September 2016

Charitably Speaking

353 Southern Artery Quincy, MA 02169

A PUBLICATION OF THE MASSACHUSETTS CHARITABLE MECHANIC ASSOCIATION

President's Message

We are well into the summer months now, and I hope everyone is enjoying this great weather. Speaking of great weather, the recent Quarterly meeting at Paul Lohnes' beach house could not have been better. In attendance were about 100 members including wives and friends. Both Paul and Jessica gave impromptu tours, and Jessica's talent as an architect was evident throughout. Many thanks for their generosity.

As I've mentioned before, we are anxious to expand opportunities for members to get together in less formal settings, an effort being headed up by Tom Crowdis. One proposed idea is golf, and if anyone would like to host a tournament at their club, please contact Tom to discuss it. We are also planning a sporting clay shoot at Addyville Farm in Rhode Island this fall. Contact Rich Adams if you are interested. One does not have to be a scratch golfer or competition shooter. If you enjoy these activities then you are welcome. Looking forward to seeing all in October. – **Arthur Anthony**

Recent Happenings

At the kind invitation of trustee Paul Lohnes and his wife Jessica, our July Quarterly was held once again at their summer home in Gloucester, and members were invited to bring wives or other guests. It took place on July 20, the weather was just perfect, and everyone thoroughly enjoyed the day. At the somewhat abbreviated business meeting, President Anthony thanked Paul and Jessica for their generous hospitality, and copies of our 2015 Annual Report were distributed.

Also over the past few months, our Board of Government met with SSGA, our financial advisers, to review the performance of our portfolio and discuss possible allocation changes. And our Planning Committee completed their review of 2016 grant applications, visited each of the applicants, and re-met to deliberate and decide upon how best to allot the available funds. Disbursement of those funds is currently under way.

Helping Others

We last highlighted the activities of the **North River Collaborative** (NRC) in our newsletter over five years ago, but this organization remains very well-regarded by our Planning Committee and merits our continued attention. NRC is a nonprofit 501(c)(3), formed in 1976, that functions as an extension of eight member school districts in southeastern Massachusetts, providing quality, cost-effective programs for special needs students. NRC directly serves over 200 students aged from three-years-old through age 22 with a variety of handicapping conditions. And it provides education-related services such as speech and language therapy to an additional 800-plus students within their own schools. NRC also has a highly regarded Professional Development Program offering a wide variety of courses to more than 3,000 regular and special educators in southeastern Massachusetts.

North River Collaborative

As part of its services NRC operates the North River School, which serves adolescents with social/emotional disorders and/or learning disabilities in an alternative middle/high school program that includes academic education, counseling services, and vocational training. This school serves Quincy, Brockton, Plymouth, and more than a dozen other towns in addition to the member districts. Its goal is to assist students in developing the behavioral and academic skills needed to successfully return to their sending schools. Students receive academic credits toward graduation from their own school districts by completing the course of studies at North River School, but it is the benefits these students derive from the school's vocational training programs that drew MCMA interest and led to our support of those programs over the past 20 years.

The challenges faced by NRC are similar to those we hear from many other schools serving children with behavioral and/or other disabilities. Their students demonstrate talent and intelligence, but as a result of not succeeding in a traditional school setting, students fall behind in their education, are unfortunately not highly motivated, and often exhibit poor self-esteem. Additionally, most students come to the school with few, if any, job readiness skills. Vocational training affords them an opportunity not just to learn specific employability skills, but to develop good work attitudes, habits, and social skills as well. And the technologies challenge them to think creatively, make decisions, solve problems, reason, and analyze. Some of the students do indeed go on to further education and employment in these fields, but all students benefit from the skills learned, boost their self-esteem, and increase their ability to be self-sufficient. Importantly, the changes in attitude and self-esteem carry back to the classroom and are reflected in improved academics as well.

The school's vocational programs currently fall into three categories: A **Culinary Arts** program offers several different experiences in which students learn and are responsible for preparing lunch for senior citizens, students, and staff. In the **Desktop Publishing and Graphic Arts Shop**, students learn to use computers to design, create, and print artwork for brochures, business cards, forms, and many other printed products; plus the shop produces printed materials for school districts, local businesses, and community agencies on a fee-for-service basis. In the **Small Engine Repair Shop**, students are taught to repair equipment such as lawn mowers and snowblowers, and they learn how to perform minor automobile repairs including oil changes and detailing. MCMA has been actively involved in each of these programs, and our Planning Committee attests that our grants over the years have been put to very good use. Our 2015 grant was used to significantly upgrade the capabilities of the desktop publishing shop, and this year we will be providing equipment to help the school develop a **Horticulture Program** that will offer further opportunities for its students.

Gridley J. F. Bryant (1816-1899)

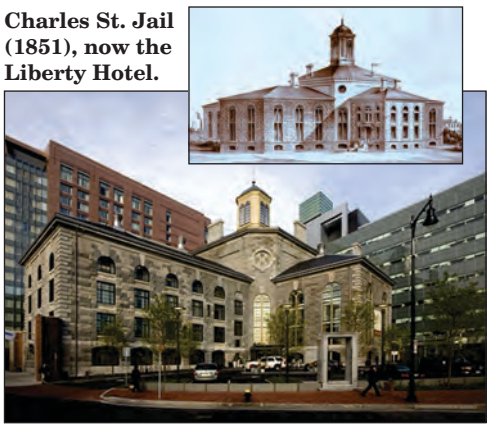
MCMA History

Some time back we highlighted the accomplishments of member Gridley Bryant, with particular focus on his design and construction of the Granite Railway that was used to transport Quincy granite for the Bunker Hill Monument. This time we turn our attention to his son, **Gridley James Fox Bryant**. By the time of his death in 1899, well-established schools provided formal training and offered degrees in architecture, and the American Institute of Architects was working to establish professional standards. But Bryant worked in an era of unregulated building in which anyone could learn a trade, teach himself the basics of drafting, and declare himself an architect. And it that extremely competitive environment, Bryant advanced his career and profession by his own high standards and work ethic, dominating the profession through the middle of the 19th century.

Born in 1816, Bryant grew up at a time when brick was the predominant building material in Boston, but major architectural works were being constructed of granite quarried locally. The young Bryant witnessed his father's involvement in many of these buildings, both as a masonry contractor and in the quarrying and transporting of the granite. As well, he witnessed the ingenuity his father displayed in inventing mechanisms and devices to transport and manipulate the often very heavy stones into place. (For example, the columns for the Suffolk County Courthouse on Court Street, completed in 1836, weighed 64 tons each.) It's likely that Bryant's later self-confidence as an architect stemmed from this first-hand experience of his father's accomplishments and ability to find innovative solutions when difficulties arose. Young Gridley could have chosen the profession of his father, but he had ambitions to be an architect, and in that era a young man's best option for such training was to work in an architect's office. Following a public school education in Boston and Quincy, he attended the Gardiner Lyceum in Maine, where he studied mathematics and engineering, and took lessons in drawing from a Boston lithographer, but he was to get his education in architecture from books and from better-educated colleagues.

Through the 1820s and 1830s, four individuals (Loammi Baldwin, **Alexander Parris**, **Solomon Willard**, and **Isaiah Rogers**) came to dominate the architecture of Boston, and the elder Bryant worked closely with all of them. Parris also owned one of the best architectural libraries in Boston, and young Bryant went to study and apprentice under Parris at about age 16. From Parris he obtained a foundation in neoclassical architecture, and within a few years he actually began to be paid for his services ($2 per day). In 1837, at the ripe old age of 21, and in the midst of worsening economic conditions both locally and nationally, he opened up his own architectural practice. Remarkably, Bryant prospered right from the start, through a mixture of architectural commissions, drawings for his father (many in connection with patent applications), and surveys of land. (The latter was a not-uncommon source of work for architects at the time, in that there was as yet little distinction between the professions of architecture and engineering.) Initially Bryant shared an office with Parris at 51 Court Street, but by 1840 he had relocated to 4 Court Street, where he remained for nearly 30 years.

Poor economic conditions continued through the early 1840s, but the ongoing filling of the South Cove (now Chinatown and the Leather District) was creating land for new housing, and that opportunity benefitted Bryant and others. Also, by mid-decade a growing city of Boston finally recognized the need for additional schools and committed to building 14 of them. Bryant was able to secure commissions for at least two of these buildings, and both were important as models of their kind. His Bowdoin School on Beacon Hill maintained the traditional "two master" interior layout of the day (students were seated on benches, and one master taught all morning classes, while a second master taught the afternoon classes), but he gave it a modern, Italian Renaissance-inspired exterior design. On the other hand, the exterior of his Tyler Street Quincy School was plain (in keeping with its neighborhood), but it featured two exterior staircases linked by a central hall on each of three floors, and on either side of the hall were classrooms with *desks* for the students. It also had a furnace, a ventilation system, an assembly hall on the fourth floor, and attic space for gymnastics. (Fifty years later, a commemorative publication hailed the Quincy School as the "first modern school in America.") Plans and specs for both of these schools appeared in Henry Barnard's influential book *School Architecture* in 1854 and helped spread Bryant's reputation far beyond Boston.



Charles St. Jail (1851), now the Liberty Hotel.

Greater fame came to Bryant from his design of prisons. In his design for the Suffolk County Jail on Charles Street, Bryant abandoned the severely plain or fortress-like norms of the time and designed (likely in collaboration with **Hammatt Billings**) an exterior of exceptionally attractive masonry that featured tall, round-arched windows, and (in collaboration with prisons reformer Louis Dwight) an interior layout that reflected the most progressive thinking in penal reform. When completed in 1851 the city of Boston had a modern prison and an architectural landmark that significantly bolstered its self-image. The accomplishment received added attention because Bryant submitted the plan and a color rendering (prepared by Billings) to the British

architectural journal, *The Builder*, which published it. This was a first for an American design, and doubly important as there was no American architectural journal at the time. Bryant and Dwight promoted their theories of prison design with considerable success, and they found even greater success in adapting their design for other types of inmates. By the early 1850s Bryant's office was turning out drawings for new jails in Dedham, Cambridge, Lawrence, and Northampton; and additions to other jails, the Deer Island Almshouse, the Cambridge Almshouse, and the Maine State Reform School. Around this same time (prompted by a cholera outbreak in 1849) momentum was building in Boston for a free city hospital, though opposition from local property owners delayed its advancement until 1861. Bryant won an open competition with his design (a central administration building linked by curving, colonnaded walkways to six separate pavilions containing the wards, surrounded by landscaped, park-like grounds) and the hospital became a reality on the eve of the Civil War.

By this time Bryant had become one of the most successful architects in Boston, and he was involved in numerous projects elsewhere in New England (particularly Maine) and occasionally beyond (the San Francisco Custom House, for example). He did not maintain a large office of draftsmen, but he managed to take on a large volume of work, in part by collaborating with other architects who could complement his own skills, and in part by writing detailed specifications to reduce the number of drawings required. Of his collaborations with other architects, many were project-based and often informal, while two, at least, were more lasting. He joined forces with **Arthur D. Gilman** in the late 1850s as the filling-in of the Back Bay was opening up that area for development, and Gilman had been instrumental in planning for that development. Their first project together was the Arlington Street Church, though it is generally attributed to Gilman, and it was followed by many Back Bay residences, including the Samuel Hooper Houses, and public buildings that included (Old) Boston City Hall, Lynn City Hall and the remodeling of the New Hampshire State House. He later entered (from 1867-1877) into a partnership with Louis P. Rogers, who trained under Bryant. Among their noted projects was the Gloucester City Hall, the Transcript Building in Boston, and the Connecticut Mutual Life Insurance Building in Hartford. And, you may recall, Bryant collaborated with **Nathaniel J. Bradlee** and Hammatt Billings on the design for MCMA's first Mechanics Hall on Bedford Street in Boston.

Only a small fraction of Bryant's work survives today. (The Great Boston Fire of 1872 alone destroyed 152 of his buildings.) But from 1840 to 1880 he designed more major buildings in Boston than any other architect, and he undertook commissions throughout New England. His ability to work with other designers, his expertise in construction management, and his talent for self promotion all contributed to his success. His career and his enthusiasm slowed markedly following the death of his wife, Louisa, in 1883, and his health and wealth deteriorated until, in 1893, he moved into the Old Men's Home on Springfield Street, where he remained until his death. (Remarkably, Bryant had designed this building in 1855 as the Lying-In Hospital.) He was remembered in his obituaries for his generosity, for his exceptional honesty, and as a "hard and constant professional worker." Gridley J.F. Bryant joined MCMA in 1859 and was a Life Member. He died in 1899 and is buried at Groveland Cemetery in Scituate.

Much of the information used in this article was drawn from the book *Building Victorian Boston: The Architecture of Gridley J. F. Bryan*t, by Roger G. Reed (2007).

Boston City Hospital Complex & Administration Building (1861)

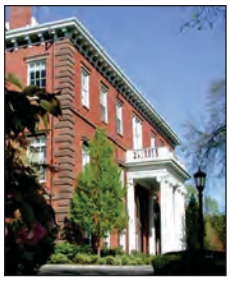
Arlington St. Church (1860)

Gloucester City Hall (1869)

Old Boston City Hall (1862)

J.T. Daland House, Salem, Mass. (1851)

Hathorn Hall, Bates College (1856)



Ballou Hall, Tufts University (1852)