

Breaking: BRA to be re-named

PERIPHERAL VISION

The right moment to look back at a glorious historic waterworks



TONIA COWAN/GLOBE STAFF

SEPTEMBER 26, 2016

Ever wondered about that majestic stone building across from the Chestnut Hill Reservoir, with all the arches and peaks and a towering smokestack?

The High Service Pumping Station started operating in 1888, and kept going for about a century. Its job was to pump water throughout the city. It was designed by Arthur Vinal and Edmund Wheelright at the height of Boston's Golden Age of architecture, in the style of Henry Hobson Richardson, whose Boston masterpiece is Trinity Church.

Despite the pumping station's prosaic function, no detail was spared in its design. This was a time when workers were pouring into the city from the farms, when engineering was the highest calling, machines were pieces of art, and even workhorse buildings were architectural wonders.

Now it's the Metropolitan Waterworks Museum, and stands as a reminder of the tremendous ingenuity behind something we all take for granted – clean water. It looks like a Lewis Hine photograph, with its soaring ceilings, giant steam engines, enormous flywheels, and huge wrenches scattered on the floor. Even the nuts and bolts are gorgeous.

Today, it seems more relevant than ever. “After [the water crisis in] Flint [Mich.], we need to restore confidence in waterworks again,” our tour guide told us.

LINDA MATCHAN

Waterworks Museum, 2450 Beacon St. Boston.

www.waterworksmuseum.org

Do you know any hidden gems — scenic, architectural, historic, artsy — in and around Boston? Let us know at linda.matchan@globe.com. To see previous Peripheral Vision columns, go to www.bostonglobe.com/section/peripheral-vision.

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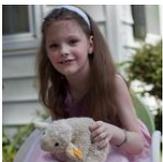
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