



The Newetowne Chronicle

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

Phone: 617-547-4252

Web site: www.cambridgehistory.org
E-mail: info@cambridgehistory.org

PEOPLE AND PLACES

A Kids-Eye View of Huron Village

By Michael Kenney

The 1903 Cambridge atlas shows just 9 residences—and not a single commercial establishment—along Huron Avenue between Lakeview and Fayerweather streets. The remaining frontage in that area, now the thriving commercial district known as Huron Village, appears as empty house lots.

But fast-forward just a dozen years to the 1916 atlas, and 19 residences appear, along with 4 commercial structures—with just one empty lot remaining. And with houses having filled in the lots along the side streets—Standish, Chilton, and Gurney—as well as up toward Larch Road and down toward Reservoir Street, the “critical mass” needed for commercial establishments had arrived almost before shrubs had been planted and front yards seeded.

The Cambridge Historical Society, two years in the future when the 1903 atlas was compiled, will celebrate the history of Huron Avenue and its neighborhoods at its annual spring benefit, which will be held on May 6 at the former Fayerweather Street School, now the home of the Lander family (see page 3 for details).

An item in the Society’s archives—a report prepared in 1984 by students at the Fayerweather Street School—as well as city atlases, help to trace the area’s development. The catalyst was the opening of a trolley line in 1894—a line that

(continued on page 6)



Huron Avenue near Chilton Street in the late 1930s, looking east

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

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Your Council at Work

In 2006 your council—a slightly old-fashioned name for the Society’s board of directors—began a process of strategic planning, following the completion in 2005 of our first 100 years. Councilors considered such basic organizational questions as: What is our particular niche in collecting and preserving Cambridge history? What are we trying to accomplish? At a retreat last March attended by councilors, advisors, and staff, we all took a hard look at the present operations of the Society, its successes and its challenges. At subsequent monthly meetings, the Council examined how the Society can work with the Cambridge Historical Commission and the Cambridge Public Library. (Please see my column in the Fall 2006 *Newetowne Chronicle* for more details on the strategic planning process.)

One sign of a healthy and forward-looking nonprofit organization is the leadership role the councilors play in setting an example for fundraising efforts. Here I am pleased to report that in the Annual Appeal, contributions made by the council and advisors not only accounted for a significant portion of the total, but each councilor responded generously to a challenge grant issued by one of the councilors. Add to that the contributions of our members and other supporters, and we raised over \$36,000, twice the amount we raised in 2005.

I would like to recognize and thank three councilors who completed their terms at the 2006 Annual Meeting. Fortunately, all three will remain active as advisors and committee members.

Daphne Abeel served six years as the Society’s editor. The triennial publication of this newsletter and the Society’s forthcoming book on Cambridge in the 20th century are her legacy. She will continue as editor of the book until its

completion. At the Annual Meeting, Kathy Born presented Daphne with a Certificate of Appreciation in recognition of her hard work and dedication as editor of CHS publications.

Eliot Klein served as a councilor for three years and has been instrumental in attracting business sponsorships for the Society. Sue Poverman, who also served a three-year term, has been active in planning our Spring Benefits. Both Sue and Eliot will continue to serve on the Development Committee.

Ted Hansen

New Council members

Darleen Bonislawski

Born in Cambridge, Darleen has a private law practice in Cambridge and has been a community activist since the late 1960s. She chairs the Cambridge Election Commission.

Michael Kenney

A retired reporter for the *Boston Globe*, Michael is a book reviewer and freelance writer on local and regional subjects.

Heli Meltsner

A preservation consultant, Heli is currently researching and writing a book on the surviving poorhouses of Massachusetts. She is on the Avon Hill Neighborhood Conservation District Commission, as well as the board of the Cambridge Center for Adult Education.

FROM THE DIRECTOR

Think Spring and Summer

On Sunday, May 6, the Society will celebrate the history of the Huron Avenue neighborhood at its annual Spring Benefit. The Lander family has generously donated their extraordinary home, secluded in the heart of Huron Village, as the site. This location, together with the charming and well-documented report done by students at the Fayerweather Street School (see cover story), inspired us to explore the history of the Huron Avenue area, which is a quintessential streetcar suburb.

The afternoon will include tours of the house, which was converted from the Fayerweather Street School into a stunning contemporary residence by Cambridge



© Peter Vandervanker

architect Maryann Thompson, a silent auction of items donated by local merchants, a chance to record your memories of living, working, playing, or shopping in the area, a hearty reception donated by your favorite neighborhood shops and restaurants, opportunities to wander in the spectacular garden designed by the Cambridge landscape architect Michael Van Valkenburgh—and, of course, some fascinating history.

Charles Sullivan, the executive director of the Cambridge Historical Commission, will describe the evolution of the neighborhood from Brattle Street's undeveloped "backyard" to the residential and commercial buildings that line the charming streets today, and Heli Meltsner, an architectural historian and preservation consultant, will present the architectural and social history of the Fayerweather Street School building and site.

Our annual Spring Benefit is an essential source of operating income for the Society. This year's budget asks us to raise \$25,000 from businesses, institutions, and our members. It is an ambitious goal, but with your support we can do it.

This summer we are planning a fun educational program for children and families funded by a grant from the Massachusetts Society of the Cincinnati. The program—called a Tory Row Quest—is being developed by educational consultant Janet McNeil. The self-guided history treasure hunt will involve searching for a variety of clues that will illuminate the important role of people and places in Cambridge during the American Revolution.

Karen L. Davis

And the answer is....

The photograph on the back cover appears to be the intersection of Huron and Concord avenues in the 1920s. Please contact CHS if you have pictures of the Huron Avenue area that you would like to donate or allow us to scan for our archives.

A thank-you to our skilled volunteers

Chip Allen, a help desk system administrator at the Radius Specialty Hospital (read IT expert), regularly rescues us from vexing computer problems.

Annie Brown, a history teacher, is developing a local history curriculum, "Cambridge Firsts," which will be posted on our website for teachers to download and use in their classrooms.

Luise Erdmann edits this newsletter and all our mailings.

Martin Evans, a retired professor of organizational behavior, is working on databases that we will use to increase our visibility in the business community.

Annette LaMond and her group of volunteers from the Cambridge Plant and Garden Club take great care of the HLN house grounds.

Chris Lenney, a librarian at Harvard's Lamont Library, creates finding aids in our archives.

Jerry Miller, former director of the Competitive Intelligence Center at Simmons College, is working with us on strategic planning and institutional advancement.

ANNUAL MEETING

The 102nd Annual Meeting

On January 28, 2007, Kathleen Born presided, filling in for Ted Hansen, and welcomed members and guests to the annual meeting at the Hooper-Lee-Nichols House. Born recognized several members and especially city councilors Craig Kelly and Henrietta Davis. The Society transacted its regular business, including the approval of the minutes of the previous annual meeting and the election of officers, councilors, and advisors (see sidebar on page 2).

Finance Committee Report

Andrew Leighton, Treasurer

A great deal was accomplished in 2006 with respect to our efforts to preserve and maintain the Hooper-Lee-Nichols House and our collections. Expenses in these areas totaled almost \$100,000. While that did not fulfill all our needs, it represents a good start. The greatest portion of the expense was funded in three ways. First, \$50,000 came from the City of Cambridge through a Community Preservation Act grant. Second, the \$25,000 matching dollars required by the CPA grant came from our centennial fundraiser in 2005, and third, \$4,000 (for collections) was a grant from the Massachusetts Society of the Cincinnati. Because 30,000 of those dollars were raised and reflected in the 2005 earnings, the Society shows a deficit in its operations for 2006 of about \$25,000.

The performance of our investment advisor, the Cambridge Trust Company, and a rising stock market combined to provide a total return on our investments that was adequate to meet our investment income budget and provide an additional amount that was able to not only make up the operating deficit but, in addition, provide us with an increase in total earnings of over \$10,000. Our total investment portfolio increased from \$595,000 to almost \$608,000.

Facility Report

Charlie Allen

In 2006, we completed work on the roof, balustrade and rear chimney of the Hooper-Lee-Nichols House. (See Winter 2006 *Newetowne Chronicle*.) During the summer our central air conditioning system failed, and we had to install a new one. Most significant, however, the

failure of several light fixtures revealed dangerous wiring conditions. A review of our electrical system resulted in a report that described items needing attention and made recommendations for updating and safeguarding the electrical infrastructure.



This sconce is one of many fixtures that needs rewiring. They were installed by the preservation architect Joseph Everett Chandler in 1916.

Armed with this report, we applied for and

were awarded a second Institutional Preservation Grant by the City to undertake a major updating of our electrical system. The grant, which is administered by the Cambridge Historical Commission, uses Community Preservation Act funds. We are fortunate in Cambridge to have the support of a strong, able historical commission.

As with the previous grant for the roof, the grant for the electrical work requires matching funds from the Society. At next year's annual meeting, I hope to be able to report on all the work that will have been done to safeguard our treasures and the house from the very real threat of an electrical fire. It is my privilege to be leading the facilities committee and supervising the construction work when such important improvements to the Hooper-Lee-Nichols House are taking place.

Collections Committee

Lindsay Leard Coolidge, Curator

In 2006, Mark Vassar continued his superb work of organizing, cataloguing, and creating finding aids for the archival collections. The conservation of the Mercy Scollay and Winwood Serjeant letters was completed (see page 8). We covered a section of a bookcase in the Chandler Room with glass to increase our display space, and we have begun a series of small installations featuring postcards from our collection.

Gifts were so numerous last year that I am un-



This image showing Memorial Drive near M.I.T. is in our postcard exhibition displaying views of the Charles River.

able to include all of them in this report. The major donations—the Gutheim Collection, the Henderson portraits, and New England Glass Company objects were described in the *Newetowne Chronicle* during the past year.

After Ferrante-Dege closed last fall, we received the company’s archival materials. Mark Vassar discovered the wonders of eBay for the Society and purchased a glass paperweight with an image of the Washington Elm to add to our growing paperweight collection. Personal papers were also given, including those of Cecilia Lyons and Harry Martin, the latter a Cambridge firefighter. Charles Sullivan donated a Frost family letter. The Cambridge Historical Commission gave the Society nine city directories, the earliest from 1847. Thank you to all of our members and friends for these wonderful gifts.

Publications Committee Report

Daphne Abeel, Editor

The year 2006 saw *The Newetowne Chronicle* continue to thrive, with articles about people and places that are part of the fabric of the history of Cambridge. My most exciting news, however, concerns the Society’s book, *A City’s Life and Times: Cambridge in the 20th Century*. The CHS received the final manuscript from the copy editor the week before Christmas. On January 11, Karen Davis, Lewis Bushnell, and I met with book designer Linda Wade and printer Beau Wing to discuss the technical operations necessary to produce the book. It is now in the hands of the designer, and proofreading and preparation of an index will soon follow. We hope that the book will be completed this fall, and it should be apparent by the summer whether that will, indeed, be possible. Whenever the project does reach its final form as a book, it will stand as a valuable and evocative tribute to the past hundred years—which are receding ever more quickly as the pace of change accelerates in the still-new century.

I want to thank all the contributors and the CHS staff and councilors who have supported the book project, and in particular, I’d like to recognize the Cambridge Savings Bank for underwriting the production costs. While I will continue to serve as editor of the book until it is completed, I am pleased to be leaving the council position of editor in the able hands of Michael Kenney.



Many thanks to Paul Parisi of Acme Bookbinding, who subsidized the printing and binding of 28 Cambridge city directories, and to the Cambridge Historical Commission for providing us with the disks. Visit Acme online at www.acmebook.com.

Huron Village

(continued from page 1)

had originally been proposed for Brattle Street but that was blocked by its residents. Ironically, the Huron Avenue house lots were, in many cases, formed from the back land of Brattle Street estates. The effect of the trolley line was to open Huron Avenue as a residential neighborhood similar to those in Boston described by Sam Bass Warner, Jr. in his classic book, *Streetcar Suburbs*.

It was a teacher with an interest in commercial archaeology and geography, Peter Richards, who set the 4th-, 5th-, and 6th-grade students to exploring Huron Village in 1984. What they found was a somewhat more service-oriented commercial district than exists today, with a barber shop, a drugstore, a Laundromat, and a gas station. But there are still today a dry cleaners, a beauty salon, and a bank, along with three restaurants. And there are also, as before, a half-dozen galleries and studios of one kind or another, as well as the dance studio, now a branch of the Cambridge Center for Adult Education.

Some of the shops the students found are still there, among them the the Bryn Mawr Book Store, the children's store Henry Bear's Park, and the Fresh Pond Market, the anchor store of the district, now managed by Mark Najarian, a grandson of the store's founder. And Pirjo, a women's clothing store noted in the students' survey, has been reborn, in a fashion, in J. Miles, for Judy Miles used to work at Pirjo. And the Finnish presence of Pirjo herself has recently resurfaced with Miles's opening of a Marimekko store.

A number of the Fayerweather School students were assigned to visit the shops, said Richards, in a telephone interview from Atlanta where he now teaches at a private elementary school. Not only did they interview the shop owners

and their workers, they even worked for a day or two behind the counters. Other students interviewed residents, while still others researched the ownership and history of the commercial buildings. From an interview with then-longtime resident Edward McCabe, the students learned that the first commercial enterprise on the street was a neighborhood convenience store built as an addition to the front of the house at 385 Huron Avenue and now remembered as "the candy store." It first shows up in the 1916 atlas and is today an office of Brattle Associates Real Estate.

The report appeared as "A Close-Up of Huron Ave.," complete with maps and diagrams—and with drawings of the storefronts. The student reporters were remarkably candid. Emma's Pizza was rated highly for its pizza, but the shop was boycotted by the students because Emma "has been rude to us." Emma, their teacher noted, "thought the kids should have been in school."



This sketch by nine-year-old Joe Gittleman is one of two dozen drawings that were part of a 1984 research project, "A Close-up of Huron Ave."

And the report on Coolidge Cleaners suggested that "it needs painting," and on Have a Heart gallery, noted that it "has never been robbed" and "hasn't had a fire in the store yet."

The report on Louie's Barber Shop noted that its owner, Louis Maccagno, had died while the students' project was underway. "We had to deal with that for the kids," Richards said. "It was a teachable moment."

Through Richards, who has studied and written on such aspects of commercial geography as roadside diners, the students' report came to the attention of Harvard's Graduate School of Design. "They picked it up," he said, "and I brought five or six of the kids over and they gave a talk about the project to design school students."

The CHS is grateful to Harriet Provine for donating a copy of "A Close-up of Huron Ave." to our archives.

Annual Meeting Keynote Address

An informative—and highly entertaining—talk on the history of the Dana family in Cambridge was presented at the annual meeting by Rosamond W. Dana, a direct descendant.



Rosamond Dana

The first Cambridge Dana was Richard Dana, who emigrated from Manchester, England, in 1640. His descendants, Ms. Dana noted, remained in Cambridge for over 300 years, “amassing and losing wealth, influence, and fame.” And also, she remarked, “scandal.” While not necessarily scandalous,

Ms. Dana noted, “a lot of the Dana women married much younger men.” Most of the Dana men went to Harvard and many became lawyers, but some of them “had trouble” there, taking part in such undergraduate frolics as “the rotten cabbage rebellion.”

The first Richard Henry Dana, “Poet Dana,” was once called “the best poet in America,” but Ms. Dana begged to differ. His son was Richard Henry Dana Jr., “Mast Dana,” author of *Two Years Before the Mast*. “This man mattered,” Ms. Dana said. But she noted that he considered his life to have been “a failure, my great success a boy’s book.” His son, Richard Henry Dana III, was the founding president of the Cambridge Historical Society.

Later, there were the family “Reds,” Edmund who visited the Soviet Union “a number of times,” and Harry, who when he was arrested on a morals charge, was defended by Ms. Dana’s father. Ms. Dana drew on the archives at Harvard and at the Longfellow House for her 1991 master’s thesis, “Privileged Radicals,” which focuses on the children of RHD III, who were the grandchildren of both Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and “Mast Dana.” She described her thesis as “a look at how the burden of the Dana families’ heritage influenced their lives.” She has presented a

copy of her thesis to the Society, where it will be available to researchers.

The Society thanks Taza Chocolates and our members for donating refreshments.

Recent Programs

Preserving Your Family History



Mark Vassar

In October, CHS archivist Mark Vassar explained basic archival techniques to use at home. Attendees were amazed by the effects that common storage practices have on collection items, and many exclaimed that they had much work to do on their possessions. As an alternative, Mark encouraged his audience to

consider donating photos and papers with Cambridge associations to the CHS.

The Cambridge Railroad



Charles Bahne

It started when Gardiner Greene Hubbard decided he needed to improve his commute between his house on Brattle Street and his office in Boston. So said historian Charlie Bahne as he traced the history of public transportation in Cambridge. By April of 1856, the city’s

first streetcar line was up and running between Boston and Mount Auburn Cemetery on a route that passed right by Hubbard’s house. Holding about 50 passengers—24 seated—the streetcars were pulled by two horses. This was quite an improvement over coaches and omnibuses, which seated fewer riders and required more horses. Eventually, the Cambridge Railroad’s horse cars were replaced by electric trolleys, the subway, and buses, operated today by the MBTA.

FROM THE LIBRARY & ARCHIVE

Mark Time

by Mark Vassar

One of our collections, recently conserved through the generosity of the Massachusetts Society for the Cincinnati, contains the letters of Winwood Serjeant and his wife, Mary. The twelve letters, which are written to Mary's sister Elizabeth Browne Rogers, document the experience of Cambridge loyalists during and after the Revolution. They contain family and domestic news, Cambridge gossip, references to current events (particularly the coming Revolution), and offer spiritual comfort and worldly advice. The following is an adaptation of the biographical sketch of Winwood Serjeant written by our volunteer Chris Lenney, who prepared the finding aid for the collection.

Winwood Serjeant (ca.1730?–1780) was born in Bristol, England, and ordained by the bishop of Rochester in 1756. He was sent in 1759 to South Carolina as an Anglican missionary by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (S.P.G.). In June 1767, Serjeant assumed the pulpit at Christ Church in Cambridge as its third rector. He first resided at 7 Waterhouse Street and then in a house near the corner of Bond and Garden streets built for him by Henry Vassall, a prominent parishioner and one of the church's founders. When Serjeant arrived in 1767, the parish had been without a settled minister for two years and was still recovering from the scandalous departure of its second rector, Samuel Griffith, another S.P.G missionary.

Serjeant was a loyalist by nature and, by virtue of his social and religious position, a sworn upholder of the Crown. Anti-Tory sentiment came to a head in the summer of 1774, when virtually everyone in the Christ Church congregation fled from Cambridge for their safety—some to British-occupied Boston, others to Newburyport or Nova Scotia. In early September 1774, riotous crowds compelled Thomas Oliver, who lived at 33 Elmwood Avenue, and Judge Joseph Lee, who lived in the Hooper-Lee-Nichols House, among others, to resign

their seats on the Mandamus Council. (Historian Samuel Batchelder has speculated that Serjeant may have also been driven from Cambridge at this time.)

Serjeant recorded in one of his letters (not preserved here) that he had “lost not less than £300 in household furniture and books destroyed and pillaged.” Serjeant and his family sought refuge in Kingston, N.H., where he hoped to find “a peaceful retirement among rural peasants,” but when anti-Tory feeling reached the countryside, he moved to Newburyport. Stricken with paralysis in 1777, he returned to Bristol, England, in 1778 and died at Bath on September 3, 1780.

Recommended reading

The Window Shop: Safe Harbor for Refugees



1939–1972. Founded by Cambridge residents, the bakery and gift shop provided jobs and fellowship for hundreds of German and Austrian immigrants. From 1947 until its closing, it was located at 56 Brattle Street. The book is available at the Harvard Bookstore and the Coop.

Sightseeing: Clues to the Landscape History of New England



In this historical and cultural examination of how our built New England environment came to be, Chris Lenney, a CHS archives volunteer, challenges us to alter the way we experience and interpret the New England landscape. Email Lenney@fas.harvard.edu.

Calendar of Events

Wednesday, April 4

Dana Fellow Event*

Place: 175 Brattle Street
(Ruggles-Fayerweather House)
Time: 6:00 p.m.

A rare opportunity to see the interior of one of Cambridge's famed collection of "Tory Mansions." Architectural historian Susan Maycock will speak on the history and significance of this 1764 house as it evolved from a high-style Georgian residence owned by loyalists, to an army encampment and hospital for injured patriots, to a private boys' school at which James Russell Lowell, Richard Henry Dana, and Colonel Thomas Wentworth Higginson studied. *By invitation only. (Dana Fellows contribute \$100 or more annually to the CHS.)

Saturday, April 21, from 10:00 a.m. to noon
Tuesday, April 24, and Thursday, April 26,
from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m.

Innovations and Innovators: Special Tours of the Hooper-Lee-Nichols House

Place: 159 Brattle Street

The CHS will participate in the first annual Cambridge Science Festival by offering guided tours of the Hooper-Lee-Nichols House that will feature scientific innovations that were developed right here in Cambridge.



Sewing machine patented in 1846 by Elias Howe Jr.

Visitors will have an opportunity to view highlights of the Society's collections, including Elias Howe's sewing machine, Sterling Eliot's addressing machine, Edwin Land's Polaroid cameras, and the house itself.

The tours are designed for both adults and children in grades 4-12, with a maximum of 15 people per group. For more information about the Cambridge Science Festival, visit www.cambridgesciencefestival.org. Call or e-mail the CHS to sign up for a tour.

Save the Date!

Sunday, May 6

On the Avenue, Huron Avenue

Time: 2:00-4:00 p.m.

Place: 74 R Fayerweather Street, Cambridge
Come to our Spring Benefit to celebrate the history of Huron Avenue, its neighborhoods, and its businesses (see page 3 for details).



340 Huron Avenue in the late 1930s

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.

Sunday, March 25

Longfellow

Bicentennial Gala

Time: 2:00 p.m.

Place: Sanders Theatre, Harvard University.

Celebrate the bicentennial birthday of one of America's original superstars, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, with music, poetry, and more.

This two-hour gala, sponsored by the Longfellow Bicentennial Committee and others, celebrates all that is Longfellow in the same place that his centennial tribute was held by the Cambridge Historical Society in 1907. The CHS will present a Longfellow Medal to the Longfellow National Historic Site.



For more information about the gala, visit www.longfellow200.org.

Festive Holiday Party



Over 125 members and friends attended our Annual Holiday Party in December.

Special thanks go to the many CHS members who contributed food, beverages, and poinsettias and to the following caterers for their donations: A. J. Culinary, The Basil Tree, Catering by Debby, Cuisine Chez Vous, East Meets West, Global Gourmet, Riley to the Rescue, and Tables of Content.

Many thanks also to Ruth Crocker and Beth Meyer for decorating the house and to Carolyn Woznick for her hand-made ornaments for our tree.

Special appreciation goes to the Movadi Woodwind Quintet for their excellent performance of holiday music. We thank you for a warm and wonderful beginning to the holiday season.



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

CORPORATE CATEGORIES

- \$100 Corporate Fellow
- \$250 Corporate Sponsor
- \$500 Corporate Patron
- \$1,000 Corporate Benefactor

Name _____

Street address _____

City, State, and Zip code _____

Telephone _____

E-mail address _____

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.

We gratefully acknowledge the following businesses, foundations and individuals for their generous support of our
2006 Annual Fund

\$1000 and above

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Can you identify
this intersection
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“The historical mind can be analytical, or it can be romantic.
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Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., 1917–2007
as reported in the *Boston Globe*, March 1, 2007