



The Newsletter of The General Society of Mechanics & Tradesmen

Founded in 1785, The General Society of Mechanics & Tradesmen is dedicated to improving the educational and cultural opportunities for people in the City of New York

Welcome Mechanics Institute Students

Last fall, at the Mechanics Institute Orientation, a brand new group of students gathered in the General Society Library to start the semester in-person. Our Zoom days of teaching were mainly in the past.

Students eagerly listened as Executive Director Victoria Dengel spoke. They had worked hard to gain entry into the educational programs of the Mechanics Institute. Each person's application and essay were testaments to their thirst for knowledge and desire to advance in their careers. "There is a difference between search and research," Ms. Dengel said. "Research is like oak. Search is just veneer. At the Mechanics Institute, you will do research, which goes deep and will stay with you forever. Your teachers are eager to begin, and I can see that you are as well."



*Legendary Educator Louis Rouillion
Directed Mechanics Institute 1900-1945*

Our staff of instructors were thrilled to see each other. It was a wonderful reunion. Most had not seen each other since March 2020. Our instructors give so much of themselves. They show up with enthusiasm after full days of work to share their vast experience and knowledge with our students, and for that we are forever grateful.

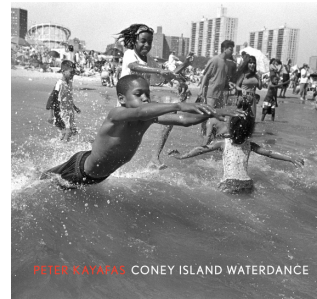
Ms. Dengel introduced the teachers and they each gave a brief talk on what they would be teaching and welcomed the students to the family that is The General Society.

President Holohan was not able to be at this Orientation. However, he sent these words, which Victoria shared:

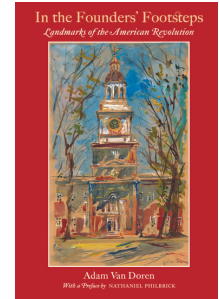
"I'm sorry I couldn't be with you in person this evening, but you are all very much on my mind as you begin your journey at

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General Society Lecture Series, Spring 2022



*Coney Island Waterdance by
Photographer Peter Kafayas*



*In the Founders' Footsteps
with Writer and Illustrator,
Adam Van Doren*

The General Society Lecture Series continues a tradition of public lectures that started at the Society in 1837. The Spring 2022 Lecture Series began with the following talks:

On March 29th, *Celebrate Alligator in the Sewer Day and Learn About NYC's Other Wonderful Critters, Too*. This illustrated talk by historian Michael Miscione enthusiastically discussed the history of Gotham's greatest true-ish urban legend. The talk was followed by an engrossing interview with author Thomas Hynes about his book *Wild City: A Brief History of New York City in 40 Animals*.

On April 12, Raymond Pepi, President and Founder and Laura Buchner, Senior Conservator, of Building Conservation Associates gave a fascinating presentation on *Understanding the History of the R. Guastavino Co. through Five Decades of Construction at the Cathedral Church of Saint John the Divine*.

On April 19th, in *Europe Divided: Huguenot Refugee Art & Culture*, decorative arts expert Tessa Murdoch discussed the remarkable work of Huguenot refugees that included hundreds of trained artists, designers and craftsmen.

On May 3, in a talk called *By Design: The Life and Work of the Artist Dietrich*, architectural historian, Gregory Dietrich explored the captivating life and career of his father, the Swedish-American Impressionist "Dietrich".

Future Spring lectures so far include:

On Tuesday, May 17th at 6 p.m. photographer, Peter Kayafas in a talk entitled *Coney Island Waterdance*, will discuss his recent book which captures, in stunning images, the swimmers of Coney Island.

On Tuesday, June 7th at 6 p.m. in a talk entitled *In the Founders' Footsteps: Landmarks of the American Revolution*, author Adam Van Doren will provide a tour through the original thirteen colonies in search of historical sites and their stories in America's founding.

Major Restoration of The General Society's Landmark Facade

Our building's facade with its ornamental fire escapes is a New York City Landmark. Over the past two years The General Society of Mechanics & Tradesmen conducted a major restoration of the facade. The scope of the work was created and supervised by the architectural firm of Howard L. Zimmerman Architects, P.C. This included repairing and fully repainting our two decorative fire escapes, both of which exhibited decades-long exposure to the elements.

The restoration included cleaning of all the brick masonry, terracotta, and stone units, the repointing of all the mortar joints, the replacement of most of the terracotta units at the water table, and the resetting and repair of the attachments of the sheet-metal cornice at the top of the building. Cracked brick masonry was replaced. A light-duty paint remover, applied at a low pressure to avoid damaging the surface of the existing brick masonry and terracotta units was used. The existing beige coating that covered the terracotta and stone units was removed revealing the original orange glazing and limestone shades, and most of the soiling present on the brick masonry, which allowed us to see the original two-tone color of the bricks for the first time in decades. The fire escapes and window frames were painted to match their original color which was revealed through a paint analysis and in consultation with *Landmarks Preservation Commission* documents.



The Main Roof Copper Balustrade

With respect to the Main Roof Copper Balustrade, Easton Architects led this aspect of the restoration. The existing copper balustrade had a granular coating and tar. Easton Architects interpreted the original design intent to have been exposed copper and thus proposed replacement to match the original. The existing balustrade was disassembled and salvaged pieces of the old balustrade were sent to a copper fabricator for templating. All the components of the original balustrade were demolished including railings, piers, balusters, and all the wood framing. The original balustrade sat atop brick, the joints

of which were raked and repointed to ensure a stabilized base. New wood framing was constructed on top of the brick base to serve as a structure for the new copper balustrade. New copper cladding was then installed to match the historic intent, over top of the wood framing members. This copper cladding has no applied finish. We will leave it to the natural elements to provide patina.



20 West 44th Street

When you visit you will now observe the original appearance of this beautiful building, with its entire concert of colors. It is a glorious testament to the work of the original architects, Lamb & Rich (1890) and Ralph S. Townsend (1903) as well as the artisans whose hands originally crafted this magnificent New York City Landmark.

Welcome Mechanics Institute Students

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...Mechanics Institute. We have been virtual since Covid arrived and we are now thrilled to be back in our building. Please continue to take care and know that we will get through this together.

You are the 163rd class to study here. You are now a part of a great American tradition. It's nearly impossible to find tuition-free adult education, but this is what we've stood for since 1858. I know you will make the most of this gift. Your teachers are magnificent and their experiences will make you richer. That I can promise you.

You chose to be here and we are honored that you are. I read your applications and your essays. We had many more applicants this year than we could possibly accept. We had to choose, but your story stood out.

So engage. Make new friends. Study hard and learn. Then take what we give you out into the world and make it better. I will see you at graduation. I am so proud of you. Thanks for being here."

Celebrating the Life of GSMT Member Polly Guérin

Polly Guérin was a beloved General Society Member who passed away on September 16, 2021 at the age of 89. A woman of many talents, she was also an author of multiple books including *The General Society of Mechanics & Tradesmen of the City of New York: A History* published in 2015. Polly was also a former adjunct professor at the Fashion Institute of Technology. She would share her reviews of art shows, musical performances, museum exhibitions, and other cultural events taking place in our wonderful City. She brought such detail to each essay she penned. We were delighted to find out, among her many achievements, that she had been a professional opera singer at an earlier point in her life. So we weren't surprised to find this story below about Polly that appeared in *The New York Times' Metropolitan Diary* in 1985.



While trundling socialites from gala to gala, limousine drivers experience a fair amount of downtime during which they are wont to work the streets, picking up the common folk. The negotiated fare is usually higher than the fare for a cab (assuming one can find a cab), but so much lower than the going rate for a limo that some people who have never been known to ride in such style say, "What the heck?" and hop in.

Not Polly Guérin. On a recent rainy night, she and a friend were standing on East 55th Street, waving at vanishing cabs, when a long, black limo pulled up. A darkened window glided down and a uniformed driver called, "Need a ride?"

Miss Guérin shook her head. Too rich for her blood. The friend agreed. But the driver persisted, as did the rain, and the interior of the limo looked so exotic, so inviting that the two women said, "What the heck?" and sank into its plushness. "Where to?" "New York Hospital. We're late for visiting hours." "Why not phone to say you're on your way?" the driver suggested.

Lifting the lid of a compartment beside her, Miss Guérin placed a call to their friend in the hospital. They were cruising up Park Avenue, she reported, and would be there momentarily. She was calling from the back seat of this stretch limo. It had a telephone, a bar, TV, the works.

"Very funny," the friend in the hospital said. "But it's true," Miss Guérin said, between giggles. The friend in the hospital laughed and asked to be remembered to Mick Jagger.

At the hospital, a crowd stood huddled under the canopy in the rain. All eyes were on the limo. Miss Guérin and friend were about to jump out to meet their public, but the driver explained that this was the way it was done. Ceremoniously, he opened the door and ushered them into the hospital under a colorful golf umbrella. Some entrance.

Of course, they were prepared to pay the driver a good sum. And, of course, he refused to take a penny. Otherwise there would be no point at all to this story. It ends with the driver calling, "Hope your friend feels better," and driving off to pick up someone else. Perhaps Mick Jagger.

Polly's Final Poem...

A Tribute by Dan Holohan, General Society President

Polly Guérin was always a celebrity to me. When I first arrived at the GSMT Polly was scheduled to give a lecture, based on a book she had written about the history of The General Society. I wasn't able to attend because I was out of town that evening. I wrote her and told her that I had bought her book on Amazon and learned a lot about our history. I thanked her and she told me that her lecture would be on YouTube and that I could watch it there.

I did watch it and was delighted with Polly's old-school formality and grace. We became friends and she began sending me poems. There would be one at the end of each month, wishing that passing month adieu, as she always said. She would sum up what had happened in verse, and what we had to be thankful for, and sorrowful for, and hopeful for in the coming month. Each month was a precious gift to Polly, and she shared that joy with me and others I have never met.

This is Polly's last poem, sent to me on September 2, 2021.



Polly Guérin

Autumn in New York

*The trees are Singing a song
Then autumn leaves came along
Leaves dressed in crimson red
Brushed with gilt beams instead
The glorious golden autumn days
Treasure them before they phase
Nature's grand finale is closing in
Savor the moments and begin
For too soon it is winter's tale
Comes round so swift with the pale.*

I emailed her immediately after I read it and told her which part was my favorite (The trees are singing a song, in this case). I told her how much I appreciated her generosity and her kindness in sharing these poems with me. She wrote back, *Thank you dear Dan for your praise for this poem. I am so pleased to receive your comment. Love, Polly.*

She once told me that she saved all of my emails to her. She printed them and hung them on the wall of her apartment.

We did this for a few years, right up until the end when it was our sister Polly's turn to say adieu. I will miss her forever and hold these last stanzas in my heart:

*Savor the moments and begin
For too soon it is winter's tale
Comes round so swift with the pale.*

Adieu, dear sister Polly Guérin. Adieu.

A Special Visit to the Bert Spilker Key Collection

Several years ago, Dr. Bert Spilker donated to the GSMT a magnificent collection of antique and ancient keys he had gathered from across the world over a period of 50 years. His collection now lives forever alongside The Mossman Lock Collection on our balcony.



A close-up sample of the Bert Spilker Key Collection

"Because they are beautiful" — Dr. Bert Spilker

Dr. Spilker is a remarkably accomplished man. He has written 15 textbooks on drug development, which are required reading in the pharmaceutical industry. He has a broad range of knowledge, and many decades of experience advising the FDA, NIH, and multiple drug-development programs worldwide.

We asked him why he had collected the hundreds of keys as his hobby, and he said, "Because they are beautiful."

And they are! But beyond beauty, we must say they are also fascinating. Each comes with a story, and we invite you to visit them.

Dr. Spilker's son, Adam, was visiting NYC from St. Paul, MN with his students last October. He called soon after he landed and asked if they could stop by and explore the keys and the locks in our museum. We said, "Of course!"



Visiting the John M. Mossman Lock Collection

Adam Spilker is a Rabbi and he has a story as wonderful as his father's. In a letter to President Dan Holohan he wrote "The summer that I was 18 years old, I was traveling with twenty other university students for six weeks in Jerusalem, studying sacred space from the perspective of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Then we spent a month at Tzipori, an archeological dig in the north. There, in the heat and dirt, in an Iron-Age pit 20 feet down, I felt connected to land, to history, and to my Judaism in a way that made the next years of transitioning from pre-med to rabbinical school possible."

And we thought of that Iron-Age pit and of the iron keys collected by his father, and of the wonderful connections that exist all around us if we only stop to notice them.

After their visit, Executive Director, Victoria Dengel wrote, "Dear Adam, it was an absolute pleasure to meet you and your wonderful St. Paul, Minnesota 11th- and 12th-graders last night. The joyful energy and genuine interest of these boys and girls was amazing to witness. Thank you for taking the time to visit and see the star attraction of the evening: The Bert Spilker Key Collection. We are forever grateful to your father for his donation. We treasure the Collection daily."



Group photo in front of the Bert Spilker Collection

***"We are forever grateful...
We treasure the Collection daily" — Victoria Dengel***

Rabbi Spilker responded, "That night was the first night in New York for the teens, and the visit was a highlight of the whole trip. Thank you, Victoria, for your gracious hosting of my group. I was just visiting with my parents for Thanksgiving and I shared our experience being at the museum. I also talked about you, Victoria, in my sermon following the trip, and about how your own story and your father's was so moving to hear. It was part of hearing three stories from women during our five days and comparing it with hearing Rebecca's voice in Chapter 24 of Genesis."

There are connections everywhere. The Spilker family is now a part of our GSMT family, and we are blessed to have them with us forever.

A Teaching Team of Brothers

Since its founding in 1858, our Mechanics Institute (MI) has employed many fine teachers, but Dave and John Cataneo stand out as being the only team of teaching brothers we know of to have shared their vast experience with our students. Both men are Master Plumbers, with a strong background in hydronic heating. We recently asked them a few questions about how and why they teach. We think their answers are perfect for the times in which we live.



John and Dave Cataneo preparing for class

GSMT: Dave, you're a graduate of M.I. Did you ever think that someday you'd be teaching here? How do things look from the front of the room?

DC: "I have two distinct memories of my time here as a student more than 30 years ago. I remember Mechanics Institute having this reputation as THE place you had to get into if you wanted to eventually get your license and own your own company.

"The building itself is completely intimidating, especially when you first walk in and look up at that giant hammer that seems so ready to render judgment on the unworthy.

"I walked in wondering what I had gotten myself into! And, no, I certainly never imagined I'd have the honor of being invited back to teach.

"The other memory that stays with me is how, after working a full day, I would get to West 44th Street and have to sit in my car until precisely 6 PM because that's when street parking became free. Then I would race up to the classroom.

"Getting through the Plumbing program was no easy feat back then; and it requires no less of a commitment from our students today. I try very hard to be mindful of their time. I also know that I owe them my very best effort when I walk to the front of each and every class. I was once one of them. I understand what it's all about."

GSMT: Gentlemen, you both crafted the new Plumbing and Heating curriculum to give our students what an employer needs most nowadays. Can you elaborate on that?

JC: "Sure. Today, someone working toward the title of Journeyman Plumber is going to be expected to perform on-the-job tasks that go beyond what individuals have traditionally faced in that role. We have more to do, and less space in which to do it. A job's layout and advance planning have become critical. We need to allow room for

the IT lines, vast electrical installations, fire suppression, and so much more that goes behind the walls and into the ceilings of every structure built nowadays.

"More and more we interface with not only our clients, but also with our clients' reps, architects, engineers, as well as manufacturers' reps, and all those involved in documenting a project and keeping everyone on site working safely.

"We've become not only ambassadors of the companies we own or work for; we're also ambassadors of our chosen trades. It's for at least these reasons that my brother and I have zeroed in on some key elements, and some non-negotiable skills, that we believe all those seeking to advance in today's trade landscape must become familiar with.

"A tradesperson will always learn best by being in the field; but we believe our wide range of experience - from tool-carrying installers and service techs, to President and Vice-President of the company - allows our unique work perspective to shine through in our approach. This is what we want to pass on to our students."

DC: "I'll add to that. I've never believed the statement that plumbing is a 'blue-collar' occupation has been fair. And these days, it's total nonsense.

"There's a revolution in the way we approach everything nowadays. Safety- and OSHA training have become not just a priority, but an industry unto itself. Automation and Artificial Intelligence are changing the way the world works. We are entering our third year of Covid. Most office buildings remain nearly empty. Our city is about to ban natural gas as a fuel, and not just for new hookups, but in toto. This is no longer a matter of 'if' but rather how quickly it's going to happen.

"I recently sat through a two-hour seminar on Hydrogen. Think of that. Hydrogen as a dominant fuel! And if not us, who is going to make that happen? The city, the utilities, the unions and the real-estate industry are going to have to come up with a whole new playbook, and soon. We're going to need employees who can implement that playbook.

"I talk about the codes, and the means and methods in class; but I also talk about how our trade is at an historical turning point. We have to be ready now.

"I know every commencement speaker since the beginning of time has told each class how the future is in their hands. Those are nice words, but for our students, it's the absolute truth. We have to be ready right now."

GSMT: You are partners in *Gateway Plumbing & Heating*, which keeps you both very busy. What inspired you to make time to teach others what you have learned?

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A Teaching Team of Brothers

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J.C. "For me, the rewards of teaching this class are numerous and present themselves in many ways. Perhaps mostly by watching a classroom of students sail through a tough midterm- and final exam, armed with new knowledge that makes them so much more valuable to an employer. We've changed them. We've made them smarter and better, and that is just an incredible feeling of shared accomplishment. It's tough to put into words, but let me just say this: Emotions run very high on Graduation Day."

DC: "John and I often say to each other that hardly anyone is going into the trades these days, and this in spite of all that I said in answering the previous question."

"I suppose teaching at M.I. is our version of lighting a candle instead of just cursing the darkness. It's encouraging to stand in front of a group of people who are so enthusiastic about the plumbing trade. We need more of them - a lot more."

GSMT: What's it like to share this teaching experience with your brother? Has it brought you closer?

JC: "It has, and mostly because it's a distraction. Before we began teaching together, the topic of our conversations was overwhelmingly about our shared business, which is often a major source of stress for both of us. Now, we look forward to discussing our teaching techniques and sharing ideas about how best to bring our diverse students together to meet our common goals. It's a beautiful distraction."

DC: "Exactly! And it was great to have John walk me through the whole process and how he puts together his classes. He was there first."

"When he asked me last semester to take on the remote Sprinkler/ Fire Suppression class, I assumed it was a one-time event and that would be it. But then I was asked to stay on and teach the Plumbing Design and Theory class. I was really excited to do it, but I knew I'd need a lot of help. Our registrar, Meg Stanton is terrific with the IT side of things, and I so appreciate all her help."

"John was also a rock when it came to putting together the new curriculum. When we were first discussing it, I think the word I used was 'nerve-wracking,' and I'm used to being under pressure. John thought that was hilarious, and he was really instrumental in getting me to (sort of) stop stressing."

"Since then, it's been really fulfilling, and I'm grateful to John for his encouragement, and of course, to Victoria and the rest of the staff for all their help."

Teaching and learning at Mechanics Institute has always been, and will always be, a team effort. We are blessed to have this Team of Brothers on staff.

Behind the Scenes at the GSMT Lectures

If you've ever been to one of our GSMT lectures, whether in person or online, you've seen Karin Taylor, The General Society Program Director. Karin always introduces our speaker. Her voice has the lilt of Northern Ireland in it and is the perfect prelude to what is always an interesting and enriching talk.



We recently asked her where and how she finds all these fascinating speakers.

General Society: How do you select the lecture subjects?

KT: *"Programming the many General Society 'Labor,' 'Literature,' and 'Labor and 'Artisan' Lectures is a team effort, in collaboration with General Society Executive Director, Victoria Dengel, General Society Board Members and past speakers. It also involves consistently researching subjects that we think will have great appeal for our audiences. Topics range from history to architecture, and often celebrate New York City. In the case of the "Landmark" lectures, many of these have been curated by Lisa Easton of Easton Architects. For the past 8 years, she has chosen a wonderful selection of specialists in architecture, conservation and preservation to deliver a wide array of "Landmark subjects."*

General Society: How did the Artisan lectures evolve?

KT: *"The Artisan Lectures Series was established in 2011 by master ornamental metalworker and General Society Member Jean Wiart in honor of the twenty-two Artisans, who founded the General Society in 1785. The series pays tribute to the art of craftsmanship by featuring master artisans who lecture about the intricacies of their specialized crafts. The Artisan lectures have also been curated by Camille Wiart and by Rhett Butler, Principal of the renowned E. R. Butler & Co."*

General Society: How are the lectures programmed?

KT: *Among the many ways described above, but also happenstance plays an integral part in the programming. For instance, Betsy Bober Polivy, stopped by in Spring 2021 to write about and photograph our John M Mossman Lock Museum to include in her, at that time, yet- to-be-published second book, "The Art of Walking Manhattan Sideways."*

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Behind the Scenes at the GSMT Lectures

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During our conversation, she described the story of her first book, "Walking Manhattan Sideways" where Ms. Polivy pounded the side streets of Manhattan for nearly a decade, talking to the many unique businesses that were found on the cross streets of Manhattan. To draw attention to them she published this wonderful book, celebrating these special places. When we heard this captivating tale, it was abundantly clear this would make a great talk; and so we invited Ms. Polivy to speak as part of our lecture series. She, in fact, spoke twice, highlighting both marvelous books."

General Society: What goes into putting together a successful event, where so much is said in so little time?

KT: *"Our lectures have been well-received because of the exceptional speakers we are so fortunate to have found. All of our lecturers share a passionate devotion to their subjects. Their presentations, often accompanied by stunning images, eloquently illuminate any range of topics in the duration of an hour."*

General Society: Have you held online lectures?

KT: *"In the Fall of 2020, as well as the Spring and Summer of 2021, our lectures were all conducted online via Zoom and it is a credit to our speakers, amidst what could be considered to be impersonal technology, that they all managed to strongly engage our audience and create such memorable programs."*

General Society: Have you re-introduced in-person lectures?

KT: *"The majority of our lectures in the Fall of 2021 were held simultaneously online and in-person. We were so delighted to have an in-person audience once again, but at the same time be able to include our online audience that joined us nationally and often internationally. Our audiences and their support are the foundation of our lecture series. We are delighted to now be in the midst of the 2022 Lecture Season and able to welcome our speakers and audience back both online and in-person."*

A Visit from MI Alumnus Richard DeLaRosa

Mechanics Institute Alumnus, Richard DeLaRosa, recently visited with us from his home in Saint Cloud, Florida. Richard is a native New Yorker. His father and mother moved to NYC from Puerto Rico in 1969. He stopped by with his lovely wife Jaritza DeLaRosa. Richard enjoys reading, camping, fishing, and playing with their five grandchildren.



We asked Richard what brought him to the Mechanics Institute in the first place.

"I learned about the Mechanics Institute while working for the Can-Do Electric Company," he said. "I worked with my father as his helper. I registered for the Electrical Technology Program back in 1990 and graduated in 2003. The education I received at the Mechanics Institute was the gateway that guided me in becoming a journeyman in the electrical field. The skill sets that I have obtained from the Mechanics Institute's learning environment paved the foundation for my careers. It helped me develop confidence as well in pursuing a family business."

We also learned that Richard's family business carries a proud name: Eddie's Workshop. "We started that business in Florida in 2017," Richard said. "We designed it to meet the needs of the community by providing electrical, plumbing and carpentry services. I named it in honor of my father, Eduardo DeLaRosa, who passed away in 1998. Dad and I always talked about making a business together. He is always alive in my heart. Even while troubleshooting and performing difficult tasks, I can hear his voice guiding me through every challenge. His influence has taught me to be a servant leader. When people

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Please Help the General Society Support Our Programs

The historic GSMT building has space to rent for programs and special events including:

- Our grand, three-story library
- Balcony/Museum
- Conference Rooms for smaller meetings
- Classrooms available for regular daytime use or evening lectures, classes, receptions and more

For more information, call The General Society office, (212) 840-1840 ext. 2, or visit our website www.generalsociety.org and click Rent Space.



Meet Jesús Berrios, The General Society Super

Jesús Berrios is a very special New Yorker. He grew up in Manhattan and lived in Frederick Douglass Housing at 104th Street and Columbus Ave with his four brothers and one sister, all raised by his Mom.

"She taught me that if I see somebody who's hungry I should take out a couple of dollars and help them," Jesús told us. "I just like to help people. It's a good thing to do. It comes back to you. It's better to be nice than not nice."



Jesús Berrios

Jesús has been with GSMT for 21 years. "I was working for Bayside Builders and was looking for something different to do. A friend gave me The General Society's number and told me they were looking for a handyman, so I called. They checked my references and hired me. I couldn't be happier!"

Jesús told us that working at GSMT helped him put his five daughters through college. Two are NYC teachers; one is an NYPD Detective; and the other two work at Memorial Sloan Kettering. Two have Master degrees, and one (a Special Ed. teacher) now wants to become a Corrections Officer.

Jesús was one of seven men who started what became Harlem RBI, now DREAM, whose mission is to provide inner-city youth with opportunities to play, learn and grow. They use the power of teams to coach, teach and inspire youth to recognize their potential and realize their dreams.

"It started as Two Rock Field in 1991," Jesús told us. "Seven of us got together and cleaned a field and started coaching 50 boys in the fundamentals of baseball. We wanted to give back to the kids in this community. We wanted to make them believe in themselves, to stay in school, and to understand that knowledge is power. We tell them, 'Don't do what your friends do. Just because they smoke doesn't mean you have to smoke. Be all that you can be.' This is natural to me. I want kids to excel and be better than I am."

It didn't take long for Jesús' five daughters to want in on the baseball action. "They came running with some of their friends and said they wanted to play, too. So I told the Director we gotta make a girls teams, too. We can't just have guys teams because I have girls."

Harlem RBI eventually helped those five girls get through college.

"We now have our own charter school at 104th St. and Second Ave," Jesús told us. "We have our own high school at 115th St. and Pleasant Ave. RBI is one of the greatest things that ever happened to the community. The kids have a place to go. Ninety-percent of the students graduate from their schools. The NFL, MLB and the NBA all sponsor RBI. Bernie Williams and Jorge Posada of the New York Yankees came to talk to the kids.

As we said, Jesús is a very special New Yorker. He's always there for others. Why? We'll let him tell you: "I like to be a good person. I like to help people. It feels good. If I see somebody who needs a boost, I pull over and open up my car's hood, because it's the right thing to do, and I never know when I may need a boost. That's the way my mother raised me. To be a good person."

You'll find Jesús everywhere at 20 West 44th Street. He is also considered to be the Mayor of this block of West 44th Street, everyone knows him. "This job is my life," he said. I can't wait to get there when I wake up in the morning. I love working with Victoria (GSMT's Executive Director). The Christmas parties are my favorite memories. She makes those so special. She cares about us. She cares about the building. There's nothing I won't do for her."

We celebrate Jesús today and everyday. He loves to maintain our beautiful building. He loves to fix what needs fixing. But he also goes home and helps children graduate from school and inspires New York Yankees to show up and talk with those kids.

There is so much to this special man. When you see him, please stop and say hello. And please thank him for all that he does, and more important, for all that he is.



Special Window Display Honors Stephen Sondheim

In the Fall of 2021, Broadway, New York and the world lost Stephen Sondheim, considered to be one of America's pre-eminent lyricists and composers. His obituary in *The New York Times* described his significant contribution to music: "Stephen Sondheim, one of Broadway history's songwriting titans, whose music and lyrics raised and reset the artistic standard for the American stage musical."

Mr. Sondheim's best known work include the lyrics for *West Side Story* and *Gypsy* and the music and lyrics for *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*, *Company*, *Follies*, *A Little Night Music*, *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*, *Sunday in the Park with George* and *Into the Woods*.

At present, in one of the General Society West 44th Display Windows, we are honored to have a special exhibit that includes some of Mr. Sondheim's own personal music materials, pieces that have been generously loaned to The General Society from the Stephen Sondheim Archives. The striking window display has been assembled by the General Society Window Curator, Thomas Donahue.



A tribute to Stephen Sondheim

Featured in the window is one of the pencils Mr. Sondheim used to edit a manuscript, accompanied by a yellow pad. Mr. Sondheim was particularly devoted to soft lead Blackwing pencils and yellow pads (26 lines to a page). Also included are 5 rehearsal copies of scores or manuscripts, with Mr. Sondheim's notations and directions to the musicians. Prominently placed in the center of the window is a one page "sketch" of the musical score from *Sunday in the Park with George*, with a photo of Mr. Sondheim placed in front. Rounding off the window display is the sheet music from many of his most revered musical songs.

In consultation with the Stephen Sondheim Archives, The General Society plans to hold a lecture celebrating the work of this musical genius. Details to be announced.

A Visit from MI Alumnus Richard DeLaRosa

(continued from page 7)

ask me how it feels to work for myself now that I have my own business, I kindly remind them that I work for my customers."

Richard wasn't able to attend his graduation ceremony from the Mechanics Institute because he was deployed to Iraq with his Marine Corp Battalion at the time. "It took almost 13 years to obtain my certification from Mechanics Institute," he told us. "My girlfriend, Jaritza, who is now my wife, attended the ceremony and received the diploma on my behalf. I was so proud of her, as it connected us both to the school."



We asked Richard what advice he would give to the Mechanics Institute students of today?

"The advice I would give them will be the same my mentors gave me. As we learn the trades, many will learn what to do and how to do it. But the most important aspect is *why* we do it. I would challenge the students as they learn the trades at the Mechanics Institute to discover their individual purpose of why they love their trade. In the end, they will discover that the *why* is to serve others in their own special way. Understanding the why leads to mastery in the trades and serving the community."



Richard DeLaRosa back in a Mechanics Institute Classroom

Finally, we asked our proud alumnus how it felt to return to M.I. after all these years.

"I feel such a strong, euphoric connection," he said. "I am so proud to be part of the Mechanics Institute legacy."

And we are so proud to have this good man and his family as a part of our history and our future.



A selection of the Mechanics Institute 2021 Graduates as they picked up their diplomas. Our traditional graduation ceremony will resume with our next graduating class. Congratulations to all!

Hammering On...

Lobby Stained Glass Window is Newly Restored

Stable Street was what New Yorkers called West 44th Street in the days when the wealthy were building their homes on Fifth Avenue and keeping their horses on the side street that is now The General Society home. There are still several remnants of the old stables. Look first at the elegant Blue Bar that's attached to the Algonquin Hotel. It was once home to horses. If you look East, you'll see other ghosts of stables past.

Stable Street was narrow and the original GSMT's building entrance had a double stone staircase on the sidewalk that led to the entrance, which is where our beautiful stained glass window now resides. When the City decided to widen the street in 1917, there was no longer room for the double stairs, so workers tore it down and what was once the school's basement door became our front door.

Last year, it was determined that the arched, over-door, leaded-glass window was in need of attention. Enter the Rambusch Company—*Designers, Fabricators and Artisans in the fields of Decorative Arts* whose leadership includes Viggo Rambusch, Chairman Emeritus, and Martin Rambusch, Director of the Glass and Art Studios. For nearly 125 years they have applied their craft to enhance the experience of interior architecture through lighting, liturgical furnishings, stained glass, mosaic and restoration.



Lobby Stained Glass Window

They explained that the arched assembly of panels, with the number of the building's address placed in the center unit, required a complete restoration. At the core of the project was a desire to not change anything as it related to the system of assembly and/or materials used. The objective was to breathe fresh life into the glass, which is the critical component of the leaded glass design, by replacing the coming with fresh, viable, conservation-grade leading. They disassembled the glass, cleaned it, and re-leaded it. The process, as you would imagine, was labor intensive and required a high level of skill. The result achieved by master artisans of the Rambusch Company was breathtaking. The beautiful window that took the place of a door on what was once Stable Street now glistens again.

The General Society
of Mechanics & Tradesmen of
the City of New York

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All Arts Do Stand"*

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For GSMT Event Calendar, visit the
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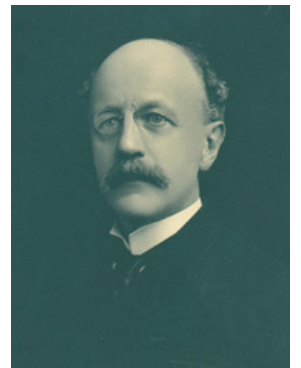
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Check our website for current updates on General Society Programs and send us your email to receive event information:
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The History of the Mechanics Institute Hoe Prize

Among the many treasures and artifacts contained in the General Society Museum collection, the Medal presented to George E. Hoe is most special. Mr. Hoe received this award for excellence in mathematics upon his graduation from the Mechanics Society School in 1858, the last year before the Mechanics Institute evening school began operation. After completing his education at the College of the City of New York, he began a career as a builder, but remained close to the General Society, following the footsteps of his father, uncle and brother, and was initiated as a member in 1885, eventually serving as President in 1896.

Mr. Hoe always recognized the impact of the education he received at the General Society. At the close of his presidential year, he established a trust fund to annually award a monetary prize and medal for exceptional graduates in every area of study, continuing with multiple contributions throughout his life. The George E. Hoe Prizes for excellence have been presented to deserving graduates continuously from 1897 to the present day.



George E. Hoe (1844-1930)



The Mechanics Society School Medal Presented To George E. Hoe (1858)

As stated in the 1931 General Society Annual Report honoring his final Hoe Prize bequest: "There is not the slightest doubt that these prizes have an influencing effect for encouragement upon the student body in an effort to create a desire for accomplishment." The original medal awarded to Mr. Hoe, shown at the left, was designed for the Mechanics School by the prominent medalist and engraver Charles Cushing Wright, a founder of the prestigious National Academy of Design in 1825. This medal, that inspired George E. Hoe as a young student and was presented to the Society at the same time that the Hoe Fund began, is on display in our museum. May its story and the Hoe Prize legacy continue to inspire our students to strive for excellence in all their endeavors.