

ABOUT TOWN

THE NEW HOTEL SOMERSET.

Some of the Contractors Who Have Contributed Toward the Solidity and Beauty of This Magnificent Structure.

Upon Wednesday next occurs the formal opening of the new Hotel Somerset on Commonwealth avenue, near the Fens, which will be managed by Mr. C. A. Gleason, long connected with the Victoria. As this is the finest structure of its kind in Boston, a list of people who, in their respective lines did the work upon it, will be of interest to the public.

One of the principal contractors upon this notable building, which is without doubt the finest of its class in Boston, was Mr. Angus MacDonald of Melrose, well known as a successful builder and handler of large and important contracts. The scope of Mr. MacDonald's contract in this instance was larger and broader than that of any other one given out in connection with this building and embraced all the carpentering and woodwork, the painting, plastering, plumbing, metal work, heating, elevators and some minor matters. Mr. MacDonald, as is usual in such cases, gave heavy bonds for the faithful performance of his contract, and has completed it to the entire satisfaction of the owners of the building, and of the lessee, Mr. Gleason.

Mr. MacDonald has been a successful contractor for 20 or more years, and during that long period has been identified with many notable buildings, and which, as they stand, reflect the greatest credit upon his skill as a builder. He had made a specialty of church and schoolhouse work, and there are many examples in various parts of the state of buildings of this and other classes which he has built. To mention a few, we find the Episcopal Church in Middleboro, the Congregational, Baptist and Universalist churches in Melrose, Mass., and five modern schoolhouses in the same town, the manual training school in Brookline, the Hotel Boulevard in Brookline, owned by Dana Estes, Esq., the Hotel Corey at the foot of Corey Hill, and the Public Library at Weymouth, Mass. The list could be extended indefinitely, but enough have been mentioned to show the character of the work done by Mr. MacDonald.

The painting was done by John White of 456 Harrison avenue, Boston, who is one of the leading painting contractors of this city and a successful business man. The painting at the Somerset called for a high degree of taste and skill, and Mr. White executed the work to the entire satisfaction of all interested parties. It is nothing new, however, for Mr. White to handle a large and important job such as this was, as he has during the years he has been in business done the painting on many notable buildings, both public and private. He has for years been fortunate in securing a generous share of the work of the city of Boston—work that he has secured in open and sharp competition with other men in his line. To look at a few of the buildings he has been identified with, we find the new Paul Bevere schoolhouse on Prince street, the Hugh O'Brien school, the Hart school, and numerous other schoolhouses and engine houses. He has also for a number of years done all the painting upon the City Hospital buildings. Mr. White also did the work upon the Suffolk county court house. Among private buildings we find endless examples of his work and scattered all over the country. Among them can be noted the residence of Gardner Hubbard, Esq., of Washington, D. C., son-in-law of Prof. Graham Bell of telephone fame, a fine residence at Gilbertsville, N. Y., one at Bellows Falls, Vt., and the handsome residence of the Hon. M. M. Cunniff on the boulevard, the Wood, Pollard & Co. building on Summer street, and apartment houses and mercantile buildings without number. Mr. White, in a word, is a leader in his business, and but few in his line can point to so many important structures in Boston and elsewhere as examples of their work as can he. He is a member of the Builders' and Contractors' Exchange, and stands high in the mercantile world.

But few buildings of any character are erected in Boston, but what show the "hall mark" of taste and artistic skill stamped upon them by Doe, Hummell & Co. of Boylston street, and the Hotel Somerset is no exception to the rule. This firm executed some notable examples of fine work in their line in this building, to describe all of which in detail would occupy too much space. Briefly, however, we find that they tiled 90 bathrooms. In the basement we find the barber shop, toilet rooms and corridors were also tiled by them. The lunch room contains a fireplace of Dutch tiles, and has Dutch tile panels extending all round the room. This work was all done by them, as were the fireplaces of imported marble found in different parts of the hotel, and the outside vestibule contains a marble mosaic floor from special designs and laid by this firm.

The refrigerators in this notable hotel are the Chase cold blast make, and are five in number, with sufficient capacity to meet all demands that may be put upon them, the one for meats in particular being unusually large and capacious. Mr. Chase was the originator of the cold blast process for refrigerating, and the pioneer in this field, and his is acknowledged today to be the most scientific refrigerating process known.

Mr. Chase installed his cold blast process upon the first European steamship which left this country equipped with a refrigerating plant, and has since fitted out 48 steamers with the Chase refrigerators. The Chase process is also in general use in freight cars throughout the country, and there are running today between 7000 and 9000 cars equipped with the Chase system. The Chase refrigerators are made for every purpose for which refrigerators are used, and are adapted to domestic purposes, as well as the large uses of the mercantile world.

The plumbing in this hotel is of the most modern and approved type, and was executed by Messrs. Pierce & Cox of No. 143 Kingston street, Boston, and Beverly Farms. The work is all of the open variety, with handsome nickel-plated fixtures, and every device conducive to convenience and luxury, and with every sanitary feature known in up-to-date and scientific plumbing.

This firm is one of the best known and successful houses in this city, and have been identified with many important buildings, to mention a few of which we find Trinity court, Devonshire building, Congressman Sprague's residence at Brookline, ex-Secretary Endicott's residence at Danvers, Mass., the Cambridge Latin school and Worcester county court house. Many others might be mentioned, but these will give an idea of the character of the work done by this house.

The hardware for this building was furnished by Barditt & Williams, the well-known Dock square house. Few important structures go up in this city and vicinity that do not carry when completed the hardware which this house suggests to architect and owner, and then supplies. Successors in the same building of a long line of hardware firms, a continuous record of whom runs back to 1796, and the parent of a large number of concerns now in the business in and about Boston, the enterprise, industry and taste of this firm have given it an enviable position among the hardware dealers of the country.

As fine an example of the stained glass art as one would desire is shown in the series of transoms on the lower floor, and the appropriateness of the design and coloring is noticeable. The magnificent figure window, "Feasting," executed in mosaic glass, is placed at the head of the stair landing. This work is indeed beautiful, and shows true, artistic feeling, and skill in handling, and great credit should be given the well-known firm of Horace J. Phipps & Co., to whom the architects intrusted this important feature of decoration.

In a building of this character destined for the home of so many people, safety is absolutely the first consideration; therefore, the entire staircase construction throughout the 30 odd flights is in the Guastavino method, consisting of superimposed tile arches absolutely fireproof, with rough masonry treads, to which the finish is attached, giving a finished, comfortable effect impossible to get in the ordinary fireproof stairs.

The boilers are equipped with the Sidney Smith setting and smokeless furnace, which afford economy in fuel, increased lifetime and safety of boilers and freedom from smoke nuisance. These devices have had extended use throughout the country, and in this city are found in such modern plants as those at the "Westminster," Worthington, Devonshire and Weeks buildings, Congregational House, Exchange Club, postoffice and sub-treasury building, Adams House, etc.