

Charitably



Speaking

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President's Message

I don't know about you, but I prefer studying history rather than being part of it. These are truly trying times for MCMA, for Massachusetts, for our country, and the world. So much has changed in such a short time. I hope you and your families are well. I know a number of us have friends or family members who have died from Covid-19, or have fallen ill from the virus and recovered. It is not a virus to be toyed with.

MCMA is carrying on as best we can. The Board of Government has now had two virtual meetings using *Zoom.com*. Not as pleasant as meeting in person, but we have been able to conduct the necessary business of the organization. Unfortunately the virus has forced us to cancel a number of events we usually look forward to: a dinner gathering at the Green Dragon in Boston, our April Quarterly, and our annual cookout at Paul and Jessica Lohnes' Gloucester home. One of the greatest challenges of this virus is the uncertainty it forces upon us. We do not yet know when we will be able to have our next Quarterly luncheon, we do not know what is going to happen with the economy over the next six months, and we do not know when we can safely put this virus behind us.

In this issue of *Charitably Speaking* we have a brief discussion of the valuable work being done by the Lordan family and their business Steel Canvas Basket. In addition to helping out our first responders, they are helping out many of our grant recipients. Thank you for your generous work. We also have a look at our first president's experience with smallpox as a young father and his work later in life leading the first municipal board of health in America. Such an accomplished man.

Recently, the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., asked MCMA to convert some artifacts that have been on loan to them for some 60 years to gifts. This question will be brought to the Board of Government for a vote, but at our last meeting it seemed clear that while we are happy to loan many of our valuable artifacts, we believe we are stewards of these items and they should remain the property of MCMA.

I wish you all continued good health and look forward to when we can gather again as a group. Until then: Be Just and Fear Not. – **Peter**

Helping Others

In a previous issue we highlighted MCMA's role in helping the organization Crossroads create a woodworking program at the summer camp they operate for at-risk youth in Duxbury. Last year we provided support for a very similar program run by **South Shore YMCA** at their Camp Burgess & Hayward in Sandwich. A key difference was that the Camp Burgess program was already established, and their interest was in finding ways in which the program could be improved.



Camp Burgess & Hayward have been providing rewarding camping experiences to children from all walks of life for over 90 years. Importantly, they are able to offer scholarships to families who could not otherwise afford to send their kids to camp. Camp Burgess for Boys and Camp Hayward for Girls are traditional overnight camps. Located on opposite shores of Spectacle Pond, these brother-sister camps are situated on over 300 acres of forests, meadows,

and freshwater ponds. Their programs provide campers with an engaging and supportive environment that encourages hands-on learning, self-expression, leadership building, and an appreciation for nature.

Four years ago, a Creative Construction Interest Group was established at camp to add trade skills to their offerings, with an emphasis on creativity while maintaining a fun environment. The complementary goals were: (1) to provide campers with the chance to develop skills in woodworking, construction, and the safe use of tools, and; (2) to work on innovative projects for the camp properties that would benefit the programs and facilities long into the future. Since its inception the interest group has seen steadily increasing enrollment, and it has added well-built, useful projects such as a lifeguard stand, a trailhead kiosk, picnic tables, Adirondack chairs, and others that have benefitted the camp community. More importantly, those leading the program have seen the positive transformation in kids empowered to use

their own hands and work cooperatively with their friends to accomplish these projects.



More recently the Camp partnered with the Waypoint Academy Vocational Technical Program to enable Waypoint students to participate in offseason camp construction projects in exchange for learning opportunities and support from the camp maintenance team. (Waypoint is an alternative high school for Cape Cod students experiencing academic, emotional, or behavioral difficulties.) The partnership enables the camp to extend their trade skills development programs from 10-weeks to year-round, but it also increases their need for quality facilities and equipment.



MCMA assisted in two ways. We provided air filtration equipment for the barn that is home to the Creative Construction program, a space they share with sheep, so their problem involved hay dust as well as sawdust, and it needed addressing. We also provided a “personal size” sawmill. As the camp expands, an inevitable side effect is trees are cut down on the property. The camp has always tried to utilize harvested trees as firewood and as wood chip surfacing, but the sawmill will allow them to build projects with their own trees. It will also aid in their goal of teaching sustainable building practices, and it will provide an additional training opportunity for the vo-tech high schoolers. As this article was being written, the summer schedule for Camp Burgess & Hayward was very much up in the air due to the coronavirus, but we wish them well in returning to normalcy.



MCMA Past ...

We're pretty preoccupied right now with concerns about the coronavirus, but President Peter Lemonias reminded us recently that infectious diseases were a concern for even our earliest members. This article is based mainly on the research done by Peter to bring the subject to our attention.

In 1764 Paul Revere was 29 years old, married with a growing family in Boston. In February of that year, smallpox started spreading in Boston, and one of Revere's young children came down with the disease. It started with a fever, and three days later a rash developed, followed by pustules that ooze and often disfigure the body. Revere went to the selectmen as required by town law, and the selectmen told him to bring the child to one of the "pesthouses" in town. These were generally unsanitary facilities where people went to ride out their disease away from healthy citizens. Aware that a stay in one of these homes was often fatal, Paul asked to keep the child at home. Revere was allowed to keep his child at home so long as he quarantine himself in his home with this child and



*Paul Revere, c. 1770,
by John Singleton Copley
(1738-1815)*

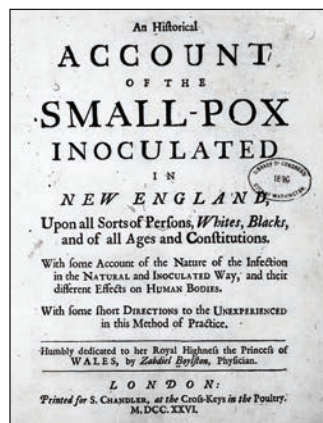
his family, with a white flag hung in front of the house to alert others that there was illness there. In addition, a guard was assigned to watch his home to ensure no one left or visited the home while the disease was present. It is not known if others in the family became ill, but none died.

Within a month the smallpox had spread through the town. Many chose to flee the town for the country in hopes of avoiding the disease. Within the town, all trade and work was stopped in hopes of limiting the spread. The selectmen then announced that residents who inoculated their families would be allowed to return to their trades and businesses. Boston had learned the benefits of inoculation back in 1721 when Dr. Boylston began infecting residents with smallpox. Most would get a mild case of the disease and would then be immune. Some developed full-blown smallpox and died, but the inoculations had greatly reduced the death toll in Boston.

Now, in March of 1764, Joseph Warren and Benjamin Church and other doctors began inoculating residents. They would take a drop of the puss from a smallpox pustule and insert it into a healthy person with a pin.

By June, the epidemic was under control in Boston. It was reported that just under 5,000 people were given smallpox by inoculation. Of these 46 died. Just under 700 residents contracted smallpox "naturally," and 124 of these died. A death rate of 1% for those inoculated and 18% for those who were not.

Fast forward to early 1799, and Boston was facing a cholera outbreak and particularly fearing a return of yellow fever, from which it had suffered in each of the previous two years. The town established the first board of health in America and named 64-year-old Paul Revere its chairman. Paul and his Boston Board of Health were given broad authority to take action to address the "filth and offal" that were causing illness in the town. They took actions to eliminate the dumping of human waste in the streets and to clean up the rotting food, animal waste, refuse from tanners, and even "putrid puddles" that were seen as harbingers of virus. The Board had "vaults of privies," cleaned out, "heaps of putrid substances" removed, and "ponds and cellars of stagnant water" drained. These decisions were in fact helpful in slowing the spread of yellow fever, as stagnant water was a breeding ground for mosquitoes that transmitted the disease, though at the time physicians did not understand exactly why.



**Dr. Zabdiel Boylston's
account of the 1721 smallpox
epidemic in Boston (1726).**



*Rainsford Island,
Boston Harbor, c. 1840,
by Robert Salmon
(1775-1845)*

But Revere and the Board chose a two-pronged approach to combat the fever, since they were unsure if the epidemics came from “local or foreign causes.” They required that ships arriving from foreign ports would have crews and passengers inspected for any signs of illness. Any person with a suspected illness would then be quarantined on Rainsford Island in Boston Harbor. (This island had been used in previous epidemics as a quarantine site, including the smallpox outbreak of 1764.) And while Revere kept track of incoming “foreign” ships, he also corresponded with officials in other seaport cities in the United States. When these cities reported an outbreak, he and the Board would quarantine all ships arriving from that city. And later it was ordered that ships arriving from tropical ports be quarantined for three full days or until 25 days had passed since they left port, whichever was longer, to ensure no one on board carried infectious diseases.

As we know, fighting epidemics and disease has had a significant role in human history, and Boston has never been immune from that fight. Our founder dealt with this as a father and as the first chairman of a Board of Public Health in America. He was able to employ his talents and to use his social and political connections to organize a public health initiative at a time of crisis in Boston, and as with so many of his other endeavors throughout his career, he was successful.

Sources:

Boston Public Health Commission website, www.bphc.org.

Forbes, Esther. *Paul Revere and the World He Lived In*. Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, 1942.

Rodwin, Nina. *Preventing the Virus “which walketh in darkness”*: Rainsford Island, Paul Revere, and the Board of Health. April 9, 2020; Paul Revere House.

... and MCMA Present

Fast forward to today, and we’re again dealing with an infectious disease in the coronavirus, and we’re very pleased to report that some of our members are doing their part to assist that effort. Several years back we profiled member **John Lordan** and his business, Steele Canvas Basket Corp. in Chelsea. John has since “fully” retired, and the company is now in the capable hands of his sons **John** and **Paul**. Since 1921 this company has made wire-framed canvas baskets, aimed initially at the coal and textile trades. Over time, as the baskets gained a reputation for “near indestructibility,” their use spread to contractors, hospitals, laundries, and others. And in more recent years the product line has expanded to include waterproof baskets, gym bags, totes, weekender bags, sling chairs, and others. The company’s quality products and its ability (and willingness) to adjust product size and shape to customers’ needs are big parts of its continued success, as is its “Made in U.S.A.” label (which is appreciated even overseas).

Steele Canvas kept their doors open through the Great Depression, both World Wars, 9/11, and multiple recessions. The coronavirus shutdown, though, brought things to a screeching halt ... at least initially. They quickly went to work to convert their cutting and stitching departments into manufacturing lines for protective face masks. And for each mask sold they have been donating one to first responders ... supporting those fighting on the front lines of the pandemic and protecting valued American manufacturing jobs while doing so. *[As this article was being written, Steele Canvas had already donated over 30,000 masks!]* John and Paul also offered to donate masks to the charities that MCMA supports and works with through our Planning Committee. That effort is currently ongoing, and we can attest that those recipients have been extremely appreciative. For our part, we just appreciate that we can count men like John and Paul Lordan (and their Dad, of course) as members of MCMA.

