and woodworking. Today the offerings have expanded to include specialties such as cabinetmaking, upholstery, photography and furniture restoration. The school offers both daytime and evening workshops in its many disciplines, continuing its history of teaching and enhancing skills in craftsmanship for amateurs and professionals alike. (Local museums, for example, send interns to take the school's course in gilding.)



We revisited Eliot in 2014 to highlight one of the newer programs undertaken by the school at that time – a partnership with the Boston public schools whereby Eliot brings carpentry and art classes directly to the schools, acquainting kids with skills and tools at a basic level, and also introducing them to architects, construction professionals, and even construction worksites. This program proved extremely popular, and before COVID hit, it had grown to include 15 schools plus a number of after-school programs and was serving 2400 kids. COVID crippled things, of course, though Eliot did provide some online instruction prior to the re-opening of schools in fall 2021. As of now, its school partners are back in-person but Eliot has decided to hold off on resuming its after-school partnerships until things settle down more. On another positive note, Eliot has recently managed to introduce the woodworking program into two high schools, English High and Greater Egleston High. This program is still in the pilot stage, and the aim is to develop it to provide more advanced instruction as students move to the next grade(s), and to include a co-op or intern work element. This program too has proven popular with students, and Eliot's limitation with expanding it is instead the challenge of finding qualified instructors willing to work only part-time. *[There may be an opportunity here for MCMA members, especially those in retirement, to help out.]*



Meanwhile, back at Eliot Street MCMA has over the past several years helped Eliot to upgrade tools and equipment in their various shop programs, with particular focus on safety, dust collection, and replacement of older, less reliable equipment. The Eliot School does an admirable job in teaching and promoting the mechanical arts to adults as well as children, and in helping students develop or improve skills that will help their employment opportunities. This school has earned and continues to merit both our admiration and the support we have been able to provide.



MCMA History

The important artifact that by itself occupied the rear wall of our board room for the past 28 years has transitioned to a new home. The artifact, of course, is the extremely large (approximately 78"x82") 1795 Map of Boston, and its new home is the Boston Public Library's Leventhal Map & Education Center at Copley Square in Boston. That "transition" became a lot more complicated than we envisioned, though it taught us much about the map's history ... and the story did end well, so let's go way back and start at the very beginning.

The Massachusetts General Court in 1794 passed a state mapping law which required all towns in the state, including the District of Maine, to produce town surveys on a standard scale of 200-rods (3300 feet) -to-an-inch by June 1795, for use in producing an official map of the Commonwealth. Osgood Carleton, one of the most active American mapmakers of the post-Revolutionary period, was engaged by many of the affected towns, Boston among them, to complete that task. *[Born in New Hampshire into a farming family, Carleton received little formal education, but he served his teenage years in the British Army during the French and Indian War, training with a British engineer officer from whom he learned surveying. He served in a Massachusetts regiment (as a sergeant, and later as a lieutenant) during the Revolutionary War, following which Carleton opened a school for navigation, mathematics, and cartography on Oliver's Dock in Boston.]* Despite the huge difference in scale, it is conceivable that our map was produced as a result of this state edict, and delivered, as the map's legend says, "To the selectmen of the town of Boston." The last mention of Boston's map in city records is a reference in a City Engineer's report on maps of Boston that was produced in the early 1900s, but the whereabouts of the map had been unknown since then.

Jumping ahead to the 1970s, our map, rolled up and badly deteriorated, was noticed by the foreman of a construction crew cleaning out a Boston building under renovation. Knowing that his boss had a serious interest in history, the foreman sent the map back to the shop rather than to the dumpster. Well, the boss was William Scott, who joined MCMA in 1973 and would in the coming years become actively involved in the association's activities and committees. Bill had no idea whether the map was worth hanging onto, but he set it aside, rolled up and standing on end, in a storage area ... where it remained for the next 20 years or so. But in 1993 Bill brought the map to our office and asked if MCMA would be interested in having it as an artifact. Our director was enthused that the map dated to the year of our founding, but far less enthused with its condition, so he called in the Northeast Document Conservation Center to examine it. They believed the map could be saved almost in its entirety, though with no guarantees, so we commissioned them to do so. After weeks of tedious work, the restored map was returned to us and installed in our conference room, where it remained until last year.

Early in 2021 our History Committee was asked by then-president Lemonias to explore the possibility of finding a new home for the map, both to make it more publicly accessible and to ensure that it would be kept in an environment more conducive to its long-term preservation. From a preliminary list of "possibilities," the committee decided to first approach the Leventhal Map & Education Center, which is the steward of the Boston

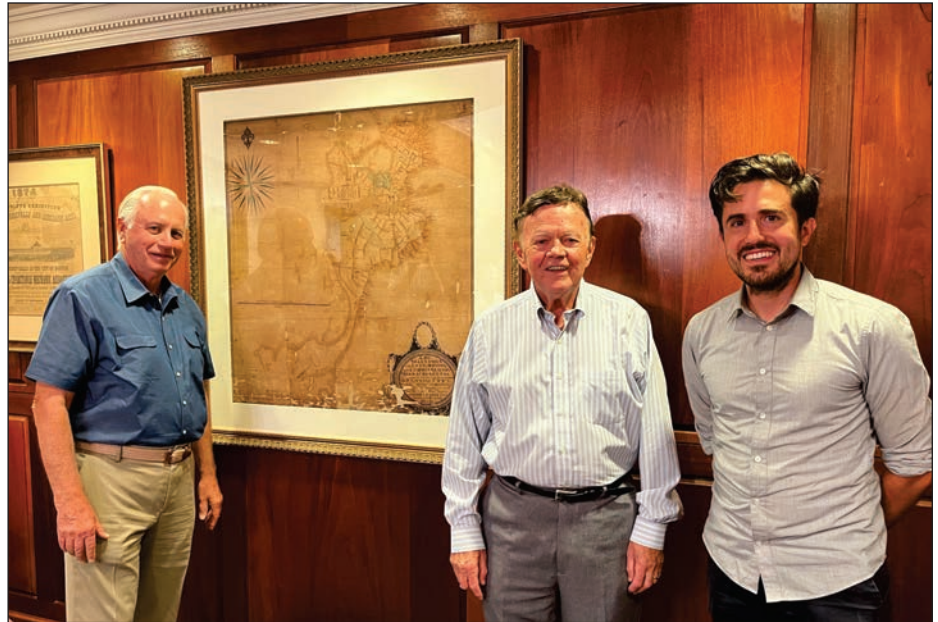


Above is a 2013 photo of the 1795 Osgood Carleton map of Boston hanging at the MCMA board room in Quincy, Mass.

Public Library's extensive map collection. Committee Chairman Rick Ryan initiated discussions with BPL about a possible long-term loan agreement, but they hit an immediate snag. Mr. Garrett Nelson, president and head curator of the Leventhal Center, advised Rick that standard BPL policy did not allow him to take on the management, care, and investment in a significant object (other than for a temporary exhibition) unless the Library had title to it.

Nonetheless, Mr. Nelson did agree to visit our office to see the map, and doing so (1) convinced him that the map would be a stunning addition to their collection, and (2) brought to light a further complication because he was quite certain that this was the same 1795 plan of Boston executed by Carleton that is mentioned in the city records. A state law holds that "public records," remain public property even if discarded or transferred, and a claim could be made that the map might be covered by this law. Neither BPL nor MCMA wanted to get "legal" with this issue, so both sides worked in good faith over the next few months to find an arrangement that would satisfy the boards of both organizations. (Very briefly, that resolution was a document that gifted the map to BPL with conditions that would return it to MCMA if BPL should ever choose to deaccession it. In addition, attribution will be given in perpetuity to MCMA.) In November the map was moved to BPL.

Earlier this year the Boston Public Library completed the digitizing of the 1795 Map of Boston and presented us with the framed (reduced size) copy that now hangs in our conference room. On August 16 Mr. Garrett Nelson, president and head curator of BPL's Leventhal Map & Education Center, attended a brief ceremony in our office to personally thank Bill Scott for his role in helping to preserve the map, and to present MCMA with a certificate commemorating our gift. The ceremony was also attended by Bill's daughter and members of the History committee, and the certificate now hangs adjacent to the map. (That digitized map can be viewed on the Leventhal website at <https://collections.leventhalmap.org/search/commonwealth:f4755474m>. The ability to zoom in on details is amazing.) All in all, this was a very successful outcome for which we thank the members of our History Committee, and Chairman Ryan in particular ... as well as, of course, Bill Scott, without whom it never could have happened.



Above, with a digitized and reduced copy of the 1795 map, are (l. to r.) Rick Ryan and Bill Scott of MCMA, and Garrett Nelson, curator of the Leventhal Map Center. Below is the digitized image of the map viewable in detail online at the center's website.

