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T H E R E A R E N O T I M E S L I K E T H E S E T I M E S



Daniel Dain presenting "A History of Boston," on January 25 at The Hub on Causeway Community Room.

WEM hosts 'A History of Boston' discussion

Story & Photos by Marianne Salza

Daniel Dain, founder and president of the law firm, Dain Torpy, discussed his book, "A History of Boston," during a January 25 West End Museum (WEM) presentation at The Hub on Causeway Community Room. Dain explained how density, diversity, and urban design influenced the prosperity of Boston from the arrival of the

first people to the election of the first, female and person of color as mayor.

"My book starts 580 million years ago, with the geological formation of this area," said Dain, who believes that Boston is one of the world's greatest cities, as it is first in higher education, hospitals, life science companies, and athletic teams.

Dain began researching for his

book in an effort to understand how Boston had changed from prodigious heights in the 19th century, to a bleak 20th century, and has transformed today into one of the most powerful economic centers.

"It addresses political, economic, social, and cultural history. There is history on music in Bos-

(HISTORY Pg. 8)

Jeanne McWilliams Blasberg returns with third novel

By Dan Murphy

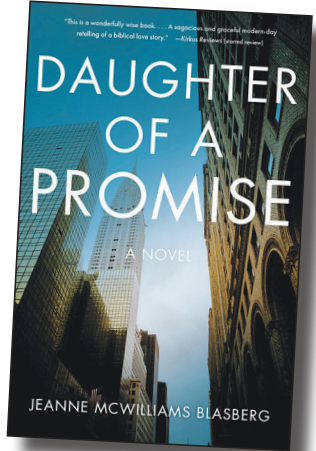
Although Jeanne McWilliams Blasberg describes her third novel, 'Daughter of a Promise,' set to be published on April 2, as "an Old Testament love story," readers need not be overly familiar with the Bible (or with Blasberg's previous work) to comprehend and appreciate her modern retelling of the story of David and Bathsheba.

'Daughter of a Promise' (She Writes Press), which has received a starred Kirkus Review, follows Betsabé Ruiz, straight out of college, as she starts her first job as a financial analyst on Wall Street. Ruiz has a goal of working there for only two years to save money

to pursue her true dream of becoming a theatre actor. But she soon finds herself consumed by the long hours that the job demands, leaving her little time for socializing, much less for taking acting lessons. Ruiz also finds herself attracted to her boss, leading to an illicit liaison between them.

In the Biblical text, which Blasberg, a former longtime Beacon Hill resident, drew from for her latest novel, King David spotted Bathsheba from atop his roof and summoned her. Their subsequent liaison resulted in pregnancy, even though Bathsheba was then married to Uriah, a soldier in David's

(BLASBERG Pg. 7)



COURTESY OF JEANNE MCWILLIAMS BLASBERG
'Daughter of a Promise,' Jeanne McWilliams Blasberg's soon-to-be-published third novel.

Enrico Caruso - His Songs: Concert to be presented by Nichols House Museum

By Suzanne Besser

The works of Enrico Caruso, considered by many to be the greatest Italian opera tenor of the early 20th century, will be sung by English tenor Mark Milhofer on what would have been Caruso's 151st birthday on Sunday, Feb. 25.

Enrico Caruso (1873 -1921) sang to great acclaim at the major opera houses of Europe and the Americas, appearing in a wide variety of roles that ranged from the lyric to the dramatic. Recognized as one of the first major singing talents to be commercially recorded, Caruso made 247 recordings from 1902 to 1920, which led to his reputation as an internationally popular entertainment star. Some of these recordings also feature Louise Homer, a popular performer at the Met and a Nichols family relation who even performed in the parlor at 55 Mount Vernon St.

Born in Naples, Caruso toured widely both with the Metropolitan Opera touring company and on his own, giving hundreds of performances in Europe and the U.S. He had a repertoire of more than 500 songs, ranging from classical compositions to traditional Italian melodies and popular tunes of the day.

Mark Milhofer has spent a quarter of a century singing in professional opera productions around the world. He studied choral singing at Magdalen College, Oxford, and specialized at the Guildhall School of Music in London, before winning one of the few places at the Italian Opera Studio in Milan.

He began his career in Italy, working with Giorgio Strehler who chose him to open his brand-new theater in Milan. For many years he played in a duo with pia-



COURTESY OF THE NICHOLS HOUSE MUSEUM
Mark Milhofer, the English tenor who will be performing the works of Enrico Caruso on Sunday, Feb. 25, at a private Beacon Hill home for a concert sponsored by the Nichols House Museum.

nist Sebastiano Brusco and has often collaborated with playwright and music historian Sandro Cappelletto. He has also performed on stage with well-known actors. The concert will be Milhofer's first performance in New England, following his Carnegie Hall debut on Feb. 21.

Milhofer will be accompanied by pianist Marco Scolastra, at 3 p.m. at the Harvard Musical Association. The concert, which is sponsored by the Nichols House Museum, will be followed by a reception featuring a 1907 Caruso cocktail as well as an opportunity to dine with Milhofer and Scolastra in a private Beacon Hill home. This special event will raise funds for the Nichols House Museum's conservation and programs. Please visit www.nicholshousemuseum.org for more information and to purchase tickets, or call 617-227-6993.

HISTORY (from pg. 1)

ton, movies filmed here, and 50 pages on sports teams,” described Dain. “It’s a broad history, but what unifies it is it answers the question of what made Boston a success, a failure, and then a success again. Even when Boston was stagnant, there were successes. Nothing is as linear as we try to make it out to be.”

Dain is a trial lawyer representing commercial property owners and developers in Boston, and is fascinated by land use laws, real estate litigation, and urban planning.

“When my clients make decisions to invest in the city, that’s a three to seven year process,” Dain revealed. “They’re making a prediction about the future when they’re deciding to build. My clients are making hundreds of millions of dollar investments under the assumption that Boston is a place people will want to continue to live. We’re in a period I call ‘high urbanism,’ which is a period of time when people want to live, work, play, shop, and visit the city.”

Dain considers Native Americans as the first urbanists in the area. They lived communally in villages and cultivated the land. Dain noted that archeology indicates Native Americans in New England as far back as 12,000 years ago; with evidence of first settlements -- fish wares and arrow

heads – from about 4,000 years ago.

Dain recognizes colonists to be the second urbanists in New England. It was important for Puritans to live in towns, where they could be protected, frequent places of worship, and attend school so children could learn to read the bible.

The three pillars of the New England economy during the Colonial period and early Federal period were fishing and whaling, trading, and agriculture. By the 1840s, all three pillars of the New England economy were in decline.

Dain examined how New England reinvented itself from an agrarian, maritime economy to an industrial economy in the 19th century. It started in 1810-1812, with Francis Cabot Lowell’s industrial espionage. Lowell studied the power looms in England to develop New England’s industrial weaving.

“They allowed visitors, but you could not take notes or draw pictures. They searched your bags when you left the business to make sure you weren’t leaving with anything. Lowell came back and worked with an engineer to recreate and improve the power looms,” exclaimed Dain. “They opened their first mills in Waltham, and the American Industrial Revolution began.”

The early American Industrial



West End Museum listeners learning about the successes and failures throughout Boston’s history.



Boston trial lawyer, Daniel Dain, author of “A History of Boston.”

Revolution is based on manufacturing enhancements. Production was made more efficient, and low-cost labor replaced craftsmen.

“As we go across the 19th century, the Industrial Revolution is creating new products that no one has ever seen before, and creating tremendous demand. The most famous one created in Boston was the telephone in 1875,” said Dain. “Boston was coveted. Boston did two things to accommodate the people who wanted to be in Boston: landfill and annexation of independent towns.”

In 1920 there was a deep, national deflationary recession after World War I ended. The New England economy had been based on industry and manufacturing companies that began looking for lower cost labor. Mills were shut down and relocated to the American south or overseas.

“It triggers a long period of time in New England that lasted into the 1990s. This region struggled for 70 years,” emphasized Dain, who noted that the economy was not replaced with anything robust until the 1990s with a technology based economy.

The Immigration Act of 1924

limited the amount of people from entering the United States. Social reformers considered immigrant neighborhoods, like the West End and the North End, to be problematic – scourged with disease, fires, and crime. The adoption of zoning laws was implemented to prevent overcrowding.

“Innovation did not happen in Boston for 70 years, and our economy stagnated because people were not listening or talking to each other, or exchanging ideas,” determined Dain.

The 1942 Zoning Law of the City of Boston separated industry from residencies. Dimensional regulations isolated buildings with the intention of slowing the spread of disease, and creating fewer places for criminals to hide. In 1948 urban renewal plans were devised to demolish 25% of Boston’s dense neighborhoods, including the West End.

In the 1980s, Harvard University economist, Ed Glaeser, determined that the market value of three quarters of the homes in Boston was less than the cost of construction. Boston lost 230,000 residents between 1950 and 1980 due to people fleeing the city. In

1982, Brookings Institute surveyed American cities and declared Boston as the most blighted, big city in the country.

Dain concluded that city building is based on what he refers to as “the three D’s:” density, diversity, and urban design. He believes that urban spaces are lucrative when they are designed to bring people together. Uniting generations of individuals from various cultural and socio-economic backgrounds brings about a mix of knowledge, and improves decision making.

“The key to innovation is the exchange of ideas from people with different experiences and backgrounds. Innovation is what drives vital cities,” deduced Dain, who lives in Needham with his wife and two children. “Boston is vibrant today. It is an enormously important city. On a per capita basis, you could make the argument that it’s the most economically powerful city in the entire world.”

“A History of Boston,” features contemporary photographs taken by Peter Vanderwarker, and images acquired from WEM, which will be re-opening its renovated museum space this spring.

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