

MEETING MINUTES
MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
February 8, 2023

Due to the Coronavirus pandemic, the Commission meeting was held remotely in a Zoom meeting.

Chairman Rosenberry called the meeting to order at 1:06 pm. On behalf of Secretary Galvin, he welcomed the Commissioners. Chairman Rosenberry next addressed the audience, thanking them for attending. For those individuals who may not have attended commission meetings in the past, Chairman Rosenberry explained the structure of the meeting and when in the process the public could address the commission. Chairman Rosenberry then took attendance to determine that a quorum was met.

The Chairman turned to the first item on the agenda, the **approval of the December 14, 2022 meeting minutes**. He called for a MOTION TO ACCEPT the minutes. A MOTION was made by Commissioner Sullivan and SECONDED by Commissioner DeWitt. Hearing no questions or comments, the chair moved the motion. The motion CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Chairman Rosenberry then turned to the next item on the agenda, the Local Historic District Preliminary Study Reports, first calling for any recusals. Hearing none, he turned the meeting over to Jennifer Doherty, Local Government Programs Coordinator. Ms. Doherty presented the study reports with PowerPoint presentation slides. A copy of the presentation is on file with these minutes.

Richards Building (Financial District) Boston

Ms. Doherty first presented the **Richards Building in Boston**. The petition for this landmark designation was accepted by the Boston Landmarks Commission on April 9, 1985.

The Richards Building is located at 112-116 State Street in Boston's Financial District.

At the edge of the Financial District on State Street, the Richards Building stands among other mid- and high-rise buildings dating from the late 19th through the late

20th century. Behind the building is an alleyway and power substation, then Chatham Street and the rear of Quincy Market.

The Richards Building is a contributing property to the Custom House National Register of Historic Places District, listed in 1973 and amended in 1996. The Custom House itself is located two blocks to the east along State Street. To the north is Faneuil Hall and Quincy Market, listed on the National Register and designated a National Historic Landmark in 1960. About two blocks to the west of the Richards Building up State Street is the Old State House, listed on the National Register and designated a National Historic Landmark in 1966, designated a local landmark in 1994, and with a Preservation Restriction held by the MHC since 2006. There are several other National Register-listed or locally landmarked buildings in the area.

The Richards Building was constructed around 1858 on two State Street parcels. With a design attributed to architect Edward Clark Cabot, who also designed the Boston Athenaeum, it was originally a five-story building with a mansard roof. It is believed to be the oldest cast-iron fronted building in the Financial District, although an older one still stands in the North End. The manufacturer of the cast iron has not been confirmed.

It features a typical three-part commercial building design, with storefronts and a centered entrance on the first floor, four floors of offices above, and a crowning cap of two additional floors with distinct two-story oriels. The original mansard roof was removed and the upper floors were added in the late 19th century. The rear of the building, fronting on to an alleyway, is plain brick.

The first five floors of the building are arcaded with round columns, with paired columns used to highlight the middle two bays of the building. Decorative bands separate the floors, while the arched window openings are highlighted by various ornaments at the apex of the arches. The arcading does not continue across the added upper floors; instead, these feature a two-story oriel with a conical roof at either side of the building.

The Richards Building was constructed by the heirs of merchant and ship owner Robert Gould Shaw around 1858, and was initially known as the Shaw Building. This Shaw was the grandfather of the Robert Gould Shaw who led the 54th Massachusetts Infantry Regiment during the Civil War. The Shaw family's merchant business was relocated to the building along with several other shipping

and packet operations typical of the maritime focus of Boston's mid-19th century downtown.

The property was acquired by Calvin A. Richards in 1889, and shortly thereafter he had the mansard roof reconfigured and two upper stories added to the building. Through the early 20th century, the building continued to house offices for those associated with the maritime trades. Around midcentury tenants began to transition to real estate, insurance, and law firms, part of a larger transition in the neighborhood away from Boston's maritime history and towards the area's development as the Financial District we know today. The building was rehabilitated with federal historic rehabilitation tax credits in the 1980s.

Because of its significance as one of the oldest cast-iron fronted buildings in Boston and its association with the development of Boston's maritime trade and later modern Financial District, BLC staff recommends that the Richards Building be designated as a Boston Landmark.

MHC staff recommends acknowledging receipt of the Landmark Study Report for the Richards Building and providing the following advisory recommendations and comments:

The Massachusetts Historical Commission concurs with the recommendations of the Boston Landmarks Commission staff.

Isolation Hospital, Springfield

Ms. Doherty then presented the **Isolation Hospital Local Historic District in Springfield**. This would be the City's 24th local historic district, many of which, like the proposed district, are single-building districts.

The district would protect a single building at 1414 State Street, northeast of Springfield's downtown. The Isolation Hospital is the earlier half of a larger hospital complex that stands on two separate parcels of land, although the two buildings are connected.

There are no designated properties in the immediate area of the Isolation Hospital. Further to the west is the large McKnight district, half of which was listed on the National Register and designated a local historic district in 1976, and the other half of which was listed on the National Register in 1986. The district is primarily comprised of large late 19th century houses mostly Queen Anne in style.

The Isolation Hospital is part of a cluster of commercial and institutional buildings outside the city center surrounded by residential neighborhoods. Across the street southwest of the complex is MassMutual's headquarters. West of the hospital are two technical high schools. To the east is St. Michael's Cemetery, a large late 19th century Catholic cemetery. There is some limited neighborhood commercial development along State Street. The residential buildings directly east of the hospital are primarily late 19th and early 20th century, some in a small bungalow form while others are larger two-family dwellings. Many have seen maintenance alterations such as vinyl siding and windows.

The Springfield Isolation Hospital was built in 1930 to plans drawn by the local firm of Kirkham & Parlett. The firm has 22 entries in MACRIS, the vast majority of which are public or institutional buildings in Springfield. They also designed the MassMutual headquarters building across State Street. Estimates from around the time of the building's construction stated that it cost \$700,000 to build and outfit.

The hospital is a five-story L-shaped building opening south to State Street, with its entrance marked by a projecting pavilion centered on the short end. The simplified Art Deco style of the building is rare in Springfield, with only 16 entries in MACRIS for the style. The verticality of the building is emphasized by the full-height piers projecting beyond the roofline into a parapet. The light-colored brick building has little ornament aside from its sandstone trim and patterning of the bricks above the top floor.

The current hospital site was originally the location of the Springfield Alms House. That complex was demolished in the 1930s when the new hospital was constructed, to be used as an isolation hospital for those with contagious diseases such as tuberculosis and polio. The City had a previous hospital that was too small for its needs, often paying other communities or hospitals to house Springfield's contagious patients, or leaving Springfield residents to quarantine at home. The four patient wards provided glass cubicle walls to separate the beds and limit contagion, as well as a sink at the end of each bed that was elbow-operated. Each of the wards had a solarium, located at the rounded end of the building facing south towards State Street. The top floor provided space for additional medical care, such as a surgical room and physical therapy space.

In the 1950s a larger municipal hospital was constructed to the west, and the Isolation Hospital continued in use in later years as the offices of the Springfield Health Department.

Vibra, the owner of the hospital complex since 1998, closed the hospital in 2018 and it has been vacant since then. Initial plans to redevelop the site for housing fell through with the pandemic. Due to its uncertain future, the building was named to Preservation Massachusetts' Most Endangered Resources list in 2022. The owner has not expressed an opinion on the proposed local historic district to the City.

MHC staff recommends acknowledging receipt of the Preliminary Study Report for the Isolation Hospital Local Historic District and providing the following advisory recommendations and comments:

The Massachusetts Historical Commission encourages the City of Springfield to establish the Isolation Hospital Local Historic District.

The Massachusetts Historical Commission encourages the protection of additional significant historic resources through a larger district or additional local historic districts.

Chairman Rosenberry then called for a MOTION TO ACCEPT the MHC staff recommendations on the Landmark Study Report for the **Richards Building in Boston (Financial District)**. A MOTION was made by Commissioner DeWitt and SECONDED by Commissioner Sullivan. The Chair called for questions or comments from the commission. The Chair recognized Commissioner DeWitt who said that the building should be designated as a Boston Landmark, but he wished the report had gone into greater depth about the façade and the issue of iron in the interior – nothing at all is said about the interior of the structure, which is too bad. He hopes that more research will be done if it is landmarked because it is a very important building. The Chair then called for questions or comments from the public. Hearing none, he moved the motion. The motion CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Chairman Rosenberry then called for a MOTION TO ACCEPT the MHC staff recommendations on the Preliminary Study Report for the **Isolation Hospital Local Historic District in Springfield**. A MOTION was made by Commissioner Wilson and SECONDED by Commissioner DeWitt. The chairman called for questions or comments from the commission. The Chair recognized Commissioner DeWitt who noted the staff recommendation for a possible expanded district, and pointed out that the later 1950s wing was designed by the firm of Shepley Bulfinch and appears to be fairly significant. Although the

Springfield Historical Commission clearly made a decision to split the wings in the district for political reasons, the later wing appears to be important, and he hopes that they would consider the staff recommendation to enlarge the district at some point. The Chair then called for questions or comments from the public. Hearing none, he moved the motion. The motion CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

This concluded the voting. Chairman Rosenberry then turned to the next item on the agenda, **Preview of the March 8, 2023 National Register Nominations**, and recognized Ben Haley, National Register Director, who informed the commission that there would be three nominations on the agenda for the March 8 meeting. Copies of the nominations will be sent to the Commissioners about two weeks prior to the meeting.

The Three Nominations Are:

Southbridge, American Optical Company Historic District

Southbridge, Mary E. Wells School

Springfield, Elias Brookings School

The Chairman thanked Mr. Haley for the preview of the National Register agenda for March, and he then turned to the next item on the agenda, the **Executive Director's Report**. He then recognized Brona Simon, Executive Director.

Ms. Simon began by reminding the Commissioners that the Survey and Planning full applications grant awards will be voted on at the Commission's March 8th meeting, and also reminding Commissioners DeWitt, McDowell and Wilson on the Survey and Planning Grant subcommittee that there will be a subcommittee meeting at 11 a.m. the morning of March 8th before the full commission meeting to review staff recommendations for awards in response to the full applications for grants that MHC received. The subcommittee will report its recommendations to the full commission meeting in the afternoon for votes on the recommended awards.

Ms. Simon next gave an update on the Federal FY2023 budget, which was finally enacted with an increase in the Historic Preservation Funding for the states. Massachusetts funding for FY23 will now be \$1,157,066. This was good news for all the states that the Historic Preservation Fund was increased.

Finally, Ms. Simon announced compiling statistics for our federal end of the year report, but also for a survey for all SHPO offices undertaken by the National Conference of SHPOs. These are great accomplishments for everyone at the MHC, the State Review Board and the Commission. She reported as of January 31st Massachusetts has 79,265 properties listed in the National Register of Historic Places. This puts Massachusetts in the top three states in the country with New York and Pennsylvania slightly ahead of us. In terms of the-number of properties in our inventory, we now have 228,980 above ground properties - building structures, bridges, landscapes, and streetscapes - in our inventory, and we currently have 16,210 archaeological sites in the inventory, which are further subdivided into 10,550 pre-contact Native American archaeological sites and 5,660 historic period archaeological sites which are sites that post-date 1600, either Native American, mainstream, minority, or ethnic group historic archaeological sites. The archaeological site numbers are lower than the above-ground buildings, because of the higher cost to find below-ground resources than above-ground inventory research. Most archaeological sites in the inventory result from Section 106 archaeological surveys, MEPA or state review archaeological surveys that are done in advance of development projects.

That concluded the Executive Director's report.

The Chairman then called for any other new business, Hearing none, he called for a MOTION to adjourn. A MOTION was made by Commissioner DeWitt and SECONDED by Commissioner Sullivan. The MOTION CARRIED, and the meeting adjourned at 1:34pm.

Commissioners Present

John Rosenberry

Charles Sullivan

Dennis DeWitt

Michael McDowell

Gina Perille

Susan Ceccacci

Donald Friary

Simone Early

Mark Wilson

Ashley Stolba

Gavin Kleespies

Staff Present

Brona Simon

Jennifer Doherty

Michael Steinitz

Ben Haley

Elizabeth Sherva

Joshua Dorin

Peter Stott

Paul Holtz

Nancy Alexson

Shari Perry-Wallace

Liz King

A TRUE COPY ATTEST

Respectfully submitted,

Shirley Brown