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### THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Hooper-Lee-Nichols House  
159 Brattle Street  
Cambridge, Massachusetts 02138

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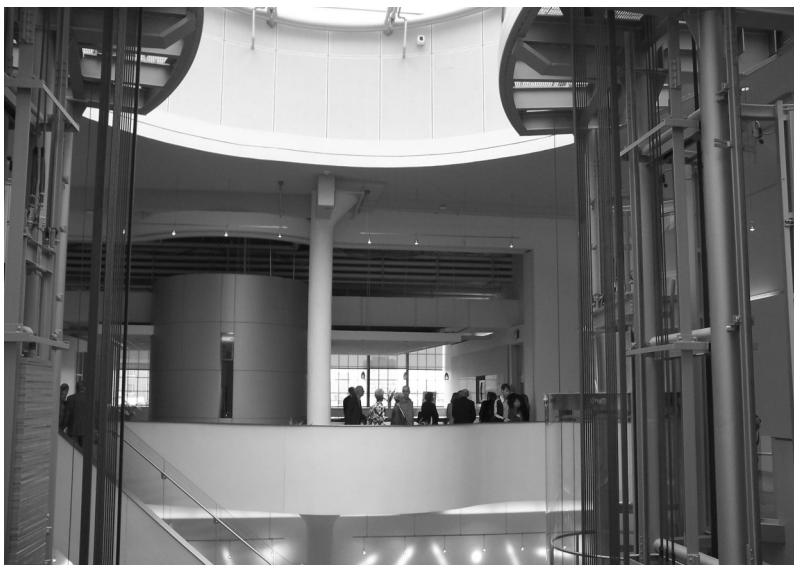
Web site: [www.cambridgehistory.org](http://www.cambridgehistory.org)  
E-mail: [info@cambridgehistory.org](mailto:info@cambridgehistory.org)

### PEOPLE AND PLACES

## Happy Birthday to Us

By Daphne Abeel

Our big news—the Cambridge Historical Society is 100 years old. In 1905, a small group of amateur historians, led by Richard Henry Dana III, founded the Society. Research to date has not revealed exactly what motivated them, but their first subject of study, as recorded in the organization's *Proceedings*, was Old Cambridge (or West Cambridge)—as distinct from East Cambridge, Cambridgeport, or North Cambridge. Streams of immigrants were settling those 19th-century neighborhoods, and it appears that the purpose of the Society was to preserve Cambridge's earliest history, that is, its Puritan-Anglo-Yankee heritage.



The Novartis Institutes for BioMedical Research hosted the Cambridge Historical Society's Grand Centennial Celebration. Here, a group of attendees tours the dramatic interior spaces where transparent surfaces maximize the natural light.

Photo courtesy of Marcia Bushnell

Over the years, the CHS has evolved from an exclusive club to an organization that is open to all who are interested in the city's history. Its subjects of interest include every neighborhood, whatever its location, national, or ethnic identity. Volunteers used to run the Society; it now has a professional staff. Whereas once the group met in members' homes or in various locations around the city—including Sanders Theatre, the Harvard Faculty Club, and the Cambridge Latin School—the Society found a home in 1957 with the acquisition of the Hooper-Lee-Nichols House at 159 Brattle Street. The membership has increased from its original authorized 200 to nearly 500.

*(continued on page 6)*

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*The Newetowne Chronicle* is published three times annually by the Cambridge Historical Society.

**FROM THE PRESIDENT*****Letters to Sara***

The Cambridge Historical Society is fortunate to possess a series of letters to Sara Thorpe Bull. This extensive correspondence spans the years 1880 to 1910, when she lived in Cambridge. The collection—which includes several photographs, newspaper articles, drawings, and poems—was given to the Society in 1986–88 by Sara's granddaughter, Sylvia Bull Curtis.

Sara Thorpe was born in 1850, grew up in Madison, Wisconsin, and in 1870 married the renowned Norwegian violinist Ole Bull. In 1879 she moved to Cambridge, renting "Elmwood" from James Russell Lowell. After Ole Bull's death in 1880, Sara continued to live at "Elmwood" until 1889 when she moved into a house built by her father at 168 Brattle Street. She was active in the Boston-Cambridge social and cultural scene and formed close friendships with important figures of the time.

The collection of letters total nearly 1,000. Her most frequent correspondent was the poet and landscapist Celia Thaxter, from whom Sara received 99 letters. Of note are

those dealing with their mutual interest in occultism and theosophy.

Another frequent letter writer was Annie Fields, the widow of the publisher James Fields and a writer and literary hostess. Her 75 letters also deal with the supernatural and religion. Sara's third most frequent correspondent was Sarah Orne Jewett, the prominent Maine author.

Sara also corresponded with such notable people as Jane Addams, social reformer; Elizabeth Agassiz, educator and founder of Radcliffe College; Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, whose daughter Annie married Sara's brother Joseph; Frances Willard, president of the Women's Christian Temperance Union; James Russell Lowell, editor and professor; and Julia Ward Howe, author and reformer. The correspondence also includes letters from P. T. Barnum, James Gordon Bennett, newspaper publisher; and Booker T. Washington, educator.

The Cambridge Historical Society is fortunate to be the custodian of this glimpse of life in the late 19th century.

*Ted Hansen, President*



Sara Thorpe Bull (2nd from left), seen with friends and family, ca. 1893. This photograph is part of the collection donated to the Society by Sylvia Bull Curtis in 1987.

## FROM THE DIRECTOR

**Thank You!**

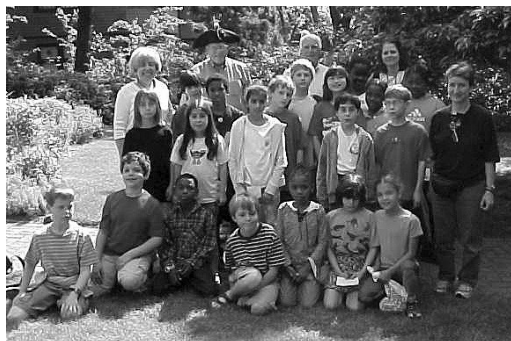
As we reach the halfway point in our centennial year, we are all aglow over the most successful fundraiser in the Society's history. Thanks to the generosity of the Novartis Institutes for BioMedical Research, we were able to mark our milestone birthday by celebrating the restoration and history of the NECCO factory, a beloved landmark on Massachusetts Avenue (see cover story and photos on page 7). We are especially pleased that Novartis, an international pharmaceutical firm, chose to support our event with a \$10,000 leadership gift. This gift reveals its deep commitment to the Cambridge community.

We are also grateful to all of you for your generous donations that more than quadrupled the Novartis gift, bringing our total raised to nearly \$47,000. Most of that money is earmarked for the operating expenses that enable us to collect, preserve, and interpret Cambridge History and to maintain the Hooper-Lee-Nichols House. For example, \$25,000 will be used to match a \$50,000 Institutional Preservation Grant we have received from the Cambridge Historical Commission to repair the balustrade and replace the roofs on the Hooper-Lee-Nichols House and its garage.

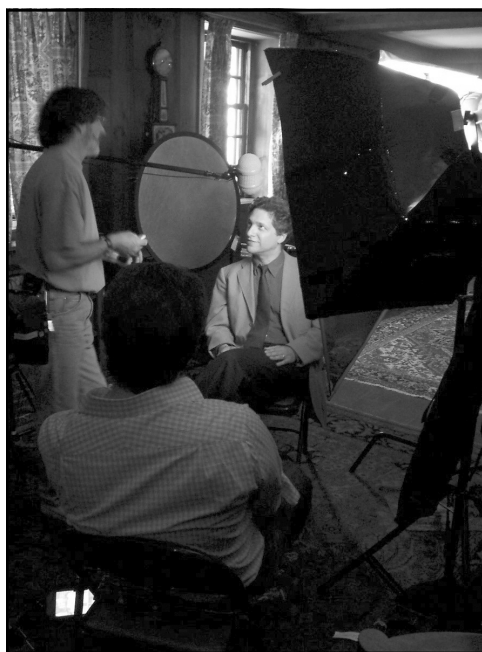
Our centennial exhibition, which opened on June 17 was made possible by the efforts and financial backing of Lindsay Leard Coolidge. Under her direction, the collections committee culled and researched the most significant objects owned by the CHS and reorganized them throughout the house to help us tell stories about our city. Lindsay also wrote and produced a gorgeous catalogue, *100 Years of Cambridge History: Highlights from the Collection of the Cambridge Historical Society*. This free publication will stand as a reminder of this remarkable year. Please stop by the Hooper-Lee-Nichols House to pick one up if you were unable to attend the opening.

Karen L. Davis

## WE HAD COMPANY



Three groups of third-grade students from the Graham and Parks School visited the Hooper-Lee-Nichols House this spring. Teacher Mary DiSchiavo (left rear) said, "As an immigrant child in east Cambridge, I never knew this existed. I wanted them to know about it." Renny Little and Ted Hansen (next to DiSchiavo) led tours. Karen Falb (not pictured) led the third group.



A video crew from ARK MEDIA prepares to interview history of science professor Peter Galison in the Chandler Room as part of the program, "Einstein's Letter to FDR." The show will be aired on the History Channel next spring.

Photos by Lewis Bushnell

## APRIL LECTURE

## ***Looking Backward: Club 47 and the 1960s Folk Music Revival***

Bob Dylan never made it in Cambridge. This was one of many fascinating stories told by folklorist Millie Rahn, who travels around the country to collect and document the history of the folk music movement. Closer to home, Millie is the folklorist for Club Passim and other regional folk music venues. She produced a documentary on Club 47 for WGBH and is currently at work on a book on the same subject.



Joan Baez in one of her early performances at Club 47.

Photo courtesy of Millie Rahn

Club 47 was the center of New England's folk music revival in the 1960s. Joan Baez got her start there and played every Tuesday night until her career took off at the Newport Folk Festival. Bob Dylan joined groups onstage and played between sets, but to his regret, he never headlined at Club 47 before his career blossomed. Millie highlighted the careers of Cambridge musicians, as well as those of others

from all over the country who came to play Newport and then Club 47. As photos from the old club were shown, the audience gasped happily in recognition.



Chris Smither playing at the Newport Folk Festival in 1967. Later he was a regular at Club Passim, and most recently he performed at the tribute to Club 47 on May 21 on the Cambridge Common.

Photo courtesy of Millie Rahn

Club 47 opened as a jazz club in 1958 at 47 Mt. Auburn Street. In 1969, it was reorganized as Passim, and run by Bob and Ray Anne Donlin on Palmer Street "between the Coops." That location was given the address of 47 Palmer Street to help maintain the connection with Club 47. In 1994, it was reorganized as Club Passim. You can still visit the original site, renumbered 45½ Mt. Auburn Street. The building, which now features a second story with a greenhouse roof, is occupied by Daedalus Restaurant and Bar, which generously supplied refreshments for the event.

*Jennifer Hance*



Folklorist Millie Rahn (r) with Jennifer Hance, who planned the program.

Photo by Lewis Bushnell

## DANA FELLOW EVENT

***The Joseph Emerson  
Worcester House***

History and commerce joined on March 31 when Hammond Real Estate sponsored the Society's annual party for Dana Fellows at the palatial, pink Joseph Emerson Worcester House. Standing on nearly an acre of land at 121 Brattle Street, the house is on the market for the first time in 50 years.



The Joseph Emerson Worcester House

Photo by Lewis Bushnell

Dana Fellows, who donate at least \$100 per year to CHS, and new members mingled in the grandly proportioned rooms of the 7,150-square-foot mansion before listening to Charles Sullivan, executive director of the Cambridge Historical Commission, describe the house and its eventful history.

Built in 1843 by lexicographer Joseph Worcester—"a forgotten figure," according to Sullivan—the modified Greek Revival house was originally part of the Vassall-Craigie estate. Worcester produced a highly respected dictionary that faded in the face of that of a more famous lexicographer. Sullivan entertained the group with anecdotes of the battle between Worcester, who took a formalist approach to the English language, and the well known Webster, who favored more vernacular usage.

"They duked it out," Sullivan said, with Webster—as everyone knows—the clear winner, but not before some battles, heavily tinged

with "upper-class elegance versus Yankee uncouthness," raged. Worcester had "lost the game by the end of the 19th century," Sullivan said, noting that he died in 1865. (More information on Worcester is available at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph\\_Worcester](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_Worcester).)

The 35-plus-acre estate had dwindled to 3.5 acres, Sullivan explained, the rest having been sold off for development. A former pond, once known as Dictionary Lake, is now an indentation in the east lawn. The last owner of the property, William J. J. Gordon, created Pringles, the stacked potato chips that come in a can.

As for potential development of the property, Sullivan brought a sigh of relief from the audience when he noted that new construction and changes visible from the street would need the approval of the Cambridge Historical Commission.

*Thelma O'Brien*

*We commend Tod Beaty, proprietor of Hammond's Cambridge office, and Lindsay Allison and Lisa May, the listing brokers, for making the history of the house an integral part of the marketing effort.*

## WE GOT MAIL

Joseph Worcester is buried in a lot at the western edge of the Dell. Today, our salamander expert set up his "barrier box" in the Worcester lot as he has been doing for the last four years. He is studying the spotted salamanders that emerge from the ground in the area of the Worcester lot and recording their spot patterns. He is finding that salamanders may return to the same small area each year after they make their spring journey to lay eggs in the vernal pool in the Dell.



It is just a coincidence that it is the Joseph Worcester lot where we have been carrying out this study, but last night as I was looking at the side yard where "Dictionary Lake" once was, I wondered how many salamanders might once have used that pond as salamander habitat.

*JANET HEYWOOD, vice president, Interpretive Programs  
Mount Auburn Cemetery  
April 1, 2005*

## Happy Birthday to Us

(continued from page 1)

The purpose of the CHS remains essentially the same—the collection, preservation, and interpretation of Cambridge history. Through exhibitions, lectures, neighborhood walks, tours of historic buildings, publications, outreach and cooperation with other organizations—such as the Longfellow House and the Cambridge African-American Heritage Trail—the CHS maintains its vibrant commitment to Cambridge, a city, endowed with a rich past, an exciting present and a promising future.

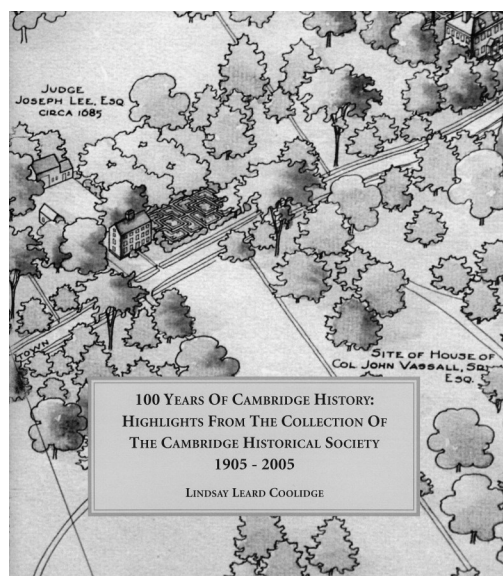
To celebrate this milestone year, the CHS has embarked upon a series of centennial events and is publishing a centennial book. On May 15, the Grand Centennial Celebration—a fundraiser—was held in the old NECCO building, now the home of the Novartis Institutes for BioMedical Research. Perhaps no other building in Cambridge illustrates so dramatically the continuing shift in Cambridge industry from manufacturing to biotech. While the sweet smell of the NECCO wafers is gone, Novartis' has refitted the interior with a stunning research environment for the 21st century. The exterior of the building has been restored to its original 1927 appearance, which included retaining the NECCO water tower, now decorated with a double helix painted in pastel NECCO colors. Every speaker—Domenic M. Antonellis, president of NECCO, Edward T. M. Tsoi, the architect who led the exterior restoration, Audrey J. S. O'Hagan, the architect who led the interior redesign, and Charles M. Sullivan, executive director of the Cambridge Historical Commission—provided a part of the story of this Cambridge landmark's remarkable transformation. In addition, Sullivan's keynote address placed the building into the context of Cambridge's industrial history. The afternoon's presentations ended, appropriately, with a rousing version of "Happy Birthday."

On June 17, the CHS proudly opened its centennial exhibition of the most significant objects collected over the past 100 years. Armed with the exhibition catalogue, guests toured the

house, enjoyed the garden, refreshments, and conversation with the landscape historian Karen Falb, who has written a report on the history of the grounds of the Hooper-Lee-Nichols House.

In October, the CHS plans to celebrate the publication of our centennial book, *A City's Life and Times: Cambridge in the 20th Century*, at the Harvard Bookstore. Edited by yours truly, the book presents essays by 18 contributors on politics, the literary scene, folk music, architecture, religion, immigration, growing up in Cambridge, Cambridge neighborhoods and ethnic communities, and institutions such as the Cambridge Plant and Garden Club and Cambridge Rindge and Latin School.

The CHS looks forward to the next 100 years of growth and service to the community. And perhaps we can be forgiven for singing "Happy Birthday to Us!"



This 28-page exhibition catalogue was written by CHS curator, Lindsay Leard Coolidge.





FROM THE LIBRARY AND ARCHIVE

## Mark Time

by Mark Vassar

Continuing the explanation of the work of an archivist, this column outlines the components of a finding aid. The finding aid describes—to both the patron and the archivist—the historical background of a collection of documents, photographs, and related ephemera. While their format varies widely, finding aids all contain such information as the title of the collection, its date range, and information on the donation or purchase of the collection. The substance of the finding aid consists of a historical or biographical sketch, a scope and content note, and a box and folder list.

Whether a finding aid contains a historical or biographical sketch depends on whether the collection is the records of an institution or the papers of an individual or family. Information gleaned from the collection itself and from additional research provides the background and the context in which the records were created. (See next article, by Giordana Mecagni.)

The scope and content note reveals how the records are arranged. They may be sorted in many ways, but are most often placed in series according to their function or form. For example, CHS's finding aid for the Grand Army of the Republic, Post 57, is arranged in series by the functions of the various officers (i.e., adjutant, quartermaster), whereas the records of the Parmenter-Hunt family are arranged according to form (i.e., diaries). In the description of the various series in a collection, users will be guided to material appropriate to their research. Highlights of the collection may also be discussed.

Finally, the box and folder list directs users to the appropriate location in the collection; they don't have to search through hundreds of boxes to find a single letter. As one can see, the finding aid is an essential tool for making a collection accessible.

## The Parmenter-Hunt Diaries

by Giordana Mecagni

*Intern Giordana Mecagni processed a collection of 55 diaries written by three Cambridge women. Mecagni organized and described the diaries and created a finding aid for the collection.*

These diaries record the daily lives of three members of the Parmenter and Hunt families from 1849 through 1931. The first two diarists, Mary Parmenter and Elizabeth Thompson (Parmenter) Hunt were sisters; the third, Abbie Brooks Hunt, was Elizabeth's daughter-in-law. A descendant donated the diaries to the Cambridge Historical Society in 1988 and 1994.



Pages from the Parmenter-Hunt diaries  
Photo by Mark Vassar

Elizabeth and Mary were two of eight children born to Mary Parker and William Parmenter. William, a naval officer, served in the lower branch of the Massachusetts General Court in 1829 and in the Massachusetts Senate in 1836, and then was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives, serving in the 25th through 28th Congresses. Mary and Elizabeth's brother Ezra also was involved in politics—he served as an alderman, a common councilman, and mayor of Cambridge (1867). The family lived on Second Street in East Cambridge.

Mary, who never married, wrote about such aspects of daily life as the weather, the health of her family, and the deaths of relatives and neighbors. Most entries include what she ate, her activities, and whom she visited. Her first diary, however, recorded the official board notes of the Ladies Union Society of



Cambridge—the ladies' auxiliary group to the East Cambridge Union Temperance Society. These notes record the activities of the group and include valuable information about members and officers.

Elizabeth married Freeman Hunt of New York in October of 1853. Hunt was an entrepreneur in the shipping industry who founded and edited *Hunt's Merchants' Magazine*, a popular trade journal. Edgar Allan Poe wrote an article about him in *Godey's Lady's Book* in 1846, in which Poe evaluated Hunt's literary accomplishments as well as describing his physical appearance. Freeman and Elizabeth lived in Brooklyn with his daughter from a previous marriage, Emma, and Freeman Hunt, Jr., whom Elizabeth bore in 1855. After her husband's death, Elizabeth moved back to Cambridge with the two children to be closer to her family.

Abbie Brooks Hunt was born in 1861, the daughter of Sumner J. Brooks and Jane Bullard Brooks. Sumner worked in the West Indies trade, and the family lived for several years in "Hayti." In 1887, Abbie married Freeman Hunt, Jr., a lawyer who was prone to depression and alcoholism. The couple had two children—Edith and William—before divorcing in 1907.

The three women remained in close contact and often filled in gaps in each other's diaries. The multiple perspectives of the overlapping diaries offer exceptional insight into the relationships and personalities of the Parmenter-Hunt families. The diaries provide commentary on domestic life in the 19th and early 20th centuries at a variety of levels, from the local (such as East Cambridge's move to number the houses) to the national (such as the Civil War's effect on everyday lives).

To learn more about the Parmenter-Hunt diaries or to look at the collection, please contact [research@cambridgehistory.org](mailto:research@cambridgehistory.org).

## ***The Restoration of the Chippendale Standing Desk***

by Lindsay Leard Coolidge

During the reorganization of the collections at the CHS, I discovered a significant provenance tracing our Chippendale Standing Desk back to Abraham Hill, who owned four acres of land and a house on Brattle Street in the early 1700s. The desk descended through the Hill and Phillips families of Cambridge and was given to the Society by Grace Treadwell.

Examining the desk, I also noticed an old label attached to the back, stating that 6 1/8 inches had been added to the bottom of the legs in 1939. It was then that I contacted Robert Mussey, a prominent furniture restorer in Boston, to remove the added wood. The Society is indebted to Mr. Mussey for his meticulous work in restoring the desk to its original height, as well as making repairs to the kneewell door and broken brasses and replacing missing veneer.



In his final report, Mr. Mussey wrote that the desk is "extremely unusual, perhaps even unique." He commented on the formality of the desk as seen in its straight legs, extensive veneer and beaded moldings, and the unusual hinged lid of the top case. It is his belief that the desk was made in Boston or Charlestown and was probably used by a merchant on or near the Boston Harbor docks.

The perfectly proportioned desk has now assumed a prominent place in the reconfigured parlor of the Hooper-Lee-Nichols House with other Colonial furniture.

## Has anyone seen Katharine Moffatt Whipple?

The National Society of the Colonial Dames of America is seeking information on a “lost” portrait of Katharine Moffatt Whipple by John Greenwood that was last documented in Cambridge. Katharine Moffatt of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, was born in 1732 and married William Whipple, a signer of the Declaration of Independence, in 1770 or 1771. She always lived in her family home, now known as the Moffatt-Ladd House. The portrait, which originally hung in the house, is believed to have descended to her great-niece Catherine Whipple Langdon Roberts, who married the Reverend Andrew Preston Peabody of Cambridge. Three of their children lived into the 20th century; the last surviving was Caroline Eustis Peabody of Appleton Street.

The National Society of the Colonial Dames of America in the State of New Hampshire has owned the Moffatt-Ladd House since 1911. They are currently working with *ANTIQUES* magazine on an issue devoted to the entire collection of the Society, to be published in 2006, and seek any information on the portrait. Please contact Lindsay Leard Coolidge, Curator, CHS, if you know anything about the painting or the family.



At Mayfair 2005 on May 1, Ellen Moot, Ted Hansen, Jim Shea, Joan Sawyer, and Bruce Harris braved the rain and cool weather to set up and host the Historic Cambridge Collaborative's booth in Harvard Square.

Photo by Lewis Bushnell

## Calendar of Events

*Saturday, July 2 and 9*

*Time: 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., rain or shine*

### **Cambridge Discovery Days**

#### **Free walking tours throughout the city**

Under the auspices of the Historic Cambridge Collaborative, the CHS will be offering the following tours. On July 2, “The British Loyalists of Brattle Street,” led by Ted Hansen, “The History of West Cambridge near Fresh Pond” led by Karen F. Falb, and “Architecture at MIT” led by Jennifer Hance. On July 9, “Four Centuries of Stylish Houses” led by Karen L. Davis, “A Guided Tour of the Hooper-Lee-Nichols House” led by Lewis Bushnell.

A brochure listing times and meeting places for more than 25 tours has been mailed to CHS members. For more information, visit [www.cambridgema.gov/historic](http://www.cambridgema.gov/historic).

*Wednesday, August 10*

*Time: 5:30–7:30 p.m.*

*Fee: \$35 for members; \$45 for nonmembers*

### **Charles River Cruise**

D’Arcy MacMahon, a founder of the Head of the Charles Regatta, will narrate our cruise, which will begin at the CambridgeSide Galleria and head upstream. D’Arcy will talk about the history of the regatta and will describe the challenges and quirks of the course from the starting line to the finish, with comments on the various boat clubs along the way. Hearty hors d’oeuvres and a cash bar.

*Thursday, September 22*

*Time: 6:30–8:30 p.m.*

*Place: Hooper-Lee-Nichols House,*

*159 Brattle Street*

*Fee: \$5 for members; \$10 for nonmembers*

### **An Ecological Look at Cambridge History**

Join urban historian Sam Bass Warner for an unusual and stimulating perspective on our city’s history. Warner lived in Cambridge for many years and has written numerous books, including the groundbreaking *Streetcar Suburbs: The Process of Growth in Boston 1870-1900*. He is currently a visiting professor in the Department of Urban Studies & Planning at MIT.

# We would like to thank the following businesses and individuals for their contributions to our centennial fundraiser.

## **\$10,000 and above**

Novartis Institutes for  
BioMedical Research

## **\$2500-\$4999**

Cambridge Trust Company  
Channing Real Estate  
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## **\$1500-\$2499**

Hammond Real Estate  
Regatta Riverview Residences

## **\$1000-\$1499**

Ambit Press  
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The Stubbins Associates, Inc.

## **\$500-\$999**

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## **\$150-\$249**

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Charles Smith  
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## *The Mission of the Cambridge Historical Society*

The Cambridge Historical Society acts as a living repository for Cambridge's traditions and history. It maintains property entrusted to it and collects, preserves, and interprets items of historical and antiquarian significance. The Society encourages research and involvement in these efforts by its members and the community at large. In so doing, it promotes a better understanding of history as an important factor in the everyday affairs of the city and its residents.

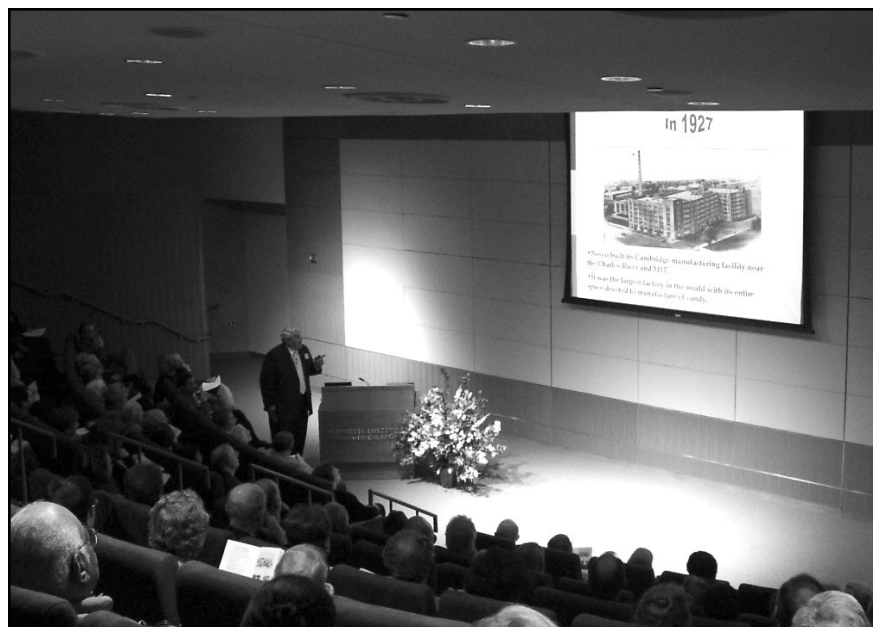
THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
*The Hooper-Lee-Nichols House*  
159 Brattle Street  
Cambridge, MA 02138

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“You cannot not know history.”

PHILIP JOHNSON (1906-2005)

*Johnson, one of the most significant architects of the 20th century, designed the house at 9 Ash Street, Cambridge, in 1941, when he was a student at the Graduate School of Design.*



In 1927

“Newark’s Cambridge manufacturing facility near the Charles River and MIT.”  
“It was the largest factory in the world with its entire space devoted to the production of candy.”