



Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Art Commission
State House
Boston, Massachusetts 02133

Paula Morse
Chair

Donna DePrisco
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FY'19 Annual Report

On behalf of the members of the Art Commission, I respectfully submit our *Annual Report* for the year ending June 30, 2019, an eventful and rewarding one for us as we worked together with other agencies to preserve, protect and promote the historic state capitol building and its collections. The continuing support of Tammy Kraus, State House Superintendent, and the staff of the Bureau of the State House have been essential for all that we undertake, and I extend our appreciation to them as well as project teams at the Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance (DCAMM). I also commend State House Curator Susan Greendyke Lachevre for sustaining these long-standing relationships with such grace and professionalism.

Senate Chamber

The most challenging of the Art Commission's activities was the completion of the restoration of the Senate Chamber in time for the inauguration of the new legislative session on January 2, 2019. By all accounts, the Chamber now looks resplendent, meeting ADA and technological requirements while remaining true to the 1795 design by Charles Bulfinch, the ca. 1868 alterations by William Washburn which included the addition of wood rustication panels on the lower walls, and the 1898 renovations at the time of the Charles Brigham extension, when the House relocated to new chambers and the grand space under the dome was first occupied by the Senate.

Former board member Christopher Hussey and the Curator served on the team of architects, consultants, in-house agencies, and myriad construction and preservation specialists, whose collaborative efforts insured the highest levels of design and implementation. As work neared completion during the fall, the Curator oversaw the reinstallation of furniture, decorative arts and 19th century marble sculpture that had been restored. Portraits of past Senate Presidents, temporarily removed to the fourth floor during the closing of the Senate



Reading Room, also were returned; this included the installation of Therese Murray's portrait (unveiled in 2017) for the first time. In addition, 6 sets of 17-foot long wool Scalamandre drapes, swags and valances were cleaned and rehung.



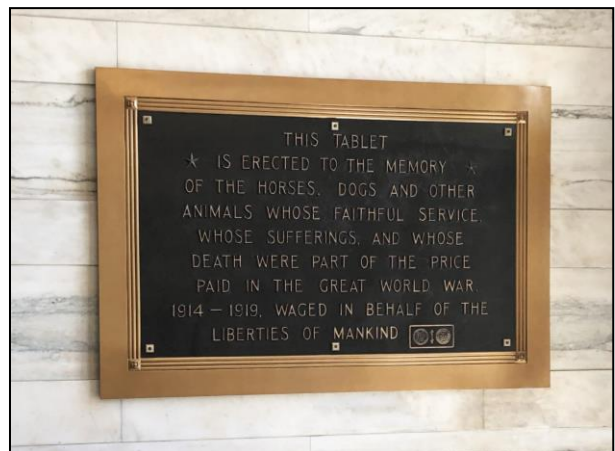
Over the rostrum, the gilded eagle, conserved earlier in the year, was refitted with its trailing banner, and with the handsome state seal, carved in 1847, was reinstalled in the gallery. We are pleased to have participated in this important and long over-due project, executed to exacting standards, and duly recognized with a 2019 state historic preservation award by the Massachusetts Historical Commission. The success of this latest effort to restore the ceremonial spaces in the State House prompts me to express the board's wish that we might now look forward to the renovation of and restoration of the House Chamber.

Frederick Douglass Quote. As reported last year, the Senate Cultural Committee developed the project to honor Frederick Douglass with a quote from one of his last great public addresses, October 21, 1890. His words, "Truth, justice, liberty and humanity will ultimately prevail," were installed in the south tympanum of the Senate Chamber last spring. The Curator also worked with the staff of the Senate President's office to arrange for the loan of a bust of Frederick Douglass by Lloyd Lillie, from the Museum of African American History, for the Senate Chamber. Nine 19th century marble busts, traditionally on display in the Chamber, were re-arranged to accommodate alteration of the architectural niches for accessibility purposes, with one niche reserved for a bust to honor Douglass. Three busts depicting George Boutwell, Samuel Francis Smith, and Gardiner Tufts were removed from the Chamber, and will be relocated. We will continue to assist the Senate on the procurement of a permanent tribute bust of Douglass in the coming year.



Collections

Animals of WWI Plaque. A memorial to the faithful service of countless "horses, dogs and other animals" during World War I was reinstalled in the General Hooker entrance in May. Donated in 1920 by the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, this large, five-foot bronze plaque had been accepted by Governor Calvin Coolidge in moving ceremonies held in the new East Wing entrance. It had been missing, however, since at least the 1970s, until it was discovered in 2018 in



the back of a utility closet. Conserved by Daedalus, Inc., Watertown, through a generous donation of funds from Robert Bayard Severy, of Weymouth, the five-foot plaque was returned to its original location at the General Hooker entrance in May.



USPO Letter Box. This large brass Art Deco letter box was originally located in the former 1932 Registry Building on Nashua Street, Boston. When the building was demolished between 1998 and 2000 to make way for the Big Dig highway connectors, the letter box and the bronze state shield (now at the Hooker entrance) were salvaged and stored for several years. Recently restored by Daedalus, Inc., it is now installed near the Post Office in the sub-basement of the State House. Although no longer in use, original mail chutes can still be found in the east and west wings of the State House.

Jean Cain Pastels. The Art Commission received the generous gift of two large pastel paintings from Boston artist Jean Cain in September 2018. The framed views, *Massachusetts State House*, and *Gazebo on Boston Common*, were both painted in 1986 and are a welcome addition to the Art Commission's rotating collection. The view of the State House now greets visitors as they enter the building through Ashburton Park, and the Gazebo has been placed in a private office. MAC2018.02 and .03



Federal Sofas. The Commission was also pleased to add to its rotating collection two Federal-style inlaid mahogany sofas, given by a local donor. One sofa is attributed to the shop of John and Thomas Seymour, ca. 1798-1805, and is documented in the most recent literature on these noted furniture makers. The other, which is remarkably similar, is probably from the North Shore, ca. 1810. With arched backs, turned and reeded arm supports and front legs, the sofas are covered in period-appropriate salmon colored striped damask, and one retains fragments of its original upholstery underneath. Due to their early dating, these sofas have been placed together in the Senate Reading Room where they make a striking pair. Anonymous gift to the Art Commission, MAC2019.01 and 02.



Collections Care

Following public solicitation, Daedalus, Inc, of Watertown, was awarded a five- year contract with two additional option years for interior sculpture care and the continuing maintenance of the State House sculpture and reliefs installed on the grounds. Initiated in 1987 following primary treatment, this has been a rewarding program. Due to annual cleaning and maintenance of protective coatings, the State House monuments are arguably some of the best-preserved public memorials in the Commonwealth.



Ames Portrait. The large portrait of Governor Oliver Ames, by Charles Ayer Whipple (1900), was reinstalled on the third floor. The portrait is housed in its original, 6-foot tall American Neo-Rococo frame, decorated with an abundance of cast plaster decoration that is both applied and shaped on thin wire. This design renders the 120-year old frame extremely fragile and vulnerable to damage in this public space. Repaired twice in the last thirty years, the painting was subsequently placed in storage until a custom-made, protective plexi-glass shield was procured for the lower portion. Members of the Ames family gathered with the Curator and State Auditor Suzanne Bump to welcome the painting back on display on February 27.

Public Outreach

In our on-going effort to promote and educate the public about the capitol, the collections, and our role and responsibilities, we expanded our website to include copies of past *Annual Reports*, guidelines and procedures for the additions to the collections, policies for care, and indices to the Collection. We will be highlighting the paintings, sculptures, plaques, murals and the architecture of the State House with illustrations and catalogue descriptions.

The Curator is often called upon to give guided tours of the State House Art Collection and the building. She is adept at customizing her talks for visiting groups and individuals. For example, the German Marshall Fellows, selected for the flagship international leadership development program by the German Marshall Fund, are welcomed annually by the Curator and the State House ADA Coordinator who discuss the history of the capitol, its collections, and the improvements that have been made for accommodation of a wide variety of visitors so that all may experience the building in the best possible way. As part of their study of Boston public art, Mass. College of Art students learned about the long history of memorial sculpture and other public commissions at the State House, from the early statue of George Washington (1827) to the more recent Great Hall Clock (1990) and the *Massachusetts Law Enforcement* and *Fallen Firefighters Memorials* (2002 and 2007). Additionally, she welcomed two large groups from the Chilton Club of Back Bay for an architectural tour, focusing on the history and the recent building renovation and preservation projects, as well as portraits and memorials for several families eager to see their ancestors.

Board and Staff

The Board and the Curator join me in wishing the best for our three board members who retired from the Commission this year. Dennis Fiori, past president of the Massachusetts Historical Society, who served

as a governor's appointee from 2009, brought a wealth of knowledge and experience from working with historical collections and institutions for more than forty years.

Christopher Hussey, from Brookline, and Jacqueline Lane, of Sandwich, were both appointed by Senate President Therese Murray in November 2013. Well known preservation architect and recent member of the Brookline Zoning Board, Chris was always as kind as he was wise in guiding us through the complexities of bid proposals for the numerous major architectural restorations and renovations at the State House that took place during his tenure. Jackie, whose expertise includes development and strategic planning, helped us consider ways we might collaborate with both private and public constituents. Her deep and generous commitment to community service, was honed through membership and leadership on a number of Boston and Cape-area non-profit boards.

Our newest member, Alison Nolan, General Manager of Boston Harbor Cruises, was appointed by the governor in October. We are sure to benefit from her associations with municipal, philanthropic and cultural organizations in the Boston area. Moreover, we look forward to the Senate President's additional appointments to the board, and the broad perspectives they will bring to our deliberations.

Our other three members, Donna DePrisco, Mary Leen and Dawn Mahoney continue to share their insights about cultural organizations, museums and community art associations. Drawing on their varied experience seems to be a prerequisite for a board that should be independent of private interests. And then, as I have often noted, as Curator, Susan Greendyke Lachevre, brings all the skills – both personal and professional – her museum sensibility for historic collections and properties in particular - that any board could wish for.

Respectfully submitted,

Paula Morse
Chair

