WOMEN SUBJECTS, WOMEN ARTISTS

IN THE

MASSACHUSETTS STATE HOUSE ART COLLECTION

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
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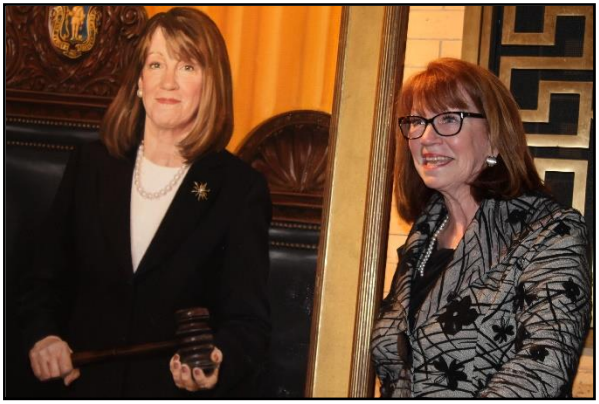
INTRODUCTION

While the Commonwealth's art collection has been on display at the Massachusetts State House since its opening in 1798, it was not until the early 20th century that women were represented. The first tributes were either symbolic – the *Civil War Army Nurses Memorial*, added in 1914, - or allegorical, as seen in the personifications of nations in murals dating from 1927 - 1938. In fact, the first statue of a historical female figure, that of Anne Hutchinson, was not accepted by the leadership until 1922. Furthermore, the first portrait of a woman, that of Esther Andrews, added in 1939, was not solicited by the Commonwealth but was offered as a gift by her family.

In 1863, Emma Stebbins was awarded the contract for a statue of Horace Mann, one of the earliest public monuments in Boston. Although there were certainly many professional women artists working in Boston during the decades that followed, they did not receive commissions until the turn of the century when $9,000 was appropriated for the programmatic expansion of the portrait collection to fill in the gaps in the display of governors under the Constitution. At that time, Boston was blessed with a talented pool of artists, both male and female, trained at the Boston Museum School and in Europe, from whom copies could be commissioned, since original likenesses of former governors were usually privately owned. During the 1920s, a second effort was made to fill out the collection with portraits of colonial governors, with more women receiving contracts.

The collection saw steady growth throughout the 20th century with tributes to military and civic service, as well as portraits of former governors and other elected officials. After women got the vote in 1920, Massachusetts elected its first two female legislators in 1923 and sent its first woman to Congress in 1925. But as late as 1996, there were still only two public memorials to women in Boston - both at the State House, and, worth noting, both were martyrs for religious freedom. In an effort to address the scarcity and lack of diversity of representation at the capitol, in 1998 the Massachusetts Senate honored six notable women, among them two women of color, with *HEAR US: The Massachusetts Women's Leadership Memorial*. But it would not be until after the turn of the millennium that Jane Swift would serve as head of state, and the Commonwealth would acquire its first official portrait of a woman.

Since then, the Senate has elected three female presidents in a row, and, at the time of this writing, only two of the six constitutional officers - the governor and secretary of state - are male. On the 100th anniversary of women's suffrage, however, there are still only eighteen images of women at the capitol. Since so many more have made significant contributions to the life and prosperity of Massachusetts and the nation, it is our expectation that this short list of tributes will grow and this booklet will go through many more editions.

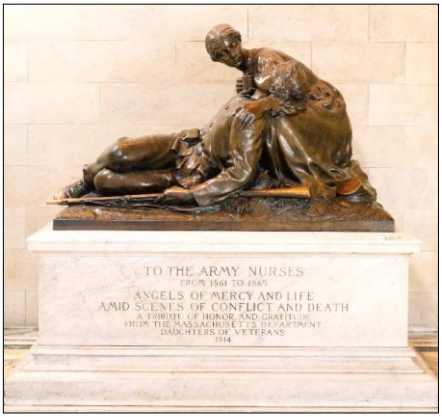


Therese Murray unveils her portrait in 2017.
Photo by Sam Doran, State House News Service.

SUBJECTS

Civil War Army Nurses Memorial

By Bela Pratt, 1909
Gift of the Army Nurses Memorial Association of the Massachusetts Department Daughters of Veterans, 1914



The first image of a woman to enter the State House collection was given by women to honor the more than 3,000 volunteer nurses who served and sacrificed despite doubts and criticism that women would be too weak to endure the horrors of war. The memorial was unveiled in the presence of six Civil War nurses, veterans and their descendants on the birthday of President Abraham Lincoln, February 12, 1914.

Pratt modeled the *Civil War Army Nurses Memorial* in 1911 shortly after the remarkably similar *Mother Bikerdyke Memorial* by Theo Alice Ruggles Kitson was unveiled in Galesburg IL in 1906. Loosely based on the *pietà*, the anonymous nurse who administers to the wounded soldier in her arms is the typical trope or representation of woman as caregiver. Pratt modeled the nurse with heavy, volumetric forms to suggest the physical and moral strength on which the soldier depends.

In accepting the statue for the Commonwealth, Governor David Walsh remarked:

> Here it will remain as long as the State House endures, to remind a careless world that pity and mercy and sacrifice are as acceptable in Heaven's sight as the valor of the soldier and the glory of the sword; and that she who heals the anguish of glory is as worth of honor and remembrance as the great captain whose genius has annihilated armies and saved nations. . . . This eventful ceremony leads me to express the hope that sometime in the not distant future, there will arise in this land a man and a poet with the genius, inspiration and sympathy fitly to sing the services given and the sacrifices made by American women on the altar of patriotism.

The memorial's commanding presence has made it a landmark at the State House. In 1984, Staircase Hall was renamed Nurses Hall by an act of the legislature.

Anne Hutchinson (1591-1643)

By Cyrus Dallin, 1915. Installed 1922.
Gift of the Anne Hutchinson Memorial Association and the State Federation of Women's Clubs, 1922

Often considered to be the country's first feminist, Anne Hutchinson was a teacher and spiritual advisor who believed in free speech and thought, and advocated a religion based on an individual's direct intuition of God through love and grace. Critical of and deemed a threat to the Puritan church, she was excommunicated and banished from Massachusetts in 1637 by Governor John Winthrop and the ultra- conservative, patriarchal General Court for her unorthodox religious views.

Nearly three hundred years later, Hutchinson was again the subject of controversy when the trustees of the Boston Public Library rejected a proposal to place her statue in the lobby of the building. Subsequently proposed for the State House, its acceptance was mired in bureaucratic red tape until it was placed prominently yet unceremoniously at the front of the west wing in 1922.

Like the Native American in his equestrian statue *The Appeal to a Great Spirit* (at the front entrance of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston), Dallin has depicted Hutchinson gazing upward. Her left hand clasps a Bible to her breast and her right hand rests protectively on her daughter's shoulder. Both figures wear the simple, long woolen cloak of 17th -century Puritan women. A bronze plaque on the base proclaims Hutchinson a "courageous exponent of civil liberty and religious toleration."

The statue of Hutchinson, and that honoring her friend Mary Dyer, at the opposite corner in front of the east wing, both serve as reminders to anyone entering the State House of the religious freedoms to which we all are entitled. In the Bi-Centennial year 1976, Governor Michael Dukakis revoked Hutchinson's banishment "to signify an end to all discrimination against women and to mark the beginning of a new era of recognition of the value of all people in the life of the Commonwealth."

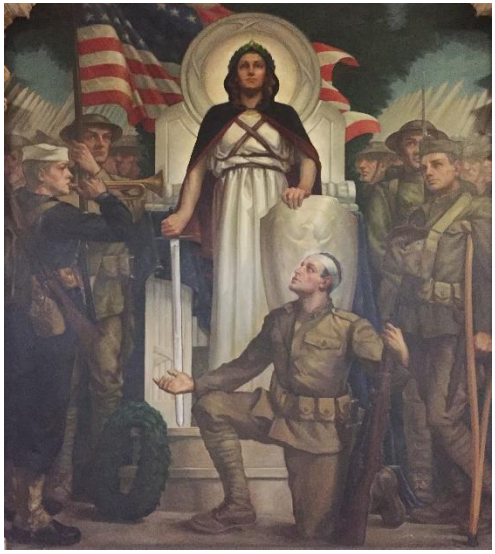
Decoration of the Colors of the 104th Infantry Division: Columbia, Gallia and Joan of Arc

Triptych by Richard Andrew, 1927
Commissioned by the Commonwealth in 1924

This mural honors the 104th infantry, the first American unit to be decorated by a foreign power after its heroic efforts during the Battle of Apremont in 1918. Based on a celebrated photograph, it depicts the ceremony of the pinning of the *Croix de Guerre* to the regimental colors by French General Fenelon Passage in Bourq, France.

Allegorical side panels portray traditional feminine personifications of each country to emphasize the cooperation of the two nations: Columbia, a symbol of the United States since the Revolution, stands with a bald eagle as she offers her sword to Gallia, a personification of ancient France, who is supported by Joan of Arc, the patron saint of the republic. Female allegories of nations date back to ancient times. Latin-based names were often used to reference regions of the world, and Europe in particular (e.g. Britannia, Hispania); countries later adopted personifications as the use of classical references grew during the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Images of Lady Liberty were used more often after the Vote.

Columbia Knighting Her World War Disabled



By Edward Brodney, 1936
Gift of the Disabled American Veterans of the World War, 1936

Columbia is depicted in this mural expressing her gratitude to Massachusetts' veterans from all branches of service who suffered in the cause of liberty during World War I. The Disabled American Veterans, a non-profit charity, was established by an Act of Congress in September 1920. The image of a wounded soldier kneeling before Columbia, here depicted in patriotic dress, has served as the organization's seal since its founding.

The War Mothers

By Edward Brodney, 1938
Commissioned by the Commonwealth

This memorial acknowledges the sacrifices of mothers of Massachusetts servicemen and women during World War I. Eleven women of all ages, and several children are depicted against a faintly painted battle scene. Although placed in a prominent location on the third floor, the WPA-era mural partitions the experience of women during and after the War to the realm of grief and unresolved loss, rather than honoring their own service roles both at home and in the field.

Esther Andrews (1862 - 1938)

By Jacob Binder, 1931
Gift of Julius Andrews, 1939

Andrews was the first woman to serve on the Governor's Executive Council (established in 1780), from 1927 until 1934. At the time of her appointment, she had already experienced a long political career as chair of the Bureau of Prisons, as a strong advocate for the establishment of the Boston Juvenile Court, and as legislative chair of the state federation of Women's Clubs. Hers was the first portrait of a woman to be added to the collection and was the gift of her family. The painting hangs in the foyer of the Executive Secretary to the Council.

Mary Dyer (c. 1635 - 1660)

By Sylvia Shaw Judson Haskins, 1959
Commissioned through the legacy of Zenas Ellis, descendant of Mary Dyer

The religious freedom sought by the Puritans in 17th century Massachusetts was not extended to dissenters who were systematically banished from the colony. A student and friend of Anne Hutchinson, Mary Dyer was sentenced to hang on Boston Common by Governor John Endecott for preaching her nonconformist religious beliefs and repeatedly defying local law that banned Quakers from the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Her execution was the last of four in Boston that took place during a twenty-year period of persecution of Quakers until King Charles forbade the practice in 1661.

None of Dyer's rebelliousness is evident in this portrayal. Judson, herself a Quaker, depicted Dyer in a simple 17th century dress and cap, sitting quietly on a bench, a book held in her lap, her eyes cast downward. In contrast to Anne Hutchinson's defiant pose, Dyer's is one of quiet conviction in the face of persecution. Judson's harmonious style and clarity of form has a modern, Zen-like quality: "Courage, compassion and peace. I wanted her simply to exist – solitary and exposed as though the only safety was within."

The base is inscribed:

Mary Dyer
Quaker Witness for religious freedom
Hanged on Boston Common 1660
"My life not availeth me
In comparison to the
Liberty of the truth"

Sylvia Shaw Judson Haskins (1897 - 1979)

Judson graduated from the Art Institute of Chicago in 1918 after studying briefly with the sculptor Anna Hyatt Huntington who may have influenced her later interest in garden statuary. She also was drawn to the simplicity of Chinese sculpture and the works of the French artist Aristide Maillol. A lifetime pacifist, she supported Quaker causes and became a member of the Society of Friends in 1943. Judson's art is characterized by smooth, simple lines, with a distinct absence of movement or intricate detail that imparts a Zen-like quality of calm and peace.
(Image: Find a Grave, photo added by Sonia Sanchez Galarza.)

HEAR US: The Massachusetts Women's Leadership Memorial

Mixed media installation by Sheila DeBretteville, Susan Sellers, and Robert Shure, 1999
Commissioned by the Commonwealth

This non-traditional installation pays tribute to the contributions of six women to public life in Massachusetts from the 1840s through the 1980s. This initiative came in 1995 from the Massachusetts State Senate which sought to "make the art on display in the state's most important public building more inclusive and representative of the people of the Commonwealth." A panel of historians, educators and cultural advisors selected the subjects.

The memorial consists of six bronze portrait busts set within six green marble panels, reflecting the traditional formats for commemoration found throughout the State House. Rather than conventional inscriptions, the plaques are etched only with two quotations from each honoree: "HEAR US."

The portraits begin on the right with Dorothea Dix, best remembered for her crusade to care for the mentally ill. Lucy Stone gained a national reputation for her lectures against slavery and for women's right to vote. Sarah Parker Remond, an ardent abolitionist, lectured extensively against slavery. Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin started the first newspaper published by and for African American women and was a charter member of the NAACP. Mary Kenney O'Sullivan, union organizer, lobbied for laws to protect women and children in the workplace. Florence Luscomb, who appears in the panel on the far left, remained a strong advocate for women's suffrage, labor unionism, peace, and civil rights well into her nineties.

The wall behind the six-foot plaques is covered with wallpaper, a symbol of domesticity, yet printed in a wholly untraditional way with a repeating pattern of key legislative documents that address the conditions these women worked to improve, underscoring the ground-breaking efforts of each in what was then a man's world. Included are excerpts from:

An Act for the removal of Insane Convicts from the State Prison (1844)

Report on the Committee on the Qualification of Voters (1853)

An Act Relative to the Hours of Employment of Women and Minors (1912)

Interim report of The Senate Commission to Investigate Communism in Massachusetts (1955)

An Act Forbidding Unjust Discrimination on Account of Color or Race (1965)

An Act to Give Women the Right to Vote for the Members of School Committees (1978)

The following quotations are etched on the plaques:

Dorothea Dix (1818 - 1893)

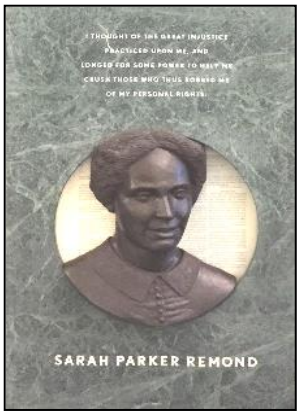
I come to present the strong claims of suffering humanity. I come to place before the Legislature of Massachusetts the condition of the miserable, the desolate, the outcast. I come as the advocate of helpless, forgotten, insane men and women; of beings, sunk to a condition from which the unconcerned would start with real horror. Memorial to the Legislature of Massachusetts, 1843.

I tell what I have seen.

Lucy Stone (1802 - 1887)

In education, in marriage, in religion, in everything, disappointment is the lot of women. It shall be the business of my life to deepen that disappointment in every woman's heart until she bows down to it no longer. Speech to National Woman's Rights Convention, 1855

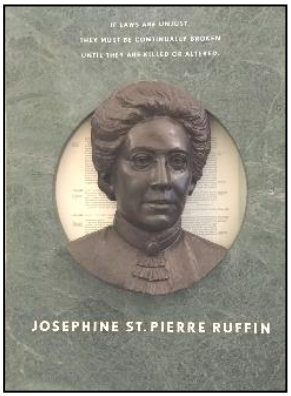
And do not tell us before we are born even, that our province is to cook dinners, darn stockings and sew buttons. We have rights.



Sarah Parker Remond (1824 - 1894)

My strongest desire through life has been to be educated. I found the most exquisite pleasure in reading, and as we had no library, I read every book which came my way, and I longed for more. Again and again mother would endeavor to have us placed in some private school, but being colored we were refused. A Colored Lady Lecturer, 1861

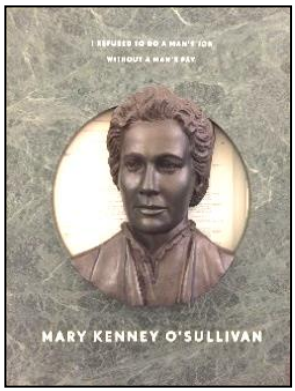
I thought of the great injustice practiced upon me and longed for some power to help me crush those who thus robbed me of my personal rights.



Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin (1842 - 1924)

It is the women of America - black and white - who are to solve this race problem, and we do not ignore the duty of black women in the matter. They must arouse, educate and advance themselves. The white woman has a duty in the matter also. She must no longer consent to be passive. We call upon her to take a stand. The Women's Era, 1894

If laws are unjust, they must be continually broken until they are killed or altered.



Mary Kenney O'Sullivan (1864 - 1943)

I was convinced that the workers must organize. Someone must go from shop to shop and find out who the workers were that were willing to work for better working conditions. I must be that someone. Unpublished Autobiography, 1936

I refused to do a man's job without a man's pay.

Florence Luscomb (1887 - 1985)

I learned in school that the American government was founded on the principle that all men are created equal. But there was no equality for half the human race - my half. Women were discriminated against not only in political freedom, but in their professional and work opportunities, in their pay, in many of their laws and social conditions and customs. And I burned with indignation at this injustice. Oral History, 1983

Until all discriminations against women are done away with, I won't say that I'm satisfied with the condition of women.

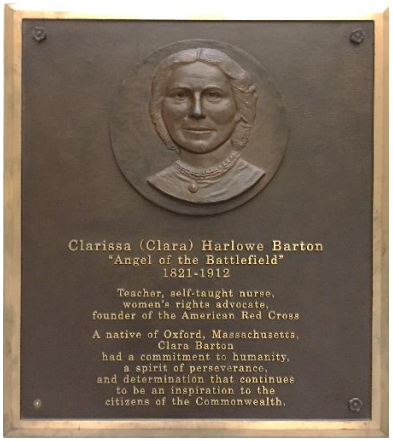
Sheila Levrant deBretteville and Susan Sellers, with Robert Shure

DeBretteville is the former director of the graphic design department and was the first tenured woman at the influential Yale School of Art. She founded the Feminist Studio Workshop of Women's Building in Los Angeles, and was an early organizer of the Women's Caucus for Art. She has been creating public art since the early 1980s, combining words with graphic elements to give voice to her subjects and to invite dialogue with the viewer. Her strong feminist leanings have led to numerous projects, which express her belief that "the values culturally associated with women are needed in public life." (*Eye Magazine*, Autumn 1993).

For the State House commission, DeBretteville collaborated with Rhode Island School of Design and Yale alumna Susan Sellers, who earned her MA studying mid-19th century labor practices in craft industries before co-founding the renowned 2 x 4 Design Studio in New York. She has also served as Senior Critic in Graphic Design at the Yale School of Art and Head of Design at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Boston sculptor Robert Shure, who created the *Fallen Firefighters' Memorial* at the State House, as well as numerous other Massachusetts public monuments, modeled the portrait heads from photographs of each woman.

Clara Barton (1821 - 1912)

By Robert Shure, 2001
Gift of several service organizations



Clarissa "Clara" Barton left her home in Oxford, MA, in 1854 to take a job as a clerk in the Washington, D. C. Patent Office - the first woman to hold such a position. Suffering from harassment and a superior who did not trust women in the workplace, she returned home for several years, only to experience similar unfair treatment. She returned to the capitol, and, upon hearing of the Baltimore riots, rushed to the aid of injured soldiers of the Massachusetts 6th regiment. Untrained, and encountering frequent resistance from those who doubted her fortitude under harrowing conditions, she offered assistance to the front line wherever possible, bringing supplies, ministering to the wounded, and appearing when battlefield surgeons needed her most. It was not long before she became known as 'the angel of the battlefield."

Like Dorothea Dix, Barton sought to organize a nursing corps. Whereas Dix was recruiting for the Army Medical Bureau, setting standards for nurses entering the corps, Barton was working outside official systems, raising money for supplies and organizing delivery and assistance to the front lines. She would go on to found the American Red Cross in 1882.

This small plaque is placed adjacent to the imposing *Civil War Army Nurses Memorial*, which honors all nurses in the field. Authorizing legislation noted that among Barton's lasting contributions would be "elevating the importance of the nursing profession and the role of women in public service."

Frances Slanger (1913 - 1944)

Bronze plaque, 2005
Commissioned by the Commonwealth

Second Lt. Frances Slanger, of Boston, was the first American nurse to die of enemy fire in World War II. Slanger emigrated from Poland with her family in 1920, received her training in Boston and enlisted in the U. S. Army Nurse Corps. She was one of only four nurses to wade ashore at Utah Beach on June 10, 1944 after which was reassigned to the 45th Field Hospital Unit in Belgium. That October, she was killed by gunfire, hours after having written her most recent column for the U. S. Military newspaper, *Stars and Stripes*. The U. S. Army hospital ship *Frances Y. Slanger* was named in her honor in 1945.

Jane M. Swift (b. 1965)

By Sarah Belchetz-Swenson, 2005
Gift of Friends of Jane Swift

On April 10, 2001, Jane Maria Swift made history when she was sworn in as the first woman to serve as chief executive of the Commonwealth, and, at thirty-six, the youngest governor in the United States. The first governor of any state to give birth while in office, she continued to exercise executive authority during her maternity leave.

While Acting Governor, Swift's focus was on public education, setting standards for curriculum framework and assessment in public schools that were recognized by the U. S. Department of Education. She was also responsible for leading the Commonwealth following the attacks of September 11, 2011, during which two terrorist planes departed from the Boston airport.

When considering her portrait for the State House, Swift was the first Massachusetts governor to commission a woman artist for her official portrait. Working from her studio in western Massachusetts, Sarah Belchetz-Swenson depicted Swift in a black suit with pearls, standing in the governor's office, with its then familiar blue walls and white trim. (Recent restoration has returned these walls to their original green.) She holds a packet of documents tied with the distinctive red ribbon, symbolizing her term as the youngest woman, at age twenty-five, to have served as state senator.

Sarah Belchetz-Swenson

Trained at the Art Students League, Belchetz-Swenson has exhibited portraits and landscapes for over fifty years and is represented in collections from New England to Australia. Her likeness of Swift typifies her restrained approach to portraiture, with minimal background details or props, which allows her to present her subject in a straightforward manner

Massachusetts Fallen Firefighters Memorial

By Robert Shure, 2007
Gift of the Volunteer Firefighters of Massachusetts

The *Fallen Fighters Memorial* features a trio of firefighters battling a blaze. Flames lick at their boots as they are surrounded by the equipment of their profession. Also beside them is the empty jacket and helmet of a firefighter who has lost his life while on duty, symbol of the hundreds of names that are etched into the bricks that surround the black granite base.

Throughout the design, care was taken to consider the interpretation of each of the three figures that would compose the tribute, as well as their poses and the symbolic props. Deep into the discussion, it was determined that aside from ethnic representation among the figures, gender equality should also be present. Thus, the kneeling figure was reinterpreted as a woman by the sculptor Robert Shure. About 4 percent of the firefighters nationwide are women, but Massachusetts has seen steady growth in the number of female graduates from the academy, at times nearly one-third of the class. As of the date of this publication, there are all-female crews serving the Brockton and Chicopee Fire Departments.

Therese Murray (b. 1947)

By Warren and Lucia Prosperi, 2017
Gift of Friends of Therese Murray

Therese Murray, the first female president of the Massachusetts Senate, stands at the president's rostrum. Holding the gavel in both hands, she smiles with confidence as one of the most powerful elected officials in the state.

I hope that as young women and girls pass by it, it sends a message that nothing can and should ever hold you back from your dreams. . . . I want all boys to see this portrait and understand that leadership is not about gender but an individual's desire to make a difference.

Murray was first elected to the Senate in 2002; during her twenty-two-year tenure, she chaired the Ways and Means Committee from 2003-2007, and was a leader in the reform of welfare, education and health care, the restructuring of the Commonwealth's transportation system, and led the passage of the state's 2010 economic development bill.

Lucia Prosperi, with Warren Prosperi

Senate President William Bulger, 2007
Senate President Therese Murray, 2017

Lucia's photography is an integral part of Warren's artistic process. They collaborate on each commission, working closely with subjects to gain a full understanding of personality, character and vision, while fine tuning aspects of design and execution. While Warren holds the paintbrush, her photographs "inform the eye, inspire the image and reference the series of decisive moments that create the vision of the painting." The Prosperi's have created dozens of realistic portraits and murals of influential figures in the political, medical and academic fields. The Prosperi's are also represented in the collection with their portrait of Senate President William Bulger. In addition to contemporary portraiture, they have also produced historical paintings.

Cadet Nurse Corps

Bronze plaque, 2020
Gift of Friends of the United States Cadet Nurse Corps, WWII

Established in 1943 by an Act of Congress in response to the critical shortage of nurses, 124,000 women of the U.S. Cadet Nurse Corps provided 80% of the military and civilian nursing care on the home front until it was decommissioned in 1948. On May 14, 1944, 900 Cadet Nurses marched from the State House to Boston Common where they pledged to serve their country for the "duration of the war." In 2020, in tribute to the 9,000 Massachusetts Cadet Nurses, the Commonwealth designated July 1st Cadet Nurse Corps Day.

The CNC was the first uniformed service that prohibited discrimination based on race, color or creed. The nurses have never been granted Veteran status.

ARTISTS

SCULPTORS

Commissions for the State House collection have been awarded to women sculptors for significant memorials since the mid-19th century, three by public competition. Of the eight monuments on the grounds, three are by women: the Horace Mann, Mary Dyer and John F. Kennedy. In the Senate Chamber, Sarah Fisher Ames is represented along with leading male sculptors of the 19th century with her patented likeness of President Abraham Lincoln (1867). All were professionally trained both in the U.S. and abroad and devoted their lives to their creative efforts.

Emma Stebbins

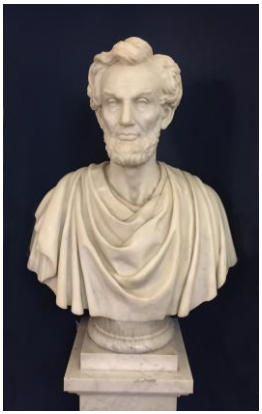
Horace Mann, 1865
Gift of the school children and teachers of Massachusetts

This memorial to the educator and founder of the State Board of Education is one of the earliest monuments at the State House. Not only is it placed prominently in front of the capitol, but the statue of Mann precedes that of Sam Adams (1880) by Anne Whitney, the first public monument by a woman in the city of Boston. Stebbins was initially trained as a painter in New York and did not begin her study of sculpture in Rome until she was in her early forties. She was awarded the commission largely through the efforts of her companion, actress Charlotte Cushman, who befriended Mann's widow, a project juror. The sculpture was sponsored by a committee of colleagues and fellow advocates for education and funded largely through the contributions of teachers and children in the Massachusetts public schools. (Image: Smithsonian Libraries)

Sarah F. C. Ames

Abraham Lincoln, 1867

Purchased by the Commonwealth



Sarah Ames studied art in Boston and Rome before the Civil War. She then worked as a nurse in Washington, D. C. and supervised the hospital established at the capitol building. There, she became personally acquainted with the President and reportedly sketched or perhaps modeled a bust of him during the war. After Lincoln's death, she patented her finely detailed work and created several replicas, one of which was purchased by the Commonwealth in 1867. (Image: Library of Congress)

Bashka Paeff

Chaplain's Memorial, 1922

Commissioned by the Commonwealth

Paeff Emigrated from Russia and studied sculpture with Cyrus Dallin at the Massachusetts Normal Art School (now the Massachusetts College of Art) and later with Bela Pratt at the Boston Museum School, both of whom are represented in the State House collection. Early in her career she won the competition for the *Chaplain's Memorial*, which honors four Massachusetts chaplains who died during World War I. The recessed bas-relief is designed in the shape of a foxhole with two chaplains ministering to a fallen soldier. During a long and successful career, Paeff was as well known for realistic animal sculptures, fountains, and portraits as she was for her larger war memorials in which she continued to use the niche-like format. (Image: Archives of American Art)

Eleanor Platt

Louis D. Brandeis, 1942
Gift of Brandeis University, 1954

Eleanor Platt studied at the Art Students League of New York and received several notable awards before she was named a Guggenheim Fellow in 1945. She is best known for her portrait heads, including that of Louis Brandeis, Associate Justice of the U. S. Supreme Court from 1916 until 1941. The original bust, of which several replicas were cast, is at the Supreme Court. The State House example was acquired in 1954, the gift of Brandeis University.

Justice Brandeis, considered the "people's attorney" while he practiced law in Boston, is best known as an ardent champion of the Constitution's guarantee of the individual rights to free speech and to privacy. (Image: Photograph by Paul Juley. Collection Smithsonian Institution Archives and Special Collections.)

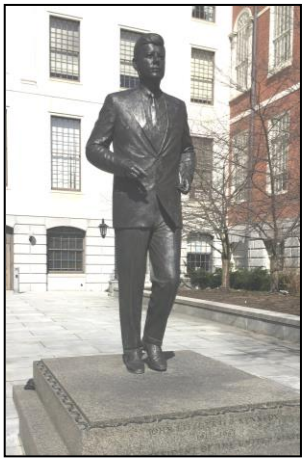
Katherine Cole Worden

Creation, 1963
Gift of the artist, 1976

Active in Newport, RI, Worden specialized in smaller, playful sculptures, most of which depict a moment in time. Her love of the art of making sculpture is captured in *Creation,* which shows a pair of hands bringing form to a lump of clay. This intimate study is in sharp contrast to her life-long social activism in Los Angeles, and later in Massachusetts and Rhode Island, particularly with groups focusing on children and the underserved.

Isabel McIlvain

President John F. Kennedy, 1990
Gift of the citizens of Massachusetts



Massachusetts native Isabel McIlvain studied at the Pratt Institute in New York and was elected a member of the National Academy of Design. While associate professor of art at Boston University, McIlvain was awarded the coveted commission to create a memorial to President John F. Kennedy for the Massachusetts State House in 1989. She studied hundreds of images of the president before settling on a press photo of Kennedy walking in the colonnade at the White House as inspiration. The 8-ft statue represents the young president striding confidently forward, filled with hope and aspiration for the country. Due to accessibility issues with its original location on the West Wing plaza, the memorial has recently been relocated to the west lawn, close to Beacon Street, where it can be viewed year-round. (Image: T. C. Fitzgerald, Art Commission files.)

Meredith Bergmann

Edward Cohen/Massachusetts Labor History, 2009
Gift of the Massachusetts AFL-CIO

Meredith Bergmann's multi-layered sculptures tell stories, often by combining historical references with forward-looking themes. Trained at Parsons, the Cooper Union, the Art Students League and in Italy, she brings a love of traditional techniques to her art that is representational as well as thought provoking. The Massachusetts Labor History plaque allowed her to weave favorite themes of history and social justice with depictions of landmark events in a unique design that conveys, with its ribbon of marchers, a dynamic sense of mission.

Bergman also created the *Boston Women's Memorial*, placed on the Commonwealth Avenue Mall in 2003, that pays tribute to three Boston writers with progressive ideas on justice - Phyllis Wheatley, Lucy Stone and Abigail Adams. The grouping represents a bold departure from conventional practices. The artist has taken the honorees "off their pedestals" and placed them in a circle at street level, pairing each with a selection of her own writings - the only inscriptions in the memorial. She has more recently completed the *Women's Rights Pioneers* memorial for New York City's Central Park.

(Image: Meredith Bergmann poses with her statue of Abigail Adams, part of the *Boston Women's Memorial*. Photo by Susan Wilson.)

See also entries on:

Mary Dyer, by Sylvia Shaw Judson

HEAR US: Massachusetts Women's Leadership Memorial, by Sheila Levrant DeBretteville, Susan Sellers, and Robert Shure.

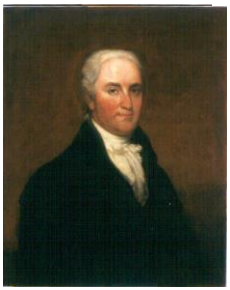
PAINTERS

The commissioning of portrait copies beginning in the 1890s coincided with the twentieth anniversary of the Boston Museum School and the emergence of the Boston School of painters. These academically trained artists, many of whom also studied in Europe, favored a faithful, harmonious depiction of subjects over competing modernist trends, which was well suited to traditional portraiture. Fortunately, the collection is well represented with eighteen paintings by leading artists of the Boston School, such as Frank W. Benson, William M. Paxton, Edmund C. Tarbell and Frederick P. Vinton.

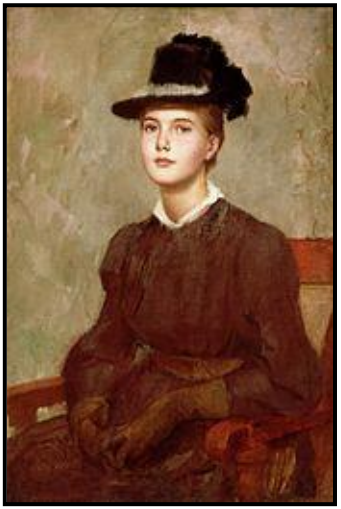
Moreover, women students could count on the support of male teachers for recommendations. Friendships formed in art classes, which continued with club affiliations and gallery associations, also resulted in an impressive number of exhibitions as well as commissions. Three women copyists in the State House collection studied with Tarbell, dean of the Boston School.

Marie Danforth Page

Christopher Gore, 1899
Commissioned by the Commonwealth



Page was one of the first artists to receive a commission for a copy portrait under the appropriation of 1899. Training at the Boston Museum School under the pre-eminent portrait painters Edmund Tarbell and Frank Benson guided Page in meeting the challenge of faithfully copying the original portrait of Gore by the distinguished 18th century artist John Trumbull.
(Image, Cincinnati Museum of Art)



Lyle Durgin

Joseph Dudley, 1901
Commissioned by the Commonwealth

Durgin studied painting in Paris with her sister, Harriet Thayer Durgin, with whom she established a studio in Copley Square, Boston in 1886. She executed portraits and ecclesiastical commissions. Hers of Governor Dudley is a copy after an unlocated original. (Image: Wikipedia)

Mary Brewster Hazelton

William Stoughton, 1924
Gift of the Boston Athenaeum

Hazelton was a classmate of Marie Danforth Page at the Boston Museum School before she traveled to Europe where she honed her impressionist touch. She returned to Boston where her paintings of elegantly dressed women in refined interiors rivaled those of her male contemporaries. Her academic training also allowed her to produce competent portraits. Her portrait of Governor Stoughton was copied in 1924 from a 17th century painting in the collection of the Boston Athenaeum. (Image: Wellesley Historical Society)

Alice Ruggles Sohier

Spencer Phipps, 1930
Commissioned by the Commonwealth

Another accomplished graduate of the Boston Museum School, Sohier excelled in portrait painting, and exhibited frequently in major cities along the east coast and California. Heavily influenced by her Boston teachers Edmund Tarbell and Frank Benson, she won numerous prestigious awards for both her portraiture and impressionist paintings. The State House portrait of Governor Phipps was copied from an original 18th century portrait once attributed to John Smibert who had a studio in Boston from 1728 to 1850. (Image: Butler Institute)

Agnes Fletcher

Richard Bellingham, 1930
Gift of Evelyn Wrench, descendant

The portrait of Governor Bellingham, signed "A. E. F." is attributed to Agnes Fletcher, possibly an British artist commissioned to paint this copy from an earlier copy portrait in a private collection in Ireland. It belongs to the last group of paintings of colonial governors added to the collection during the 1920s and early 1930s.

SEE ALSO:

Jane Swift, by Sarah Belchetz-Swenson

Therese Murray, by Warren and Lucia Prosperi

THE STATE HOUSE ART COMMISSION

The State House Art Commission was formed as an executive board in 1910 in response to the rapid growth of the collection at the capitol to oversee and approve the design and inscription of new artworks. Following the installation of the Norman Prince memorial in 1922, authority to approve honorees, which heretofore had rested with the governor and council, was shifted to the legislature. The commission retained its strong advisory role, however, and in 1924 the responsibilities of the five-member volunteer board were expanded to include care and custody in order to ensure proper handling, display and preservation of the increasingly valuable collection.

Early boards, composed of notable artists, architects, museum leaders and landscape designers, were dominated by men. Gertrude Fiske was the first woman appointed to the commission, serving from 1930-1945. Trained at the Boston Museum School, her still lifes, interiors and portraits were painted with broad strokes and bold colors not typically associated with the first generation of Boston School alumnae. By the time of her appointment to the Art Commission she was an established artist, named to the prestigious National Academy of Design, and had co-founded the Guild of Boston Artists, the Society of Etchers and the Ogunquit Art Association.

Katherine Lane Weems served from 1941-1945. Also trained at the Boston Museum School and with the sculptor Anna Hyatt Huntington, Weems is well represented in collections and sculpture gardens across the nation. A prolific sculptor of animals, she is perhaps best known for the large rhinoceros in front of her alma mater. During her short tenure on the board, the Commonwealth received a gift from Zenas Ellis for a memorial to his ancestor Mary Dyer. With her considerable experience, Weems was able to guide the initial discussions on everything from budget to artist selection criteria.

For the first time, in 1977, women composed the majority of members. Arlene Friedberg, the first woman chair, served from 1982 - 2001. Her involvement with numerous art associations and publications, and her knowledge of the contemporary art scene led to the reinvigoration of the commission by establishing new policies and guidelines for the care and growth of the collection.

Now, in 2020, the seven-member board is made up entirely of women. The current chair, formerly of the Gardner Museum and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, is a long-time trustee of the Cohasset Historical Society. She oversees the female State House Curator whose myriad responsibilities reflect the evolution of the board's mandate to care for the collections, guide the process for new additions, and advise on the preservation of the historic State House. To that end, today's commission enjoys the continued support of the State House Superintendent, also a woman; our close collaboration with her enables us to implement many of our programs.

This book is dedicated to all those who have dedicated their lives to the advancement of women.

Katherine Weems. (Katharine Lane Weems papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution)

Gertrude Fiske. (Cw810, Creative Commons)

State House Curator Susan Greendyke Lachevre, with former Art Commission Chair Arlene Friedberg and current Chair Paula Morse at the dedication of the John F. Kennedy Memorial, 1990. (Art Commission files)

SUBJECTS

ANDREWS, Esther (1862—1938)
Portrait by Jacob Binder, 1931
Room 189

BARTON, Clara (1821—1912)
Bronze plaque by Robert Shure, 2002
Nurses Hall

CADET NURSE CORPS of WWII
Bronze plaque by Leland Hussey, 2020
Nurses Hall

DIX, Dorothea (1818—1893)
HEAR US: Mass. Women's Leadership Memorial
Multi-media installation by Sheila Levrant deBretteville and Susan Sellers, 1999
Second floor

DYER, Mary (c. 1635-1660)
Bronze statue by Sylvia Shaw Judson, 1959
Front lawn, East Wing

HUTCHINSON, Anne (1591—1643)
Bronze statue by Cyrus Dallin, 1915
Front lawn, West Wing

LUSCOMB, Florence (1887—1985)
HEAR US: Mass. Women's Leadership Memorial
Multi-media installation by Sheila Levrant deBretteville and Susan Sellers, 1999
Second floor

MURRAY, Therese (b. 1947)
Portrait by Warren and Lucia Prosperi, 2017
Senate Reading Room

O'SULLIVAN, Mary Kenney (1864—1943)
HEAR US: Mass. Women's Leadership Memorial
Multi-media installation by Sheila Levrant deBretteville and Susan Sellers, 1999
Second floor

REMOND, Sarah Parker (1824—1894)
HEAR US: Mass. Women's Leadership Memorial
Multi-media installation by Sheila Levrant deBretteville and Susan Sellers, 1999

RUFFIN, Josephine St. Pierre (1842—1924)
HEAR US: Mass. Women's Leadership Memorial
Multi-media installation by Sheila Levrant deBretteville and Susan Sellers, 1999
Second floor

SLANGER, Frances (1913—1944)
Bronze plaque by the F. P. Davis Foundry, 2005
Nurses Hall

STONE, Lucy (1802—1887)
HEAR US: Mass. Women's Leadership Memorial
Multi-media installation by Sheila Levrant deBretteville and Susan Sellers, 1999
Second floor

SWIFT, Jane (b. 1965)
Portrait by Sarah Belchetz-Swenson, 2005
Governor's Reception Room

"COLUMBIA" and "GALLIA"
Decoration of the Colors of the 104th Infantry, mural by Richard Andrew, 1927
Third floor

"COLUMBIA"
Columbia Knighting her World War Disabled, mural by Edward Brodney, 1936
Third floor

The War Mothers
Mural by Edward Brodney, 1938
Third floor

Civil War Army Nurses Memorial
Bronze statue by Bela Pratt, 1911
Nurses Hall

Massachusetts Fallen Firefighters Memorial
Bronze statue by Robert Shure, 2007
Ashburton Park.

ARTISTS

AMES, Sarah Fisher Clampitt (1817—1901)
Abraham Lincoln, marble bust (replica), 1867
Senate Chamber

BELCHEZ-SWENSON, Sarah (b. 1938)
Jane Swift, portrait, 2005
Governor's Reception

BERGMANN, Meredith (b. 1954)
Edward Cohen/Massachusetts Labor History, bronze plaque, 2009
Third floor

DeBRETTEVILLE, Sheila Levrant (b. 1940) with SELLERS, Susan (b. 1967)
HEAR US: Mass. Women's Leadership Memorial, Multi-media installation, 1999
Second floor

DURGIN, Lyle (1850—1904)
Joseph Dudley, portrait (copy), 1900
Second floor corridor

FLETCHER, Agnes (dates unknown)
Richard Bellingham, portrait (copy), 1930
Second floor corridor

HAZELTON, Mary Brewster (1882—1953)
William Stoughton, portrait (copy), 1924
Second floor corridor

JUDSON, Sylvia Shaw (1897—1979)
Mary Dyer, bronze statue, 1959
Front lawn, East Wing

McILVAIN, Isabel (b. 1943)
John F. Kennedy, bronze statue, 1990
Front lawn, West Wing

PAEFF, Bashka (1893—1979)
Chaplains' Memorial, bronze bas-relief, 1922
Third floor

PAGE, Marie Danforth (1869—1940)
Christopher Gore, portrait (copy), 1899
Third floor

PLATT, Eleanor (1910—1979)
Louis D. Brandeis, bronze head (replica), 1942
Third floor

PROSPERI, Lucia (b. 1951), with Warren Prosperi (b. 1949)
Therese Murray, portrait, 2017
William Bulger, portrait, 2007
Both, Senate Reading Room

SOHIER, Alice Ruggles (1880—1969)
Spencer Phipps, portrait (copy), 1930
Second floor

STEBBINS, Emma (1815—1882)
Horace Mann, bronze statue, 1863
Front lawn

WORDEN, Katherine Cole (1925—2015)
"*Creation*" statuette, bronze sculpture, 1963
Doric Hall