

WORCESTER COUNTY MECHANICS ASSOCIATION



Portraits at Mechanics Hall

Worcester, Massachusetts



Mechanics Hall

BUILT 1857 • RESTORED 1977
NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

Mechanics Hall has been judged by architectural historians as the nation's finest pre-Civil War concert hall. The Hall was built in 1857 by the Worcester County Mechanics Association, a non-profit organization that continues to own and operate it today. Mechanics Hall is testimony to the skill and ingenuity of Worcester's 19th century artisans and tradesmen, which defined them as the founders of America's Industrial Revolution. The building was used for cultural and educational events including concerts and lectures; it housed a technical lending library and classrooms for teaching the mechanical arts; it also was the site of industrial exhibitions.

Today, anyone can be a member of the Association, whose modern mission is to preserve and maintain the Hall as an artistically inspirational facility for cultural and community events. Fully restored in 1977, Mechanics Hall remains the cultural cornerstone of Central Massachusetts. It is widely used by world-class performing artists and by community organizations. The excellent acoustics are favored by many major recording companies. Free concerts, educational programs, weddings, black tie events, civic and commencement ceremonies, all share a history of taking place beneath the portraits in the Great Hall.

— Norma J. Sandison
Executive Director

Mechanics Hall
Worcester County Mechanics Association
321 Main Street, Worcester, Massachusetts 01608
508-752-5608
www.mechanicshall.com
mechanicshall@mechanicshall.com

Portraits at Mechanics Hall

Kathleen M. Gagne, Editor

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THE GREAT HALL IN MECHANICS HALL

Introduction

The Great Hall of Mechanics Hall may not be an art gallery but the portraits that surround the balcony give it an added dimension as a place of assembly. The portraits have looked upon the concerts, cotillions, lectures, and in the days of the Hall's decline, the wrestling matches and roller-skating. The original 19 portraits in the gallery were installed from 1866 (George Washington and Abraham Lincoln) to 1927 (Senator George F. Hoar). The four women's portraits were added in October 1999.

At first glance, there seems to be no common ground among these stern looking individuals in their somber clothing: presidents, military figures, politicians, citizens, leaders and lecturers. Closer research reveals, however, that all (except Washington) were contemporaries and that most were of local interest and importance. Further, those depicted reached the height of their influence during the period leading up to and through the Civil War, years when Mechanics Hall became a viable facility and a valuable adjunct to the social and cultural life of the community.

But why these individuals and not others? To understand their selection, one must first understand the nature of the Worcester County Mechanics Association, and the men who were its founders. Even the women's portraits abide the intentions of those 19th century Mechanics. The notables in the portraits represent those qualities of enterprise, patriotism, sobriety, and respect for the individual highly prized by the leaders of the Worcester County Mechanics Association.

The founding fathers of the Association, serious, frugal, practical, and a bit provincial, were mostly of humble origin. Their success was a result of ingenuity and hard work. Men of lofty principle, they were dedicated, according to the preamble of their charter: "to elevating our moral characters, improving our intellects, and cultivating our social qualities." Through presenting lectures, teaching technical skills, and providing a library of technical texts, they hoped to give the Mechanics in their employ a chance of bettering themselves.

Coupled with their desire to instruct, however, was to foster an appreciation of things of beauty. Through fine art, by "taking pleasure in things of the mind distinct from that of the senses," they believed men could achieve a higher moral character. To gain that end, they wished to make their hall a place of beauty and to embellish it with works of art. From the very beginning they began to acquire portraits to decorate the walls and to fill the niches made by the curved arches which surround the balcony.

How the Portraits Were Acquired

To say "acquire" is, perhaps, to give the impression that a systematic program of buying art took place. What transpired, though, proved to be a less selective process. Local citizens and groups eagerly came forward to put their chosen ones upon the walls. And the founders, being thrifty men, gladly accepted their offerings as long as they represented men worthy of such honor. Of the 19 original portraits, only four were commissioned by the Association and one (Senator Hoar) was purchased.

In 1886, Ichabod Washburn and Stephen Salisbury II presented the Association with Thomas Badger's portrait of George Washington, which was a copy of the Gilbert Stuart painting. The painting was hung in a place of honor over the stage. In the same year, the trustees accepted the E.T. Billings portrait of Abraham Lincoln, a presentation of the "lady friends of the Bay State Shoe & Leather Company." Lincoln's portrait was placed in the other place of honor over the stage. The good ladies continued their practice of donating paintings by contributing in 1867 and 1869 the Garrison and Andrew portraits, also done by Billings. The employees of the shoe company showed a marked preference for Billings as an artist and for subjects of national fame.

For the next forty years gifts came in. Military organizations presented the portraits of the generals, and relatives supplied others. Francis Plunkett gave the Association the portrait of his brother, Sergeant Plunkett; Mrs. Levis G. White that of her father, Benjamin Walker; Henry W. Miller that of himself; and the nieces of John Gough that of their uncle. The Worcester Women's History Project proposed the idea of "Honoring Women in Mechanics Hall" to the Association trustees in 1996 and commissioned the portraits of Lucy Stone, Abby Kelley Foster, Dorothea Dix and Clara Barton. The four women were chosen precisely because their industry and ideals were a match to the gentlemen whose portraits hung in the Hall for so many years. The women were contemporaries of the Mechanics, were of local importance and some had national notoriety. The women's portraits were presented in October 1999. In addition to the portraits' depictions of remarkable women, the paintings are 19th

century in style, and are framed in authentic 19th century frames.

Making room for the ladies was no small task. The Worcester Women's History Project consulted with the Worcester Art Museum and the Association Trustees to recommend which four portraits would be displaced. After much discussion and careful consideration of all factors, the portraits of James B. Blake and John A. Andrew have been removed from the Great Hall, and now hang on the north and south staircases, respectively, leading to the Great Hall. The portraits of Augustus B.R. Sprague and Josiah Pickett have been re-hung in the Washburn Lobby. In addition, several other portraits were moved from their longstanding positions and placed in other niches to favorably display all of the portraits as one installation rather than as separate statements. We note with amusement that the portrait of beloved Worcester Mayor James B. Blake has been moved out of the Great Hall. The Trustees in 1872 were not enamored of the depiction of their esteemed Mayor and, even after the artist made "some alterations and improvements" to the painting, the trustees moved it at least once, finally settling on a position for it at the rear of the gallery which offered poor visibility.

The portraits in Mechanics Hall represent distinguished and dedicated nineteenth century men and women, who serve as models for present and future generations. They represent the qualities most admired by the Mechanics, who themselves were the heartbeat of the industrial revolution in America. The portrait descriptions that follow are in order of their appearance in the Great Hall.



Abraham Lincoln



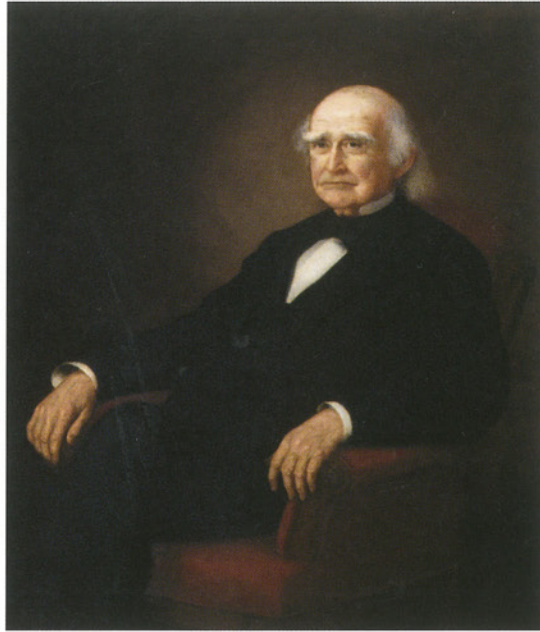
George Washington

“A fine painting of Abraham Lincoln was presented to us by our fellow citizens connected with the Bay State Shoe Company, and also a copy of Stuart’s Washington by the Hons. Stephen Salisbury and Ichabod Washburn.”

—Annual Report 1866-1867

Edwin T. Billings created the painting of Abraham Lincoln. Billings was by far the most popular painter with Worcester patrons. Born in Leicester, he stayed in Worcester from about 1855 to 1865 and then moved to Boston where he lived the life of a recluse. While in Worcester, he was especially productive, painting six of the portraits in the Great Hall (Lincoln, Garrison, Andrew, Ward, Walker and Miller) and several others, which are owned by the Worcester Art Museum. Abraham Lincoln was a hero to the Worcester citizens. The city had sacrificed many of its young men in response to Lincoln’s determination to preserve the Union. In addition, the prevalence of anti-slavery activists in Worcester led the Mechanics and other Worcesterites to hold Lincoln in high esteem. A massive and solemn memorial service was held in Mechanics Hall after his assassination.

Thomas Badger painted the portrait of George Washington, a reproduction of the Gilbert Stuart painting in Faneuil Hall. Julie Chase Fuller, the first woman president of the Mechanics Association and the Association’s first executive director was responsible for saving the Hall from the wrecking ball in 1975. In her efforts to raise restoration funds, she came to learn both great and minute details about every aspect of the Hall and its history. An excellent storyteller, her interpretation of Mr. Stuart’s opinion of President Washington became famous (infamous?) throughout the city. Nevertheless, Washington’s role as Father of the Country was important to the deeply patriotic Mechanics.

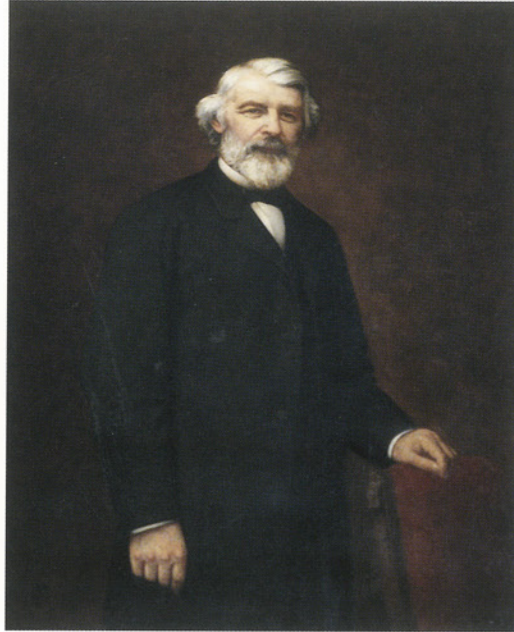


Henry W. Miller
(1800-1891)

HENRY W. MILLER came to Worcester as a young boy in 1804 and watched the city grow from a population of 1,500 to 85,000. Miller was the first person in Massachusetts to bring a coal-burning furnace into his home. Known for his integrity and industry, he owned a successful hardware business on Main Street until 1886. He served on the building committee for Mechanics Hall, was a founder and vice president of the Worcester County Institution for

Savings, a chief engineer of the Worcester Fire Department, and a Worcester selectman. He also assisted William Wheeler in establishing his foundry in 1825. George Frisbee Hoar became his son-in-law, marrying Wheeler's daughter, Ruth.

The portrait of Henry Miller was painted by Edwin T. Billings and was presented to the Worcester County Mechanics Association in 1890 by Miller himself.

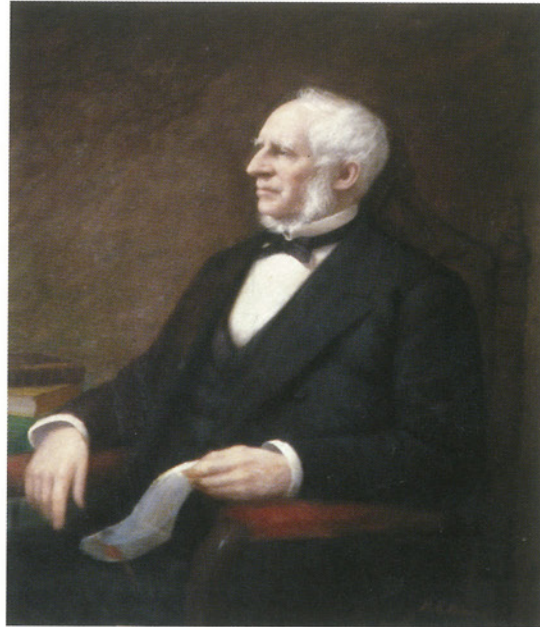


Benjamin Walker
(1809-1888)

BENJAMIN WALKER was born in Greenfield, Massachusetts and was a Worcester Mechanic and merchant. He served as an apprentice in several trades and gained skill as a blacksmith through an apprenticeship in West Boylston. He came to Worcester in 1829 and opened his own blacksmith shop on Waldo Street, but his success came only after he began operating the Walker Ice Company. Walker was known as an

honest man with a keen sense for business. He was a Worcester assessor and Alderman. A life member of the Worcester County Mechanics Association, having joined at its founding, Walker also served on its board.

Benjamin Walker's portrait was also painted by E.T. Billings, and was presented to the Association in 1890 by Walker's daughter, Mrs. Levis G. White.

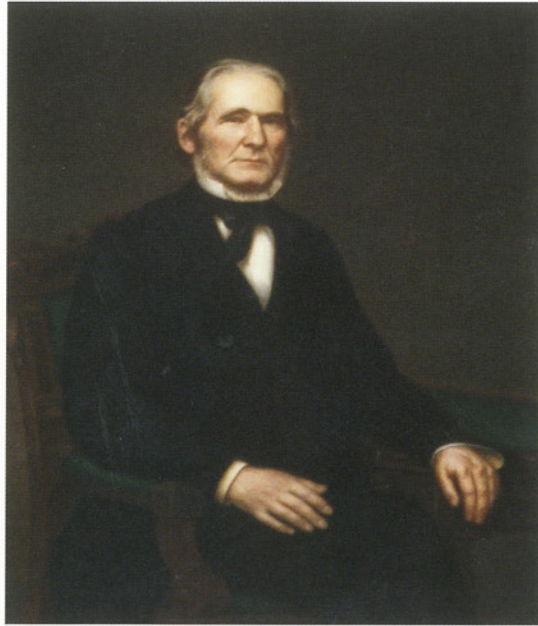


Stephen Salisbury II
(1798-1884)

STEPHEN SALISBURY II belonged to one of Worcester's most influential families. His link to the Mechanics began with his dedication to promoting the city's prosperity, enhancing its educational opportunities, and encouraging its economic growth. His funds were primarily responsible for creating the Worcester County Free Institution of Industrial Science (known now as WPI, and formerly as Worcester Polytechnic Institute). Creating a school for training in the latest technologies was a major goal of the Worcester County Mechanics Association. Salisbury's wealth grew in tandem with his relationship to the Mechanics of

Worcester. Many of their factories sat on land leased to them by Salisbury. He also built many of the factories himself, and leased the buildings to Mechanics whose businesses showed promise. He built the wire mill on Grove Street that enabled Ichabod Washburn to establish American Steel and Wire Company. An honorary Mechanic because of his close ties to industry, Stephen Salisbury contributed a large sum of money to the Association after the completion of Mechanics Hall to assist in decreasing its debt.

In 1909, the Association commissioned the Salisbury portrait from Henry E. Kinney, a Worcester artist.

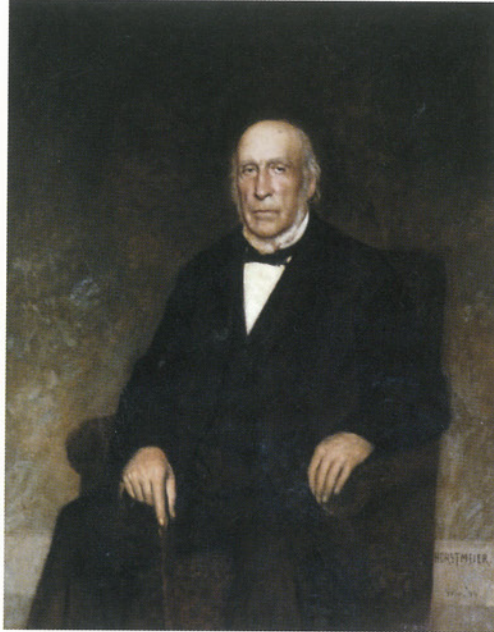


William A. Wheeler
(1798-1873)

WILLIAM ADOLPHUS WHEELER was the first president of the Worcester County Mechanics Association. At the time of his death, he was the oldest living manufacturer of iron castings in New England. Wheeler was born in Hardwick, Massachusetts, where he learned blacksmithing from his father and became successful in the iron foundry business. He opened an iron foundry in Worcester in 1823. Wheeler was extremely ambitious and embodied the defining characteristic of the Mechanics: innovation. With Henry Miller, he built the first cupola furnace in Massachusetts, a vertical furnace used to melt iron for casting.

He was the first in Worcester to use a steam engine. He was first in the state to manufacture hot air furnaces and cast iron stoves. He made iron castings for iron-workers, for tool-makers and for plow makers; he made fire-proof safes and heavy sheet iron, box stoves and cook stoves; he built the Worcester extension of the Worcester & Nashua Railroad; and his cast iron was used in the construction of Mechanics Hall.

Philip Spooner Harris painted the portrait of William A. Wheeler, commissioned by the Association and hung in 1876.



Elbridge Boyden (1810-1898)

ELBRIDGE BOYDEN was a prominent Worcester architect and was selected to construct Mechanics Hall. At the time of his death, Boyden was one of America's leading architects, and Mechanics Hall may be his greatest achievement. Boyden was born in Somerset, Vermont and grew up in Orange, Massachusetts. He apprenticed to carpenter Joel Stratton of Athol, and bought that business from Stratton at the age of 20. Boyden taught himself architecture by reading the two or three books on that subject that Stratton owned. In 1844, he assisted in building an addition to the Insane Hospital Asylum in Worcester, and in 1847 formed the Boyden & Ball architectural firm with former Worcester mayor, Phineas Ball. The Worcester County Mechanics Association contract-

ed the firm to design Mechanics Hall and paid \$500 for the plans. Boyden was a strict overseer of the building construction and did not shy away from the many arguments that erupted in various factions over the details. Aside from its beauty, Mechanics Hall is noted for its superb acoustics. Boyden had developed skill in acoustical design, which was not even a studied science in his day. His distinguished career in Worcester included designing many private homes, Nichols Academy in Dudley, remodeling the College of the Holy Cross, designing five nearby town halls, fifty churches, and numerous businesses.

The Trustees commissioned Boyden's portrait in 1897 from Albert W.A. Horstmeir.



Lucy Stone
(1818-1893)

LUCY STONE became one of the leading reformers and advocates of women's rights, winning fame especially for persuasive and moving oratory. Born in West Brookfield, Massachusetts, of a family long established in New England, her quest for education led her to Mt. Holyoke Female Seminary where she graduated with honors and became the first Massachusetts woman to be awarded a college degree. Stone later entered Oberlin College, Ohio, noted for its introduction of coeducation.

She was much influenced by the anti-slavery writings and ideas of William Lloyd Garrison. She spoke at the first national Woman's Rights Convention, held in Worcester in 1850. Lucy Stone established the *Woman's Journal*, and was co-founder of the American Women's Suffrage Association.

Numael Pulido painted Lucy Stone's portrait. It is among the four women's portraits presented to the Mechanics Association in 1999 by the Worcester Women's History Project.



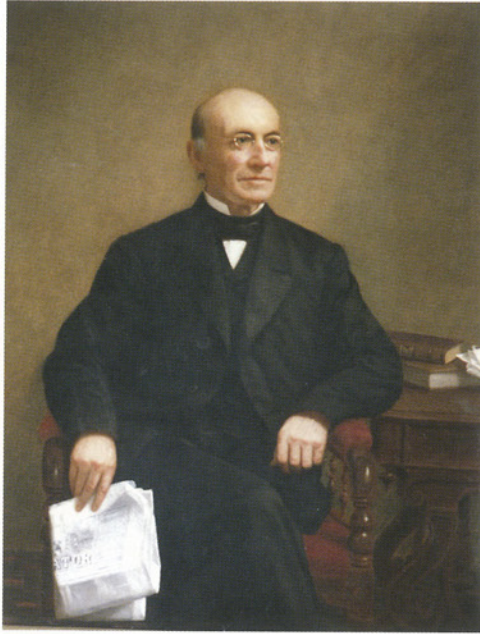
Clara Barton

(1821-1912)

CLARA BARTON cared for the wounded during the Civil War. Inspired by the work of the International Red Cross in Europe, she founded and was president of the American Red Cross for twenty-three years. Born in Oxford, Massachusetts, her lifelong love of learning and her passionate interest in education resulted in her establishing one of the first public schools in New Jersey. She went to work for the U.S. Patent Office, where she was reputedly the first woman hired for a

government job. Witnessing the almost total lack of first-aid facilities during the Civil War, she spearheaded an effort to provide supplies to hospitals and battlefield camps. After the War, she headed the government's Missing Soldier's Office, which tracked down thousands of lost soldiers and contacted their families.

Clara Barton's portrait is the work of Daniel E. Greene. It is among the four women's portraits presented to the Mechanics Association in 1999 by the Worcester Women's History Project.



William Lloyd Garrison
(1805-1879)

WILLIAM LLOYD GARRISON'S outspoken devotion to the abolition of slavery made him one of the most influential reformers of the 19th century. Garrison was born in Newburyport, Massachusetts and at age 13 began an apprenticeship in the newspaper business. By 1826 he owned his own paper, *The Free Press*. The following year, he went to Boston as editor of one of the first temperance papers, *The National Philanthropist*. In 1830 Garrison founded *The Liberator*, which he used as the platform for aggressively pursuing his moral and political causes. His passionate articles and speeches gained him fame and followers and equally impassioned foes. He first demanded the emancipation of slaves in 1830. Worcester celebrated Garrison as

a hero for his courageous stand in a righteous cause. He spoke at the 1856 Worcester Disunion Convention where he called for the peaceful elimination of slavery. In its early days, Garrison was opposed to the violence of the Civil War and wanted a peaceful separation of free and slave states, but eventually supported the war. After the war, his attentions turned to the issues of Negro education, prostitution, women's suffrage and Indian rights.

Garrison was a champion of causes to which the Mechanics were devoted. His portrait was painted by Edwin T. Billings and was given to the Worcester County Mechanics Association in 1867 by the "lady friends of the Bay State Shoe & Leather Co."

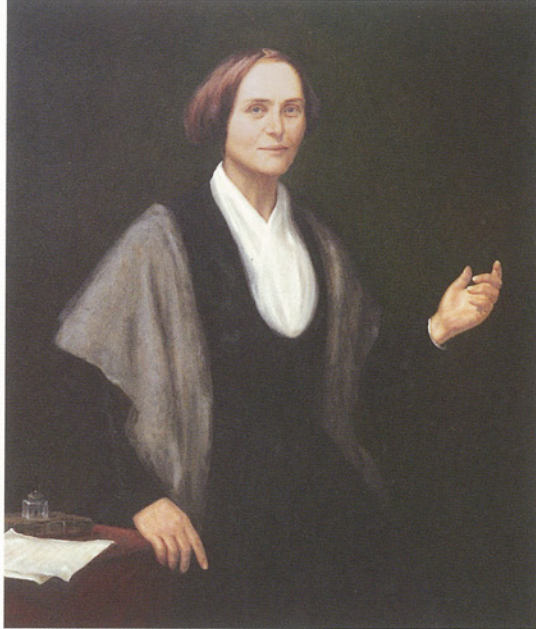


Henry Wilson (1812-1875)

HENRY WILSON served as Vice President of the United States under Ulysses S. Grant. He was born in Farmington, New Hampshire under the name Jeremiah Jones Colbath and became an indentured servant from the age of 10. At 21, he moved to Natick, Massachusetts, changed his name, and worked for a shoemaker. He briefly attended school and became fervently opposed to slavery. Wilson ran a shoemaker shop for ten years and began his political career in 1840 as a member of the Massachusetts House of Representatives. He helped to launch the Free Soil Party in 1848 and served numerous terms in the State Legislature and Senate. Wilson was elected to

the United States Senate in 1855. He was Chairman on the Committee on Military Affairs during the Civil War, bringing to bear his experience as brigadier general in the Massachusetts state militia. He had been present in 1856 at the Worcester Disunion Convention, which supported a peaceful emancipation but he bitterly opposed that stand. His rags to riches story, his trade as a shoemaker, his championship of the causes of working men, and his stance against slavery endeared Wilson to the Worcester Mechanics.

Wilson's portrait was painted by Edgar Parker of Boston and was hung in Mechanics Hall in 1886 as a gift of Edward A. Goodnow.



Abby Kelley Foster (1815-1902)

ABBY KELLEY FOSTER spent her childhood in the countryside around Worcester, and later lived in Millbury. Born near Amherst, Massachusetts, she was a crusader for the abolition of slavery and for women's suffrage. Foster was one of the first women to deliver speeches before sexually mixed audiences. She married a radical abolitionist, Stephen S. Foster. After the birth of their daughter, they bought and settled on a farm in Worcester,

from where they continued their activities on behalf of slaves and women, and where she eventually died. Her home, still standing on Mower Street in Worcester, was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1973.

Charlotte Wharton of Worcester painted the portrait of Abby Kelley Foster. It was presented to the Mechanics Association in 1999 by the Worcester Women's History Project.



Dorothea Lynde Dix (1802-1887)

DOROTHEA LYNDE DIX was the granddaughter of Elijah Dix, a prominent Boston physician, and Dorothy Lynde Dix of a leading Worcester family. Born in Hampden, Maine, she was a humanitarian crusader for the mentally ill, superintendent of army nurses during the Civil War, friend and protégé of William Ellery Channing, the Unitarian leader. Her impassioned report to the Massachusetts legislature on the plight of the insane eventually resulted in the expansion of the medical

facilities in Worcester to accommodate the state's mentally ill, known today as Worcester State Hospital. This was the beginning of a nationwide change in the treatment and housing of the mentally ill.

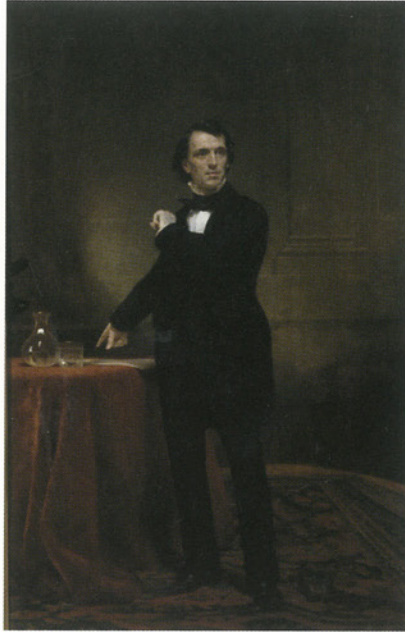
Susan Murray Stokes of Newbury, Massachusetts painted the portrait of Dorothea Lynde Dix. The Worcester Women's History Project presented the portrait to the Mechanics Association in 1999.



James Abram Garfield (1831-1881)

JAMES ABRAM GARFIELD was President of the United States when Charles Guiteau assassinated him in 1881. He was born in Ohio but his ancestors were from Massachusetts. His term as President was less than one year, but to the citizens of Worcester and the rest of the country, his military service during the Civil War and his political successes made him a hero with the stature of Abraham Lincoln. At his memorial service, Senator George Hoar declared that "Washington and Lincoln, even now, are coming forward to greet him, and welcome him to a seat beside their own." Worcester joined the country with an outpouring of grief for their hero. Garfield was memorialized with a service in Mechanics Hall just as Lincoln has been 16 years earlier.

President Garfield's portrait was owned by Edward A. Goodnow, who presented it to the Association in 1882. While the Mechanics were certainly willing to pay tribute to the slain president by hanging his portrait, they may have had a motive other than patriotism for accepting it. Goodnow also owned another portrait, about which the trustees hinted in the annual report of 1882, "There is the hope...that we may soon have the gratification of seeing as a companion, the portrait of the late Vice President of the United States, Henry Wilson." They greatly desired to have Wilson's portrait, and Goodnow obliged by giving it to them in 1886. Edgar Parker of Boston painted both the Garfield and the Wilson portraits.



JOHN B. GOUGH was born in Sandgate, England and came alone to New

York City at the age of 14, where he became a very successful bookbinder. When he could afford it, he sent for his mother in England. She became ill and died, however, shortly after arriving in America. Gough drank alcohol to console himself. To make matters worse, his first wife died together with their first child and alcohol was Gough's chosen comfort. Losing all, he eventually arrived in Worcester in 1842, working as a comic singer and mimic. Although he was entertaining, his drinking prohibited him from becoming successful. Joel Stratton (a relation of the Joel Stratton from Athol who hired Elbridge Boyden as a carpenter) persuaded Gough to sign the temperance pledge. Remaining sober was a struggle for Gough, but he was determined. Although he was mocked in his attempts by those who knew him as

John B. Gough (1817-1886)

a drunkard, Gough began to make speeches on temperance, and became an

accomplished orator, moving his audiences to tears as well as laughter, and signing on more than 15,000 others to "the pledge." His rewards included the respect of the city and speaking engagements around the world. He also regained his lost wealth, being paid up to \$175 per speech. Mechanics Hall was a favorite podium for temperance promoters, and Gough was quite at home on the stage of the Great Hall.

The portrait of John Gough was painted by Sir Daniel MacNee and given to the Association in 1901 by Gough's nieces, Mrs. Charles G. Reed, Miss Fannie Whitcomb, and Miss Mary G. Whitcomb. The Scottish Temperance League commissioned the portrait in 1855, when Gough was only 38 years old.

ICHABOD WASHBURN was a brilliant Mechanic who made his fortune in the wiredrawing industry. He was one of America's foremost industrialists of the nineteenth century, and a true Worcester Mechanic. Born in Kingston, Massachusetts, Washburn was "put out to live" when he was nine years old as an apprentice to a chaise and harness maker in Duxbury. He returned to Kingston and worked in a cotton factory when he was 14. He later apprenticed to a Leicester blacksmith and went to

work in Worcester forging and finishing machinery. His first business was manufacturing lead pipe and woolen goods machinery. His second business was manufacturing machinery for carding and spinning wool. In 1832, Washburn became one of the first in America to produce iron wire. He invented a wire drawblock, which dramatically increased his wire production. Stephen Salisbury II built a wire factory on Grove Street for Washburn—according to Washburn's specifications. His businesses, American Steel and Wire and Washburn and Moen were housed in Grove Mills and in Central Works in South Worcester. Washburn's wire was used for telegraph wire, barbed wire,



Ichabod Washburn
(1798-1868)

ladies' hoop skirts, and for Chickering pianos. Not only a great industrialist, Ichabod Washburn was civic minded, highly religious, an outspoken abolitionist, and a generous benefactor. His bequest made possible the establishment of Memorial Hospital. He was a co-founder of the Worcester County Free Institution of Industrial Science (now WPI) and of Washburn College in Kansas. Washburn was responsible for constructing the Mission Chapel for the poor on Summer Street

and the Union Church on Front Street. He was elected Vice President of the Worcester County Mechanics Association at its founding in 1842, and was president when Mechanics Hall was built. He is largely responsible for its existence, through contributions amounting to about \$25,000, for securing the land, and for acting as a buffer to protect Elbridge Boyden from micro-management by the building committee. He also donated the first \$1,000 toward the construction of the Worcester Organ in the Great Hall, built by the E.G. & G. Hook brothers.

Washburn's portrait was painted by Bostonian Moses Wight and was commissioned by the Association in 1870.



Sergeant Thomas Plunkett (1839?-1884)

THOMAS PLUNKETT was born in County Mayo, Ireland, and came to Boston with his father and two brothers in 1844. At an early age, the younger Plunkett came to West Boylston and became a leather worker with his brother in a boot factory. In 1861 he enlisted in the Union Army, Company E, 21st Regiment of the Massachusetts Infantry Volunteers. A veteran of many bloody battles, including Chantilly and Second Bull Run, Plunkett's last battle was at Fredericksburg in 1862. Grasping the flag from the dying color bearer of Company A and holding it on high, Plunkett led the troops to the farthest point reached by

any Union soldiers that day. But the charge was halted when a shell exploded on the flag. Plunkett's arms were nearly severed, and as a result of these injuries, were amputated. Plunkett was a hero beyond all measure. When he died at the age of 44, his remains were brought to Mechanics Hall, where the blood-stained flag he saved at Fredericksburg was delivered from the State House to be draped over his coffin.

Civil War veteran James Madison Stone painted Sergeant Plunkett's portrait, which was presented to the Association by the Sergeant's brother, Francis Plunkett.



GEORGE FRISBEE
HOAR was perhaps
Worcester's greatest
statesmen. He was a

lawyer, a Congressman, and a United States Senator. Originally from Concord, Massachusetts, Hoar lived in Worcester for more than fifty years. He attended Concord Academy, Harvard University, and Harvard Law School. He was a reformist and ardent abolitionist, coming to Worcester because it was the "strong-hold of the new anti-slavery party (Free Soil Party)." He was elected to the Massachusetts House of Representatives at age 25 and to the State Senate at 31. He married William Wheeler's daughter, Ruth, and returned to Worcester after her death to practice law and raise two children. During that time, he became in demand for his radical speeches against slavery. He was elected to the

George Frisbee Hoar (1826-1904)

United States Congress in
1868 as a result of a strong
campaign backed by the
Worcester Mechanics. He

was re-elected six times, and elected to the U.S. Senate in 1877. He remained a Senator for thirty years. Always the radical, he enmeshed himself in reconstruction issues and Negro rights. He was a strong advocate for women's rights, and was especially interested in education. He greatly admired the Worcester Mechanics for their industry and ingenuity and for the growth they fostered in the city of Worcester. Memorial services for Senator Hoar took place in Mechanics Hall, the building in which he spoke many times.

The portrait of Senator Hoar was purchased by the Association in 1927 and was painted by Henry Hammond Ahl of Boston.



General George Hull Ward
(1826-1863)

GENERAL GEORGE H. WARD was born in Worcester, a descendent of General Artemus Ward from Shrewsbury, who was prominent in the Revolutionary War. As did many others in those days, Ward became a skilled machinist at an early age. When he was twenty years old, however, he followed his life's passion and joined the military. Ward rapidly rose through the ranks and, by the outbreak of the Civil War, his leadership abilities gained him a commission as lieutenant colonel in the 15th Regiment of Massachusetts Volunteers. He lost a leg at the battle of Ball's Bluff in 1861, where he and others in the Worcester regiment fought with bravery and distinction. He returned to Worcester in 1862 to assist with recruiting and

drilling soldiers, while what remained of his leg healed badly. He was determined to rejoin his regiment on the battlefield, however, and he did so in 1863. At Gettysburg, the 15th Regiment and the 82nd from New York came under a heavy onslaught, and General Ward lost his life on the battlefield. Worcester's hero was lauded for his bravery and patriotism. Sergeant Thomas Plunkett of the Massachusetts 21st Regiment, already home, joined the funeral procession. General Ward is memorialized with a statue at Gettysburg.

The portrait of General Ward, painted by E.T. Billings, was presented to the Worcester County Mechanics Association in 1873 by the 15th Massachusetts Regiment Association.



JAMES BARNARD

BLAKE was born and raised in Boston. He studied engineering with the firm, Blake & Darracott and eventually came to Worcester when that firm became contractors for the Worcester Gas Works. In 1852, Blake became Agent of the Worcester Gas Light Company and later on became Superintendent of the Gas Works. He was trustee of the Worcester Five Cent Savings Bank, and a director of the City National Bank and People's Insurance Company. He was elected mayor in 1865 and every year afterward for the next five years. His dynamic leadership abilities drew the city into the industrial age, with its first public sewerage system, major street and water supply improvements, and an overhauled public school system. The Mayor was well loved by everyone in the city, even those that disagreed with his positions. Blake met an untimely death when he and a foreman of the Worcester Gas Works unwittingly carried a lantern near a gas-filled

pipe that had been carelessly left open. The resulting explosion was said to have shook the city and was heard for miles. The mayor, badly burned, directed efforts to extinguish the fire. He died from his injuries two days later. Once again,

James Barnard Blake
(1827-1870)

Mechanics Hall was the sight of the city's mourning. A man who pushed the city toward prosperity, Blake had much in common with the Mechanics.

The portrait of Mayor James Blake was painted by William Willard of Sturbridge, and was presented by the citizens of Worcester to the Mechanics Association in 1872. Controversy over the accuracy of the depiction caused the Mechanics to request that Willard make some improvements. Even so, the Mechanics were not pleased with the painting and placed it at the rear of the Hall, where it received dim visibility. It is now installed on the north staircase leading to the Great Hall.



Governor John Albion Andrew (1818-1867)

JOHN A. ANDREW was governor of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts during the Civil War and was dedicated to the abolition of slavery. His leadership in Massachusetts provided strong support for President Lincoln and for preserving the Union. Andrew entered Bowdoin College at age 15, and although he did poorly academically, he did become a fine debater and formed a definitive opposition to slavery. In 1848, Andrew became an organizer for the Free-Soil Party, and in 1857 was elected to the state legislature, where he quickly took on leadership roles and grew in statewide popularity, particularly for his outspoken opposition to slavery. When the Civil War broke out, Andrew rallied the Massachusetts

troops to be the first to go forward. After emancipation, he formed the 54th and 55th Massachusetts all-black regiments. Andrew served as Governor until 1867 and died shortly after leaving office. His positions on slavery, his leadership abilities, and his patriotism profoundly affected Worcester's Mechanics, who themselves were at the peak of their influence in the city.

The portrait of Governor John A. Andrew also was painted by E.T. Billings. The "lady friends of the Bay State Shoe & Leather Co." presented it to the Worcester County Mechanics Association in 1869. The portrait is now installed on the south staircase leading to the Great Hall.



General Josiah Pickett (1822-1908)

GENERAL JOSIAH PICKETT was born in Beverly, Massachusetts. In 1849 he was drawn by the Gold Rush to San Francisco, but that adventure did not make him rich. He came to Worcester in 1855 to pursue his interest in the military and to join the Worcester City Guards, known as a small and highly disciplined military unit. During the Civil War he formed Worcester's Company A of the 25th Massachusetts Infantry and was made colonel by 1862. He served gallantly and bravely, leading a charge in 1864 at Cold Harbor after other Union forces scattered and broke down. His charge turned the battle tide in favor of the Union. Confederate General Bowles remarked that Pickett's regiment was the only one to obey orders. He was wounded severely and sent back to Worcester to recuperate but returned to the front

in November, although his health forced him to retire shortly afterward. Pickett was a genuine Worcester hero. He was city Postmaster for twenty years, worked at the Worcester Customs House, was a director of the Worcester Electric Light Company and a member of the Worcester County Mechanics Association, and the Society of Antiquity.

James Madison Stone, a veteran of Pickett's own regiment, painted the portrait of General Pickett. The 25th Regiment, Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry presented the portrait to the Mechanics Association in 1902, while Pickett was still alive. The event was spearheaded by General A.B.R. Sprague himself, and drew a crowd of 200 veterans. The portrait now hangs in the Washburn Lobby.



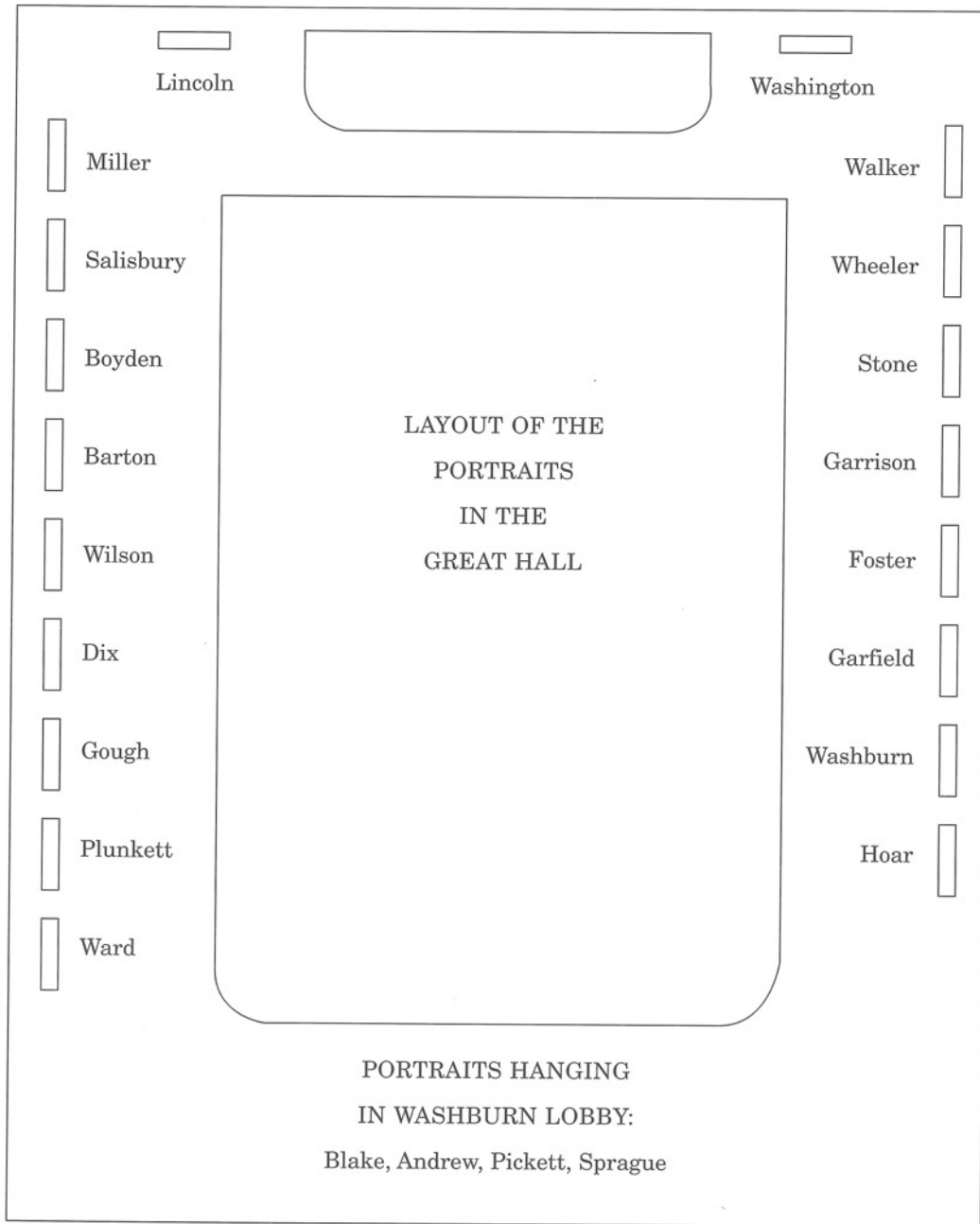
GENERAL A.B.R. SPRAGUE was born in Ware, Massachusetts, a descendent of John Alden of the Mayflower. At 15, he came to Worcester as a clerk for a prominent Worcester merchant and joined the Worcester City Guards two years later, beginning his brilliant military career. He was elected captain of the guards when the Civil War broke out and became a member of the 25th Massachusetts Regiment of the Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry. He fought at Roanoke and Newberne and was placed in command of the 51st Massachusetts Volunteers as a colonel. He brought his regiment into Pennsylvania to stop General Lee's offensive, and remained there until Lee's forces were driven back into Virginia. He came home to attend an ailing relative, but returned to the war in 1864 to command the Second Heavy Artillery and eventually was

General Augustus
Brown Reed Sprague
(1827-1910)

commissioned brigadier general. He retired in 1865. Sprague returned to Worcester and became a dedicated force of reform in the city. He was Worcester City Marshall and Collector of Internal Revenue and Sheriff of Worcester County. In 1895, he was elected mayor. His civic legacy includes prison reform and new public school buildings. He was also a business leader, serving as the treasurer of Putnam & Sprague furniture business, as president of the Worcester Electric Light Company and of the Mechanics Savings Bank.

The portrait of General Sprague was painted by James Madison Stone, and was presented to the Worcester County Mechanics Association in 1903 by the 51st Massachusetts Regiment Association. The portrait now hangs in the Washburn Lobby.

PORTRAITS AT MECHANICS HALL



Credits

The information in this volume is taken heavily from the accounts in two sources.

The first is an earlier edition of *Portraits at Mechanics Hall* printed in the early 1980s and written by Florence Zuckerman. The second is a paper written by Gary Johnson at the College of the Holy Cross produced in May 1980. The research performed by Zuckerman and Johnson provided much of the bibliographic details throughout this volume. In addition, the

Worcester Women's History Project is credited with the photographs of the four women's portraits. Mary Melville, co-chair of the Worcester Women's History Project, wrote the biographical descriptions of Clara Barton, Dorothea Lynde Dix, Abby Kelley Foster, and Lucy Stone. The photograph of Mechanics Hall on page 2 is by Steve Rosenthal. Partial funding for publishing this edition was provided by the Worcester Women's History Project.

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