

Three Little-Known Massachusetts Organizations: The Historic Bostons' Partnership, the Boston History Collaborative, and the Bay State Historical League

By Maureen A. Taylor

The city of Boston, with its rich history, is home to a plethora of organizations with a historical purpose. Yet the majority of citizens are unaware of most of them and what they do. In this article I will profile three unique groups linked by an educational mission that are worth knowing about. One of these organizations focuses on students and tourism, another works to educate individuals working with museums, historical societies, and historic houses, while the third intends to awaken tourists to Boston's exciting history.

Historic Bostons' Partnership

The [Historic Bostons' Partnership](#) was established in 1999 to "recognize and celebrate the unique and important historical connections that exist between Boston in Lincolnshire, England and Boston in Massachusetts." One of the founders of the group, Professor Will Holton of Northeastern University, presented a "plan for the foundation of a vital, people-to-people relationship celebrating and expanding the rich historical links" between the two Bostons at the organization's first meeting. The Partnership seeks to make the public aware of that centuries-old history, including the link between the Boston Latin School in Boston, Massachusetts (1635) and the Grammar School in Boston, Lincolnshire (1567).

Indeed, many of the original settlers of Boston, Massachusetts came from the Lincolnshire area during the Great Migration, including Simon Bradstreet, John Cotton, and John Winthrop. But did you know that the [Boston Latin School](#) is the oldest school in the country, founded on April 23, 1635? The first headmaster of the Boston Latin School once taught at the Grammar School in Boston, Lincolnshire, cementing the bond between the two schools.

The Partnership maintains this connection through educational programs via the Internet and curriculum materials. A student exchange program between the two schools is also planned. Since the two towns have a historical link, it is hoped that a tourism package will encourage travelers in both directions. Both Mayor Thomas Menino of Boston, MA and the Boston (U.K.) Borough Council support the project.

Many outstanding Bostonians attended the Latin School including Leonard Bernstein, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Benjamin Franklin. Franklin left an endowment to present the top seven graduating seniors with a medal, named after him. Today, almost 100 percent of the graduating class goes on to college. One of the stops on President George Bush's education reform tour on January 8, 2002 was the Boston Latin School.

For more information contact:

Will Holton
Massachusetts Chairman
41 Oriole St.
Boston, MA 02132
[email](#)

Judy Cammack
Lincolnshire Chairman
127 Spilsby Road
Boston, Lincolnshire PE 21 9QN

Boston History Collaborative

Boston's role in the American Revolution is an important part of the curriculum of any American history teacher, but how many history textbooks include Boston's literary heritage or technological innovations? Executive Director Dr. Robert Krim founded the Boston History Collaborative in 1997. Krim formed a non-profit alliance of historians from area universities; representatives from area museums, historic sites, and libraries; members of the Greater Boston tourism industry; city, state, and federal officials; and the business community to explore Boston's "hidden" history. The goal of Collaborative is to position Greater Boston as one of the world's primary destinations for historical tourism by offering visitors and residents educational and entertaining programs over a ten-year period. To that end, they have ambitiously launched a series of projects to meet the goal of presenting Boston as a different type of tourist destination.

Recently, the Collaborative held a History Makers Award Dinner to honor those Boston corporations who have made history through their innovations. This year's recipients were the Gillette Company for the disposable razor; Genuity, Inc. for Bolt, Beranek, and Newman's development of the Internet; Genzyme, a biotechnology firm; and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology for laboratory-based education. The Boston Red Sox baseball organization won a Centenary Award.

Boston History Collaborative Projects

[Literary Trail of Greater Boston](#) is a self-guided twenty-mile tour that showcases some of the country's literary greats such as Ralph Waldo Emerson and the Alcotts. Start at the Omni Parker House Hotel and visit Beacon Hill, Boston Athenaeum, Boston Public Library's Bates Hall, Longfellow House, Concord Museum, Orchard House, and Walden Pond. If you want to learn more about Boston's place in literary history consult Susan Wilson's guidebook *The Literary Trail of Greater Boston*, in collaboration with the Boston History Collaborative (Houghton Mifflin, 2000).

[Boston by Sea](#) consists of several projects focusing on Boston's maritime heritage. These include three types of Boston Harbor tours--a guided walking tour, a self-guided tour, and a boat tour that was launched in May 2000. The boat tour includes live theater, music, video, and slides in a performance that stages re-creations of events of courage, adventure, and discovery. Visitors can view the USS Constitution, Boston Light, Fort Warren, the site of the Tea Party, and the Golden Stairs of Immigration while hearing the stories of historical Boston events. The guided walking tour is free and goes along the Long Wharf led by actors dressed in the style of nineteenth-century Boston. The guides show where the British landed in Boston in their attempt to put down the Revolution, explain the important role the Wharf played in the cod trade, and tell the story behind Boston's opposition to slavery and slave catchers. All of these stories are told right where the events occurred. The self-guided walking tour allows visitors to explore Boston's maritime history at their own pace with a map and informational brochure.

[Boston Family History](#) is a website helping Bostonians and those who migrated through Boston find their family roots. Boston Family History also features a series of virtual trails linked to local ethnic associations and neighborhood historical societies, that touch on Boston's historic places and monuments.. While Boston is popularly associated with the Irish, this site illustrates the diverse populations that have settled in the city. Follow a timeline, contact genealogical societies in the Boston area, or leave a

message on the site's forum. It's up to you.

[The Innovation Odyssey](#) spotlights the people and places behind Boston's great inventions. This tour of Boston and Cambridge highlights Boston's unique contributions to the worlds of technology, finance, and medicine. Did you know that the invention of the telephone and Internet, the birth of modern surgery and DNA decoding, the creation of the mutual fund, and the formation of the nation's first commercial bank all occurred in Boston? Special group tours can be arranged through the Collaborative. Contact the Boston History Collaborative, 179 South St., Boston, MA 02111, 617-350-0358 for information on rates and group tours.

The Bay State Historical League

The oldest of the three organizations profiled is the [Bay State Historical League](#), founded in 1903. According to their website, it is a "non-profit association of individuals and organizations such as history museums, historical societies and commissions, historic houses and sites" that promotes "the enjoyment of history through its preservation, interpretation and presentation." So how do they do that? Well, the 1949 Massachusetts law that requires state and local history be taught in the schools is just one of the League's successes. They also work closely with the Massachusetts Historical Commission, the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners, and the Massachusetts Historical Resources Advisory Board. This means that the League is part of the community of professionals working with Massachusetts history both as an institution and on the behalf of its members.

Membership is open to both individuals and organizations, with rates for the latter pro-rated depending on operating budget. Benefits include *Common Wealth*, a quarterly newsletter with articles on public history. Membership also includes borrowing privileges to their circulating library. A list of materials for loan appears on their website. Members also qualify for discounts on fees for League workshops and seminars.

A League membership is a must for staff members of historical organizations. They offer a wide variety of workshops and programs on the types of problems encountered by these organizations, from caring for historical photographs to grant writing. Their membership list is a network of individuals facing similar issues in non-profit management. An unusual benefit of membership is the lending of measuring devices that indicate relative temperature and humidity levels in order to determine whether an institution's facilities meet preservation standards. Workshops are regularly held for members on a variety of subjects; recent ones have ranged from preservation standards to tips on being an effective tour guide.

The League recently published two books: *Painting Historic Exteriors: Colors, Application, and Regulation* (with the Massachusetts Historical Commission) and Cynthia Robinson and Gretchen S. Sorin's *Going Public; Community Program and Project Ideas for Historical Organizations*. This is in addition to working on editions of the *Directory of Historical Agencies in Massachusetts, a Speakers Bureau* (with the Center for New England Studies) and *Massachusetts* by Judith Freeman Clark.

Who wouldn't want to be part of this vital organization? It's easy to join, so why not consider it today. Contact the Bay State Historical League, 185 Lyman St., Waltham, MA 02452, 781-899-3920 for more information.