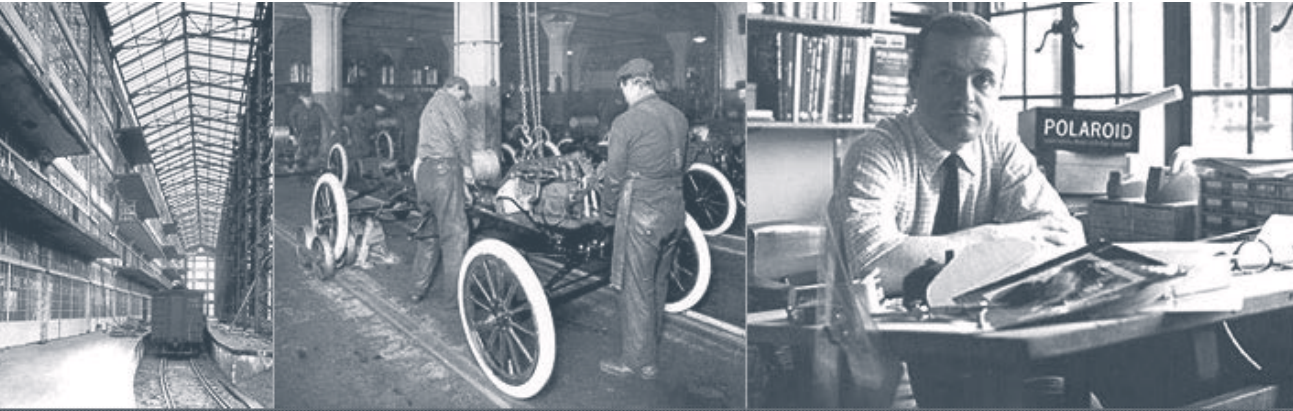


# The CAMBRIDGE HISTORIAN

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS • [cambridgehistory.org](http://cambridgehistory.org)

*Top Left:* Ford's Cambridge Assembly's central hall; parts arrived by rail from Ford's plant at Highland Park, Michigan. In early years, branch assembly plants like Cambridge averaged just 10 cars per day.

*Top Middle:* Assembly-line workers mate an engine and chassis together at Ford's Model T plant at Highland Park in 1913, the year before the Cambridge Assembly opened.

*Top Right:* Polaroid was a later occupant of the five-story Ford building and used it for manufacturing.



*Bottom:* The Cambridge Assembly plant under construction in 1913. Beginning in 1910, Henry Ford built Model T plants throughout the country; assembling cars near regional markets greatly reduced shipping costs.

*All photos courtesy of Ford Motor Company Archives and the Cambridge Historical Commission*

## CARS in CAMBRIDGE

By Doug Brown

WITH AIR BAGS, anti-lock brakes, traction control, and GPS, the Uber driver of today operates a very different machine from the family chauffeur's open-topped horseless carriage of 100 years ago. But regardless of the generation, Cantabrigians have always loved working on cars. Today that tinkering is just as likely to occur in a university lab as in a backyard garage.

First among the former is the Sloan Automotive Lab, founded at MIT in 1929 by Professor Charles Fayette "Fay" Taylor with the goal of being the premiere automotive research lab in the world. At last count, the lab had produced more than 600 scientific publications. Professor Taylor's funding originally came from Alfred Sloan, the CEO of General Motors. Today, the lab's work is supported by GM, Ford, Toyota, VW, Volvo, Ferrari, among many other automakers.

Taylor was a legendary figure in the field of engines, working for the Wright brothers and helping design the fuel-efficient engine for Charles Lindbergh's *Spirit of St. Louis*. He directed MIT's lab for 31 years and died in 1996 at the age of 102. His two-volume work, *The Internal Combustion Engine in Theory and Practice*, remains a seminal reference for automotive engineers.

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Housing for All?

Fall 2016 Symposia

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The Squirrel Nut Zippers Visit the Cambridge Historical Society

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## The Cambridge Historian

*Published by*

The Cambridge Historical Society

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and Graciela Galup

## From the Executive Director

When you think of the Cambridge Historical Society, what pops to mind? Essential to the community? Civic-minded? Inclusive? Do you recognize the Society as a way for you and your fellow citizens to make sense of this place we all call home?

If any or all of this rings true for you, great. We've done our job. If not, well, we have some work to do!

A year ago in this space I talked about our recent efforts speaking with you, our members and supporters, about who we are and what we want to be. You said we're doing a great job, but we could be better in our messaging, our outreach, and how we develop programs for those outside our traditional audience.

We've taken your suggestions to heart, and I'm pleased to unveil the new direction of the Cambridge Historical Society in two distinct ways: a new logo and a new website. To develop a new graphic identity, we were grateful to work with member Angelynn Grant (Cambridge, Mass.) and her colleague Peter Levine (Providence, R. I.) on what we call "the rings." This new logo is a deconstruction of our beloved seal, but also makes us think of the rings of a tree, the ripple effect of dropping a pebble in water, even a doorknob that opens up to a world of curiosity and learning. To us, it symbolizes the depth of history and the effects of our actions on humanity. Yes, it's a lot for an image to convey, but we think it communicates this and more quite effectively. Personally, I love the "1905–now." It says that even though our organization has been around a long time, we are current and relevant.

With our new identity in place, we turned our attention to updating both the look and the capability of our website. A generous grant from the E & L Campbell Family Foundation allowed us to transfer the website to a more user-friendly platform that gives us increased flexibility for adding content and a higher level of security. Visitors to the site can now learn about our upcoming events, browse articles of historical interest, and comb through our archives.

The credit for these achievements goes to our hardworking and dedicated Communications Committee—Lauren Vargas, Christine Quern, Heidi Pribell, Christina DeYoung, and Liz Adams, led by chair Jan Ferrara. The beautiful redesign of this newsletter is thanks to our Publications Committee and the unstoppable leadership of editor Bruce Irving and associate editor Rosemary Previte, as well as graphic designers Mary Macfarlane and Graciela Galup.

Despite these significant leaps forward, there is still much to be done. If you are interested in volunteering your skills—in any area—please contact us. We welcome you. There is a role for all of us to play in sharing the stories of Cambridge. ☺

All the best,



Marieke Van Damme





MIT also produced a couple of graduates, Tom and Ray Magliozzi, who have done their share to spread the car gospel far and wide. The university continues to pioneer research on fuel efficiency, emissions reduction, solar electric vehicles, and self-driving cars. The CityCar, a foldable, stackable urban electric vehicle, was created by the late Bill Mitchell, a dean of MIT's School of Architecture and Planning. A team of five MIT graduates designed the Transition, a street-legal "flying car" soon to begin production at Terrafugia in Woburn.

But these innovations are only the latest evidence of the region's ground-breaking automotive work, which goes back almost to the beginning of the automobile's history. Billy Durant, legendary rags-to-riches-to-rags founder of GM, was born in Boston in 1861. In 1893, Charles and Frank Duryea built and road-tested the first gasoline-powered American car in Springfield. The very first license plate in America, Massachusetts "1," was issued on September 1, 1903, to Brookline's Frederick Tudor, a descendant of Cambridge ice baron Frederic Tudor. (A later descendant still holds the plate.) And from 1893 through 1989, some sources claim that Massachusetts produced more cars at its assembly plants in Cambridge, Somerville, Springfield, and Framingham than did Detroit, with the state's factories turning out Knox fire trucks, Indian motorcycles, Pontiac GTOs, Packards, Rolls-Royces, GMs, Fords, and many lesser-known brands.

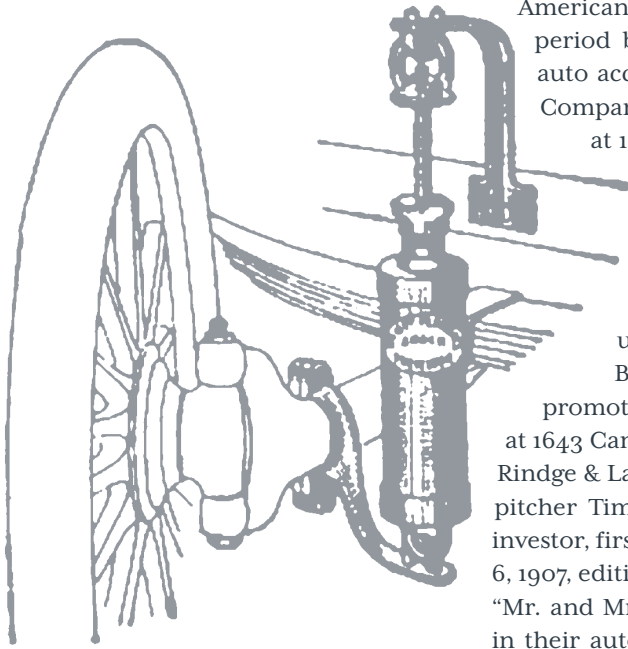
Locally, the Ford Motor Company opened its cutting-edge Cambridge Assembly factory at the corner of Brookline Street and Memorial Drive in 1913. It was the first vertically integrated assembly line in the world, with cars, including the famous Model T, moving through an assembly process spanning five stories. It was replaced in 1926 by the Somerville Assembly, an even more massive 145-acre affair that closed in 1958, following the failure of the Ford Edsel. The site is now the recently completed Assembly Row mixed-use development. In later years, the Cambridge plant has been used by Polaroid and Pfizer and is now owned by MIT, which leases gleaming lab space to life science tenants.

Nationally, there were over 1,800 automobile manufacturers in the United States from 1896 to 1930. Very few survived. Besides Ford, two other brands of the early 1900s are associated with Cambridge: the Berkshire Motors Company and the Crest Manufacturing Company. Berkshire Motors was founded in Pittsfield in 1905. It moved to Cambridge in 1912 and was renamed Belcher Engineering before closing in 1913. Only 150 cars are known to have been produced.

Crest was more successful, though it didn't last long either. Between 1901 and 1904, it built several versions of its Crestmobile, a one-cylinder car producing between 3.5 and 15 horsepower, at a factory near the current site of the Garment District in Kendall Square. Each year, the company introduced new models with ever-improving capabilities, including touring cars, delivery vehicles, and a "doctor's runabout." An ad in *Automobile* magazine claimed that "a comparison of the 1903 Crestmobile with any other low-priced car will prove it superior in every detail." The company even provided a removable gas tank that "will appeal to the tourist when occasion comes to store vehicles where objection to gasoline is made on account of insurance rules." Cars sold for between \$600 and \$1,250 were capable of speeds up to 30 mph, and, unlike the vehicles pioneered by Henry Ford, were available in two colors: red or green. The company was eventually sold to automaker Alden Sampson in 1905 and moved to Pittsfield. Through a series of mergers and acquisitions, Alden Sampson ultimately became part of the Chrysler Corporation.

An advertisement for the 1904 Crestmobile. That year, the East Cambridge company employed 300 workers producing five cars per day. Photo courtesy of eBay

*The very first license plate in America, Massachusetts plate "1," was issued on September 1, 1903, to Brookline's Frederick Tudor, a descendant of the Cambridge ice baron Frederic Tudor. (A later descendant still holds the plate.)*



Ernst Flentje's "automatic hydraulic jounce and recoil preventer," perhaps the first modern shock absorber. Company advertisements modestly described these shocks as the "Best in the World." Photo courtesy of the Cambridge Chronicle, May 6, 1911

*"A comparison of the 1903 Crestmobile with any other low-priced car will prove it superior in every detail."*

—Automobile Magazine

Local automakers were not the only ones hoping to capitalize on the exploding American market—the city had a healthy auto parts industry as well. A survey of period business directories finds companies making springs, running boards, auto accessories, electrical equipment, and rubber goods. The Blake Spark Plug Company manufactured its revolutionary Quick Detachable Spark Plug at a factory at 101 Concord Avenue, now the site of the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics on Observatory Hill. The Prest-O-Lite Company, producer of the first truly effective automobile headlight, built an acetylene plant in West Cambridge in 1920 to provide fuel for its products. Prest-O-Lite was eventually folded into the Union Carbide Corporation, and the site at Fresh Pond was redeveloped in 1962 into the Fresh Pond Mall, the ultimate expression of mid-20th-century, car-centric urban design.

But of all the Cambridge auto manufacturers, perhaps the greatest self-promoter was Ernst Flentje, a German immigrant and sausage importer who lived at 1643 Cambridge Street, directly across the street from what is now the Cambridge Rindge & Latin School (and next door to the home of the great 19th-century baseball pitcher Tim Lincecum at 1653 Cambridge Street). Flentje, who was also a real-estate investor, first came to the public's attention in a story on the front page of the February 6, 1907, edition of the *New York Times*. While vacationing in Florida, the paper reported, "Mr. and Mrs. Ernst Flentje of Cambridge, Mass., were dumped into the New River in their automobile late yesterday afternoon, at Fort Lauderdale, but escaped with their lives." On his return to Cambridge, Flentje designed and began producing "The Flentje," an "automatic hydraulic jounce and recoil preventer"—a shock absorber. Though it is uncertain whether his brush with a watery death inspired his subsequent endeavors, the rest of his life was devoted to improving the safety and performance of the automobile.

Flentje went on to receive seven patents for shock absorber improvements between 1908 and 1925. In his first two years in business, he sold 5,000 units. By 1916, things were so good that his stable was converted into a full-fledged factory facing Trowbridge Street. In a 1912 ad, the company claimed that its product was the "Best in the World" and offered \$5,000 to any other shock absorber manufacturer to disprove the claim. "Try a set on thirty days' free trial and three years' guarantee," Flentje said, "and be convinced of the correctness of my claims."

Today, though his home on Cambridge Street is long gone, evidence of this pioneer's place in Cambridge history lives on in the Ernst Flentje House, at 129 Magazine Street. Originally built in 1866 as a Second Empire single-family residence with a mansard roof, it was restyled in 1900 by Flentje and converted into a three-unit apartment building (Flentje also owned the building next door, 131 Magazine Street). The house was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1983 and, according to the Massachusetts Historical Commission, remains "one of the most exuberantly decorated triple deckers in the city." Meanwhile, the factory he built in the stable behind his home on Cambridge Street is now the home of the Cambridge-Ellis School. ☉

Ernst Flentje (center) and colleagues in front of his factory on Trowbridge Street, now the site of the Cambridge-Ellis School. Photo courtesy of the Cambridge-Ellis School archives





# The MAKINGS of CITY STREETS

By Michael Kenney

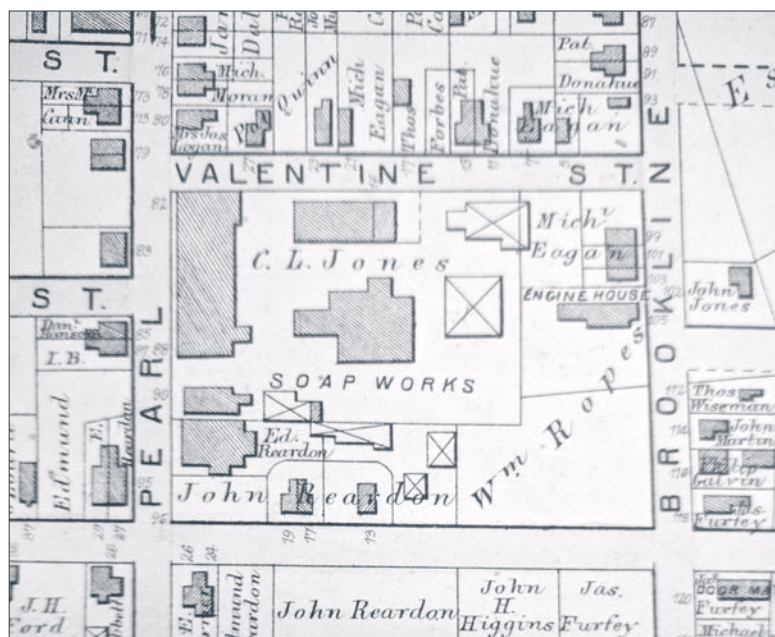
AS WE LEAN INTO this year's theme of "What Does Cambridge Make?", a look at street names reveals a product-filled past.

Porter Square was Union Square until 1899, when it was renamed in honor of Zachariah B. Porter, the proprietor of Porter's Hotel; many claim he lent his name to the specialty of the house, the Porterhouse steak. Porter's Hotel was demolished in 1909, but the new Porter Square Hotel, a 65-room boutique, opened last year on the corner of Mass. Ave. and Porter Road. Porter Circle and Porter Park are nearby.

Tucked in next to the J. P. Squire meatpacking plant on East Cambridge's Gore Street a century ago was Bacon Court, a short dead-end. Was it named in reference to a product of the nearby factory, or could it have been because a Mary Bacon lived there? Either way, like the Squire plant itself—destroyed in a grease- and fat-fueled fire in 1963—it is long gone. But the name lingers on, appearing on Google Maps and seeming to underlie a footpath along the east side of Gold Star Mothers Park on Gore Street.

One of the newest product-commemorating streets is Glassworks Avenue in the North Point area, developed in 2013. It commemorates the New England Glass Company, which flourished from 1814 to 1921 on nearby Bridge Street (now the McGrath Highway). Leighton Street, another new North Point street, honors Thomas Leighton, an English glass expert who was recruited in 1826 to become superintendent of the glassworks (despite there being a law in England forbidding glass workers to leave for America). Six of his seven sons became glass workers, including William, who invented lime glass, a process that allowed for high quality at a low cost.

Also long gone is Brewery Street, off Broadway. Although street historian Lewis Hastings\* writes that "no brewery is known to have operated there," its very name so bothered Temperance activists of the day that it was renamed Burleigh Street in 1897. Also gone is Distillhouse Street, off Cambridge Street near Willow Street. It led into the D. R. Shortwell Distillery, later the Great White Spirit Company, but was closed in 1927 at the height of Prohibition.



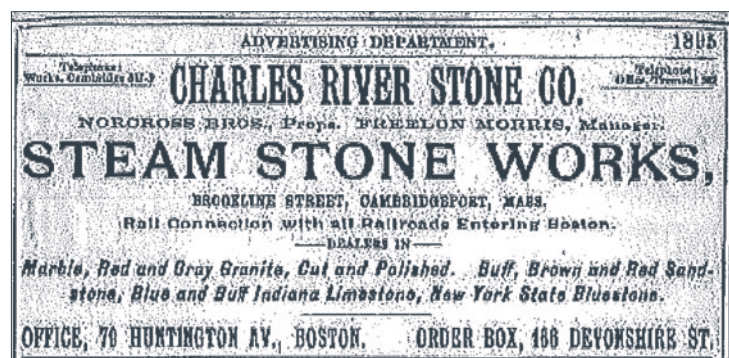
Valentine Soap Works, founded by Charles Valentine in 1828, became the C. L. Jones Co. Bromley Map, 1873, Cambridge Historical Commission

Though it now runs past the walls of academia in Harvard Square, Mill Street, leading from DeWolfe Street to Holyoke Street, was the site of a planing mill built by Thomas Stearns and Solomon Sargent in 1860, and demolished in 1890.

Granite Street recalls the Charles River Stone Co., which in its 19th-century heyday furnished granite for the Boston Public Library, Trinity Church, and the Shaw Memorial opposite the State House. At that time, the river was navigable to the company's location near the old Ford Motor plant on Memorial Drive.

Camelia, Magnolia, and Myrtle avenues now run near Youville Hospital and through its surrounding neighborhoods. They once were the site of extensive 19th-century nurseries built by the horticulturist and seed merchant Charles Mason Hovey, who is commemorated by Hovey Avenue.

And while there is no Soap Street, soapmaking was a major industry in Cambridgeport. Recalling that is Valentine Street, named for Charles Valentine, who established a soapmaking factory at the corner of what is now Valentine and Pearl streets in 1828. By the 1880s it was producing 10 million pounds of soap a year. Just a few blocks away is Cottage Street, named for the soap-makers' cottages built there in the 1840s. Many of them still stand. ☺



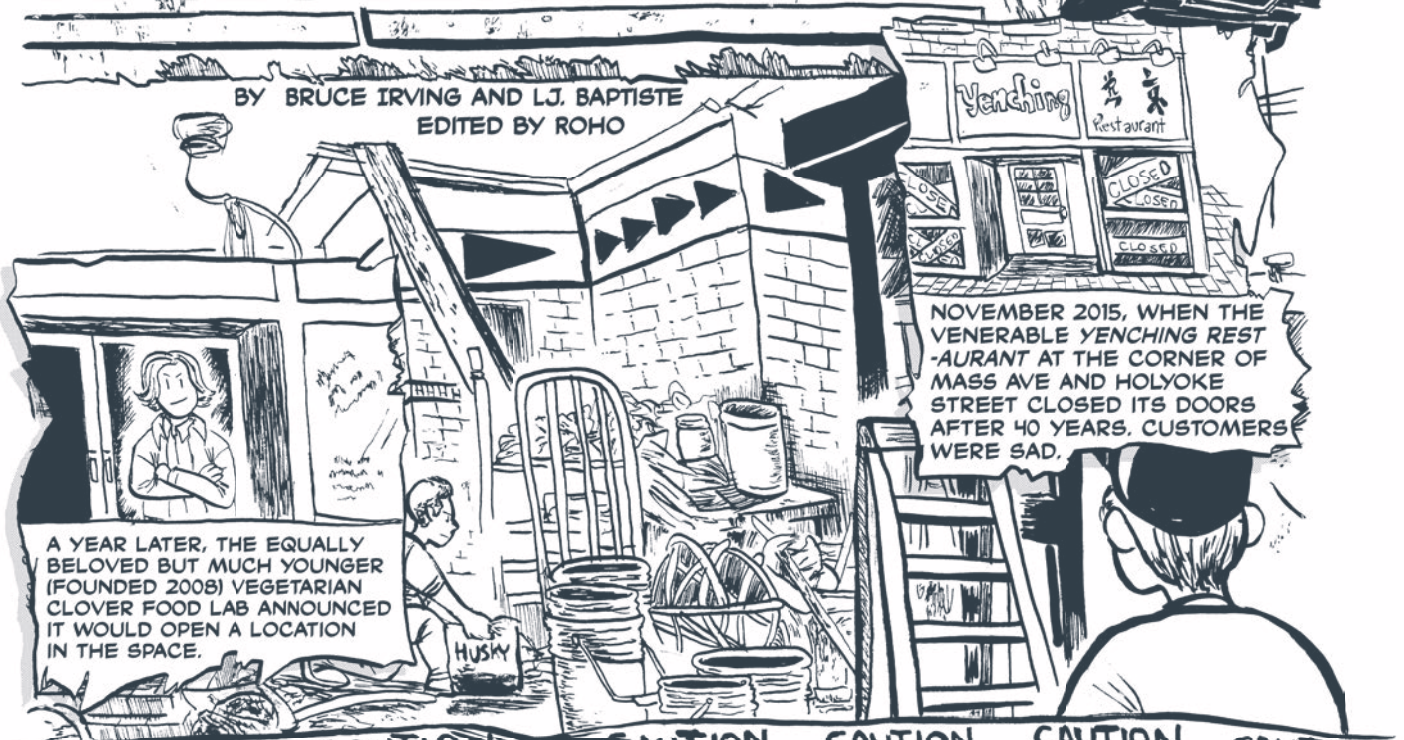
Advertisement in the 1895 Boston City Directory for the Charles River Stone Co. Cambridge Historical Commission

\*Lewis Hastings was the longtime city engineer (1889-1932) who compiled histories of all the streets in Cambridge, going back to the original records for the early streets and getting information from developers for the streets they developed.



# A CLOVER IN TIME

BY BRUCE IRVING AND L.J. BAPTISTE  
EDITED BY ROHO



A YEAR LATER, THE EQUALLY BELOVED BUT MUCH YOUNGER (FOUNDED 2008) VEGETARIAN CLOVER FOOD LAB ANNOUNCED IT WOULD OPEN A LOCATION IN THE SPACE.

CAUTION CAUTION CAUTION CAUTION CAUTION CAUTION





1938 TO 1970, IT WAS THE HAYES-BICKFORD CAFETERIA, PART OF A CHAIN. "THE BICK" WAS ONE OF THE GREASY SPOONS OF CHOICE IN HARVARD SQUARE. IN 1964, HAYES-BICKFORD WAS PICKETED AGAINST FOR ITS DISCRIMINATORY "NEGRO HIRING POLICY"; AT THIS RESTAURANT, A CONGRESS OF RACIAL EQUALITY (CORE)-SPONSORED DEMONSTRATION LED TO THE ARREST OF 27 PEOPLE, INCLUDING 7 FOR TRESPASSING AFTER THEY LINED UP WITH THEIR BACKS AGAINST THE COUNTER TO KEEP ANYONE FROM BEING SERVED....



1913, IT WAS THE WALDORF LUNCH PLACE, PART OF ONE OF THE FIRST RESTAURANT CHAINS IN THE WORLD, AND AN IMPORTANT MEETING SPACE FOR BOTH STUDENTS AND LABORERS IN THE EARLY 1900S. THE TILING SEEMS TO DATE FROM THIS TIME: ONE OF THE PENNANTS IS OF HARVARD FOOTBALL RIVAL CARLISLE INDIAN INDUSTRIAL, WHICH WAS A FEDERALLY FUNDED BOARDING SCHOOL FOR NATIVE AMERICANS UNTIL ITS CLOSING IN 1918.



THE GENERAL CONTRACTOR (CAMBRIDGE'S JUSTIN KELLY CONTRACTING) DISCOVERED A FINAL LAYER OF HISTORY: AN IRON SUPPORT POST WITH THE FAINTEST TRACE OF HELICAL BARBERSHOP STRIPES. IT WAS ON THIS SPOT THAT, IN MAY 1893, WILLIAM H. LEWIS--AN 1892 GRADUATE OF AMHERST COLLEGE, AN ALL-AMERICAN FOOTBALL PLAYER, A HARVARD LAW SCHOOL GRADUATE OF 1895, AND THE FIRST AFRICAN-AMERICAN U.S. ASSISTANT ATTORNEY GENERAL--WAS REFUSED SERVICE BY 2 OF THE 8 BARBERS IN THE SHOP. HE FILED A SUIT SEEKING \$5,000 IN DAMAGES AND SUCCESSFULLY LOBBIED FOR THE PASSAGE OF A MASSACHUSETTS LAW PROHIBITING RACIAL DISCRIMINATION IN PLACES OF PUBLIC ACCOMMODATION.





# HOUSING for ALL?

## Fall 2016 Symposium

By Lynn Waskelis

*"I look around and I see diversity bleeding out of Cambridge; the ones that remain are disproportionately poor. The ability to remain decreased dramatically after rent control disappeared. Do we want to be a city of only extremely wealthy and extremely poor people?"*

—Corinne Espinoza

"IT'S A PRIVILEGE AND A BALM to have thoughtful community conversation. This is one that needs to take place across the community," said Representative Marjorie Decker about the Society's three-part symposium last fall, which focused on the past, present, and future of affordable housing in Cambridge by asking, How did we get here?, Who is the we? (symposium #1); What have been the successes and failures of planning and activism? (#2); and How do we achieve the affordable city? (#3). Held on October 13 and 27 and November 17, the series began at the Cambridge Public Library's Main Branch, continued at the Cambridge Community Center, and concluded at the Central Square Branch Library.

Moderators included Representative Decker (#1), reporter Curt Nickisch (#2), and urbanist Diana Lempel (#3); along with Conversation 1 speakers Barry Bluestone, Corinne Espinoza, and Charlie Sullivan; Conversation 2 speakers Greg Russ, Cheryl-Ann Pizza-Zeoli, and Jim Stockard; and Conversation 3 speakers Japonica Brown-Saracino, Lily Cheong, and Adam Tanaka. They all told their personal stories, addressed economic realities, untangled policy thickets, described public and private housing stock histories, and offered examples of successful models.

As Corinne Espinoza observed, "I look around and I see diversity bleeding out of Cambridge; the ones that remain are disproportionately poor. The ability to remain decreased dramatically after rent control disappeared. Do we want to be a city of only extremely wealthy and extremely poor people? Who 'deserves' to live in Cambridge? People who live here now? People who want to live here? Is housing a human right?"

Triple-deckers and Section 8 housing, North and East Cambridge, Old Cambridge and Kendall, The Port and Central Square, and rent control—all were discussed, prompting us to ask, "What's my role, my responsibility, in solving this problem?" As Marieke Van Damme noted, "It's the job of the Society to use stories—personal experiences and histories—to make sense of the world today. We do it by using the humanities, taking perspective, and creating empathy."

In all, nearly 300 attendees wrestled with the issue of affordable housing, one of Cambridge's most entrenched and divisive. Survey results of the symposia were positive: 88 percent of responders said they learned something new, and 75 percent said they gained a new perspective. At the end of Conversation 3, participants were invited to offer ways they would improve the housing situation in Cambridge. Examples of their pledges include:

- Help build and approve housing as quickly as possible because I work for the City of Cambridge and we need to be a more efficient government
- Support dense affordable and middle-income housing developments
- Work to make housing a part of the Massachusetts Constitution
- Downsize my living situation so we are not a two-person household occupying a four-bedroom home
- Try to pay attention to local housing issues and regulations, and be open to a range of attitudes toward density, development, and shared space

The symposia were partially funded by Mass Humanities, Cambridge Savings Bank, and generous local sponsors. ☺

Note: The print Conversation Guide and a rich list of related resources can be found here: <https://goo.gl/jeqZpt>



Top: Rep. Marjorie Decker (l), Barry Bluestone, Charles Sullivan, and Corinne Espinoza at the Cambridge Public Library. Bottom: Corinne Espinoza (r) and attendees in conversation



# HISTORY NIGHT in the NEIGHBORHOOD

By Donna Karl

“WOW! I DIDN’T KNOW THE history of our neighborhood could be so much fun,” exclaimed a neighbor who had come to my house to talk about the Trotting Park area of North Cambridge. I was finishing a six-month research project as a CHS Fellow, and I’d invited a group of interested neighbors to an “evening of history.”

My research had begun with a group of four single-family houses (mine included) that had been built by the developer Ervin R. Dix between 1902 and 1903. It further expanded into the broader development of the neighborhood from a “trotting park” (horse racetrack) in the 19th century into a thriving, working-class neighborhood of largely Irish and French-Canadian immigrants by the 1930s. In addition, I surveyed the businesses in this area from 1900 to 1930.

For our discussion, I provided a variety of materials: historical inventories of the houses of interest from the Cambridge Historical Commission; a grid of the existing houses in 1903 (from the *Bromley Atlas*), with an overlay of houses built after 1903; and a second overlay of businesses in the area at the turn of the 20th century. I also included spreadsheets of the names of the residents of the four Dix houses and Trotting Park businesses from 1900 to 1930, as well as historical photos of the area.

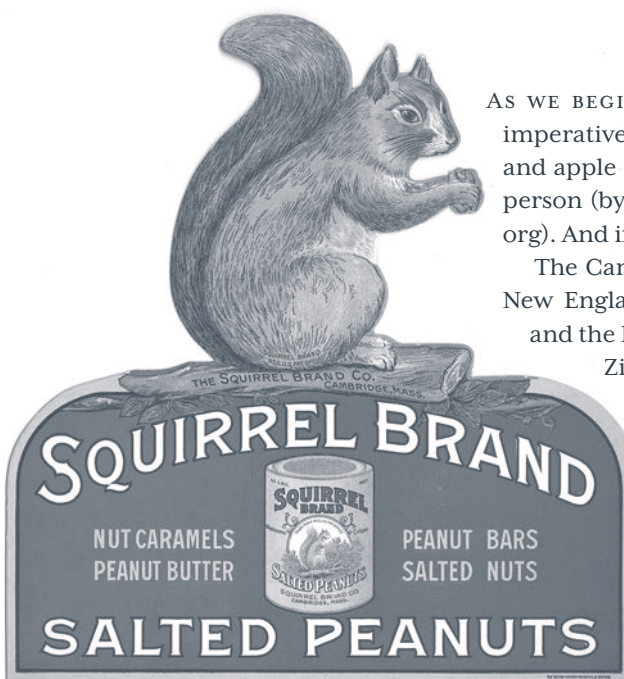


Donna Karl, host of a History Night, and Charlie Allen

The discussion ranged from details of the Trotting Park area and why it was closed and converted into saleable plots, to interest in the genesis of Jerry’s Pond and the question of its water quality today, to what the brickyards were like, and how and why two- and three-family houses replaced single-family houses after 1905. There was speculation on how the neighborhood in the 1920s compared to the neighborhood today, and how gentrification and current development are now changing the area yet again.

The discussion was rousing. Each person had information to contribute and questions to ask. In the end, all agreed that it was a surprisingly fun and informative evening! ☺

\*The 2016 Fellows were sponsored by Charlie Allen Renovations, Inc.



## From the ARCHIVES By Irina Sandler

AS WE BEGIN TO EXPLORE this year’s theme of “What does Cambridge make?”, it is imperative to look to the past to see how far Cambridge has come since cow pastures and apple orchards dominated the landscape. I invite you to view our collections in person (by appointment) or to ask questions via email ([isandler@cambridgehistory.org](mailto:isandler@cambridgehistory.org)). And if you would like to contribute something, please email us as well.

The Cambridge Historical Society has several collections relating to industry: the New England Brick Company Collection, the Henderson-Vandermark Collection, and the Hollis G. Gerrish Collection. The latter, better known as the Squirrel Brand Zipper Nuts collection, tells the story of the Gerrish family and the Squirrel Brand Company, which was founded in 1888 as the Austin T. Merrill Company and acquired by Perley G. Gerrish, Hollis G. Gerrish’s father in 1899. Hollis G. Gerrish took over as president of the company in 1939, after his father’s passing.

Mr. Gerrish was born in Maine in 1907 and graduated from Cambridge High and Latin School in 1925. After receiving an A.B. from Harvard in 1930, he dropped out of Harvard Business School to work for his family business. After serving in the U. S. Navy during World War II, Mr. Gerrish married a Radcliffe College graduate, Catherine Ruggles. He was an

active member of Cambridge clubs and philanthropic organizations, in addition to establishing the Hollis and Catherine Gerrish Endowed Scholarship Fund in 1987. The Society is delighted to hold and share the papers, business records, and memorabilia of this local family and its company.

In other news from the archives, the Society has been granted \$3,000 by the Mass. Society of the Cincinnati to update the Cambridge Archives website ([www.cambridgearchives.org](http://www.cambridgearchives.org)). This site has not been updated for several years and is currently a collaboration among the Society, the Cambridge Historical Commission, and the Cambridge Public Library.

Highlighted on this site will be the Society's Revolutionary-themed exhibits, along with exhibits of Revolutionary War collections from the Historical Commission and the Library.

The other archivists—Emily Gonzales of the Commission and Alyssa Pacy of the Library—and I are revamping this website to guide people to the information they need, as well as showcase our own holdings. The new website will help users find out more about Cambridge and its role in the Revolutionary War, while also informing them of other holdings of these institutions. We are looking forward to a modern website that will enable the archivists to design online exhibits. Stay tuned! ☺

## The SQUIRREL NUT ZIPPERS

Visit the Cambridge Historical Society

By Katherine McGaughey, Collections Volunteer

HOLLIS GERRISH, THE OWNER OF THE SQUIRREL BRAND COMPANY, began his career like many of his neighbors, taking on the business of candy-making in what was at the time a very industrial Cambridge. A lifelong resident of Cambridge until his death in 1997, Gerrish had seen his neighborhood morph from an area built on high craft to a mecca of high tech, academia, and start-ups.

The Squirrel Nut brand developed a loyal local customer base over the years, and it made a national comeback in the 1990s when a retro swing band named themselves “The Squirrel Nut Zippers,” after the vanilla-caramel “nut zipper” candy.

Learning that the band was performing on January 6 at the Sinclair for their 20-year anniversary tour, we invited the lead singer, James “Jimbo” Mathus, to visit the Society to view Squirrel Nut ephemera.

Anyone who has seen the band can't help but be charmed. Jimbo, a natural storyteller with a thick New Orleans accent, brought the objects to life with his heart-felt memories of the factory and his relationship with Mr. Gerrish: “When we were first starting out, trying to think of a band name, we were all addicted to Squirrel Nut Zippers, so we thought we might as well name ourselves after the candy. We sent a tape to Mr. Gerrish for his approval. He loved our music, because we sounded from his era.”

“Our relationship with Mr. Gerrish continued for years; we did the original ‘squirrel jingle’ for them and, with his permission, we handed out his candy at shows. In a way, we helped the business stay on longer. We had a big ceremony outside the factory around 1996 when we were given the key to the city,” he said brightly,

As Jimbo viewed the collection of advertisements, photographs, and candy packaging, he was drawn to the old black-and-white Polaroids of the factory and the workers. “Oh that woman with the glasses . . . she was the old secretary! And Manny the repairman!”

And, Jimbo explained the candy's history: “The name came from a story about a drunk Vermonter who, when talked down from a tree, told police it was ‘nut zipper,’ a local prohibition-era alcohol concoction, that caused him to climb it.”

In 2003, the former factory on Boardman Street was converted into condominiums. Even as Cambridge continues to evolve, the city's last major independent candy manufacturer has left its mark. The candy itself (made by NECCO since 2004) continues to serve as a testament to Cambridge's workers of yesteryear ☺



Top: James “Jimbo” Mathus and Marieke Van Damme at the Hooper–Lee–Nichols House

Bottom: The Squirrel Nut Zippers performing at the Sinclair in January



# The Cambridge Historical Society

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*Thank You to our vital interns and volunteers! We couldn't do it without you!*

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# THANK YOU, INTERNS and VOLUNTEERS!

By Rosemary Previte

WE ARE SO GRATEFUL to our 2016–17 interns and volunteers, who've helped the Cambridge Historical Society run smoothly, and without whom we would not be able to plan our vital programs and events.

Here are a few testimonials:

"My time as an intern at the CHS helped me take my skills out of the classroom to contribute to the goals of a mission-driven organization . . . I had the opportunity to work on a wide variety of projects with some great people." (Aaron Rhodes)

"I am excited to be working hands-on with a museum collection during my internship at CHS and to be working in the Hooper-Lee-Nichols House." (Heather Larson)

"I enjoyed working with the Communications Committee on the rebranding project the most. I learned from all of the different but complimentary perspectives . . . and in the end



CHS staff, interns, and volunteers at our Volunteer Appreciation party in February

we chose a remarkable design team and got a great result." (Christina DeYoung)

"I plan to study history this fall at Smith, so I wanted to take advantage of my year off and become involved in local history. . . . The CHS seemed like the perfect fit. It is very interesting to see just how much goes on behind the scenes . . . and fascinating to see how CHS is preserving current events that will become history in time." (Betsey Donham) ☉

## In MEMORIAM

By Rosemary Previte

ELLEN G. MOOT died at her summer home in Chocorua, New Hampshire, on September 3, 2016, after a brief illness; she was 86. Formerly of Cambridge and recently of Concord, she grew up in Boston and graduated from Shady Hill School in Cambridge, St. Timothy's School in Baltimore, and Radcliffe College. She earned a master's degree in foreign affairs from Yale University and then worked for several years at the Washington Center of Foreign Policy Research at Johns Hopkins in Washington, D. C. After marrying John Moot and moving to Cambridge's Coolidge Hill, she worked at Harvard's Center for International Affairs. Ellen lived on Coolidge Hill for 40 years (1968–2012).

Ellen was an advocate for people facing challenges and disabilities, and the list of her activities—including volunteer work, nonprofit boards, and political campaigns—is long. They include: the parent-led Shady Hill School hockey program, Summer Arts program, and fundraisers for the school; the Cambridge Guidance Center; Metropolitan State Hospital's advisory board; the Department of Mental Health's Mental



Ellen (Guild) Moot  
1930–2016

Health Center for Cambridge and Somerville (where she served as president); the Cambridge–Somerville Children's Committee; the Cambridge Community Foundation; and the Cambridge Club.

Ellen was also a committed member and strong supporter of the Cambridge Historical Society, which is most grateful for her legacy and generosity. She will be dearly missed by the Society's councilors, advisors, and members.

Predeceased by her husband and her brother Samuel E. Guild, Ellen is survived by her daughter Amey, her son Alexander, and two grandchildren.

As her son Alex notes, "Ellen was known by many for her unswerving commitment to people and causes, her unwavering support, and the quiet, steady, selfless, humble, unassuming way in which she made such an impact."

*The Society is grateful to Mrs. Moot for her generous bequest.*

*If you would like information about planned giving, please call our office. You can honor both the present and the future by remembering the CHS in your will. Your support will guarantee the long-term health of the Society's programs, collections, and historic Hooper-Lee-Nichols House.* ☉

Photo courtesy the The Boston Globe Obituaries

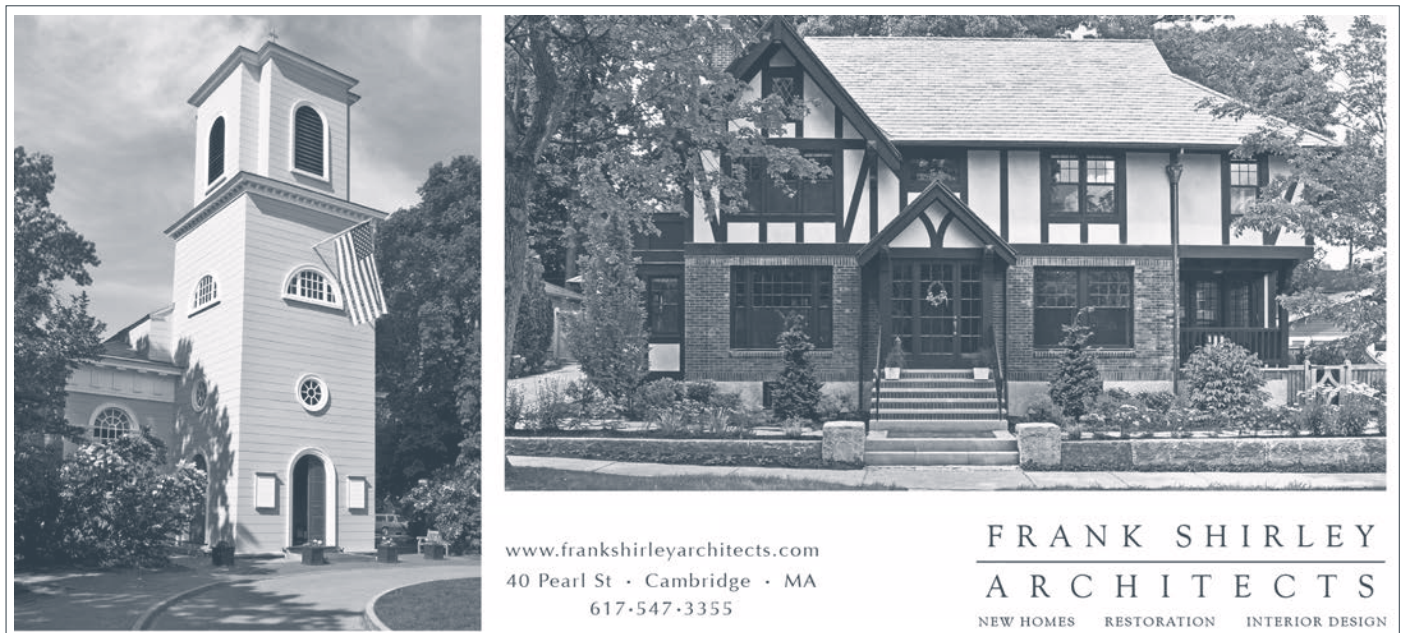


PCA is dedicated to preserving Cambridge's historical buildings - from our home in Inman Square to places you call home.

We are proud to offer our continued support to the Cambridge Historical Society.

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# A LOOK BACK and a LOOK FORWARD

## The Society's Annual Meeting 2017

By Lynn Waskelis

THIS YEAR'S ANNUAL MEETING, held on Wednesday, March 22, at the Cambridge Public Library's Main Branch, was a great success, with nearly 100 in attendance. President Tod Beaty began by thanking everyone for their support. He also presented an overview of the CHS's financial status, as well as projections for future fundraising goals.

Jan Ferrara, councilor and chair of the Communications Committee, formally presented the Society's new logo, which reflects the Society's history and its aspirations, and plans to update the Society's website.

Secretary Frank Kramer proposed the slate of officers, all of whom were unanimously approved: President, Tod Beaty; Vice Presidents, Elizabeth Adams-Lasser, Charlie Allen, and Doug Hanna; Treasurer, Greg Brown; Curator, Heli Meltsner; Editor, Bruce Irving; and Secretary, Doug Brown.

The seven new nominees to the Council—Constantine (Gus) Alexander, Doug Brown, Christina DeYoung, Heidi Gitelman, Jonathan Muniz, Samantha Crowell Richard, and Ed Rodley—were warmly welcomed and also unanimously approved. Special thanks were given to Stan Burrows, George Carlisle, and Sean Hope for their past service to the Council.

Secretary Kramer proposed some changes to the Society's By Laws, including the expansion of the governing council from 15 to 19 members, which the membership approved.

Upon the completion of the business portion of the meeting, executive director Marieke Van Damme posed the question, "How does it feel to be a member of one of the most revolutionary historical societies in the United States? Our humanities-focused approach to tackling contemporary issues through conversation and perspective-taking is a new idea, even a bit of an experiment. But as we found out last year, it can be quite effective and meaningful. . . . Here in Cambridge, we don't do history for history's sake. It isn't enough to present history as events that happened. We need to dig deeper, and answer 'So what?' and 'Who cares?'"

She then introduced the big questions the Society is exploring in its 2017 programs: "This year we are asking another question relevant to our lives, What does Cambridge make? You probably already know our proud manufacturing history, but what do we make now, and how does that connect us to our community?" In closing, she emphasized that the Society welcomes all people and strives to be a safe place for thoughtful, respectful dialogue—where the wisdom of the past is applied to the problems of today.

She then gave the podium to the evening's speakers: Shaun Nichols, College Fellow in History at Harvard University; and Ed

Childs, Chief Steward, United Here Local 26, which represents Harvard University Dining Services employees.

Nichols began his presentation, "The Making (and Re-making) of the Cambridge Economy," by saying "Industry is weird," and proceeded with an account of Cambridge's industrial development, notable for its proximity to Boston, its relative diversity, and the impact of its two universities. He employed workers' quotes about the difficult conditions at Cambridge's Simplex Wire & Cable and the J. P. Squire Slaughterhouse, along with the pollution they generated, to conclude that "Nostalgia for industry is really nostalgia for a by-gone (New Deal) political economy," where workers earned a living wage, and had more job security and benefits. Instead of trying to bring manufacturing back, he proposed fighting to regain the political and economic benefits we're nostalgic for.

Nichols introduced Childs, a long-time leader of the labor movement among Harvard workers, and a cook at Harvard Dining Hall for more than 40 years. Childs highlighted campus workers' successes in their struggles for a living wage, including the October 2016 dining hall worker strike, which secured health-care benefits and wage increases for that union. He described how the power of workers is amplified by coalition building, and how struggles for better working conditions often take on broader issues, such as gender identity nondiscrimination, and the struggle to end apartheid in South Africa. As he said, "Workers make things happen."

Thanks to the Cambridge Public Library, Jules Catering, our dedicated volunteers, members, and friends, and to CCTV for covering this event. ☺



2017 CHS Council, front: Bruce Irving (l), Heidi Gitelman, Samantha Richard, Doug Brown, Christina DeYoung; back: Doug Hanna (l), Tod Beaty, Andy Leighton, Heli Meltsner, Charlie Allen, Pamela Baldwin, Elizabeth Adams, Ed Rodley, Jan Ferrara

SPRING 2019

# CALENDAR of EVENTS

The Cambridge Historical Society makes the history of our city fun, interesting, and relevant to our lives. Join us for another year of great events! In recognition of your support, you can enjoy:

- Subscription to this newsletter
- Discounted admission to our ticketed events and programs
- Invitations to our Annual Meeting, Holiday Party, History Cafés, and other signature events
- Advance notice of limited-enrollment programs

## 2017 PROGRAMS ASKING: WHAT DOES CAMBRIDGE MAKE?

### History Café Series

- **June 15:** Common Goods crafts demonstration, Cambridge Common; Conversation, Hong Kong Restaurant
- **July 13:** Clay, Bricks, Dump, Park walking tour of North Cambridge; Conversation, Jose's Mexican Restaurant
- **September 12:** Whose Kendall? walking tour of Kendall Square; Conversation, Cambridge Brewing Company
- **September 27:** Apothecary Now Conversation, Alnylam Pharmaceuticals

### Annual Fall Symposium

Kendall Square + Biotechnology

Past, Present, & Future, two evenings in October

### Hooper-Lee-Nichols House Tours

June 25, July 30, August 27,

September 24, 12-1pm

### Cambridge Open Archives at the

Hooper-Lee-Nichols House

June 20, 4-6pm

*Join this year-long conversation and help keep Cambridge curious! For up-to-date information about our programs or to make a donation, visit [www.cambridgehistory.org](http://www.cambridgehistory.org).*



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