

Charitably



Speaking

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A PUBLICATION OF THE MASSACHUSETTS CHARITABLE MECHANIC ASSOCIATION

President's Message

Hello to all, and I'm sure we're all welcoming summer with open arms. Both our Board of Government and our Planning Committee have been busy conducting the business of MCMA. The Board of Government will be meeting this month with our investment team from State Street Global Advisers to review our investments and discuss our plans going forward. The Planning Committee members have their assignments and will be visiting prospective grant recipients in the coming weeks. Speaking of the Planning Committee, Chairman Mr. Paul Lohnes and his wife, Jessica have offered to host our July quarterly at their home in Gloucester on July 22. Details will follow, and our thanks are extended to the Lohnes family for their gracious hospitality. This is a wonderful opportunity for a casual meeting in a beautiful spot where we can enjoy each other's company. Be Just and Fear Not. – **Rich Adams**

Recent Happenings

Spinelli's in Lynnfield was the venue for our April Quarterly, which was held on the 29th of the month. Following an invocation by Past President Erling Hanson, we enjoyed a great meal, after which we attended to the business of the Association, and President Adams welcomed newly-elected member Mr. Paul Denaro, who told us a little about himself, his profession, and his family. We were then pleased to welcome our guest speaker Mr. Peter Brock, who for 12 years played on the offensive line for the New England Patriots. Mr. Brock treated us to a number of stories about games (including the 1985 Super Bowl) and teammates from his years with the Patriots. And he also explained his current role as president of the Patriots Alumni Association, which supports youth programs throughout New England and provides former Patriots players an opportunity to remain actively involved with each other, the Patriots organization, and the community. But he also relayed personal stories about growing up in Oregon with four brothers, three of whom, like himself, went on to professional football. The fourth brother, with the support of family and community, overcame his special needs disability to complete school and achieve success in his own career. Our members thoroughly enjoyed Mr. Brock's presentation, and we thank him sincerely for the time he spent with us.



Pete Brock, president of the New England Patriots Alumni Association, addressed MCMA members at the April Quarterly Meeting.

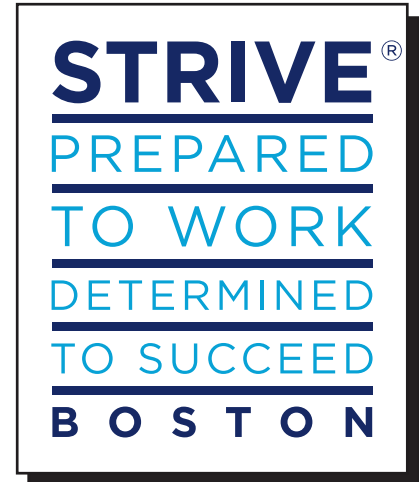


Helping Others

We were pleased last year to renew our relationship with an organization that has, for over 20 years now, been committed to helping chronically unemployed men and women enter and succeed in the workforce. Boston Employment Services, Inc., dba **Boston STRIVE**, is an affiliate of the STRIVE model introduced in 1984 in New York, and now offered by 25 community-based agencies in the United States and overseas. Key characteristics of the model are five weeks of intensive attitudinal training, along with job readiness training, vocational training, job placement, and two years of graduate follow-up with continued support and assessment.

The populations served by Boston STRIVE include chronically unemployed adults, including ex-offenders, court-involved youth, and single mothers, in the neighborhoods of Dorchester, Roxbury, and Mattapan. About half lack either a high school diploma or equivalent certification. Three quarters have children, and 100% of participants are low-income or very low-income. Boston STRIVE's focus is to provide the support and training necessary to help these chronically unemployed men and women realize their potential to find and keep jobs that promise sustainable livelihoods and personal growth. To accomplish it, they must change attitudes, build skills, and work closely with employers. STRIVE's five-week, full-time workshop simulates the rigors of a full-time job. Clients learn soft skills that are otherwise lacking, such as the value of timeliness, professional dress, accepting and applying constructive feedback, teamwork, and managing professional relationships. They learn to navigate the internet and use basic computer skills. They grow as individuals and begin to take critical steps toward a stable and employed life.

Our \$11,829 grant to Boston STRIVE was in support of their Microsoft Certification program, one of the three vocational training programs they offer, and was used to purchase laptop computers, multiple software licenses, and a printer. We are confident they will be well-used, as this organization has a proven track record. Boston STRIVE measures its effectiveness in several ways, including annual goals for recruitment, number of graduates, GED attainment, and job placements, but perhaps the most meaningful is its record of 68% job retention after two years.



MCMA History

We've mentioned him, and some of his works, in at least two previous articles, but it's time we gave architect **William Gibbons Preston** some real attention. Born in 1842 to **Jonathan Preston**, a successful Boston architect and builder, William worked in business with his father until the latter's retirement in the mid-1870s, after which he continued in practice on his own until his untimely death in 1910 at his home in Brookline. He was educated at Harvard College, and he furthered his studies in Paris (a not-uncommon experience for architects of the day) at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, and his early works reflect that experience. Preston's design for MIT's first building (the since-demolished 1863 Rogers Building, at MIT's original location on Boylston Street) was executed while he was still in France, and it strongly resembled Parisian architecture of the time. Other Preston early works also show pronounced Gallic influences, including the striking old New England Museum of Natural History (1863) at 234 Berkeley Street, that, happily, is still

continued on next page

with us. This building housed the museum until 1951, when it moved to new quarters on the Charles River and was renamed the Boston Museum of Science. Since then the building has been home to high-end retailers Bonwit Teller (for 30 years) and LouisBoston (for an additional 20 years), and now, following a major interior renovation, it houses a Restoration Hardware design gallery.

Preston ultimately, over his five-decade career, worked in several architectural styles, and he did not restrict himself to building design, as bridges at Forest Hills Cemetery and the Boston Public Garden attest. *(The latter is the world's shortest true suspension bridge.)* Nor was his work restricted to the Boston area. Among other locations, Preston worked in Narragansett Pier, Rhode Island, in both St. John and Campobello Island, New Brunswick, and he designed some of Savannah, Georgia's most impressive buildings. But the great majority of his work did take place in this area, most notably in Back Bay, the development of which coincided with Preston's career. In addition to the structures mentioned above, he designed 13 Back Bay houses (1 Gloucester Street and 123-125 Commonwealth Avenue are examples) and the original (corner) building of the Hotel Vendome at 160 Commonwealth Avenue. *[This building was substantially rebuilt following a tragic fire in 1972. It is now called The Vendome, and houses luxury condominium units.]* On the periphery of the area Preston in 1880 designed the castle-like Armory of the First Corps of Cadets, later known as Park Plaza Castle, and now the Castle at Park Plaza. But Preston's major contribution to the Back Bay, at least to our eyes, was our own Mechanics Hall on Huntington Avenue. Built in 1881, this structure housed MCMA's offices and our Mechanical Exhibitions, but it also hosted shows and exhibitions of many colors, including auto shows, sportsmen shows, flower shows, home shows, and even the 1883 Foreign Exhibition. Many of our members remember it fondly, but it was, of course, razed in 1958 to make way for the Prudential Center development.

Like Mechanics Hall, much of Preston's work is lost to us, but a number of good examples can still

continued on next page



234 Berkeley Street



123-125 Commonwealth Ave.



45 Milk Street



160 Commonwealth Avenue



1 Gloucester Street



Boston Public Garden Suspension Bridge



15 Beacon Street



20 Beacon Street



Mechanics Hall, Huntington Avenue

... and MCMA Miscellany

Our Association in late 1856 purchased land on Bedford Street in Boston and appointed a Building Committee to oversee construction of a building “of our own.” *[Long ago demolished, this was the Mechanics Hall that preceded and was replaced in 1881 by the much larger structure on Huntington Avenue that is mentioned in the article above.]* With the input of architects **Gridley J. F. Bryant** and **Nathaniel J. Bradlee**, an overall design was agreed upon, and **Hammatt Billings**, of whom we’ve written before, was asked to design the Bedford and Chauncy Street facades. Billings completed the task in just a few days, producing his entire work (it was described as “Italian Renaissance modified by Lombardic or Romanesque details”) on a single 4x5 piece of paper. (Billings was known both for his quick work and his diminutive sketches.) Though he was requested to “develop his concept at a larger scale,” the design was accepted by the Association, and the cornerstone for the building was laid in 1857. (Bryant, Bradlee, and Billings were all members of MCMA.)

be found in Boston. Among them is the 10-story former Boston Transit Commission Building (1904) at 15 Beacon Street, now converted to the boutique XV Beacon Hotel. Close by, at 20 Beacon Street, is the Claflin Building (1884) that was the first home of Boston University’s College of Liberal Arts, and now houses luxury condominiums. Another gem is the 9-story International Trust Company Building (1893) at 45 Milk Street, its classic architecture in sharp contrast to nearby skyscrapers. At 176-184 High Street is the 6-story Chadwick Lead Works, built in 1887. *[Joseph H. Chadwick was known as “The Lead King of Boston,” and Preston also designed Chadwick’s home in Dorchester and his mausoleum at Forest Hills Cemetery.]* And, newly-restored, The Power Station (at 540 Harrison Avenue) that once powered Boston’s trolleys is also a Preston work. Farther afield are the Fernald State School in Waltham and the Thomas-Webster Estate in Marshfield.

Preston died, quite unexpectedly, at his home in Brookline (1063 Beacon Street) in 1910. He was survived by his wife Estelle, but their only son, Evans, had predeceased him some years before. He is buried at Mt. Auburn Cemetery. William Gibbons Preston joined this Association in 1880 and was a life member, as had been his father. It is perhaps a testament to his talent that so many of his works, all over a century old, are still in use.



Above is MCMA’s first Mechanics Hall, which was located at Bedford and Chauncy Streets. The facades on both streets were designed Hammatt Billings. The cornerstone was laid in 1857.