



The Newetowne Chronicle

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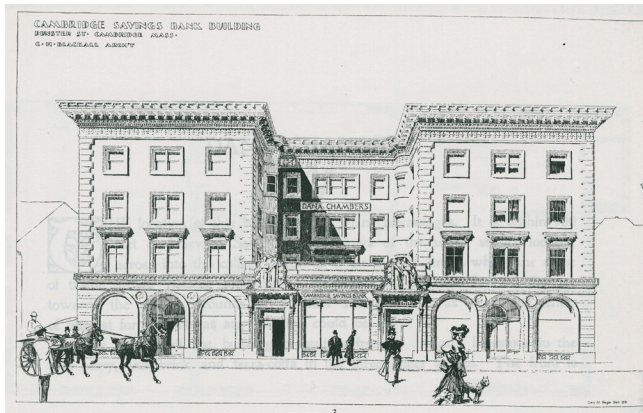
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Cambridge Savings Bank Celebrates 175 Years

By Michael Kenney

In the passbooks issued to its earliest depositors, the Cambridge Savings Bank (then known as the Institution for Savings in Cambridge) proclaimed an altruistic belief in the value of saving money – especially for young people.

“A young man intending to marry at a future day, and young women, who may expect to change their condition,” the passbook noted, “can here safely lay up a sum against a time when they want it more.”



Architectural drawing of the first permanent home of the Cambridge Savings Bank *Courtesy of the Cambridge Historical Commission*

technologies,” putting resources into electronic banking, according to Wilson.

The recent proliferation of bank branches in Harvard Square, Wilson said, reflects large national banks “trying to get into a market” – the same market his own bank was looking for in 1834.

The Cambridge Savings Bank was not the city’s first bank. Cambridge saw its first bank open eight years earlier, in Central Square, reflecting the role of Cambridgeport as the city’s commercial center. Harvard Square got its first bank in 1832, the Charles River Bank, a commercial bank at what is now 1414 Massachusetts Ave., for many years the site of the Harvard Trust Co. and now of a Bank of America branch.

In a history of the Cambridge Savings Bank, Charles M. Sullivan, executive director of the Cambridge Historical Commission, noted that many of the business and civic leaders who had been involved in organizing the Charles River Bank came together two years later to incorporate a bank strictly for savings, and it is this bank that has survived almost for two centuries in Cambridge.

Continued on page 4

The bank, with its headquarters in Harvard Square, still makes an “effort to get student accounts,” said Robert M. Wilson, its president and CEO.

But the bank has grown up with its community and now has a more established clientele. It has grown its commercial client base significantly, focusing on commercial loans and cash management services. To continue growing, the bank’s strategy is to keep its traditional account base and move ahead “with modern banking



Cambridge Savings Bank towering over the hole dug for the expansion of the Red Line c. 1980
Courtesy of the Cambridge Historical Commission

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From the Executive Director

By Gavin W. Kleespies

It takes an old house a long time to tell its story. This has been the case with the Hooper-Lee-Nichols House. The Cambridge Historical Society has been listening to whispers since the 1950s; however, in the past couple of years we have heard many new stories.

Now, thanks to a \$20,000 grant from the Cambridge Savings Bank, we are going to be able to tell these stories and allow the house to speak to the public. The Society will be publishing a new history of the house that includes a recounting of all of our recent investigations and explorations of the structure. We will also be reinterpreting the museum spaces and making the rooms into an interactive experience for visitors, allowing them to look behind walls and under wallpaper and through the plaster to see the history of the building.

The publication will be an accounting of the traditional history of the Hooper-Lee-Nichols House, why that history was questioned, what we have recently discovered through an innovative examination, and the mysteries that remain. It will recount the stories our house has revealed. From reviewing reams of microfilm, we have learned of plans to demolish the building by the heirs of George and Susan Nichols in 1892. Our paint analysis has revealed the many layers of renovations that led to the seemingly unified rooms we see today. Peeling back the patches and bandages has shown us both decorations that had never been seen by anyone alive today and mistakes and shortcuts taken by tradesmen two hundred years ago. Our dendrochronology has given us a date, although it has not answered all of our questions.

The displays in the rooms will use this new information, as well as windows left to peek behind the walls, to show visitors both what we now know and what remains a mystery. The rooms will tell the stories of the house's development, but they will also show the history of the community the house has grown with. The disturbance caused by our recent electrical work, paint analysis, repairs, and repainting, forced us to move every item out of every room, and this gave us the opportunity to review how we are using the space we make available to the public. We learned that we could be a more effective museum through a shift from period displays to flexible and changeable exhibits. This will allow the house to speak to the public, not only about its own mysteries, but also about our city over the past 300 years. This house witnessed the American Revolution and the rise of Cambridge as an early industrial powerhouse, the confluence of America's greatest literary minds, the development of immigrant neighborhoods, and the childhoods of millions of people, and it is ready to tell those stories.

It is hard to say why the house has revealed so much after years of being quiet; never the less, the house has fascinating stories. However, no matter how hard you listen, some mysteries will remain for future generations. We are excited about the chance to let you hear these stories and ponder the remaining mysteries for yourself. We plan to reopen the Hooper-Lee-Nichols House in December.



We Need to Talk: The Importance of Oral Histories

By Jinny Nathans

I used to think that oral history interviews were merely a minor footnote to the real discussion of historical events. However, I now realize that the words of people looking back on the scope and events of their lives add to the dimension and meaning of any historical period. Oral history interviews, when done well, add flesh, bone, and sinew to the spine of facts. A relatively new method of supplementing the primary documents of history, oral history interviews were first employed on a large scale as part of the Works Progress Administration in the 1930s. Interviewers collected remarkable accounts from surviving veterans of the Civil War and African Americans who had lived as slaves. Over the years, this form of history increased in prominence within the historical community, and in 1974, when Studs Terkel published *Working*, it became an accepted tool.

Since that time, the use of oral history has become increasingly common and is used by an array of different institutions. Academics and public historians are no longer alone in recording people's memories. Now clubs, professional organizations, and even corporations are using these techniques to create accounts of their development and provide access to this information through a variety of media. As an archivist myself, I recently participated in an oral history interview of the legendary local weatherman and broadcast weather pioneer, Don Kent. The interview resulted in a detailed picture of what it was like to be a weather forecaster in the earliest days of television - and it was also just a lot fun to chat with the gentlemanly and unpretentious Mr. Kent about his life and work.

The process of redesigning the Hooper-Lee-Nichols House has allowed us to use oral histories in our museum. We will be using our rooms to display the history of Cambridge, and two

of these displays will use oral histories. One room will hold objects related to childhood in Cambridge and will include five different oral histories we conducted over the past year, as well as material from the diary of a boy who grew up in the Hooper-Lee-Nichols House in the 19th century. A second room will look at the changing urban and industrial landscape of Cambridge. Until the 1940s, Cambridge was still one of the largest industrial cities in Massachusetts; however, much of that industrial landscape is now gone. Similarly, the urban space in Cambridge has dramatically changed, from a city with a strong working-class community to an increasingly professional population. This room will look at how the urban/industrial landscape of Cambridge has evolved through the rise of high tech and biotech firms, the disappearance of manufacturing, the end of rent control, and the change in the housing stock of the city. A part of this display will be interviews with some of the people on both sides of the rent control debate, along with material from our collections.

Both of these displays will have online components, where an individual can learn more about these subjects and see larger pieces of the featured oral histories. The exploration of the history and legacy of rent control, along with some of the oral history interviews on the subject, will also be the focus of an event we will be holding in November.

We have an exciting year coming up, with engaging and innovative programs every month. Watch for further information on the Rent Control program, scheduled for November 14 at the Masonic Hall in Porter Square. All of this is made possible through your membership and contributions. I thank you for your support and encourage you to recommend membership in the Society to a friend or neighbor or to surprise a friend with a gift membership.

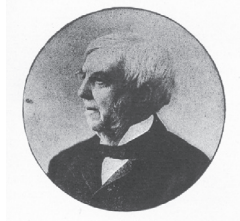
Letter from the President

Recent Cambridge Historical Society Events

Discovery Days Tours
Residential Architecture
August 8, 2009



Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes
Bicentennial
August 29, 2009



Cambridgeport History Days,
October 3, 2009



Open Archives
July 15, 2009



Folk Music in Cambridge
August 15, 2009



Vernacular Architecture
Forum tour
September 12, 2009



Pedaling the People's
Republic Bike Tour
October 4, 2009



Interns and Projects

Church Histories



John Falter is conducting a survey of the churches in Cambridge. He is documenting their architectural and religious history to create an interactive online map that will show their locations and give a short history, a picture, and links to additional information.

Rent Control



Charlotte Krontiris, a recent graduate of the University of Chicago, is studying the history of rent control in Cambridge. Through reviewing microfilm of local newspapers, the Rent Control Commission records, and the collections held by CHS, she is piecing together an understanding of a complex and still contentious issue. This work will be supplemented by a series of oral history interviews and turned into an exhibit available both online and at the Hooper-Lee-Nichols House.

Continued from page 1

Typical of the group was Levi Farwell, the bank's second president. He had helped organize the First Baptist Church of Cambridgeport and was a deacon there for 26 years. He also served as town clerk, state representative, state senator, and ran a coal and wood business at College Wharf on the Charles River and a dry goods store near the site of the present bank.

Members of the founding group were active in local politics and were involved in efforts to fence the Common (opposing efforts to cut a highway through it), moving the town hall, and removing a market house in Harvard Square "that had become a nuisance."

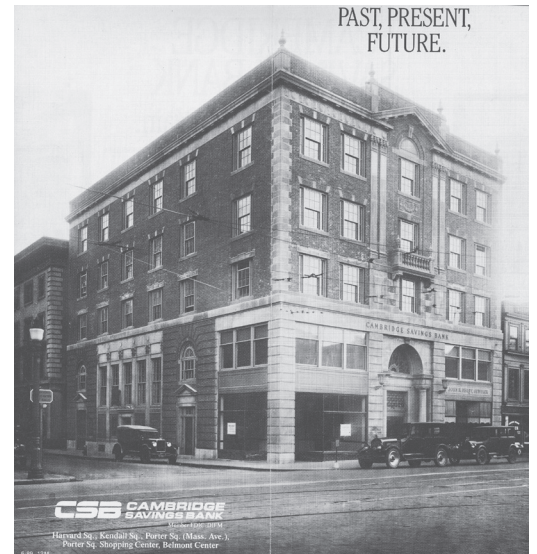
Until it built its own building on Dunster Street, the bank's offices moved frequently – often for the convenience of its treasurer at the time – and several times it shared offices at the Charles River Bank.

The Dunster Street building, which is connected to the present bank headquarters at the corner of Massachusetts Avenue and Dunster Street by a bridge, is a grand structure built in 1897 in the Italian Renaissance style. Its upper floors housed the Dana Chambers, privately run suites for students at Harvard that

were part of the elegant, and sometimes opulent, 19th-century "Gold Coast" in Cambridge.

The present headquarters was built in 1923, and after several makeovers, its façade was restored to its original appearance in 1989.

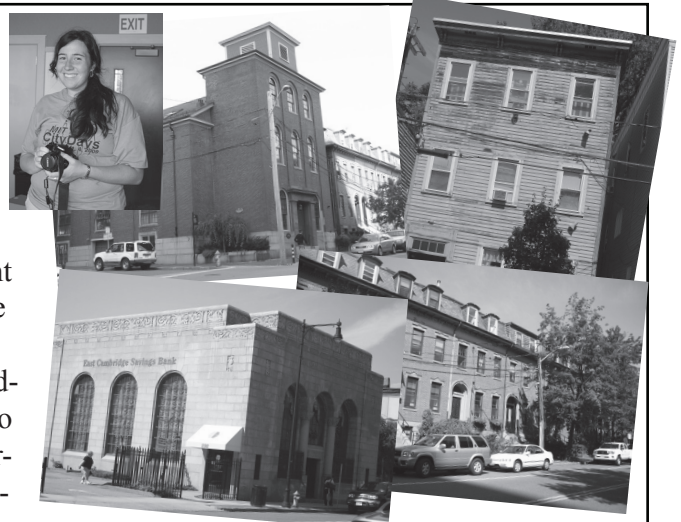
The bank, whose operations have expanded over the years into the neighboring buildings, now owns one of the iconic buildings in the center of Harvard Square. The historic Read-Farwell Block, which the bank acquired in 1994, is actually four buildings built between 1780 and 1820 with a half-moon façade that dominated one corner of Harvard Square.



The Cambridge Savings Bank, 1924
Courtesy of the Cambridge Savings Bank

MIT CityDay Photo Project

Every year, MIT holds the City-Day program, where incoming students volunteer at local nonprofits and get to know their new city. This year, CHS asked its team to go to East Cambridge and document the area. With 40 people, they made short order of it and in a few hours were able to photograph every building in the neighborhood. We hope to continue with this program in different areas in future years and eventually have a picture of the whole city at the beginning of the 21st century.



Coffee Table Book Looks at Harvard Square over the Past Half Century

By Daphne Abeel

Harvard Square: An Illustrated History Since 1950 documents in photographs and text the history of Harvard Square from 1950 to the present. It is the first publication of its type to capture the evolving nature of the urban crossroads next to the “world’s greatest university” and a magnet for visitors from all over the world.

Mo Lotman, a relative newcomer to the area (he moved to Boston in 1991), has done a yeoman’s job of research to compile photographs and reminiscences by over 100 contributors – frequenters and residents of the Square over the past 50 years.

The book – a primer on change, loss and what the Square has gained – is divided by decades, from the late 1940s and early 1950s to recent times. Each

decade is introduced by essays by John Updike, William Weld, Bill McKibben, Amanda Palmer, Tom Rush, and Paul Baranay. Readers who have known the Square for the past half century will find many of their favorite lost spots: the Hayes-Bickford, The Tasty, Pangloss Bookstore, the Waldorf Cafeteria, the Wursthaus, Olsen’s, and Briggs & Briggs, to name just a few. Marc Halevi’s photo, taken from the roof of Widener Library in the 1980s, will remind Cambridge residents that an entire block was razed. Remember when Massachusetts Avenue was two-way? As the decades march on, the book uses more color photography, and the pace of change accelerates.

The Square’s postwar European flavor, represented by Schoenhof’s Bookstore (now on Mt. Auburn Street), the Wursthaus, and the Window Shop, founded by the wives of Austrian refugees, has largely dissipated. The building of Harvard’s Holyoke Center and the extension of the MBTA to Alewife, which caused perhaps the biggest disruption and change in the Square, are amply documented.

Some shops and institutions have endured: J. August, Leavitt & Pierce, the Brattle Theater, Harvard Book Store, Nini’s Corner, Casablanca (remodeled), Cardullo’s, the old subway kiosk (itself now housing Out of Town News), and, of course, the Harvard Coop and the Cambridge Savings Bank. New stores speak to the new

age of cell phones, running shoes, and computer services. There are many fewer bookstores as digital media continue to push out print and paper.

Harvard Square is not just its buildings, of course, but also the people: the chess players at Au Bon Pain, the Hari Krishnas, the performers, as well as what happened there: the antiwar protests of the ’60s, for instance.

This will be a great gift book for visitors to Harvard Square. Long-term residents may feel some things are missing. It would have been nice to have some comments by Louisa Solano, who took over the Grolier Bookshop from Gordon Cairnie, or remarks from the poet Seamus Heaney, who picked up where Robert Lowell left off, often taking his students to a coffee shop

or bistro for a continuation of his class.

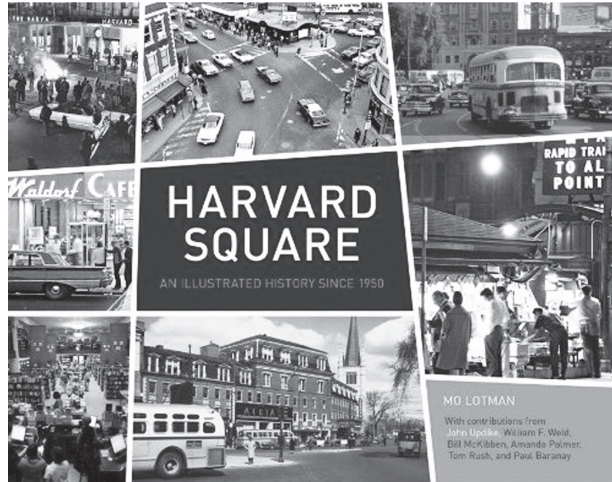
Some readers will reach for their spectacles or a magnifying glass to read the text, much of which is run in white on a color-saturated background.

The intriguing logo maps are ingenious but are tiny and difficult to read – as are many photo credits, which run across the photos themselves. The book seems a bit over-designed.

The iconic black-and-white photo of the Square taken in the 1950s by Allen Moore from the Billings and Stover building (which now houses the Curious George bookstore) would have made a stunning wraparound cover photograph; it serves as the title page instead.

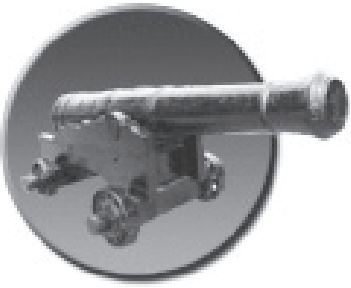
But these are quibbles. This is a volume to leaf through and enjoy. It will make an attractive gift or souvenir for anyone who wants to have Harvard Square at his or her fingertips. And it illustrates that well-known adage, *plus ça change, plus c’est la même chose*. The Square, no matter its metamorphoses, remains a powerful, lively attraction for people in the neighborhood and farther afield.

The Cambridge Historical Society will cosponsor a book signing party with Harvard Book Store on December 1 at 7:00 p.m. at the Harvard Book Store. A portion of the sales at that event will support CHS.



Society News Online

Cambridge During the American Revolution



Thanks to a grant from the Society of the Cincinnati, the Cambridge Historical Society has launched a new website dedicated to the city's key role in the early years of the American Revolution. The site uses an interactive map to mark over 30 locations in Cambridge, with photos and digital copies of original documents from the CHS collection. The text was written by Caitlin Deneen.

Folk Music in Cambridge



Working with the New England Folk Music Archives, CHS has developed an online tour of sites that were important in the folk music revival of the 1960s. They include Harvard Yard, where the American Folklore Society was founded in 1888, Joan Baez's apartment, and the Hayes-Bickford, a hangout for musicians. The text was written by Laura McCoy.

Membership is what keeps the Society going

If you're not a member, consider joining. If you are already a member, you can give a gift membership to a friend or neighbor.

Name _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Email Address _____

Single	\$35 _____	Family Dana Fellows	\$150 _____
Family	\$60 _____	Sponsor	\$250 _____
Dana Fellow	\$100 _____	Benefactor	\$500 _____

Make checks payable to the Cambridge Historical Society and mail to
159 Brattle Street, Cambridge, MA 02138.

Cambridge Boat Club Celebrates Centennial

By Daphne Abeel

The Cambridge Boat Club, whose white clapboard clubhouse is a familiar sight to anyone who walks or drives along Memorial Drive near the Buckingham Browne & Nichols Upper School, is marking its centennial. The club's first home was downriver, close to where Ash Street meets Memorial Drive. It moved to its present location at Gerry's Landing in 1947.



Courtesy of Richard Koolish

The first meeting devoted to its founding was held at the home of Richard Henry Dana, also a founding member of the Cambridge Historical Society. Over the decades, the club has continued to carry out its original mission: "to encourage athletic exercise boating and yachting, and to establish and maintain a place for social gatherings." During its first half century, its members, both men and women, mainly engaged in rowing and canoeing. Today, the membership is deeply involved in national and international rowing competitions.

In 1965, the club initiated the annual Head of the Charles Regatta, which now draws scullers from all over the world. This year's regatta will take place over the October 17-18 weekend. To celebrate its 100th birthday, the club has privately published a lively history, illustrated with many photographs. Based on the club's archives and individual reminiscences, the book was edited by Anne Peters, a member of the club's Board of Directors. It was distributed as a gift to the membership this past summer.

The volume, *Cambridge Boat Club: A Centennial History, 1909-2009*, is for sale to the public. Those interested in purchasing a copy should contact the Cambridge Boat Club, 2 Gerry's Landing Road, Cambridge, MA 02138.

Mark Time

It is likely that it's been a year since I've discussed placing images from CHS collections on The Commons on Flickr. Well, we haven't quite made it into The Commons yet, but we have established a presence on Flickr. Thanks to Gavin's diligence in posting our finding aids to the CHS website, we have been able to post a few hundred of our images. Photos from the following collections are currently posted: The Bee Records, Cornelius Bennink Papers, Mary de Gozzaldi Papers, Sarah Bull Papers, Nichols Family Papers, and the Wentworth Higginson Cartes de Visite Album.

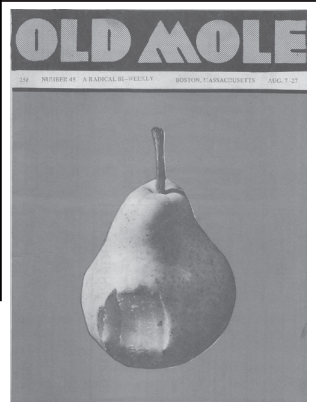
In addition, we've also begun to provide links from our collections on Flickr to the finding aids on our website so that users can understand the context of the photographs, as well as links from the photograph descriptions within the finding aids on the CHS website, so that our users can link directly to the image. We hope to soon find ourselves among the many great cultural institutions in The Commons, but until then we plan to continue offering greater access to our collections through the professional version of Flickr.

Mark J. Vassar

Recent Acquisitions



This MBTA sign was installed in the shortlived station at Brattle Square, near where the Charles Hotel is today. Only two signs were made and the station was soon removed. Donated by George A. C. Pereira

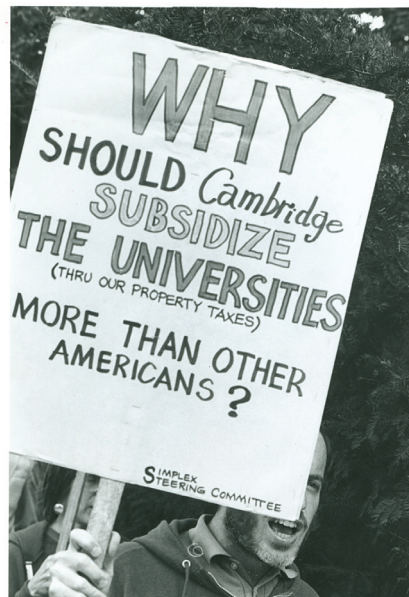


The Old Mole was a radical newspaper printed in Cambridge from an office along Brookline Street. A collection of 18 issues was donated to CHS by Paul Buffone.

The New England Folk Music Archives has deposited its collections with the Cambridge Historical Society. They include photographs, personal correspondence, art, publicity, and business records related to the folk music, blues, and musicians in Cambridge and throughout New England. The Society will process this collection and make it available to the community through our archives.



This 19th-century fire bucket is from the days of private fire protection. It reads: "No.1 Cambridgeport Fire Society." Donated by Charles Sullivan.



Bill Cavellini has been active in local politics for more than 30 years. He was a core member of the Simplex Steering Committee for its 18-year struggle with MIT over development in Cambridgeport. He was also active with a number of tenants rights groups. He donated his papers, photos, and memorabilia related to these two causes and will be sitting down with our intern Charlotte and the CHS staff for an oral history interview on these causes.



This piece of the Washington Elm is unusual for its wedge shape; it includes the outermost layer of the wood. From the estate of Arthur Drinkwater.

These are a few samples of the 180 photos that were brought to the Society and scanned as a part of our first ever photo scanning day. The originals were returned to the owners, and they received a scoop of ice cream donated by Toscanini's. More information about this program and additional photos can be seen at www.cambridgehistory.org.



Upcoming Events

October 21 - History of the Cambridge Skating Club, at the Skating Club

November 14 - The Rent Control Files: Archival Collections on a Polarizing Issue, at the Free Mason's Lodge in Porter Square

December 1 - *Harvard Square* book signing with Mo Lotman, cosponsored by the Harvard Book Store, at the Harvard Book Store

December 9 - Holiday Open House and unveiling of the reinterpreted Hooper-Lee-Nichols House

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The Hooper-Lee-Nichols House

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