



President's Remarks

For those who have not yet heard, I am sorry to announce that Ray Purdy passed away on August 19, ending a long and painful battle that began with prostate cancer but gradually affected him in other areas as well. Many witnessed the slow deterioration of his body over the past few years, but few outside his immediate family ever saw a slackening of his spirit, and it is that cheerful, upbeat, caring Ray Purdy that I hope we will never forget.

We had decided some months ago to include in these newsletters an occasional article on a *current* member, in addition to those featuring past members, and Ray was our choice for this issue. Though it is unfortunate that Ray did not get to see the finished newsletter, he did get to see the article we did on him (*it was written about two months ago*), so we have left it as written. (Ray in fact provided much of the information via conversations we had earlier this summer, and was surprised but a little flattered that we were writing about him.) We will continue in future issues to write about MCMA members both past and present, but it is doubtful any will have cared more deeply about this organization than did Ray Purdy.

Marty Joyce

Recent Happenings

Once again, our July Quarterly was held in the outdoor rotunda of the Adams Inn in Quincy. For this meeting, dress was casual, the meal was a barbecue, and we enjoyed perfect weather. Copies of our Annual Report were distributed, and the President asked members to note the write-up on our painting of *Old Ironsides*, as it explains some of the relationship between the building of that ship and the founding of our organization, and to refer to the several pages at the end of the report for a detailed summary of the grants MCMA provided to very worthy organizations last year. Dick O'Meara, Bill Jutila and Tony Scalese filled us in on the early planning for our upcoming Triennial, for which a February 6 date has been set. Joe Bellomo read out two new applications for membership, and those applications will now be forwarded to the Membership Committee for review.

We were pleased that Ray Purdy was able to attend, in view of his recent health issues, and Ray thanked everyone for the many cards, letters and calls he has received from members over these past few months. We were disappointed, however, to learn that David Dalzell has encountered complications following a surgery, and we will contact him to pass along our best wishes for his recovery.

Helping Others

The **Landmark School** is an organization that first received MCMA support in 2008, and has been chosen to receive another grant this year because of the very favorable impression they have made on our Planning Committee. Founded in 1971 by Charles Drake with a goal of educating students with

language-based learning disabilities, Drake saw these students as bright and capable, but whose reading, writing, spelling and mathematical skills did not match their thinking and problem-solving capabilities. Initially serving 40 students with a small group of teachers, the school has grown to over 450 students on two campuses, and a faculty and staff of more than 300. Today, Landmark is recognized internationally as a leader in the field of language-based learning disabilities.

Our support for Landmark has focused on the Woodworking & Boat Building program taught at their high school campus in Beverly. (Landmark also runs an elementary/middle school campus in Manchester-by-the-Sea.) Students here have above-average intelligence and are gifted in many ways, but often lack self-esteem because of learning difficulties attributable to dyslexia that have in many cases caused them to be unfairly treated in their early years as if they were “slow” or stupid. Building self-esteem as a foundation for further learning is a core concern (perhaps *the* core concern) at Landmark, and courses such as woodworking and boat building are important to their program and to the students’ overall development.



The class size is small for this course (4-7 students, though this is typical even in the academic classes), allowing students to receive plenty of oversight, and the curriculum is intentionally flexible to allow students wide latitude in their choice of projects. Not surprisingly, these students tend to choose very challenging projects, and they typically rise to the challenge and produce very fine results. The true results, however, are in the strides the students make in learning to work and deal with others, and in developing the all-important self-esteem that stems from accomplishment. And, while most Landmark graduates (92%, in fact) go on to college, some students are taking the skills they

have developed into careers in the woodworking trades. Regardless of their career path, we are pleased that MCMA has been able to help these students with the tools and equipment we provide to support this well-run program.

Our Members

One member’s contributions to MCMA over the past four-plus decades have been so visible and so significant that there can be but a small percentage of our membership that does not feel they know him well. Nevertheless, even if only for the benefit of that small percentage, we’re about to tell you about **Raymond J. Purdy**.

Born in Dorchester and educated in the Boston public schools, Ray received a broad introduction to the trades while attending the Boston Mechanic Arts High School [*later to become Boston Technical High School*]. Like much of his generation (and like many other future-MCMA members) Ray went from high school directly into the military and World War II, and he soon found himself serving aboard the Navy’s LSM 126 in the Pacific. [*LSMs were similar to, but less than a quarter the displacement of, the more familiar LSTs. They were ocean-going ships, but their boxy shape and shallow draft made them pretty unpleasant in rough seas.*] Some of Ray’s most vivid memories of that service are the invasion of Iwo Jima, where as a nineteen-year old he was charged with operating the loading ramp of his LSM as it off-loaded marines and tanks onto the beach. Upon his return home, he went to work for the Herbert F.

Sawyer Electrical Company, soon became a licensed electrician and within a few years was pretty-much running that company. But in the mid-1950s, Ray formed his own company, the R. J. Purdy Electrical Company, which he ran successfully for many years, and counted among his steady customers the Gillette Company, Starrett Tool and Milton Academy. Following his retirement from the business end of electrical work, Ray kept active until recent years, on a part-time basis, as a wiring inspector for the Plymouth Building Department.



Ray joined MCMA in 1963. In addition to service on several committees, he served as our Secretary/Treasurer from 1978-1987, as Executive Director from 1988-1993, and as President from 1995-1998. In anticipation of our 1995 Bicentennial, Ray researched and wrote *The Quiet Philanthropy*, a recap of the founding and history of our organization, and it remains the most concise yet inclusive summary of those events available. And those members privileged to attend our Bicentennial celebration that year have not forgotten the sheer enjoyment that Ray, in Paul Revere costume, brought to that event. Throughout his service to MCMA, Ray has steadily reminded us of our rich history, while at the same time keeping us aware of the good work being done by the organizations who receive our support. (Ray maintained a close relationship with many of those organizations, such as National Braille Press, Work Incorporated, and the Carroll School for the Blind.) Plus, Ray has always had a unique talent for putting new members at ease and making them feel part of this organization.

On a personal note, Ray celebrated his 60th wedding anniversary earlier this year with his wife Elaine, and they moved last year from their long-time residence in Plymouth into a more manageable home in Carver. Their son Rick, of course, is our current Executive Director, and their daughter Carol lives in Florida. As we've noted in previous issues, Ray experienced a number of problems with his health that seriously limited his ability to get out and around, and he really appreciated hearing from members who took a few minutes to call or write.

MCMA History

In past issues we've highlighted the accomplishments of several architects, builders and manufacturers who were members of MCMA, but our subject for this article is more appropriately remembered as an artisan. **William H. Grueby** won gold medals at international exhibitions in Paris, Buffalo and St. Petersburg, but his personal origins were as modest as the building that held his pottery at K and First Streets in South Boston.



A native of Chelsea, and youngest child of a spar maker, Grueby was born in 1867 and began his career (at age 13) close to home at the J & JG Low Art Tile Works, where he worked until 1890. He then went into business for himself (in Revere), but within a year became a partner in the firm Atkins and Grueby, producing faience and tile. [*Faience is a glazed terra cotta that is fired twice, thereby achieving a greater range of colors.*] This partnership was dissolved in 1893, and in the same year Grueby visited the Columbian Exhibition in Chicago, at which he saw highly (even "overly") decorated ceramics from all over the world. But he saw such decoration in striking contrast to his own ambitions, as Grueby's trademarks were to be the soft natural colors of his enamels, and the substantial, handmade look of his

faience, tiles and pottery. He formed a new partnership in 1894, setting up shop in South Boston, and later incorporating as the Grueby Faience Company.



Grueby had begun experimenting with art pottery while still in partnership with Atkins, but this area was to become a substantial part of his new enterprise, along with faience and tile. Grueby's art pottery was first exhibited and sold in Boston in 1897, and it was a sensation from the start. With success at the 1900 Exhibition in Paris (two gold and one silver medals) Grueby stepped into the international arena, as both public and private collectors began to acquire his work. The recognition would be extended over the next several years as Grueby won top honors at both American and European exhibitions, and established working relationships with Gustav Stickley, Louis Tiffany and other high quality designers of international reputation. Grueby pottery was used for the bases of lamps made by Tiffany and others. Grueby tiles were incorporated in Stickley tabletops, and their work was displayed at many of the same exhibitions. (At the 1901 Pan American Exhibition in Buffalo, and **at the MCMA Exhibition of 1902**, their work was actually intermingled.)

To Grueby, the most important element of his pottery was its glaze, and it was this element to which Grueby devoted his time and attention. His matte green glaze was especially valued, and became his signature work. The pottery reached its zenith in stature and production in 1904, when other potteries, taking notice of Grueby's very visible success, leapt in to create and market less expensive imitations. Ultimately, more than 100 studios and companies imitated Grueby's styles and glazes, with the cumulative effect that the market was saturated with "choices", all of them "green", and the vast majority priced well below Grueby. The company was under financial pressure by 1907 and went into receivership in 1909. It emerged from bankruptcy and continued (producing tiles and faience only) for another 10 years before closing the doors in 1920. Grueby died in 1925.

Grueby's pottery can best be viewed today in museums, including Boston's MFA which owns several examples, though it has appeared also on PBS's *Antiques Roadshow*. His tile and faience installations are not as readily accessible, though they do exist. Probably the most prominent are on display in the New York City subway system, since Grueby tiles were widely used in about a dozen stations on the original (Manhattan) line opened in 1904. *[Legend has it that each station received distinctive color and design treatment in order to make them readily identifiable to the largely illiterate population of the day.]*



Though it was celebrated in its time, the work of William H. Grueby is even more prized today, and it remains a great example of the fine craftsmanship for which so many MCMA men have been known.



[The primary sources for this article are the book The Ceramics of William H. Grueby by Susan J. Montgomery, and the article Grueby: The View from 100 Years by Steve Fales in the May04 Journal of Antiques and Collectibles.]

[Photos in order of appearance; Faience and Tile, The Charlesgate, Kenmore Square; Grueby Vases; Plaques in NYC Subway Stations Astor Place and Columbus Circle.]