



March 2008

President's Remarks

We need to begin this issue with a sincere thank-you to those members who responded to our November request for year-end donations to MCMA. Over \$16,000 was received, and it came both from active members as well as from members we have not seen in some time. To the former, we appreciate your willingness to provide monetary support in addition to the time and energy you devote to MCMA. To the latter, we are pleased that you continue to hold interest in this organization, and we remind you that you are always welcome to attend our Quarterly meetings if you are in the area, regardless of whether you are able to participate in a more active role. For all members, we will continue to provide information on our activities, history, and charitable work so we all have a fuller understanding of MCMA and a better appreciation for why our efforts on behalf of this organization are needed and warranted.

Marty Joyce

Recent Happenings

Our Annual Meeting was held in January at Montvale Plaza in Stoneham. Elections were held, Chairmen or spokesmen from our various Committees reported on the Year 2007, and recommendations for appropriations were acted upon. President Joyce gave a brief address during which he thanked the Trustees, the Executive Director, and all members of our several committees for their efforts and their support throughout his first year in office. He particularly acknowledged the service of Trustees Richard Adams, Jim Brown and Peter Lemonias, all of whom have completed their terms on the Board of Government, and all of whom have been very active Trustees and very important voices on the Board.

Planning Committee

One of the lesser known charitable organizations that MCMA has helped to support is the Hull Lifesaving Museum. The overall mission of this organization is the preservation of the Boston Harbor region's lifesaving tradition and maritime culture. To that end it operates the Hull Lifesaving Museum at the Point Allerton U.S. Lifesaving Station in Hull, and spreads its message through collections, exhibits, education, research and service to others. Its community outreach projects serve over 400 youths annually, and its programs and curricula have been recognized for their excellence by federal, state and local agencies alike. Since 1978, over 30 sister programs have evolved throughout the U.S. and overseas that model themselves directly on the museum's work.



Our support for the museum has focused on one of their programs, called the Maritime Apprenticeship Project (MAP), which focuses on the fields of Ship Maintenance & Repair, New Boat Fabrication, Marina Technology, and Marine Transportation. This program is operated at a fully equipped Boatshop in Boston's Marine Industrial Park. It offers training for careers in the Maritime Trades for young men and women in the

custody of the Department of Youth Services, and works with key partners who provide training, access to internships and jobs, and mentoring. Twenty youths are enrolled annually (following a month-long assessment and screening process) for a full-time, seven-week summer program. Half of these enrollees are then helped to enter school and part-time work, while the remaining 10 begin a year of intensified training, education and internships. Over 50% of MAP enrollees are high school dropouts, but all apprentices are required to enroll in high-school credential-granting programs as a condition of attending MAP. In addition to the 20 students directly served annually, guidance and counseling are provided to prior-year enrollees for a minimum of two years.

It's likely that any young person would benefit from a program such as boat construction, as he or she begins to learn wood working techniques, become proficient with hand and power tools, understand scale measurement and displacement, and appreciate the importance of basic math skills. But for the youths in MAP, it is more than a benefit...it's a real chance at a better life. Over half of these students have been the targets of shootings and knifings, while 80% of last year's participants lost family members or friends to handgun violence. Most stay indoors when not at MAP, a reflection of their constant anxiety, and all speak to the haven of peace and respect that the Boatshop represents. Yet MAP has already assisted over 1,000 of these very disadvantaged youth in achieving self sufficiency, self respect, and a sense of purpose.



This program has achieved real success...and in their business, each success story has a name, with the expectation of a better and more positive life ahead of him or her. In the words of one 17 year old participant, "Between this summer and last summer I developed skill and courage. I developed work skill by coming to work and learning. I developed the courage to come to work everyday and stand up to the negativity that tells me not to." Hull Lifesaving Museum and their MAP program are worthy recipients of MCMA's support.

MCMA History

In our last issue, we discussed at length the career and accomplishments of past member O.W. Norcross, who in the early 1900's was the largest general contractor in the country. Needless to say, the numerous Norcross projects mentioned in that article were excerpted from a much more extensive list, and one that was omitted was the Ames Building in Boston. Located at One Court Street, this 13-story building was at the time it was completed (1893) the tallest building in Boston, is even now the second tallest



masonry-wall-bearing building in the *world*, and is currently undergoing renovation to become a luxury boutique hotel. More importantly, it was built for the Ames Company, and that brings us to the subjects of *this* article, Oakes Ames and Oliver Ames Jr.

Oakes (born in 1804) and Oliver Jr. (born in 1807) were the sons of Oliver Ames, whose father, Captain John Ames, began making the colonies' first metal-blade shovels in West Bridgewater in 1774. Oliver, nicknamed "the King of Spades", moved the shovel works to Easton in 1803, and it was under his aegis that the company moved from a local to a national company, and its reputation for producing quality products was secured. The country's development and its expansion westward in the early 19th century offered ample opportunity for growth as the spread of farms, the construction of canals and roads, and the development of railroads all required the shovel as a basic tool. When gold was discovered in California in the 1840s people rushed west, and Ames shovels and picks followed. By mid-19th century Ames products were sold from north to south and from the eastern seaboard to the Pacific.

Oliver's sons Oakes and Oliver Jr. had grown up in the business, each attending local schools before entering their father's workshops to learn every step of the manufacturing process. By the 1850's they were running the company, and both had by that time become middle-aged men of wealth and influence. Oakes helped establish the Republican Party in Massachusetts, and from 1863 to 1873 served as U. S. Congressman from the 2nd District. Oliver Jr. was elected to the state senate in 1852 and 1857. Ames tools were being shipped to gold mines in Australia, diamond mines in South Africa, and to other corners of the world, and the onset of the Civil War would bring government contracts for shovels and swords that would enrich the company and the Ames family even further. But things were about to change.

The profits being brought into Easton were too much to be invested locally. Like other Boston area entrepreneurs, the Ameses turned toward the railroads of New England and the Midwest. Oakes Ames in particular saw among the national interests the need for construction of a transcontinental railroad. At the same time President Lincoln, struggling to preserve the Union, was determined to prevent division of the East and West. He threw the prestige of the Presidency behind the Railroad Acts of 1862 and 1864, which guaranteed private enterprise subsidies and land rights to build the railroad. In January of 1865 President Lincoln, frustrated that the competing efforts of the Union Pacific and Central Pacific Railroad Companies were suffering from infighting, poor management, and the inability to raise the huge amount of capital required, called Congressman Ames to the White House. The President appealed to Ames to take control of the Union Pacific portion of the project, which had until then been able to construct a mere 12 miles of track. As the story goes, Lincoln appealed to Ames to "...take hold of this...The road must be built, and you are the man to do it."

The Ames brothers seized the opportunity. In 1866 Oliver Jr. took over as president of the Union Pacific Railroad. Oakes agreed to finance the company by pledging the income and holdings of the shovel company, and both men invested heavily in Credit Mobilier, a construction company that handled contracts for the railroad. Oakes played

the additional role of using his position in Congress to influence legislation favorable to the railroads. On May 10, 1869 after years of hardships and frustrations the Central Pacific and the Union Pacific lines were connected with the driving of the “Golden Spike” at Promontory Summit, Utah. Adulation followed, but there was trouble ahead.

The Union Pacific was deeply in debt and unable to pay many of its creditors. People began to complain that investors in Credit Mobilier had grown rich while contractors and workers went unpaid. In addition, national land and credit backed the railroad, and the looseness of regulations for these resources began to be questioned. Oakes Ames was accused of profiteering on the construction of the railroad, even though he had almost lost the shovel company due to the loans against the firm's assets. Other legislators, particularly those who had also bought shares in Credit Mobilier, were happy to let Oakes take the brunt of the scandal, and in 1873 the House censured him. He returned home to Easton a broken man, and died of stroke only months later. The Ames family managed to pay back the loans but had difficulty eliminating their association with the scandal, though many have since attributed the resolution against Oakes to partisanship and the intense publicity that the scandal engendered.

The brothers were not, however, forgotten by the Union Pacific Railroad, which in 1875 commissioned a monument to be dedicated to them. Located at the highest elevation of the Union Pacific track, near Laramie, Wyoming, the 60’ tall monument was designed by H.H.Richardson and built by _ one guess _ Norcross Brothers, with plaques by

sculptor Augustus Saint-Gaudens. Another legacy of the Union Pacific experience is the city of Ames, Iowa, which was named for Oakes Ames. And the Ames family has left a lasting architectural mark on Easton with the Ames Free Library and Oakes Ames Memorial Hall (the buildings designed by H.H.Richardson, and the grounds by Frederick Law Olmstead), the Rockery monument (also by Olmstead), the Old Colony Railroad Station (now the Easton Historical Society), and the many impressive homes of family members.



Both Oakes Ames and Oliver Ames Jr. became members of MCMA in 1853, and each listed his occupation as *shovelmaker*. Their grandfather John had been raised as a Puritan, and his emphasis on the importance hard work, diligence, application and thriftiness was not lost on either his sons or grandsons. Both Oakes and Oliver Jr. were accomplished individuals who knew their tool business inside and out, and were able to pass it on to their own descendents. (In fact, the business remained in the Ames’ family into the 1950s, when it was moved to West Virginia.) And despite the negativism that resulted from the Credit Mobilier situation, their roles in bringing about the completion of the trans-continental railroad cannot be understated. They are two of the very many talented and accomplished members of MCMA who have preceded us.
