



# The Newetowne Chronicle

Fall 2010

Volume X Number III

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## The Highest Form of Flattery

By Gavin W. Kleespies and Michael Kenney

Tory Row occupies an unusual place in Cambridge history. These seven Georgian estates were built by a group of wealthy families who represented the social elite in Cambridge. However, as discontent rose in the American colonies, these families came to realize that their political views and lavish way of life were not accepted by the mainstream of Cambridge. All seven families left their estates for safer ground closer to the British military well before the first shots of the American Revolution were fired. The estates were seized by the Continental Army. Some were used to house officers, others as hospitals, and one was the home and headquarters of General George Washington.

In an odd turn of fate, while Cambridge residents were quick to condemn the lives of excess that these Tory estates represented, Brattle Street returned to being the most fashionable address in the city, and these homes became the most sought



The Hooper-Lee-Nichols House (1685) and 149 Brattle Street (1939)

after soon after the end of the Revolution. In the 19th century a number of Georgian houses, similar to the Tory estates, were built along Brattle Street, and in the first half of the 20th century Georgian Revival became the most popular house style in Old Cambridge. Brattle Street is now more Georgian than it was in the Georgian era. In fact, two of the Tory houses, the Hooper-Lee-Nichols House (owned by Judge Joseph Lee during the Revolution) and



The Longfellow House (1759) and the South Dakota home of W. D. Swain (1910)

Courtesy of the Longfellow National Historic Site

Elmwood (built for Lt. Governor Oliver), have been replicated in Cambridge. John Vassall's house (which became George Washington's headquarters and the home of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow) has been copied often, including the one pictured in South Dakota. The Tories were not the only people in Cambridge who built Georgian houses and Washington's home is certainly a large part of its status, but it is remarkable how pervasive the style of the Tories became.

Cambridge actually has many replicated buildings, some of which were built to resolve demolition disputes with the Cambridge Historical Commission. For an account of many of these replicated buildings, visit [www.cambridgehistory.org](http://www.cambridgehistory.org).



Elmwood (1767) and 22 Fayerweather Street (1898)

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**A Federal Grant Helps Bring Our Photos Online**

By Gavin W. Kleespies

Thanks to a grant from the federal Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) and matching funds provided by the Cambridge Trust Company, the Gund family, and our Council members, the Historical Society is going to create digital scans of the CHS Photograph Collection.

Our collection has fantastic images of our city and the people who have called it

home over the last 160 years. Most of these images do not exist anywhere else. Due to the constraints of staff time, these photos are currently available only on a limited basis.

These historic images of Cambridge will be made available online through the Society’s website and the website Flickr. The aim of the project is to allow open access to everyone who has an interest in Cambridge.

**Chinese Archives** By Cynthia Brennan

In China this summer, I visited academic and medical, public, national and rural, and even Buddhist temple libraries for a course in Chinese Librarianship (the first course toward a master’s degree in Library and Information Science). A society invested in its history and culture was reflected in the well-maintained historical sites and libraries, crowded with eager visitors willing to wait in clusters that substituted for our concept of lines. Among the highlights was the Tianyi Pavilion Library in Ningbo. Built in about 1561, it is the oldest private library



The Tianyi Pavilion Library in Ningbo

in Asia and one of the three oldest in the world. Careful building design protects the collection from fire and the intense humidity of Ningbo. Under the rules of its founder, Fan Qin, who was fiercely devoted to the preservation of his collection, it survived as the private library of the Fan family until 1935, when there was a transition to ownership by a committee of Fan Qin’s descendants and the local government. The library was spared injury from the violence of the Opium

the local government meant protection during the Cultural Revolution’s most devastating years, 1967-1969, when many historically important objects were destroyed. Thanks to key Party officials, People’s Liberation Army soldiers were stationed at the library, fending off would-be attackers. This protection attracted donations to the Tianyi Library by endangered private libraries and special collections. Now about 450 years old, the library has been transformed: from being tucked away on the grounds of the Fan family complex, inaccessible to any

researchers, to being open to a public enthusiastic about the history preserved within its walls. Currently, the collection consists of the local histories and government documents it originally contained, but it has grown from 13,000 volumes in 1949 to 300,000 volumes today. The collection also includes furniture, scrolls, calligraphy, stone printing blocks, and something that made me homesick: a collection of bricks dating from 50-1840 A.D. Like our



Bricks from Qianjin Hall

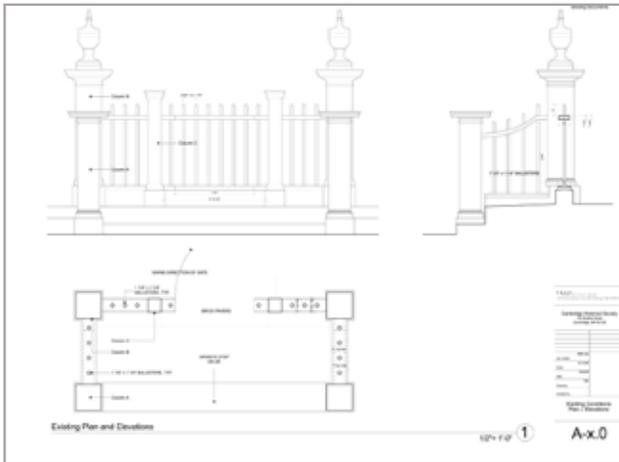
Wars, the Taiping Rebellion, the Sino-Japanese War, and the Chinese Civil War; the gradually weakening empire and increasing influence of Western interests caused political tumult but left the collection unscathed. The 1949 donation of the library and grounds to

New England Brick Company collection, these bricks illustrate the importance of preserving cultural objects, documents, and rare books – a goal the members of the CHS share with people all over the globe.

## The Cambridge Plant & Garden Club and the Historical Society By Daphne Abeel

The repair and replacement of the front gate, urns, and fence posts at the Hooper-Lee-Nichols House is only the latest project undertaken by the Cambridge Plant & Garden Club to benefit the Cambridge Historical Society.

The style of the fence dates back at least to the mid-19th century, although the most notable features, the inset gate and urns, were designed by Joseph Everett Chandler and added in 1916. A renovation specialist, Chandler was an early proponent of the Colonial Revival movement. His other work in the area includes the Cooper-Frost-Austin House, the Longfellow House, the House of Seven Gables, and the Paul Revere House. The CHS gate is notable for its inset, concave design and, with the fence, its light and lacy style that harks back to the Federal period and is also reminiscent of the Peirce-Nichols house in Salem.



Plans for the new gate. Provided by Smart Architecture

The relationship between the CP&GC and the CHS dates back a half century, when the Cambridge Garden Club<sup>1</sup> took charge of the grounds.

Dwarf fruit trees and a rose garden were planted, and a circular boxwood garden was installed. Hedges of small yews were added; now mature, they are a signature feature of the garden. Through the 1960s, club members worked in the CHS garden on a weekly basis.

During the 1970s, the CP&GC turned its energies to the Fresh Pond Reservation and the Longfellow House garden but renewed its commitment to the CHS garden in the 1980s. Members began with a renovation of the front perennial beds. Ollie Capizzi of Capizzi & Co. donated a comprehensive cleanup of the grounds, including the pruning of trees and shrubs, and the removal of a large elm, a victim of Dutch elm disease. Though Capizzi donated his

<sup>1</sup>The Cambridge Plant & Garden Club was formed in 1966 by a merger of the Cambridge Plant Club, founded in 1889, and the Cambridge Garden Club, founded in 1938. The Cambridge Plant Club was one of the first women's garden clubs in the country.

services for a decade, the club now pays the firm for annual pruning of the yews.

The CP&GC holds at least two work days a year at the garden, and some members weed, prune, and deadhead throughout the gardening season. In 2002, the club voted to supplement the work of its volunteers with funding for the services of a local landscaper and designer, Michael Hanlon, and a lawn firm. Since then, the club has been responsible for various improvements, including a renovation of the boxwood garden, funded partly with a grant from the Garden Club Federation of Massachusetts. The most recent additions are a pair of pink dogwoods, planted this spring.

In May 2010, a generous CP&GC member held a neighborhood fundraiser for the restoration of the front gate. Maggie Booz, a past president of CP&GC and the principal of Smart Architecture, contributed new drawings of the gate in the exact proportions of the old gate and posts. The club has accepted a bid from the Ricci Bros., David and Edward (Rocco), for the work.

As CHS President Jinny Nathans put it, "We cannot be too generous in our thanks to the Cambridge Plant & Garden Club for all the services rendered and improvements the club has made to the Hooper-Lee-Nichols House over many years. We are forever in its debt."



CP&GC's fall cleanup

Laura Nash, the current CP&GC president, says of the relationship between the two organizations: "Our club feels a special connection to the property because of its position in the landscape of Cambridge. We have a long-term commitment to the Cambridge Historical Society. We are fortunate to have members who are willing to pick up the ball when it comes to the actual hard work in the gardens."

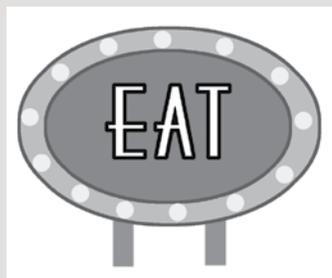
Booz expects the work on the gate to be finished in late November and is looking forward to showing the garden to delegates attending a zone meeting of the Garden Club of America in May 2011.

New things on  
[www.cambridgehistory.org](http://www.cambridgehistory.org)

## Cell Phone Tour

Thanks to a grant from the Massachusetts Society of the Cincinnati and the hard work of our summer intern Anna Gedal, you can now tour Cambridge's role in the American Revolution on your cell phone. Call 617-517-5990 to try it out.

## Culinary History of Cambridge



Our new culinary history of Cambridge is up and running on our website. Click on the EAT button halfway down our homepage to read about Cambridge's contribution to the American diet.

## Central Square: Then and Now

The Cambridge Historical Society, in collaboration with the Cambridge Historical Commission, the Clear Conscience Café, and the photographer Phyllis Bretholtz, has created an exhibit: Central Square: Then and Now. It is on display in the Clear Conscience Café through October and is now available on our website.



## President's Letter By Jinny Nathans

As an archivist, I know how much time goes into processing historic collections. Few people see this work while it is in process and, if it is done well, the final product will seem like a logical presentation of the material. While this work often belies the time that goes into it, it is an important part of the Cambridge Historical Society's mission to preserve, protect, and present the history of Cambridge.

Historical collections do not come with tables of contents or explanations of what is important in them. When archivists process a collection, they make the material accessible to researchers. They take boxes of material and rehouse the contents in the appropriate archival enclosures. They also note how the material is organized and remove duplicates and irrelevant material. They research the history of the person or organization that created the papers, and when they are done, they create a finding aid, a road map to the collection. It explains how the material is organized, gives a historical sketch, and explains its relation to larger historical events.

The Cambridge Historical Society has been lucky to have one archivist, Mark Vassar, working with our collections for the past ten years. Thanks to his work and the technical ability of our staff, all



Joseph and Keith working on two collections

of the finding aids for our collections are available on our website, opening these resources to the community.

This work is so important to the Cambridge Historical Society's goal of making the history of our city available, but in today's economy, with fewer

donations and grants harder to come by than ever, it is more and more difficult to pay for this work. Luckily, our staff has done a great job of bringing in and working with highly qualified interns. This semester Mark is working with four Simmons graduate students: Susan, Joseph, Keith, and Chessie. They are



Chessie is working on the Greenhill Family Folklore Productions Collection

organizing the Cavellini, Schloming, and Batchelder Collections along with the Greenhill Family Folklore Productions Collection and the Old Cambridge Photographic Club Collection. The work of Mark and all of our interns past and present has helped us become the highly professional and successful organization we are today.

## Correction

David Gibbs, executive director of the Cambridge Community Center, has identified some errors in the article on the center in the Spring 2010 issue.

Mr. Gibbs writes that Harvard University Operations Services "does not 'oversee CCC's buildings, grounds, and any construction projects.' UOS is a very important community partner... but it has no oversight role whatsoever with respect to any of CCC's activities."

In addition, he says that "there are no plans to use any portion of our capital campaign funds to construct a new health clinic, and the Cambridge Health Alliance has no involvement in our capital plans whatsoever."

Mr. Gibbs also notes that the building is covered in red asbestos shingles, it was purchased from the city in 1943, and Riverside is "the second most diverse area in the City."

We regret the errors.

## A Historic Site That Never Was By Michael Kenney

During the bicentennial year, Cambridge placed blue oval markers at historic sites throughout the city. One of them identified a building at the corner of Putnam Avenue and Pleasant Street in Cambridgeport as the site of the Howard Industrial School, a post-Civil War training program for black women from the South.

Now a 1993 condominium complex known as the Howard Industrial Lofts, it incorporated a 1960s research laboratory built on the site of World War II veterans housing. Earlier, a market and a succession of small houses stood there.

However, recent research in the files of the Cambridge Historical Commission and other public records shows that it was never the site of the Howard Industrial School. This research places the school some three blocks to the east, at 585-587 Putnam Avenue, near the corner of Sidney Street.

Diane Boucher, a graduate student at Clark University who has researched the history of the school, assisted this writer in finding the actual site. Charles Sullivan, the Commission's executive director, confirmed the new location and contributed additional research.

The school had its origin – and got its name – from a request in 1866 by General Charles Howard seeking opportunities “for some of the many thousand freed people crowded together in the neighborhood of Washington” to find work and “opportunities for them to acquire habits of industry and self-dependence.”

Howard and his brother, O. O. Howard, both Union Army generals and natives of Maine, were commissioners in the Freedman's Bureau, which had been established to assist former slaves.

Led by Anna Lowell, an antislavery activist, a committee of prominent Bostonians and Cantabrigians – the names Ayer, Peabody, Wyman, and Wigglesworth appear among them – took on the mission, and by November 1866, General Howard had sent along 23 people.

Two leading political figures were also involved. The wartime governor, John A. Andrew, was the school's first president, and John B. Alley, a Republican congressman from Lynn, had been active in the Free Soil Party, an antislavery forerunner of the Republican Party.

As Boucher put it in a 2009 conference paper for the New England Historical Association, “the school hoped to educate women in the domestic trades and then match them with employers.” And while waiting for a job placement, the women “would earn a living by providing laundry service.” Records indicate that a laundry and kitchen building and a connecting passageway were constructed at the house.

Replying to a letter from Miss Lowell in March 1867, Howard wrote that “from inspections I have made in person... and from your own accounts and those indirectly received from freedwomen themselves, I am convinced that [the school] has been altogether a success.”

But plans for job training were apparently scrapped, as many of the women refused to stay long enough, preferring to work immediately. Some 200 requests for domestic workers had been received even before the school opened.

The school's 1868 report noted that some 463 persons had been admitted in a year's time, with 52 at the school on March 1, 1868. The school's reports are vague about the exact location of its building, but the 1867 report notes “a debt of gratitude” to Elijah Goodrich, the school's landlord. Goodrich was a prominent landowner in Cambridgeport, with considerable property along Walnut (now Putnam) Street – which Sullivan says accounts for some of the confusion in placing the marker at the corner of Pleasant Street, one of his properties.

However, Goodrich is also listed in Christopher Hail's compilation of Cambridge Buildings and Architects as the owner of a “double two-story house” at 585-587 Walnut Street, near the intersection with Sidney Street. He had purchased this 1847 Greek Revival house in 1866 from Joseph A. Holmes, a prominent Central Square grocer – the likely source for the identification of the school in the *Cambridge Chronicle* of October 27, 1866, as being at “the Holmes House.”

City directories for 1868 through 1871 places the school at “Walnut near Brookline.” Sullivan points out that these listings are misleading, since the school was actually near the corner of Sidney Street. The 1868 directory also lists Miss Lowell as the matron, Ellen F. Dascomb as a housekeeper, and Charlotte Towne as a teacher.

Sullivan confirms the location of the school at the 585-587 Putnam Avenue site, based on the property's deed history. Andrew Preston Peabody, (acting president of Harvard 1862, 1868-69) appealed in the *Cambridge Chronicle* on February 8, 1868, for “some benevolent person” to help the school acquire the building from Goodrich; and on August 20, Congressman Alley, who had no other real estate investments in Cambridge, purchased the property, presumably saving the school from eviction.

The school apparently ceased operation by 1871, the year Alley sold the property to two carpenters, John H. Farrell and Peter Mullin. The building was substantially demolished about 1960; the last remnant was removed in 1981. The site is now a townhouse complex.

# Volunteers



Chelsea, a student at Northeastern University, is interning at the CHS this fall and helping us digitize *The Proceedings*, a CHS publication from 1906 through the 1980s. She is joining an ongoing project, with the first 12 volumes having been done by our volunteer Richard.



Natalie, a recent graduate of Boston University, has been volunteering with the CHS for the past seven months. She researched, wrote, and presented the tour on William James's Cambridge in August. She is now embarking on a sweet new project, a tour and exhibit on the history of manufacturing candy in Cambridge.



Ting, a high school student from Belmont, volunteered with us for a week and helped us organize and rename all the photos from the 2009 MIT City Days.

# History Around Town

## Cambridgeport History Day

October 2, 2010  
For a week, Cambridgeport



came alive with history. Over 100 houses hung up "If This House Could Talk..." signs for a neighborhood tour. Dana Park was filled with performers and history buffs. Seen here is the ITHCT booth and Kit Rawlins, Bill August, Ross Miller, and others trying to answer the photo mystery quiz at the Cambridge Historical Society table.

## Tours Archives Tour

July 14, 2010  
Cambridge residents were



able to see the inner workings of four of Cambridge's archives on the second annual Archives Tour. The Historical Society worked with the Longfellow National Historic Site, the Mount Auburn Cemetery, and the Cambridge Historical Commission to offer a behind-the-scenes look at rare pieces of Cambridge history in these collections.

From Julia Child to Design Research to Steve's Ice Cream, our town has been a pioneer in American culinary history. This tour featured guest speakers from Harvest, UpStairs on the Square, Casablanca, and the Schlesinger Library.

## William James's Cambridge

August 14, 2010

William James was one of the most important thinkers of the



19th century. He spent most of his professional life in Cambridge, producing some of his greatest works in his Irving Street home. Our tour explored his history in Cambridge and the community he was part of.

## Culinary History Tour

August 7, 2010  
Cambridge has had a lot to do with what America eats and how we eat it.



## MIT City Days September 3, 2010

Incoming MIT students volunteered with the CHS as part of the schoolwide MIT City Days project. This is a day when students help local nonprofits and to get to know their new city. For the second year we asked our students to help us document the city of Cambridge today. Last year the students documented East Cambridge; this year 36 students, carrying

digital cameras, photographed every building in Area 4 and filled out a short description of the structure. Eventually, we will have a complete digital documentation of the city in the early 21st century, which can be used to document future change.



# Collection Development

## A sample of our recent donations



The founders of Rounder Records donated to the New England Folk Music Archives and the Cambridge Historical Society a set of all of their recordings available on CD.

The Harvard Square Business Association has deposited its early records with the CHS, including all of its early minutes and correspondence.

We were given a quilt that had been given to Austin Hazen Wright (1811-1865) and Catherine Myers Wright (1821-1888) by their friends in Cambridge. This quilt was made in 1848 before their departure for Persia as missionaries.

We received a full set of *The Howl*, a newsletter produced

for 20 years on Howland Street in the Agassiz neighborhood.

We were given two *cartes de visite* of the Club, a women's sewing club. These date to 1863.

Skip Schloming donated videos and papers to be added to the Small Property Owners Association Collection.

The two granddaughters of the founder of Daggett Chocolates (with a factory at 400 Main Street) visited us and brought photos and items related to their family.



## Our Second Annual Photo Scanning Day

We asked people to bring in photos they had taken in Cambridge and let us scan them. For their efforts, we gave them a free scoop of ice cream, donated by Toscanini's. We received some great pictures. The images span the 20th century and include everything from Elsie's Deli in Harvard Square to Kresge's Market in Porter Square to the city dump that was replaced by Danehy Park to a nail salon on Cambridge Street to graffiti on the street. Pictured here are a sample from Anne Trant Sirois, Sandra Dolan, Barbara Yeoman, Gavin Kleespies, Rick Levy, and Becca Smith.

Alyce and Katherine at a fundraiser at St. Peters, c. 1935



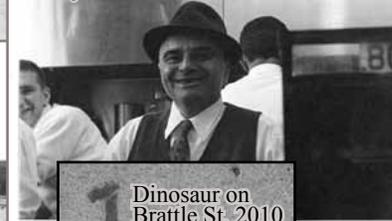
John and Frankie at Kresge's in Porter Square, 1958



Frankie on Parnell Street in East Cambridge, 1959

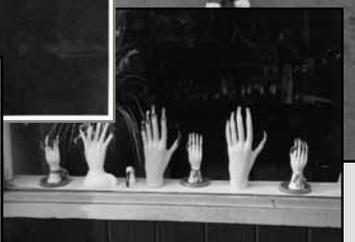


Henry Bauman at Elsie's Deli, c. 1960



Anne and Louann at McCrean Pool, c. 1960

Dinosaur on Brattle St. 2010



Beauty salon on Cambridge St., 1996

## Support Your City's History. Join the Cambridge Historical Society.

The Cambridge Historical Society is an independent, nonprofit organization. We are not tax supported or a part of a larger institution. We rely on membership support to preserve Cambridge history and produce programs and publications.

Single	\$35	_____	Name	_____
Family	\$60	_____		
Dana Fellow	\$100	_____	Street	_____
Family Dana Fellows	\$150	_____		
Sponsor	\$250	_____	City	_____ State _____ Zip _____

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

## Test your knowledge of Cambridge history!



Can you date this image? Look at the buildings. What do you see that you can date, and think of what buildings that are there now you can't see.

### CHS Survey

We want to know what you think. We will be mailing out a survey asking you what we are doing right and what we could do better. Please fill it out and return it to us. Everyone who responds will be entered into a raffle for a dinner for two out on the town.

## Upcoming Events

November 3, 6:00-7:30 pm  
at the Brattle Theater

- *Left on Pearl: Women Take Over 888 Memorial Drive*  
Preview and Q&A with the producers of this documentary on the 1971 takeover of a Harvard building

December 1, 6:00-8:00 pm  
at the Hooper-Lee-Nichols House

- How to Workshop: How to digitize and archive historic photos, art and memorabilia. Learn the correct way to create an archival-quality file without damaging the original.

December 8, 5:30-8:00 pm  
at the Hooper-Lee-Nichols House

- Annual CHS Holiday Party

Check [www.cambridgehistory.org](http://www.cambridgehistory.org) for our 2011 calendar

## CAMBRIDGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

*The Hooper-Lee-Nichols House*

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