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2014 ANNUAL REPORT

The members of the Art Commission respectfully submit their *Annual Report* for the year ending June 30, 2014. This has been a banner year for the Commission: revisions to our legislation, last updated in 1924, were signed into law by Governor Patrick in July 2013, expanding the members from five to seven, creating a permanent State House Curator to replace the Art Collections Manager, a contract position for thirty years, and formalizing our unique advisory role in all projects that affect the historic structure as well as the art collections at the State House. We thank Governor Patrick and his administration for validating the importance of the many ways we oversee the collections as well as our commitment to historic preservation.

Moreover, our new mandate underscores the necessity of professional, day-to-day oversight of the fine art and artifact collections charged to our care. Of the many talented applicants for the Curator's position, Susan Greendyke Lachevre, Art Collections Manager since the position's inception thirty years ago, was clearly the outstanding candidate. She was the only one with experience managing a public art collection in a government setting. The legislation also changes the way members are appointed; this responsibility is now shared between the administration and the legislature, with the governor selecting three and the Senate president and House Speaker each appointing two. Thus far, the Senate President has made her two appointments; we await the same action from the House Speaker.

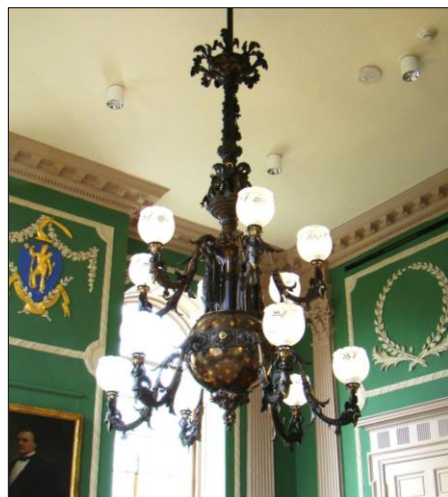
The enactment of our legislation was particularly timely, coming at the launch of several important and vitally necessary renovations projects this year. Due to the length and complexity of the Executive Office renovations, which carried over a short while into the summer, I include all that we contributed as a final report on the project.

We continue to work closely with the Superintendent and staff of the Bureau of the State House (BSH), as well as the Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance (DCAMM) on the implementation of these projects, as well as collaborating on policies and care of the historic State House and its contents.

**State House Executive Office and West Wing Renovation Project**

The Curator was an integral part of the renovation team composed of members of the administration, DCAMM, BSH, Finegold Alexander and Associates – architects, and the historical consultants charged with the study, design and oversight of the 14-month project. The extensive scope of work, initiated through a much-needed overhaul of mechanical systems as well as upgrades to address security, accessibility and deferred maintenance, afforded the opportunity to conduct a renovation of the interiors as well, with every aspect necessitating that particular attention be paid to preservation of the historic fabric of the Level I and Level II spaces. The Curator provided archival photographs and documentation that helped to identify original architectural elements, finishes, and furnishings, and identified all art and decorative arts that required specialized handling. As a follow-up to their critical plaster and historic paint analysis of the governor's office and the council chamber by Boston Conservation Associates, she urged the further examination of all adjacent areas in order to complete a comprehensive study of the suite using current methodology.

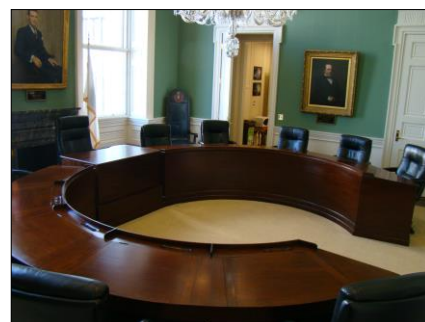
In the governor's office, the former council chamber, the Curator was instrumental in assuring that the remarkable custom-designed ca. 1855 Cornelius and Baker gasolier would remain in its original location. This ten-foot tall chandelier, with its elaborate figural groups and floral decoration, is the only remaining original gas fixture at the State House. Over the years, loss as well as black overpaint, dirt, and deteriorated coatings had disguised the bright metal highlights of the numerous decorative cast elements. Specifying that metals conservators rather than lighting restorers undertake the project, she worked with preservation consultants to develop the scope of work. The Williamstown Art Conservation Center received the contract to conduct technical analysis and conservation treatment of the gasolier. They also were responsible for rewiring and supervising the step-by-step reinstallation in mid-July. Period replacement globes were provided by the Art Commission to complete the restoration.



Historical furniture, including the 19<sup>th</sup> century partner's desk and breakfront, in the suite were identified and sent to Mussey and Associates, Hyde Park, professional furniture conservators for care. Repeated visits to review condition and treatment options assured that these pieces would retain as much of their original features and finishes as possible. The Curator and Superintendent Tammy Kraus are to be commended for locating the 1890s "bull pen" desk and lobbying for its reinstatement in the Governor's Council Chamber.

### Annual Report of the Art Commission for the year ending June 30, 2014, page 3

Stored at DCAMM's Lancaster facility since the early 1990s, the two arms of the mahogany desk were still in good condition, but the low desktops did not allow for wheelchair access. Reviewing options, the curator and the board strongly advised against any permanent alteration, and suggested instead that the **desks** be raised all around, thereby allowing access to all stations. The third part of the assembly – the center desk – was identified as the handsome mahogany desk mounted with a carved seal of the Commonwealth. This desk, when fitted with the arms, however, proved too wide to allow for proper ambulation around the perimeter of the room. The small secretary's desk, normally placed in the middle of the bullpen, was found in storage and although different in scale from the original assembly, approved for placement as the link. This desk, which showed no evidence of original finish, was refinished for match, and mounted on a low platform to fit with the taller arms. The effect of the assembly restored by Mussey Associates to their original brilliant finish in the renovated room is handsome indeed. The historic "seal" desk also was restored and replaced elsewhere in the suite.



*Council Chamber (current Governor's office) 1895; bull pen desk in storage, 2013; Council Chamber restored, 2014.*

In addition, the Curator removed and stored all fine art within the suite. Five portraits that required cleaning or other treatment (Tobin, 1947; Sargent, 1975; Dukakis, 1983; King, 1990, and Swift, 2005) were sent to Theresa Carmichael, Bedford, a painting conservator, for care. Susan also planned the art layout and, in an effort to preserve the newly restored plaster walls, worked with the project architects to develop a satisfactory hanging system for the paintings that would eliminate repeated hardware installations. Where there are molded panels, paintable veneered tracks were proposed; brass rails were retained in the reception and other areas. Due to the opening of the reception area back to its original length, several more governors' portraits can now be installed in this space. The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, the Norman Rockwell Museum, and the National Center for African-American Art, have agreed to continue their loans after renovations; the MFA will oversee the reinstallation of their paintings. The Board supported the Curator's objections to track lighting in the Reception Room and approved a minimum number of discrete down light cans as supplemental illumination throughout the suite.

## **Annual Report of the Art Commission for the year ending June 30, 2014, page 4**

The curator and board also reviewed proposals by numerous contract consultants, pouring over specifications for new chandeliers for the main reception room, replacement furniture, upholstery selections, floor finishes, area rug designs, hardware, tile, and other details and finishes throughout the suite. The project, with its myriad details for consideration and review, occupied much of the Curator's time this fiscal year. As of this writing, many items remain to be completed, but the results promise to be a stunning renovation, revealing and historically accurate. We are honored to have been a part of this long overdue project.

### **Additional Collections Conservation and Preservation**

**Governor John Endecott** – portrait analysis and conservation. The project was re-issued by DCAMM on behalf of the Bureau of the State House and the Art Commission in spring 2014. A procurement management team consisting of members of DCAMM, BSH and the Art Commission met in May and voted to recommend the contract be awarded to John Hartmann, Carlisle, Pennsylvania. The Art Commission approved the recommendation, which was then forwarded to Superintendent Tammy Kraus for review and final approval. It is expected that Mr. Hartmann's services will commence late summer 2014.

**Small sculpture conservation.** An RFR was written by the curator and issued by DCAMM for the conservation of six busts (four plaster, one marble, one bronze), which have been on display in the State House Library. These were treated by Robert Shure, Skylight Studios, Woburn. This is work that was deferred during budget cuts several years ago and we are delighted to have been able to secure conservation services as part of the renovation of the State Library.

**Exterior Sculpture Maintenance.** This was the first year of a new multi-year contract with Daedalus, Inc., Watertown to perform annual cleaning and waxing of all of the exterior monuments and plaques at the State House. Joshua Craine, conservator, reports that the Commonwealth's dedication to this annual maintenance program continues to preserve our monuments in good condition, reducing the level of treatment required each year. Ideal weather conditions matched the skill and professionalism of the conservators whose work was performed in record time this year. Mr. Craine iterated, however, his concern for the granite base of the Lodge, which has been in poor condition for years.

### **Other activities**

A small wreath-laying ceremony was held in Nurses Hall in honor of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the *Civil War Army Nurses Memorial*, February 12, 2014, with Cynthia Kennedy Sam, sculptor Bela Pratt's granddaughter, in attendance. Marking the occasion, Ms. Sam made a gift of an original gelatin print photograph of the clay model for this statue to the Art Commission. We extend our appreciation to her for her donation to the archives of this remarkable monument.

The board voted to approve a September 2013 request of the New York Historical Society for the loan of the State House portrait of Anson Burlingame, minister of China to the United States, for its upcoming exhibit, *Chinese American: Exclusion/Inclusion*, opening in September

2014. Burlingame co-authored the 1868 “Burlingame Treaty” that was for many years the basis for Chinese immigration, and legal and civil protection for immigrants to the United States.

The State House hosted the opening ceremony for *Four Centuries of Massachusetts Furniture*, September 17, 2013 in Doric Hall. For the occasion, the seventeenth-century chair belonging to Governor John Endecott, was placed on display where it received the attention and admiration of dozens of notable scholars and curators of American furniture.

The office continues to address scores of inquiries each year from scholars, publishers, family researchers, government agencies, and the general public seeking information on the history of the building and the collections within. With decades of institutional knowledge, the Curator is in a unique position to provide this important service. She continues to give both presentations and tours of the collections upon request.

### **Art Commission - Members and staff**

Inevitably among our wisest and most committed members, some go forth to new commitments. Beatrice Nessen’s resignation in October left us without her well-honed public advocacy, which served us so well in gaining sponsorship for the House bill revising the Commission’s legislation. Martin Mahoney’s move across the border to New York (he is Chief Curator of the Norman Rockwell Museum in West Stockbridge) deprives us of his critical eye in collections management.

Fortunately, in early winter, two new members, Jacqueline Lane, of Sandwich, and Christopher Hussey, of Brookline, appointed by Senate President Therese Murray, began their tenure; and, already, they have enhanced our discussions with their broad experience and expertise in historic preservation, Chris as a preservation architect, and Jackie, who serves on the board of a number of Cape Cod cultural organizations as well as the Senate Art Committee. Their good humor blends easily with the other members, and we all seem to have bonded in short order. While we are meeting our commitments, even going the extra step with additional meetings to review bids, I hope that the House Speaker will act soon on his prerogative and appoint the last two board members. Having seven members will provide greater diversity and geographical distribution, and assure us quorums for our monthly meetings throughout the year

Finally, as this Report clearly indicates, the new Curator and former Art Collections Manager, Susan Greendyke Lachevre, entertained a full plate this year and managed it all beautifully. She is certainly the point person at the State House for matters concerning historic preservation of historic spaces and works of art. She was an essential member of the Team for the Executive Office and West Wing renovation project. While often under great pressure, she remained true to the mission and the vision of the Art Commission – which aspires to the highest professional standards in the care and preservation of the State House and the Art Collection, promoting its artistic value and historical and cultural significance.

Sincerely,

Paula Morse  
Chair