

Charitably



Speaking

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President's Message

Recognizing Presidents Day – First, a very humble “Thank You” for the opportunity to lead MCMA as your president for the next three years. It is with deep appreciation to all those 71 presidents that came before me that I hereby accept this responsibility, which I will not assume lightly, nor carelessly discharge.

It is because of the continued involvement by our past presidents, that MCMA has been as successful as it has over the years, and the last two have certainly been no exception. A special thanks needs to go out to Past President Peter Lemonias for the magnificent job he has done during this whole COVID ordeal to keep us all safe and secure during what may have been one of the more trying times in MCMA history. While we have not all become “Zoom Specialists” because of this, I am sure this recognition is not something we want listed as one of our lifetime accomplishments anyway, but *we have survived it all*.

I would be remiss if I did not also recognize Past President Rich Adams for his efforts in producing a simply magnificent 75th Anniversary Triennial. All the reports that I have heard were glowing with praise and appreciation for such a wonderful event.

I also made a comment at the Triennial that I want to repeat here for those that may not have been there. Were it not for Past President Bud Hanson some 41 years ago, explaining and asking a young man to get involved in MCMA, I would not be here today. We continue to look for “quality” members who believe the traditions of MCMA. It is *now* your turn to also consider offering that very same opportunity to someone you believe could be a great member of MCMA. They too may just become president someday. – **Chuck Sulkala**



Above, the Paul Revere snuffbox is passed from outgoing president Paul Lemonias (left) to incoming president Charles Sulkala at MCMA's 75th Triennial celebration.

Helping Others

For 85 years the **Carroll Center for the Blind** in Newton has empowered people with vision loss, developing many methods for those who are blind or have low vision to learn the skills needed to be independent in their homes, classrooms, and workplaces.

Organized initially as the Catholic Guild for All the Blind, it counted heavily on voluntary support from the beginning. In 1947 Father Thomas Carroll, who during WWII worked extensively with blinded veterans, became its director, and over time the Center became a leading innovator in providing assistance to the blind and visually impaired. It established the first community



mobility (cane travel) program to teach safe travel skills to blind people. And its Rehabilitation Center was the nation's first comprehensive residential center for newly blinded civilians, based on successful Veterans Administration programs. (Fencing for the blind is one example of innovation incorporated into the program to help blinded people develop balance, dexterity, and coordination necessary for cane travel.) In his lifetime Fr. Carroll received nearly 100 national and international awards for his work with the blind, and following his untimely death in 1971 the Center was renamed in his honor.

Today, the Carroll Center serves people from all over the United States who live on its campus while they attend residential rehabilitation training programs. The Carroll Center operates a low vision clinic, inaugurated an Educational Services department that supports blind children in public schools, created the first adaptive computer training program for blind persons in the U.S., and was the first with online training for the blind in computers and other technologies. It opened a Technology Center in 2002, providing state-of-the-art training for blind children and adults on the latest computer software and hardware for education, employment, and personal use. To address the national shortage of teachers of the visually impaired and other blindness professionals, it created the Carroll Interns program that provides recent college graduates with paid internships at the Center.

Career opportunities for people who are blind or have low vision are an important goal. (The unemployment rate for blind individuals is a staggering 70 percent.) Carroll Center employs a number of job placement and job training programs in that effort, including one designed to help employees suffering vision loss to retain their jobs. It created a Vocational Transition Program for young adults to gain both independent living skills and work experience, a Job Market Preparation program for newly blinded clients, and a college internship program called Eye Work. Computer technology has had an important role in Carroll Center's teaching and training programs, particularly those involving job training. Much of the support MCMA has provided to the Carroll Center over our 25-year relationship has been focused in that area. This is a relationship that is both warranted and valued.



At the Carroll Center for the Blind, the many programs facilitating independent living for people of all ages with vision loss include orientation and mobility training, low-vision skills rehabilitation, and summer youth programs, including “braille trail” and wood shop.



MCMA History

Two of our treasured artifacts are paintings by the artist Jane Stuart, and both are copies of the originals painted by one of America's greatest painters – her father, Gilbert Stuart. One is the portrait of Paul Revere that hangs proudly in our boardroom, while the other is the large painting of George Washington at Dorchester Heights that we have on loan to the Harvard Club in the Back Bay. Our now Past President Peter Lemonias researched both of these artists to broaden our knowledge of them and to give us a fuller appreciation for their artwork (and our artifacts).

Gilbert Stuart was born in 1755 in Rhode Island. His father was a merchant, and Gilbert grew up in Newport. He apprenticed in art with Scottish painter Cosmo Alexander, and moved to Scotland in 1771 to continue studies with his teacher. But Alexander died the following year, so Stuart returned to Newport in 1773 to begin a career as a portrait artist. With the turmoil of the brewing American Revolution, he had little luck in developing his business and so moved to London. There he apprenticed for six years with



Paul Revere
(1813 portrait by Gilbert Stuart)

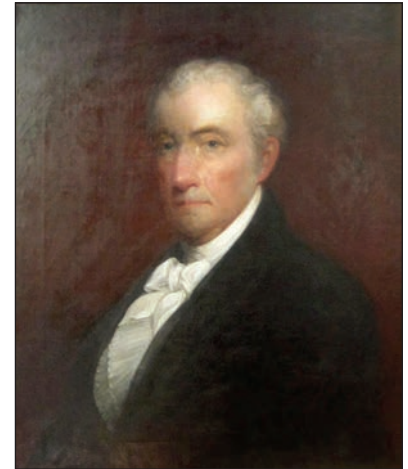
the American artist Benjamin West. *[West was born and raised in Pennsylvania but in 1863 settled in England, where he became very successful. His most famous work was The Death of General Wolfe, commemorating the 1759 Battle of Quebec. It is now displayed in the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa. West was also a close friend of Benjamin Franklin, who was godfather to West's second son.]*

During this time, Stuart's painting talents developed significantly, and in 1782 his work, *The Skater*, brought him serious renown. He now brought in significant revenue for his portrait work, but managed to spend it and more on high living and partying. Threatened with debtor prison, he relocated to Dublin in 1787, where he managed again to rack up significant debts and actually did end up in debtor's prison just as George Washington was being sworn in as America's first president in 1789. Leaving Ireland, he told a friend he expected to make a fortune by painting portraits of Washington, who had become famous as the leader of the American Revolution and the

first president of the United States. As Washington biographer Ron Chernow noted: "For the impulsive, unreliable Stuart, who left a trail of incomplete paintings and irate clients in his wake, George Washington emerged as the savior who rescued him from insistent creditors."

In New York City Stuart painted many people of influence. After he painted a striking portrait of John Jay, a trusted friend of the president, he finally got the letter of introduction to Washington that he coveted.

Upon meeting the president, Stuart used his standard technique of talking incessantly to his subjects, relaying personal anecdotes and jokes to loosen them up and reveal themselves to him. He went so far as to tell the serious, close-mouthed Washington: "You must let me forget that you are George Washington, and you that I am Stuart, the painter." Washington dryly responded that Mr. Stuart need not forget "who he is or who George Washington is."



Gilbert Stuart
(1755-1828)
(1888 portrait by Jane Stuart)



**George Washington
at Dorchester Heights**
(1806 painting by Gilbert Stuart)



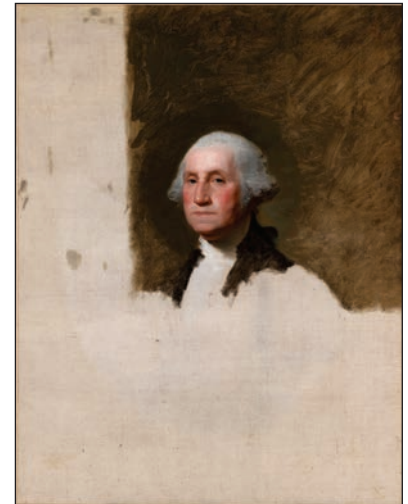
John Jay
(1794 portrait by Gilbert Stuart)

After his first portrait of Washington was completed, Stuart was swamped with orders to paint copies, and he was happy to oblige. His second portrait of Washington was left unfinished so he could use the portrait as a model for his many subsequent paintings of Washington. (It is this second portrait of Washington that appears on the one dollar bill.) For the rest of his life, whenever Stuart needed a few dollars, he would paint a couple of Washington portraits that he could readily convert to cash, and it is his many paintings of Washington for which he is now best known. But Stuart also went on to paint all the heroes of the American Revolution, including our Paul Revere, as well as the first six presidents of the United States. At the time of his death in 1828 he had painted over 1,000 portraits.

Today, Stuart's erratic behavior and inconsistent quality (he left many paintings unfinished and destroyed many others) are believed to have been due to undiagnosed manic depression. And despite all his success, his family was left in poverty after his death. The Boston Athenaeum hosted an exhibit of 250 of his paintings to help raise money for his family.

Following Stuart's death, his young daughter Jane, born in 1812, took over the family business and became the chief breadwinner for her mother and three sisters. Trained in painting by assisting her father, her techniques became as good as his, and many art experts have difficulty distinguishing her work from her father's. After her father's death, she received commissions to make dozens of miniature and full-sized paintings after the popular works created by her father, particularly those of George Washington. Though a talented painter in her own right, she found her financial success in painting copies of her father's works.

While she focused on making copies of the Washington portraits, Jane also copied such paintings as our Washington at Dorchester Heights, and she painted copies of other noted Americans, including our portrait of Paul Revere. Though she moved to Newport in 1831, Jane maintained a studio in Boston until late 1858, when a fire destroyed her studio and much of her work. To help her recoup from the heavy losses she sustained, several friends purchased her full-length copy of George Washington at Dorchester



President George Washington
(1796 unfinished portrait by Gilbert Stuart)

Heights and in 1859 presented it to MCMA to hang in our Mechanics Building (then located at Bedford and Chauncy Streets in Boston).

Jane Stuart died at age 76, in the year 1888, while residing in Newport. Today there is a museum at Gilbert Stuart's birthplace in Saunderstown, Rhode Island that is devoted to his art and legacy, and which also features works by his daughter Jane.



Interior Scene by Jane Stuart (1835)

Sources

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