



The Newetowne Chronicle

A publication of the Cambridge Historical Society

IN THIS ISSUE

Summer 2007
Volume VII—Number 2

PEOPLE AND PLACES

A Touch of Paris, or Nagaland,
in Harvard Square

À la recherche de la place perdue
page 7

FROM THE PRESIDENT

The Cambridge Historical
Society's Longfellow Medal
page 2

FROM THE DIRECTOR

A Golden Relationship
page 3

RECENT PROGRAMS

Dana Fellow event at the
Ruggles-Fayerweather House
page 5

Innovations and Innovators
page 4

Spring Benefit
On the Avenue, Huron Avenue
Page 10

FROM THE LIBRARY & ARCHIVE

Mark Time
page 8

CALENDAR OF EVENTS
page 9

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HISTORICAL SOCIETY
The Hooper-Lee-Nichols House
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Cambridge, Massachusetts 02138

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PEOPLE AND PLACES

A Touch of Paris, or Nagaland, in Harvard Square

By Daphne Abeel

Schiller, a Turkish grammar, drama by García Lorca, a Russian dictionary, an Arabic phrase book or something in Ao (a tribal language spoken by the Ao-Nagas of Nagaland, India)—Schoenhof's Foreign Books is the only place within a radius of 250 miles to find them.

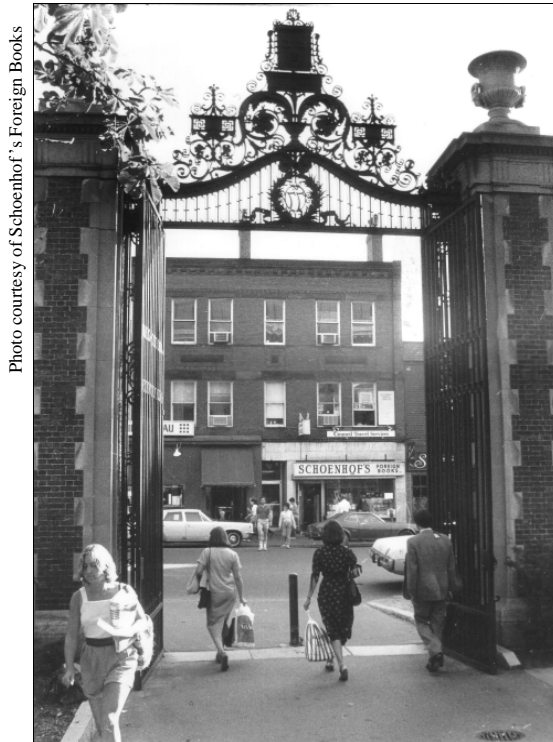


Photo courtesy of Schoenhof's Foreign Books

Schoenhof's opposite Harvard Yard, ca. 1960s.
(building demolished)

Schoenhof's (literally "beautiful house") has occupied its sleekly modern quarters on Mt. Auburn Street, aslant from the Harvard Lampoon and next door to Harvard's Signet Society since 1982. However, its history stretches back to its founding in Boston in the mid-19th century by Carl Schoenhof, a German immigrant.

After Schoenhof's death, the store continued to bear his name, moving in the late 1930s to Cambridge at 1280 Massachusetts Avenue, opposite Widener Library in the midst of Harvard Square. Although it continued to change hands—purchased by the French publisher Editions Gallimard in the 1980s and sold in 2005 to its current owner, MEP Distribooks, based in Skokie, Illinois—Schoenhof's has retained its name and its mission.

The move to Cambridge coincided with an influx of German-Jewish immigrants, fleeing the Holocaust. Schoenhof's and another Cambridge institution, the Window Shop—founded by the wives of émigré professors, lawyers, and judges—gave Cambridge a European ambiance that endured well into the 1960s.

(continued on page 6)

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

FROM THE PRESIDENT

The Cambridge Historical Society's Longfellow Medal

In February 1907 the Society sponsored a number of events to celebrate the 100th anniversary of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's birth. One feature of the celebration was commissioning the noted Cambridge sculptor Bela Pratt to create a commemorative medal. The Society also sponsored a fully attended "public meeting" at Sanders Theatre, featuring tributes, readings, and music, tours of Craigie (now Longfellow) House, and an exhibition of memorabilia at the Cambridge Public Library.

The 2½-inch bronze Longfellow Medal featured a sculpted likeness of the poet on one side and an inscription on the reverse. A series of medals was produced and for several years a medal was offered by the Society as an annual prize for the best essay written by Cambridge schoolchildren

on a topic related to Longfellow. Later, the medal was awarded periodically to honor Cambridge residents who made significant efforts to preserve and promote Cambridge history.

Recently, the Society's Council voted to expand Longfellow Medal eligibility to include Cambridge institutions that have contributed significantly to Cambridge history. It was further voted that the Longfellow National Historic Site be honored as the first such recipient for its outstanding efforts in ensuring that the legacy of Longfellow continues in both his historic house and archives.

At the celebration of the 200th anniversary of Longfellow's birth held in March, again in Sanders Theatre, I was pleased to present the Longfellow Medal to Myra Harrison, superintendent of the National Park Service, who accepted on behalf of the site.

Ted Hansen



Ted Hansen presents the Longfellow Medal to National Park Superintendent Myra Harrison. Emcee Christopher Lydon is behind her. The statue of James Otis looks on.

FROM THE DIRECTOR

A Golden Relationship

Quick! Are the Cambridge Historical Society and the Hooper-Lee-Nichols House synonymous? If you answered no, you'd be correct. If you answered yes, it is probably because the identity of the Society and the House are tightly intertwined. It is, after all, our headquarters—our iconic presence on Brattle Street. But the Society was founded to collect, conserve, and communicate Cambridge history 53 years *before* Frances Emerson left us her house.

The acquisition of one of the oldest houses in Cambridge for a headquarters was cause for celebration. The Society at last had a place of its own to keep its collections and hold its meetings. A resident curator was installed, tours were offered, and experts were called in to discover the many secrets of the old house.

Original paneling and a hidden fireplace with a beehive oven were discovered behind plastered walls and china cabinets. Wallpaper with a tax stamp dating it to the pre-Revolutionary period was found behind rare, early-19th-century scenic wallpaper that was conserved and rehung.

But over the years rotting sills, leaking roofs, antique plumbing, inefficient heating, aged electrical systems, and even the need to paint the house every six years began to strain the Society's resources. Money that had been spent on publications and items for our collections was increasingly being diverted to maintain and preserve the house.



The Society is committed to preserving the Hooper-Lee-Nichols House for the public good, keeping it open as a house museum displaying items related to Cambridge history.

What to do? Some have said, "Sell the house; it's worth millions." Even if the Society wanted to, selling is not an option: According to the terms of Mrs. Emerson's will, we own the house only as long as we use it.

The ongoing challenge is to balance the overall mission of the Society with responsible stewardship of the house. In Cambridge, we are fortunate to have passed the Community Preservation Act a few years ago. It earmarked funds for historic preservation, and the Cambridge Historical Commission created a grant program to help nonprofit organizations maintain their

historic buildings. With our first grant, we were able to leverage \$30,000 of funds we raised into an \$80,000 roofing project.

We have recently been awarded a second grant to upgrade the electrical system. We must act now to protect the house itself, the Society's collections, and the occupants of the building from the threat of fire due to aged wiring. Our council member Charlie Allen, of Charlie Allen Restorations, will manage the project pro bono as he did the roofing project. But the Society still needs to provide a \$50,000 match to take maximum advantage of the \$100,000 grant, for a total cost of \$150,000.

So, while the Society and the House are distinct entities, they are inextricably linked, almost like a marriage. In fact, 2007 is the Society's 50th anniversary of owning the House—a perfect opportunity to launch a campaign to raise 50K for 50 years. It's a golden relationship!

Karen L. Davis

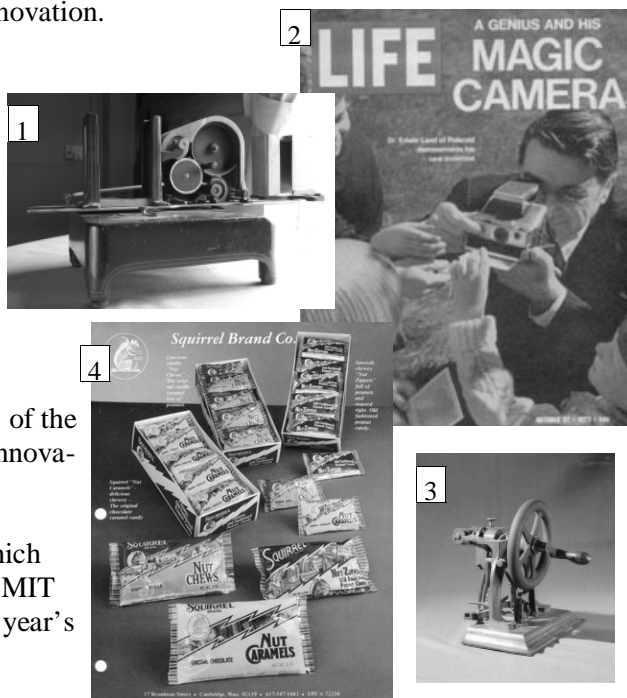
Innovations and Innovators

In April, the CHS participated in the first annual Cambridge Science Festival by offering special tours of the Hooper-Lee-Nichols House. Drawing on our object and archival collections—together with our booklet *Cambridge on the Cutting Edge* and new research by volunteer Annie Brown—we created an exhibition highlighting Cambridge's history of innovation.

Among the displayed items were (1) Sterling Elliott's addressing machine; (2) a 1972 cover of *Life* magazine showing Edwin Land with his SX-70 Polaroid camera, along with two original 1948 Model 95 cameras that Land donated to the Society; (3) the sewing machine patented in 1846 by Cambridge resident Elias Howe, who won a patent dispute with Isaac Singer; and (4) a poster showing varieties of Squirrel Brand candies.

We also displayed papers, photographs, and items of the New England Brick Company and Cambridge's innovative glass, soap, and ice industries.

CHS congratulates the organizers of the event, which was the brainchild of John Durant, director of the MIT Museum. We are already looking forward to next year's festival.



Lights, camera, action...

On a rainy weekend in April, the Chandler Room at the Hooper-Lee-Nichols House was transformed into a movie set. With its pine paneling and open hearth, it became the Charlestown home of John Harvard and his wife, Ann, for a reenactment of the final hours of Harvard's life on September 14, 1638.



Writer and director Michael Van Devere, left foreground, readies the film crew for a scene at John Harvard's deathbed with Elina Kanellopoulos playing Harvard's wife, Ann.

The film, *John Harvard*, was written and produced by Harvard Extension graduate student Michael Van Devere with a cast of Harvard undergraduates and a technical crew. It recounts Harvard's deathbed decision to bequeath his library of 400 books and half his estate to the small college founded just two years earlier in what was then called Newetowne.

Van Devere anticipates screening the 45-minute film in November to celebrate the 400th anniversary of John Harvard's birth. Subsequently, he will show the film and lead a discussion about it at a CHS event.

DANA FELLOW EVENT*

The Ruggles-Fayerweather House



On Wednesday, April 4, the Cambridge Historical Society's Dana Fellows toured the Ruggles-Fayerweather House and heard Susan Maycock of the Cambridge Historical Commission describe its history.

Now the home of Ed and Ann Kania and their children, the Georgian mansion at 175 Brattle Street was built by George Ruggles in 1764. Its handsome proportions and deep setback from the north side of what was then the Watertown road are typical of the "Tory Row" houses of the pre-Revolutionary period. Ruggles moved to Boston in 1774 after trading houses with Thomas Fayerweather.



(l to r) Ann Kania, Ted Hansen, Larry Nathanson, Ed Kania, and Susan Maycock

During the American Revolution, the Continental Army used the house as a hospital. In 1827 William Wells, a Boston bookseller, bought the house and ran a boys' boarding

school there. One student, Richard Henry Dana Jr., wrote in later years that the administration relied on a "good deal of flogging."

The house has had only six owners in its nearly 250 years. William Wells's family occupied it for 80 years. Richard Merriman, a professor of history at Harvard, created the library and added a squash court and garage in the early 20th century. Klaus Biemann, a professor at MIT, lived there from 1970 to 1999.

In gratitude to the Kanias for their hospitality, the Society presented them with a copy of the deed from George Ruggles to Thomas Fayerweather, the original of which is in the Society's archives.

Thanks to Trader Joe's, Ann & Ed Kania, Judy & Tom Bracken, and Anna & Larry Nathanson for an extraordinary array of hors d'oeuvres.

**Dana Fellows contribute \$100 or more to the CHS annually.*

The Cambridge Women's Heritage Project

celebrated Women's History Month on March 27 by unveiling a new Web site in honor of Cambridge women, past and present. Visit www.cambridgema.gov/cwhp, and you will find approximately 150 biographical sketches selected from more than 400 nominations to the Cambridge Women's Heritage Database. This database celebrates the contributions of women and women's organizations from the settlement of Cambridge to the present. Additional nominations, corrections, and volunteers are welcome.

For more information about the project, call Mary Leno at 617-349-4697 or send e-mail to mleno@cambridgema.gov. —Sarah Burks, Cambridge Historical Commission

Correction:

In the winter issue, we incorrectly listed an Annual Fund donor and donation. It should have read, Carl Nordblom, CRN Auctions, Inc., \$250.

A Touch of Paris

(continued from page 1)

Paul Mueller, an Austrian-Jewish refugee from Vienna who acquired part ownership of the store from Librairie Française, was a member of this community. He and his wife, Greta, ran the establishment during a period when interest in European languages ran high. Many a student of German in the 1950s and 1960s may recall frequent trips to Schoenhof's to purchase the small Reclam and Insel Verlag paperback editions of individual works assigned by their Harvard professors.

An employee such as Hermione ("Minna") Brand, who died in 2004 at the age of 96, was typical of the sort of person a customer might find behind the counter at Schoenhof's from the 1950s to the 1970s. Erudite in her own right, she would pursue any volume requested, climbing the store's ladders to the highest shelf. Today, manager Rupert Davis, a transplanted Englishman whose connections with the store date from his student days in the late 1960s, says, "Our busiest seasons are the beginning of each semester."

Schoenhof's is a destination, not only for Harvard students and faculty, but for those associated with all the universities in the area and for customers many miles beyond. Its nearest and only real competitor is French and European Books, in New York's Rockefeller Center. Davis, who has managed the store since 1996, says the store today stocks many more books in Chinese and Arabic than in previous years. Trends in language learning tend to follow geopolitical interests and patterns of shifting population, and while the French literature section still commands some dominance, Spanish has probably surpassed French as the learned language of choice.

Flags of foreign countries fly outside Schoenhof's, but they are, in fact, the property of the

Spee Club, Schoenhof's landlord, which makes a point of flying the flags of its members' nationalities. "We do get the occasional visitor who wants to know if we are the Norwegian Consulate," says Davis.

Today the staff includes two other longtime and valued employees, David Leyenson, book buyer (whom Davis calls "the bibliographic brains of the outfit"), and Ina Johnson of the reference department—both have worked at Schoenhof's for nearly three decades. The life of a book-seller is not an easy one in these times when the Internet's ubiquitous power commands a growing number of buyers. In addition to selling books, Schoenhof's holds a series of reading and conversation groups each week. The exhibits in its window's display case change with the season, with Irish literature predominating in March, French literature in July, and so forth. This spring, a new venture for the store is a children's language hour to be conducted in French.



Schoenhof's current location on Mount Auburn Street

Harvard Square without a foreign bookstore seems impossible to imagine. Yet the world of print is increasingly fragile, and while many college students study one or two languages for a few years, Americans are not generally known for their interest or proficiency in other tongues. However, there are probably more foreign-born residents in Cambridge and the metropolitan Boston area than in years past, and they constitute a new market for what a unique store such as Schoenhof's offers.

For 150 years, Schoenhof's has been an enduring testament to the life of the mind in a milieu devoted to the intellect and to scholarly research. Its founder would, perhaps, be surprised but surely pleased and would, without question, wish for 150 years more of the same.

À la recherche de la place perdue

By Michael Kenney

Any account of a surviving Harvard Square bookstore is likely to spark a wave of nostalgia, prompting readers to recall the days when there was a bookstore—or two, or three—on nearly every block. Remember Mandrake and Pangloss, one will say; or The Bookcase and Ahab, Barilari's and Reading International; and going even further back, Thomas More and Phillips. Or, like WordsWorth, not long ago, much of its once familiar store vacant, used for what appears to be contractors' storage.

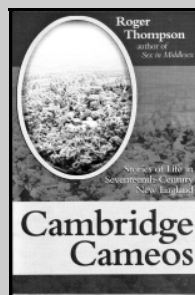
All gone, or like Starr Books, gone underground in a church basement, or McIntyre and Moore, transplanted to Somerville. Only occasionally is there a return, like the Globe Corner Bookstore, reborn on Mt. Auburn Street, and still tucked away are a handful of rare and academic specialists.

There are survivors: Schoenhof's and the Harvard Book Store and "The Coop," which survives as a Barnes & Noble and by recasting itself from a department store (tweed suits on the top floor, housewares in the basement).

Other readers will have other landmarks—the specialty shops, the restaurants and eateries, even a market seemingly stocked especially for E. E. Cummings's "Cambridge ladies who live in furnished souls." But it was the bookstores that defined the Harvard Square of memory, and their loss defines its present. "Nostalgia comes easy," wrote the poet and music critic Lloyd Schwartz in the *Boston Phoenix* last fall. Nobody thought to capture the nostalgia, documentary style, in those long-past days. The local filmmaker Federico Muchnik made a run at it with *Touching History: Harvard Square, The Bank, and The Tasty Diner*, an account of the contentious redevelopment of the Read Block, in which a faux-landmark replaced the townie eateries.

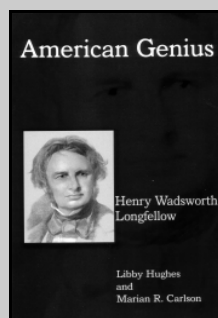
But if nostalgia comes easily, perhaps it can be constantly recreated. Muchnik, in his film, gives a final word to Charles Sullivan, the executive director of the Cambridge Historical Commission and veteran of many development fights. "People become identified with the Square they knew when they arrived," said Sullivan. "They come up out of the subway at age 18 or 22 and see this incredibly busy and complicated place, full of lots of interesting people and activities, and they identify with it as they first see it." But over time they become conservative, Sullivan added, and want it "back the way it was" when they first saw it, whether that was with Abercrombie and Fitch and Pacific Sunwear, the first redevelopment tenants of the Read Block, or with The Tasty—or with those bookstores of time lost.

Recommended Reading



Historian and author Roger Thompson has culled thousands of original documents to tell the humorous and harrowing stories of the ordinary folk who lived in and around today's Harvard Square from 1631 to 1686. To purchase *Cambridge Cameos: Stories of Life in Seventeenth-Century New England*, visit sales@piconpress.com.

Thanks to a tip and support from the Cambridge Historical Commission, Thompson gave an impromptu talk at the Hooper-Lee-Nichols House on June 20.



Geared toward young readers, Libby Hughes and Marian Carlson's engaging and inspiring biography of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow presents the life and works of the great poet and kindly man in a way that teaches good values, shows that dreams do come true, and acknowledges that tragedy is part of life. Published to coincide with the Long-

fellow Bicentennial celebration (see p. 2), the book can be purchased at the Longfellow National Historic Site and the Harvard Coop. For a signed copy, e-mail carlsonpat@aol.com.

FROM THE LIBRARY AND ARCHIVE

Mark Time

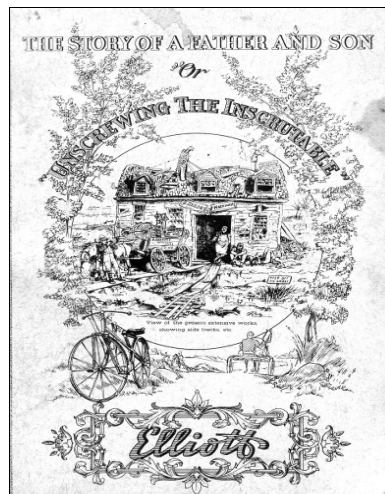
by Mark Vassar

In past columns I have mentioned eBay and the vast amount of material it holds that relates to Cambridge history. Many items on eBay fit neatly into our collection policy.

Over the past several months, I (and several others) have been monitoring eBay to see just what sorts of items might be appropriate for CHS. Items such as postcards appeared in abundance. Other items, such as NECCO candy display jars and letters written in Cambridge, appeared less often.

At present, CHS has limited funds for enhancing our collections, but we have purchased such inexpensive items as postcards of the Hotel Continental and the Harvard Observatory, an ink blotter advertising the Hathaway Bakery, and a pamphlet describing the inventions of Sterling Elliott, the creator of the Elliott Addressing Machine. We've also received a thoughtful donation of the 1934 Cambridge volumes of the Sanborn Insurance Maps (updated to 1955), purchased on eBay by Charles Sullivan.

It occurred to us that members might enjoy searching for and purchasing items from eBay and donating them to CHS. In order to prevent members from bidding against each other or purchasing items we already have, we would like to create an eBay e-mail group. If you are interested in such a group, please contact me at archives@cambridgehistory.org.



This booklet, which describes the Elliott family and their many inventions (see page 4), was purchased on eBay for the CHS collection.

Membership Application**Please check a category**

To learn about benefits for specific categories, please call the CHS office at 617/547-4252.

INDIVIDUAL CATEGORIES

- \$35 Single
- \$60 Family
- \$100 Dana Fellow (Single)
- \$150 Dana Fellow (Dual)
- \$250 Sponsor
- \$500 Patron
- \$1,000 Benefactor

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- \$100 Corporate Fellow
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- \$500 Corporate Patron
- \$1,000 Corporate Benefactor

An additional donation of _____ is enclosed to help CHS preserve and maintain the Hooper-Lee-Nichols House.
 I do not wish to join at this time; however, enclosed is my contribution of \$_____.
 Make checks payable to the Cambridge Historical Society and mail to 159 Brattle Street, Cambridge, Mass. 02138.

Calendar of Events

Members will be mailed invitations and other details about the following events. Nonmembers are welcome to attend and are encouraged to join the Cambridge Historical Society.

Saturday, July 28, 10:00 a.m.

A Hunt for History

Following a special quest map and deciphering clues, participants will learn about Cambridge before and during the American Revolution.

Geared toward schoolchildren and their families, the self-guided quest will begin at George Washington's former headquarters (now the Longfellow National Historic Site). A treasure box waits at the end.

Quest maps will be available year-round at the Hooper-Lee-Nichols House (159 Brattle Street), the Longfellow National Historic Site, and other places in Cambridge. This free activity has been made possible by a grant from the Massachusetts Society of the Cincinnati.

Saturday, August 11 and 18

Cambridge Discovery Days: Well Versed in Cambridge

In honor of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's 200th birthday, architectural and historical tours will illuminate Cambridge's literary heritage—particularly poetry. These free tours are organized by the Historic Cambridge Collaborative.

Friday, September 21, 5:00–7:00 p.m.

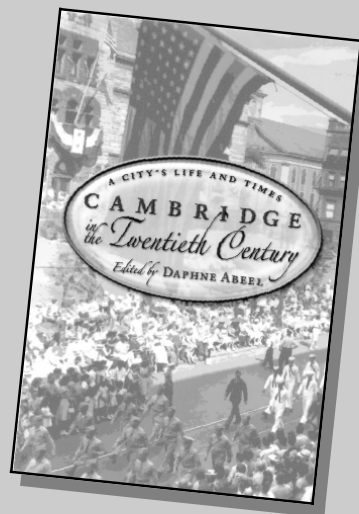
Tea and Tour of the Jared Sparks House

21 Kirkland St., \$5 members, \$10 nonmembers
Join the CHS and the Reverend Professor Peter Gomes for tea at the Jared Sparks House. Gomes will lead guests on a tour of his residence—an impressive ca. 1838 Greek Revival house that he has filled with antiques and his other collections. Professor Gomes's remarks will highlight two recently conserved portraits of Jared Sparks and his wife. Sparks (1789-1866), an American historian, educator, and Unitarian minister, served as president of Harvard University from 1849 to 1853. Space is limited; reservations are required.

Wednesday, November 7 (time to be announced)

Publication Party at the Harvard Bookstore

The Society's new book, *Cambridge in the Twentieth Century: A City's Life and Times*, is a significant portrait of our community. The book has been funded by a grant from the Cambridge Savings Bank.



Wednesday, December 12, 5:00–7:00 p.m.

Holiday Open House at the Hooper-Lee-Nichols House

Enjoy the festive atmosphere, food provided by friends and local caterers, and seasonal music. Guests will have an opportunity to purchase our new book, as well as CHS gift memberships.

Ongoing

Tours of the Hooper-Lee-Nichols House

Tuesday and Thursday at 2:00 and 3:00 p.m. \$5; free for CHS members. Call to arrange a group tour.

Details on these programs will be posted on our Web site as they become available.

SPRING BENEFIT

On the Avenue, Huron Avenue

On May 6, the Society celebrated the history of Cambridge's only streetcar suburb at the former Fayerweather Street School—arguably the most extraordinary private residence in Cambridge. The event exceeded all our expectations surpassing our fundraising goal of \$25,000. The planning committee sends a big thank-you to our hosts, speakers and donors (see page 11).



(right) Hostess Lori Lander welcoming guests in the top-floor gymnasium of her house and (below) with speakers Charles Sullivan and Heli Meltsner



(right) Looking for bargains at the silent auction and (below) studying historic maps of the Huron Avenue area



(below) Architect Maryann Thompson, in foreground, leads a tour of the house, which she converted from a school.



(below) Socializing on the deck



We would like to thank the following businesses and individuals for supporting the Cambridge Historical Society through contributions to our spring benefit.

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Riley to the Rescue
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Shaw's (Mt. Auburn Street)
Susi's



Edwin Land demonstrating his first Polaroid camera in 1948.
See more on *Innovations and Innovators* on page 4.

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

In going into the past, maybe we can feel something
about ourselves in the process.

Martin Scorsese
Rolling Stone, Nov 1, 1990

*Martin Scorsese won the Academy Award for his 2006 film The Departed,
a drama set in the Boston area.*