The Cambridge Historian

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1905: A YEAR OF NEW BEGINNINGS

BY MICHAEL KENNEY

Call 1905 "a year of new beginnings." It marked not only the final decision on a new subway route—today's Red Line—but also the birth of the Cambridge Historical Society.

Well into the year, there was debate over whether to run a subway underground once it crossed the Charles River, or to run an elevated line through Central Square, going underground at Bay Street. That option was favored by the Square's business community and by none other than Harvard President Charles William Eliot. "Transportation in a tunnel," Eliot opined, "is the most disagreeable mode now anywhere used." But in mid-April, a "who's who [of] leading citizens," as the *Cambridge Chronicle* put it, tipped the scales for a fully underground route.

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WHY THE "LONGFELLOW" BRIDGE?

BY FRANKLIN REECE

In 1905, the magnificent Longfellow Bridge was nearing completion, even as the Cambridge Historical Society came to life. And today, 110 years later, the iconic bridge is being restored, just as the society enters an exciting new stage of life.

The bridge was an engineering marvel. Designed to mimic the artistic style of the bridges of Europe, it added a dramatic flair to the Charles River. Its "salt and pepper" towers and Viking ship prows reflect a period in Cambridge's history when it was perceived as up-and-coming, international, and world class.

Chief engineer William Jackson and architect Edmund Wheelwright combined steel and masonry to create eleven arches supported on ten piers with four ornamental granite towers. Each of the "salt and pepper shakers" is made up of 515 Rockport granite stones weighing up to three tons apiece.

It was a love story that earned the bridge its name, however. Beginning in 1836, the bridge carried Henry Wadsworth Longfellow from his apartment in Craigie House on Brattle

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Letter from the President

Dear Members and Supporters,

It's been such an exciting year for the Cambridge Historical Society! As we celebrate our 110th anniversary, our strategic plan has been completed. It sets us on a path to expand our impact on the community and make the society more outward-facing than it has ever been. We want to do more than preserve and promote the history of Cambridge; we want to make it come alive for our students, residents, and visitors.

I'd like to thank the other members of the Governing Council of the Cambridge Historical Society for all their hard work these last few years. From the very successful capital campaign that completely restored the exterior of the Hooper-Lee-Nichols house, through the time-intensive strategic planning process, my fellow council members have demonstrated a huge commitment to the success and growth of the organization.

And now there will be a new voice of leadership to propel our evolution. I am so pleased to announce that after a national search, the Cambridge Historical Society has found its new leader—and she was living right here in Cambridge!

Marieke Van Damme became our new Executive Director on June 8th, and we couldn't be happier. She brings with her a diverse experience in both programming and development, honed at the Bostonian Society, the Trustees of Reservations, and other successful organizations. The council unanimously approved her hiring and we are elated to have such a professional, experienced, and dynamic person to lead us.

Thanks again to all of you for your generous support and for being such champions of the society. Our plans for the future are ambitious, but with your help we can achieve our goals to make Cambridge history more relevant and more accessible to an even wider audience.

With warmest thanks!

Tod Beaty
President, CHS Governing Council

PS–Enjoy this newsletter celebrating our 110th Anniversary. Special thanks to editor and council member, Bruce Irving, Development and Administrative Associate Rosemary Previte, and designer Emily Marsh for making the newsletter a celebration of where we have been and where we are now.

We also thank our generous sponsors: S+H Construction and Cambridge Trust Co.

42 Brattle Street

From the First Book of Proceedings

BY ROSEMARY PREVITE

June 19, 1905 – April 24, 1906

The Cambridge Historical Society was founded on June 17, 1905, when 18 people ("subscribers") first convened at 42 Brattle Street.

At that meeting, the society formed two committees—one to present the by-laws and the other to nominate the councilors and officers. The subscribers elected thirteen councilors, including Mary Isabella Gozzaldi, Alice Longfellow, and Richard Henry Dana III, who was elected president. Thus began the society's vital mission, to "collect, preserve, and interpret items of historical and antiquarian significance."

On October 30 of that year, the society held its second meeting, which was called the "First Annual Meeting." Four papers on different aspects of Cambridge's history were read, and they were later published in a series of books known as the *Cambridge Historical Society Proceedings*. The *Proceedings* were published on a regular basis until 1979, and intermittently since then.

Invited to speak at that meeting was Charles Eliot Norton, native Cantabrigian, leading American author, and art professor well known for his intellect, scholarly achievements, and social activism. Following is part of his remarks.

"Reminiscences of Old Cambridge"

BY CHARLES ELIOT NORTON

When the pleasant invitation to speak this evening came to me, I hesitated to accept it, but on reflection, I put doubt aside and welcomed the opportunity to express my piety for my native town, and to say how dear a privilege I count it to have been born in Cambridge and to have spent here much the greater part of my life, and how deeply I reverence the ancestors who have bequeathed to us the blessing of their virtues and the fruits of their labors. Few towns have had a more notable succession of worthies than Cambridge, and as a result in large part of the character of these men and women, the story of the town contains the record of many events not merely of local interest, but such as connect it with the history of the country and with the progress of civilization during the last two hundred and fifty years.

The Old Cambridge of today is a new Cambridge to us of the elder generation; and I can form no better wish for its children that they may have as good reason to love and to honor their native city as we of the old time had for loving our native village.

Do you agree that—while we might not express our thoughts today in the same words of Dr. Norton—many of us at the society feel quite the same way about our "village"?

From the Archives

BY MARK VASSAR

Someone recently asked me, "What does an archivist do?" In response, I'll describe the six major tasks.

Whether a collection is composed of diaries, photos, or business records, the first task is **IDENTIFICATION**. Providing basic information—who created the records and why, the dates they cover, the size of the collection, and the order they arrived—prepares me for the next task, appraisal.

APPRAISAL is when the archivist evaluates the collection. If, for example, a collection has no connection to Cambridge, we would probably offer it to another organization. Once a decision has been made to keep a collection, the issue of preservation is addressed. For long-term **PRESERVATION**, different types of records require different treatment, and it is important to decide how best to store them to preserve their physical integrity.

The next two tasks go hand in hand—**PHYSICAL ARRANGEMENT** and **DESCRIPTION**. First, archivists must determine the most systematic and useful physical order of records, and then a description is prepared. Finally, archivists must be able to provide **ACCESS**, so that researchers can obtain information for histories, biographies, genealogies, or other projects.

Photo of the H.M.S. *Somerset*, acquired by the Cambridge Historical Society in 1906

The CHS Archives—Circa 1905

As a newly formed group in 1905, one of the Cambridge Historical Society's first tasks was to begin an archive, and in 1906, collecting began in earnest. As with other historical societies of the time, it began by establishing a library and collecting the published proceedings of historical societies across the country. A few "gems" would also be acquired in this nascent year, among them an 1886 photograph of the wreckage of the H.M.S. *Somerset*, whose story has repeatedly captured New England's attention over the years.

Launched in 1748, the *Somerset* saw action during the French and Indian War at the capture of Louisbourg, and later during the American Revolution in the Battle of Chelsea Creek (Boston), the Battle of Bunker Hill, and the Siege of Fort Mifflin (Philadelphia). While pursuing a French squadron in 1778, the ship ran aground off the coast of Provincetown. Although salvage efforts were difficult, the colonists retrieved what they could, with one of the ship's cannons eventually being used to fortify Castle Island in Boston. By 1788, a storm had moved the wreckage closer to shore, and the tide buried it under tons of sand. Since then, it has only been exposed by storms three times: in 1886 (when this photograph was taken), in 1973, and in 2010 (when I was fortunate enough to see it myself).

The ship was immortalized in Longfellow's 1861 poem,

The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere

Then he said 'Good-night!' and with muffled oar
Silently rowed to the Charlestown shore,
Just as the moon rose over the bay,
Where swinging wide at her moorings lay
The Somerset, British man-of-war;
A phantom ship, with each mast and spar
Across the moon like a prison bar,
And a huge black hulk, that was magnified
By its own reflection in the tide.

Messages To and From the Spirit World

BY HELI MELTSNER

The word séance – a meeting of people attempting to communicate with spirits – comes from the French word for "seat," "session," or "sitting." With the growth of spiritualism in the late-19th and early-20th centuries, séances became popular, almost commonplace. Mediums would deliver "messages" from the dead, who would sometimes show their presence by, for example, levitating objects and ringing bells.

CHS Treasurer Andy Leighton's family has lived near the society's Hooper-Lee-Nichols house since the 1880s, when they moved from St. Louis to 163 Brattle Street. Andy grew up on Kennedy Road, which abuts the society's house, and he has many wonderful tales to tell about the area: the tennis court at its end, the rousing neighborhood "capture-the-flag" games, and the fabulous sledding down the still-private road back when it stretched all the way to Highland Street.

One unusual story emerged from the trove of papers he inherited from his great-grandmother and great-grandfather, Cornelia and Lucien Carr. Cornelia was adventurous and sociable, and Lucien was an archeologist who served as curator at Harvard's Peabody Museum. The papers concern his ancestors' involvement in contacts with the spirit world. Around the turn of the century, Cornelia was a prime mover in gathering a group of friends and relatives and hiring a medium—a professional who claimed to be able to reach those who had "passed over to the other side." Her contact was a 14th-century monk who, Andy says, "earned his stripes" by teaching the living how to be good, incidentally passing messages between the living and their deceased loved ones.

Recently donated by Andy to the Mount Auburn Cemetery, the cache of papers will help the staff untangle a mystery: the meaning of unexplained words carved under the names on headstones in Charlotte Cushman's family lot. Charlotte's son, Edwin, was married to Cornelia Carr's sister Emma. It seems that each member of the group was given a code name to use in communicating with the dead, such as "Devotion," "Reflection," "Discretion," and "Solicitude." The Carr papers include a long list of these code names, as well as the given names of the persons who participated in the séances.

WHY THE "LONGFELLOW" BRIDGE?, CONT.

Street to the Beacon Hill home of Frances "Fanny" Appleton. She was a young beauty and the daughter of Boston industrialist Nathan Appleton, and Henry was a heartbroken 29-year-old widower. Known as the West Boston Bridge then, it was a wooden structure built in 1792 as a toll road to connect the capitol with its prosperous neighbor. Longfellow took this trip, usually on foot, every day for seven years.

In 1837, when Fanny rebuffed his first proposal of marriage, Longfellow stopped on his way back to Cambridge that evening and began to work on his poem "The Bridge," which immortalized the span he knew so well. Hundreds of trips later, Fanny finally accepted, and they were married in 1843. "The Bridge" was published in 1845 and depicts his initial misery at being rejected by Fanny compared to his joy at her change of heart. It became a poem memorized by generations of school children.

The new bridge opened in 1907, the centennial of Longfellow's birth, and many, including Boston Mayor "Honey Fitz" Fitzgerald, wanted it named after the great poet. Unfortunately, the state legislature had already named it the New Cambridge Bridge, and not until 1927 was it officially christened the Longfellow Bridge by an act of the legislature.

Mr. and Mrs. Longfellow had six children, the fourth of which, Edith, married Richard Henry Dana III, son of Richard Henry Dana Jr., who authored Two Years Before the Mast. *The younger Dana founded the Cambridge Historical Society in 1905 and served as its first President.*

Cambridge and the Vaccine Wars

BY ROSEMARY PREVITE

Jacobsen v. Massachusetts 197 U.S. 11
Supreme Court of the United States
Argued December 6, 1904 | Decided February 20, 1905

In many ways, today's controversies in medicine and science harken back to earlier times. For example, in the early 1900s, renowned Cambridge resident Charles Eliot Norton supported a movement to legalize physician-assisted suicide in Ohio and Iowa. During the same time, a controversy erupted regarding the smallpox vaccine that led to the case of *Jacobsen* (a Cambridge resident) v. *Massachusetts*. This case—the first Supreme Court case concerning public health and the power of states—was a major event in the history of public vaccination.

At the time of the case, infectious disease was the leading cause of death in the United States, and public health programs were organized at the state level. From 1901 to 1903, during Cambridge's last major smallpox outbreak, city officials ordered a compulsory vaccination program. Those who refused to comply were subject to a $5.00 fine or a 15-day jail sentence.

In 1902, Henning Jacobsen, a minister and Swedish immigrant living in Cambridge, refused to take the shot or pay the penalty. After losing his court battle in Massachusetts, Jacobsen appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court, leading to the landmark case, which upheld the state's authority to enforce compulsory vaccination. In his opinion, Chief Justice Melvin Fuller wrote, "The police power of a state must be held to embrace, at least, such reasonable regulations established directly by legislative enactment as will protect the public health and the public safety."

The smallpox epidemic in Cambridge ended in 1903, with only a few sporadic cases until 1932, when the last case occurred. The last case of smallpox in the United States was in 1949, and in the world in 1977, in Somalia. Nowadays, the major causes of death are heart disease and cancer. Widespread vaccination prevents many more infectious diseases, and the responsibility for regulating public health has shifted to the federal level.

Despite numerous studies confirming vaccines' safety, the skeptical spirit of Henning Jacobsen persists among certain individuals, based on their personal philosophy, religious beliefs, or political leanings. As a result, there has been a decrease in the rate of vaccination for DPT (diphtheria, pertussis [whooping cough], and tetanus) and MMR (measles, mumps, and rubella). At the same time, documented cases of both measles and pertussis have increased.

The Bridge

HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW

I stood on the bridge at midnight,
As the clocks were striking the hour,
And the moon rose o'er the city,
Behind the dark church-tower.

I saw her bright reflection
In the waters under me,
Like a golden goblet falling
And sinking into the sea.

And far in the hazy distance
Of that lovely night in June,
The blaze of the flaming furnace
Gleamed redder than the moon.

Among the long, black rafters
The wavering shadows lay,
And the current that came from the ocean
Seemed to lift and bear them away;

As, sweeping and eddying through them,
Rose the belated tide,
And, streaming into the moonlight,
The seaweed floated wide.

And like those waters rushing
Among the wooden piers,
A flood of thoughts came o'er me
That filled my eyes with tears.

How often, O, how often,
In the days that had gone by,
I had stood on that bridge at midnight
And gazed on that wave and sky!

How often, O, how often,
I had wished that the ebbing tide
Would bear me away on its bosom
O'er the ocean wild and wide!

For my heart was hot and restless,
And my life was full of care,
And the burden laid upon me
Seemed greater than I could bear.

But now it has fallen from me,
It is buried in the sea;
And only the sorrow of others
Throws its shadow over me.

Yet whenever I cross the river
On its bridge with wooden piers,
Like the odor of brine from the ocean
Comes the thought of other years.

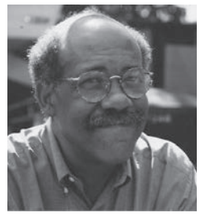
And I think how many thousands
Of care-encumbered men,
Each bearing his burden of sorrow,
Have crossed the bridge since then.

I see the long procession
Still passing to and fro,
The young heart hot and restless,
And the old subdued and slow!

And forever and forever,
As long as the river flows,
As long as the heart has passions,
As long as life has woes;

The moon and its broken reflection
And its shadows shall appear,
As the symbol of love in heaven,
And its wavering image here.

Cambridge Historical Society 2015 New Members of the Governing Council



STAN BURROWS

A lifelong Cambridge resident, Stan has over his 40-year career worked at the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston, Hewlett Packard, and several software companies, and has consulted for groups as diverse as the World Bank Group and the state's Executive Office of Health and Human Services.

He earned his bachelor's and master's degrees from Boston University and a master's from the Kennedy School of Government. He has directed several nonprofits, including Operation A.B.L.E. and the Micro Loan Foundation, and volunteers at the Harvard Club and United Way.

Stan's dad came to Boston from Barbados and worked his way through Northeastern University and Boston University Law School. Stan's mom grew up in Cambridge, where her father ran a boarding house for black Harvard undergraduates. Stan and his wife Jill have three children, seven grandchildren, and one great-grandchild.

CARL FANTASIA

A graduate of Northeastern University with a degree in mechanical engineering, Carl began his career in the energy industry and worked for Duke Energy, Pacific Gas and Electric, and Chevron. In 2001, he began running the New Deal Fish Market, a family owned business established in 1928, now an East Cambridge icon.

In 2008 Carl started the East Cambridge Business Association (ECBA). ECBA has a longstanding tradition of supporting family-run businesses, some of which began in the early 1900s and are still operating, and it continues to add value to the community through various initiatives such as "East Cambridge in Bloom," a project to improve and beautify the Cambridge Street streetscape.

Carl lives in Braintree with his wife Michelle and two sons, Carlo (11) and Luca (8).

JAN FERRARA

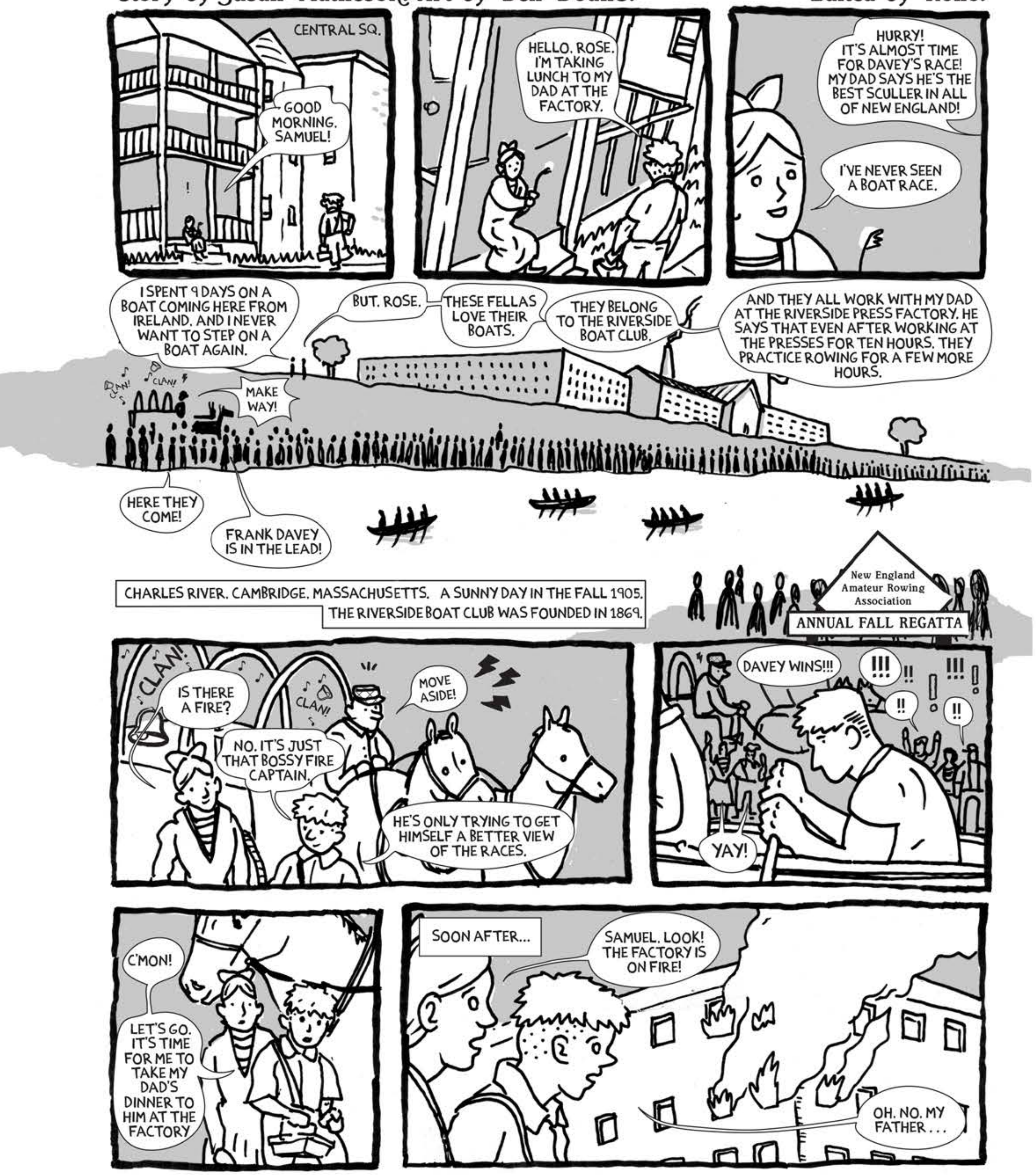
Jan has lived in Cambridge since 1990. She and her husband Joseph live on Brattle Street in an English Arts-and-Crafts home, and in 2012 they received a preservation award from the Cambridge Historical Commission for restoring the exterior of the building.

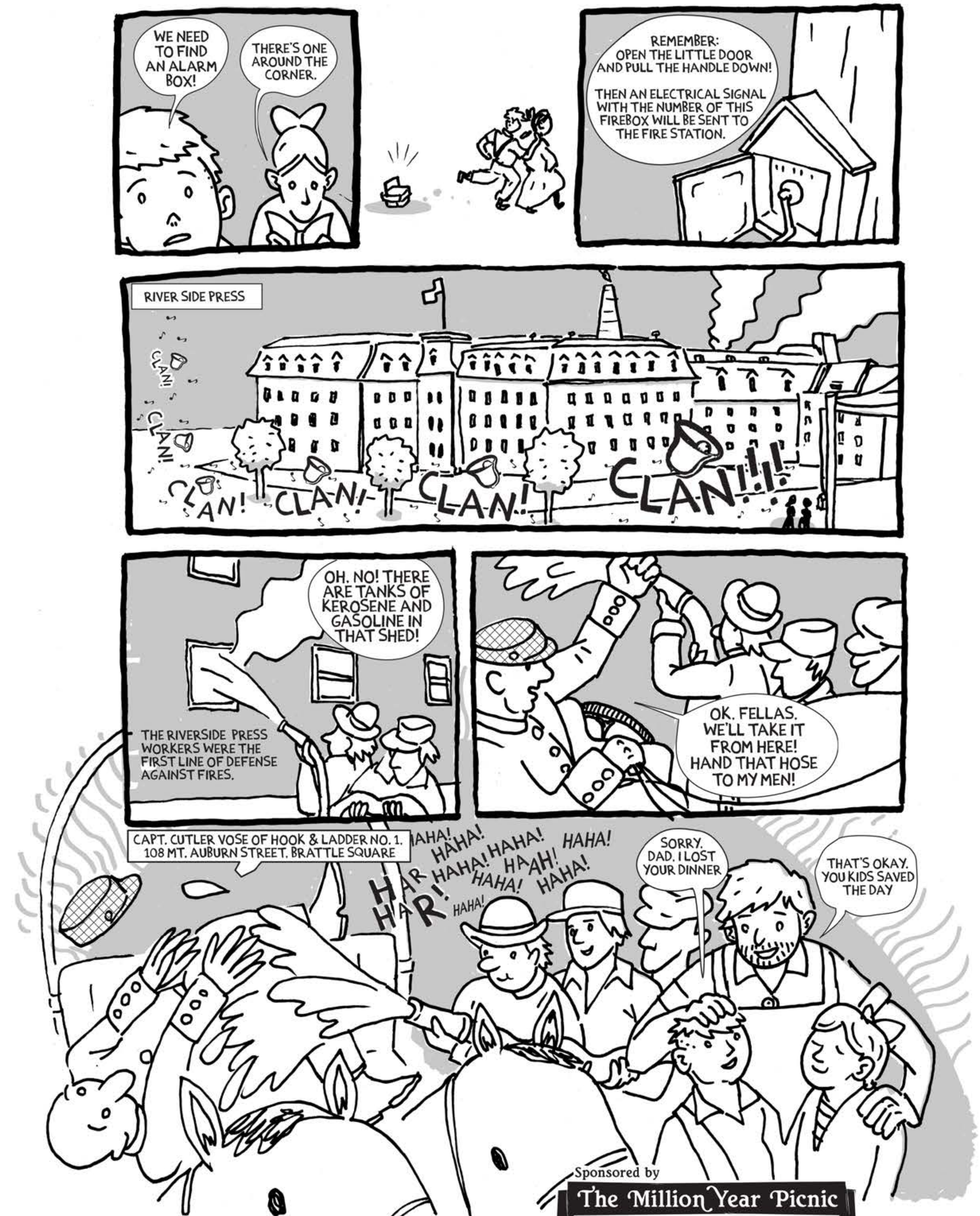
Jan received her degree from the University of Cincinnati and has been a graphic designer of exhibits for museums, zoos, and aquariums. An active gardener, she chairs the Communications Committee of the Cambridge Plant and Garden Club and is a volunteer for CitySprouts, a nonprofit that provides sustainable schoolyard gardens and related programs for the Cambridge public schools.

Jan and Joe have two daughters: Lidia, who recently graduated from Barnard College; and Emilia, who will attend Trinity College in the fall.

Firebox Regatta

Story by Susan Matheson. Art by Ben Doane. Edited by Roho.





CANTABRIGIANS–STUMP US!

Do you have a bit of little-known trivia? We are looking for **"110 Things You Might Not Know about Cambridge—Past or Present."** Send us your submissions, and we will publish our favorites in upcoming newsletters.

Please follow these criteria:

- Limit five facts per submitter
- Must provide source and/or attribution
- Email us at info@cambridgehistory.org

Example:

Question: What two things on the Cambridge city seal are no longer standing?

Answer: Gore Hall at Harvard (It was demolished in 1913.)

Answer: The Washington Elm (When workers tried to save the diseased tree by cutting two of its limbs in 1923, the entire tree fell over.)

Source: *Saving Cambridge: Historic Preservation in America's Innovation City*, © 2013 by the Cambridge Historical Society

Lawn Parties: Fun... for Some

BY SUE MATHESON

One of the public's favorite forms of entertainment in 1905 was the "lawn party." Huge tents, colorful flags, a merry-go-round, and athletic games attracted hundreds of people to summertime galas held on the grounds of churches and hospitals in Cambridge. These parties lasted into the evening and often included full orchestras and dancing. They were similar to carnivals, with shooting galleries, tug-o-wars, and plenty of food. One newspaper article describing an upcoming lawn party stated that the church grounds would be "brilliantly lighted by incandescent lamps and thousands of Chinese and Japanese lanterns."

But there were troubling aspects to these lawn parties, too. A lawn party held in the city on July 1, 1905, included a game called the African Dodger, whereby a black man stood behind a canvas sheet, poking his head through a hole in it. Partygoers threw baseballs at him; if they hit him, they won a small prize. This game was common at circuses around the country from the late-19th century to as recently as 1945. It is unclear when the game was no longer allowed in Cambridge, but sometime prior to 1915 John Thomas Harrison, an African-American and an editor, stopped the practice of the game at a street fair in Cambridge.

1905: A YEAR OF NEW BEGINNINGS, CONT.

For springtime diversion, the *Chronicle* reported in May, there was the "horse-and-buggy" yarn, about "a finely appearing young lady" who had been hiring a horse and buggy from a Richdale Avenue stable, "paying with worthless checks," and claiming to be the daughter of wealthy parents "with a summer place on the Maine coast."

On June 15, the Cambridge Historical Society was formed, under the leadership of Richard Henry Dana III. A Harvard alumnus, Dana was an attorney and civil service reformer. "Many in Cambridge," reported the *Chronicle*, "have long looked for such a society."

"Never Too Late to Talk Politics," ran the *Chronicle*'s headline in mid-July. "It helps to keep citizens warm in November and December." There were rumors of prospective candidacies for mayor among both the Democrats and the Non-Partisan forces—a forerunner of the contests a half-century later between the old-line forces and the Cambridge Citizens Association. It all shook out in November with Democrat Charles H. Thurston facing off against Citizens Party candidate Warren X. Blodgett, with Thurston winning in an 88-vote squeaker.

September saw the death of Frederick Hastings Rindge, donor of city hall, the library, and the manual arts school, which became the "Rindge" in Cambridge Rindge & Latin School. Raised in the "Rindge mansion," still standing at the corner of Dana and Harvard streets, and later known as "Cambridge's greatest benefactor," Rindge moved to California in 1887, but was lobbied by Mayor William Eustis Russell, a Harvard classmate, to fund the projects.

Richard Henry Dana III

Later in the year, John H. Corcoran—the city's "most progressive and successful merchant," as the *Chronicle* put it—bought Hyde's Block, a prominent 19th-century building in Central Square. It became Corcoran's department store and operated until 1950, when it was taken down.

Meanwhile, long-time city engineer Lewis Hastings, who had been ousted by the Democrats, was reinstated by the incoming Non-Partisan aldermen. Hastings's history of the city's streets was published in the historical society's *Proceedings*.

And then, at year's end, the historical society sponsored the celebration of the city's 275th anniversary at Harvard's Sanders Theater. "Its duty," said society president Richard Henry Dana, should be not just "the mere marking of this or that historic spot," but to go "deeper into history and interpret the life and spirit of our illustrious ancestors."

Our annual Spring Benefit, held on June 4 at the Cambridge Boat Club, was a huge success, and we thank our generous sponsors:

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159 Brattle Street
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Are you a CHS Member?

This semiannual newsletter, *The Cambridge Historian*, is among the benefits of membership. To join, or to make a donation to the society, please visit **cambridgehistory.org**!