

## BSRA Entertainment Report for February 1, 2014

### LONG FORM (for historical record) Entertainment Report for February 1, 2014)

**February 1, 2014.** American Victoriana: The Architecture of Charles Brigham. Charles Brigham was an architect on the cutting edge, of international renown, who designed Back Bay townhouses, Newport cottages, and important public buildings in Boston and across the country, from 1866 to 1919. Watertown Historic Commission Chair David Russo presented an overlooked aspect of Brigham's work: the train stations that he designed, contributing markedly to station design and the burgeoning American culture of tourism and travel. The show began with a biographical introduction to Charles Brigham (1841 - 1925). He lived in Watertown, MA for nearly all of his life, and started his career as a Civil War veteran who made maps for the Union Army; unfortunately, none of these maps have been preserved. Although he had no formal education in architecture, he started a career in architecture apprenticed to Gridley J. F. Bryant (also a Civil War veteran), and then with John Hubbard Sturgis, with whom he was a partner for 20 years. Charles Brigham served in several public service and private enterprise offices, and had a substantial role in the Temperance Movement, resulting in his home town of Watertown being "dry" (not allowing the sale of alcoholic beverages) until Prohibition. His architectural work was ahead of its time, and prominently integrated several styles, as we saw throughout the show.

We saw an introduction to the architectural work of Charles Brigham in his design of important mansions and public buildings, including (scattered throughout) photos of furniture and light fixtures designed or at least specified by Charles Brigham for the buildings that he designed. The first photo was of the Edwin N. Perkins mansion ("Pinebank"), in Jamaica Plain, completed in 1868, mainly according to Sturgis' design; this was demolished in 2007, emphasizing that historic structures are not guaranteed preservation even today. This mansion was notable for use of terra cotta, which at the time had to be imported at considerable expense and was widely (although mistakenly) believed to be insufficiently durable for serious architectural work. Charles Brigham came into his own voice with the next mansion that we saw, for which he had his first independent commission: the Robert Cushing Cottage in Newport, RI, completed in 1868, followed by the Hollis Hunnewell house in Wellesley, MA, 1870. His foray into public buildings started with the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston's Copley Square in 1871, in a Gothic Style prominently featuring terra cotta. This was not the Museum of Fine Arts we know today on Huntington Avenue, and it was demolished in 1909. Next we saw the Edward N. Hooper House in Cambridge, MA, completed in 1872, featuring the "Georgian Revival" style inspired by drawings that Sturgis made of the Hancock House of 1737 just before its demolition. The Hooper House was later the personal house of Massachusetts Governor William Weld (who no longer lives there), and is on the National Register of Historic Places, but is reported to be currently on the market. Back to public buildings, we saw a drawing of the Cook County Courthouse (Chicago, IL) design submitted by Charles Brigham, but not selected for the actual building. Next was Church of the Advent in Boston, built from 1880 - 1888, although Charles Brigham also submitted plans for the Parish House in 1876 and alternate plans for this church in 1879 that were not selected for the actual building. This was strongly British-influenced, featuring Victorian Gothic. The next featured building was Charles Brigham's extension to the Massachusetts State House in 1889, ushering in the transition to the "Colonial Revival" style that has been a feature of all US State Houses built since 1889. We also got to see interior photos of the State House extension, including the Massachusetts House of Representatives chamber, offices, furniture, and more.

Next, we saw several buildings designed by Charles Brigham in Fairhaven, MA. This started with Millicent Library, completed in 1892, featuring terra cotta now produced in the United States and widely accepted as a serious architectural material. Next was Fairhaven Town Hall, built in 1894, built in "Venetian Gothic" style, and appearing much like a church; we also got to see interior photos of this, including light fixtures designed by Charles Brigham. After this was the H. H. Rogers Estate, built in 1895 and demolished in 1910, although with wings of the mansion being removed and used as individual dwellings for a time after 1910. Then we saw the Albert Burrage House on Commonwealth House in Boston, built in 1899 in a "French Chateausque" style that did not catch on in Boston, and reviled at the time for being ostentatious and indulgent, but now a historic landmark. Less visibly, this mansion also

featured a steel frame, allowing the incorporation of more windows than in structures having load bearing walls of masonry. Albert Burrage must have liked the product, because Charles Brigham got another commission from him, to build the Albert Burrage Estate ("Monte Vista") in Redlands, CA in 1901, in the "Mission Revival" style on the outside and a mixture of other styles on the inside. Note that Albert Burrage was on the Boston Transit Commission in the 1890s, and in on the planning of the Central Subway that eventually became part of the Green Line. Back to Fairhaven, we saw the Memorial Church, Parsonage, and Parish House that Charles Brigham designed, built in 1902 - 1903 in a "Neo-Gothic" style, except that the Parsonage was built in the "Elizabethan" style. Then we saw the Tabitha Inn, built in 1904 in the "Elizabethan" style; Mark Twain stayed here. Next we saw Fairhaven High School, built in 1906 in the "Eclectic Revival" style incorporating a mixture of Tudor-Gothic and other foreign styles, which still has one classroom in original condition (including desks designed or at least specified by Charles Brigham); we got to see interior photos of this classroom and other parts of the building, including an auditorium reminiscent of Hogwarts (from the **Harry Potter** movies), but featuring less stone and more wood.

Back in Boston, we saw the Christian Science Mother Church extension, built in 1904 in a mixture of styles strongly influenced by Renaissance, Byzantine, and Mosque architecture, designed to make good use of the limited space available at the time (due to the streets, zoning requirements, and adjacent buildings that have since disappeared). For the last non-railroad/transit building, we saw the Reverend Arthur Knapp House at 50 Garfield Street (12 Garfield Street before May 31, 1912) in Watertown, MA, built in 1881 in the "Queen Anne" style often mistakenly thought to be a style of the 1890s; this is the house that started the style, showing that Charles Brigham was truly a trend-setter.

Now we got to see train stations. This part of the show started with the Old Colony Railroad map of 1893. The Old Colony Railroad was established in 1845, and grew by mergers (including some of the railroads listed as commissioning the following buildings) to serve much of the Massachusetts Bay area until it was itself absorbed by the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad in 1893. The region served by the Old Colony Railroad defined the region containing train stations designed by Charles Brigham. The first image of a building that we saw was a drawing rather than a photo of Taunton Depot, because Charles Brigham designed this in 1866, but his design was never built, and he was scarcely paid for his work, and only after years of dispute. This was at the time of transition for Charles Brigham from working for Gridley J. F. Bryant to working with John Hubbard Sturgis. The Taunton Depot design did get some use for work for which Charles Brigham actually got paid, for the similar Plymouth Depot built in 1869, demolished in 1905 to replace it with a newer station. Next was Wollaston Depot in Quincy, MA, built in 1870 for the Old Colony and Newport Railroad, and demolished in 1969 or 1970 in the course of the Red Line Extension to Quincy; the photographer of this station captured a view with a train leaving the station. After this was Dedham Station, built in 1882 for the Boston and Providence Railroad (leased by the Old Colony Railroad starting in 1888), and demolished in 1951; this station fused "Romanesque", "Colonial", and "Craftsman" styles; we also got to see drawings of some of the interior. Then we saw Stoughton Station, built in 1888 for the Boston and Providence Railroad, now vacant but protected by being on the National Register of Historic Places; we also got to see some old interior photos of this. Also built in 1888 originally for the Boston and Providence Railroad, we saw Roxbury Crossing Station, with the photo featuring an elevated heavy railway behind the station (which was at ground level when the station was built) and streetcars going by in front of the station; this station was demolished at an unknown date, but likely in preparation for the Interstate 95 extension into Boston that was never built (having been stopped in 1972 after condemnation and destruction of a swath of land in the 1960s, that was eventually used for construction of the Southwest Corridor). The design of this station may actually have come from John Spofford.

Finally, we got to see Boston transit stations. This part of the show started with Atlantic Avenue Station on State Street, built in 1906, serving what was originally the downtown end of the East Boston Tunnel and the Atlantic Avenue Elevated; we saw several views of this, including a small emergency exit headhouse reminiscent of the Boylston Street Station headhouses, even though the latter were not designed by Charles Brigham. Atlantic Avenue station suffered a serious fire in 1949 and was demolished in the 1950s to make way for the elevated Central Artery (highway); the successor station is the modern Aquarium Station on the Blue Line. Finally, we finished up with Adams Square Station and Scollay Square Station on the Central Subway (eventually part of the Green Line), built in 1898 and demolished in 1928 (although the Court Street stairway of this station still exists, unused); the current successor to these stations is Government

Center Station (which only uses platforms in the Scollay Square Station locations), of which the current station building (dating from the 1950s) is itself due to be demolished and replaced from Spring 2014 - Fall 2016.

**SHORT FORM** (for Annual Report) Entertainment Report for February 1, 2014)

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