



# JOHN F. KENNEDY'S BIRTHPLACE

## A PRESIDENTIAL HOME IN HISTORY AND MEMORY



JOHN F. KENNEDY NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

Historic Resource Study



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**A Historic Resource Study**

**by**

**Alexander von Hoffman**

**National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
August 2004**

Cover illustration: Rose Kennedy at Dedication Day Ceremony, shaking hands with spectators, May 29, 1969 (NPS Library photo 69-33-5-8). Courtesy John F. Kennedy National Historic Site.

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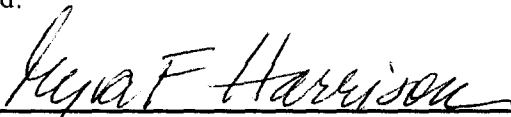
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# Table of Contents

List of Figures .....	v
List of Tables .....	vii
Foreword .....	ix
Acknowledgments .....	xi
Introduction .....	1
<b>Chapter I</b>	
Home, Hometown, and Urbanism: Brookline, Coolidge Corner, and the Neighborhood .....	7
<b>Chapter II</b>	
The Social Identities of Rose Fitzgerald and Joseph Kennedy .....	69
<b>Chapter III</b>	
Kennedy Family Life and the American Home .....	107
<b>Chapter IV</b>	
John F. Kennedy National Historic Site and the Problems of History and Memorialization .....	139
<b>Appendices</b>	
A. Occupational Categories .....	171
B. Status of Collections, John F. Kennedy National Historic Site, February 2003 Janice Hodson, Supervisory Museum Curator .....	175
C. Anna Coxe Toogood, Historic Furnishings Plan, John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site, 1971 .....	195
<b>Repositories Consulted and Note on Further Research .....</b>	<b>287</b>
<b>Bibliography .....</b>	<b>293</b>





## List of Figures

Figure 1. Coolidge Corner area, 1874.....	15
Figure 2. Coolidge Corner area (north), detail, 1893. ....	16
Figure 3. Coolidge Corner area (north), detail, 1907. ....	17
Figure 4. Coolidge Corner area (north), detail, 1913. ....	18
Figure 5. Coolidge Corner area, 1874.....	24
Figure 6. Coolidge Corner area, detail, 1893. ....	25
Figure 7. Plan of Building Lots, Beals Estate, Brookline, 1897.....	30
Figure 8. Coolidge Corner area, detail, 1900. ....	31
Figure 9. Coolidge Corner area, detail, 1913. ....	32
Figure 10. Abbotsford Road area, detail, 1900 .....	35
Figure 11. Abbotsford Road area, detail, 1913 .....	36
Figure 12. Abbotsford Road area, detail, 1927 .....	37



## List of Tables

Table 1.1	Non-Domestic Wage-Earners on Beals And Stedman Streets, by Birthplace, 1910 and 1920.....	30
Table 1.2	Domestic Wage Earners on Beals And Stedman Streets, by Birthplace, 1910 and 1920 .....	31
Table 1.3	Beals and Stedman Street Wage Earners, by Occupational Groups, 1910 and 1920.....	33
Table 2.1	Abbottsford-Naples Roads Wage Earners, by Occupational Groups, 1920.....	36
Table 2.2	Non-Domestic Wage-Earners on Abbottsford-Naples Roads, by Birthplace, 1920.....	37
Table 2.3	Domestic Wage Earners on Abbottsford-Naples Roads, by Birthplace, 1920.....	37



## Foreword

John F. Kennedy National Historic Site in Brookline, Massachusetts preserves and interprets the 1917 birthplace of the nation's 35th president. The house was the first home shared by President Kennedy's father and mother, Joseph P. and Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy, from 1914 to 1920. The historic house, grounds, collections, and neighboring Brookline community document the formative years of the prominent Kennedy family and permit exploration of the early influences which shaped the character and ambitions of John F. Kennedy.

The site was repurchased by the family as a memorial to President Kennedy in 1966 and refurbished to its circa 1917 appearance under the close supervision of the president's mother, based on her recollections. Many pieces in the collection are original to the family's tenure in the house; others are Kennedy family pieces, appropriate antiques, or period reproductions selected for interpretive value. Following the refurbishing, the Kennedy family donated the birthplace to the National Park Service in 1969. (In May 1967 Congress passed legislation authorizing the Secretary of the Interior to acquire the Brookline property.)

The National Park Service commissioned this study for two reasons. The first was to situate Joe and Rose Kennedy within Brookline's Beals Street neighborhood to provide a better understanding of the spheres in which the Kennedy family members lived, worked, and played. The second was to analyze the significance of the creation of the site as a memorial to the recently assassinated president.

This study gives the National Park Service an enriched perspective on the Kennedy years at Beals Street and provides essential documentation for interpreting their home as part of a neighborhood. Using census data and other primary documentation, the study reveals in detail the socio-economic status of the Kennedy neighbors and indicates the level of the family's social interaction within the neighborhood. The parents limited their participation in the local neighborhood to such activities as household shopping, attending church, and sending their children to local schools; their intellectual interests and social connections remained more cosmopolitan, and were generally focused outside of Brookline.

This is the first historical study to place the creation of the site within the larger context of the US preservation movement and the establishment of two other important presidential homes: George Washington Birthplace in Virginia, and Franklin Delano Roosevelt's home in New York. The study also incorporates substantial new research on the individual items that Rose Kennedy chose to furnish the home, including items she chose not to include. This section of the study makes clear that the John F. Kennedy Birthplace is both a product of the larger preservation movement and a very personal expression of the president's mother.

The work was undertaken by Alexander Van Hoffman, a senior research fellow at the Joint Center for Housing Studies at the Graduate School of Design, Harvard University. His previous scholarship has included an analysis of the Jamaica Plain neighborhood of Boston,

*Local Attachments: The Making of an American Urban Neighborhood, 1850 to 1920* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994). Park staff provided essential access to source material, critical reviews of drafts, and new research on objects in the home.

The study and its findings will assist the park as it pilots and incorporates new educational and public programming.

Myra Harrison  
Superintendent  
John F. Kennedy National Historic Site  
July 2007

## Acknowledgments

The author would like to acknowledge first and foremost the invaluable assistance and hard labor of Elise Madeleine Ciregna, who indefatigably, faithfully, and diligently researched, drafted, and edited material for this historic resource study. Without her it is difficult to see how the study could have been accomplished.

The author owes a special debt of gratitude to Louis Hutchins, the Project Manager, for his patience, wisdom, and good humor in seeing this historic resource study to its conclusion.

Also the author thanks the National Park Service staff and specialists for their careful reading of drafts of the study and helpful suggestions that improved the text immeasurably: Christine Arato, Lee Farrow Cook, Janice Hodson, Carole Perrault, Nancy Waters, and Paul Weinbaum. Thanks as well to Nancy Jones for helping to start the project.

Last but by no means least, the author thanks Myra Harrison, Superintendent of the John F. Kennedy National Historic Site, for her warm support of this project and her strong leadership at the site.





## Introduction

A modest looking house has existed on a quiet residential street in Brookline, Massachusetts, a suburb of Boston, for nearly a century. It was here that Joseph and Rose Kennedy set up housekeeping shortly after their marriage in October 1914. In the second floor master bedroom, on May 29, 1917, Rose Kennedy gave birth to the couple's second child John F. Kennedy, who became America's thirty-fifth president. By 1920 the Kennedys felt that, with four young children, they had outgrown the house on Beals Street and moved to a larger house on Abbottsford and Naples Roads. In 1927 Joseph Kennedy found business opportunities in New York City and the family departed for New York, and later took up seasonal residence in estates Kennedy acquired in Palm Beach, Florida and Hyannisport, Massachusetts.

The house at 83 Beals Street might have settled into obscurity but for the election of John F. Kennedy to the presidency of the United States, which the Town of Brookline celebrated by placing a commemorative bronze plaque on the house. The assassination of John Kennedy brought the building more attention, as members of the public gathered at the house to mourn, remember, and honor the late president. Citizens of Brookline attempted unsuccessfully to persuade the town to acquire the president's birthplace for a memorial. Then on November 1, 1966 Rose Kennedy, working through her nephew, purchased the house she had left 46 years before and set about restoring it, to the best of her ability, as she remembered it had looked like at the time John was born. Almost three years later, on May 29, 1969, Rose Kennedy transferred ownership of the property to the National Park Service and helped officially dedicate the John F. Kennedy National Historic Site at a well-attended public ceremony.

In creating the Kennedy birthplace site, Rose Kennedy expressed her hope that it would give people a better appreciation of the history of the United States by showing how people—as particularly exemplified by herself and the members of her family—lived in 1917. In her taped reminiscences for house tours, Rose Kennedy illustrated what she meant by describing the family's daily life, including the way she and the children used the neighborhood and its institutions, the routines of motherhood, housekeeping, cooking, childcare, and the uses of the individual rooms in the house.

Since that date the National Park Service has owned and managed the John F. Kennedy birthplace, one of eight presidential or boyhood homes under its supervision. The National Park Service preserves and interprets both the birthplace house and Rose Kennedy's later memorialization of her son's early boyhood home.

The purpose of this Historic Resource Study is to provide a scholarly understanding of the historical significance of the Kennedy birthplace that will inform and guide the park managers in the future treatment and interpretation of the site. It traces a dual history of the site, focusing particularly on the period of the family's residency at 83 Beals Street during the 1910s and the period of the establishment of the birthplace site in the 1960s.

The Historic Resource Study is divided into four chapters. The first three chapters explore major topics related to the history and interpretation of the Kennedy birthplace during the years the Kennedys inhabited it. They are meant to further the goals set by Rose Kennedy to communicate the family life and background of the future president and, at the same time, the social history of home and neighborhood of the early twentieth century. The fourth chapter traces the history of the creation of the memorial site, placing it in the context of the history of historic preservation and the creation of other presidential sites under the aegis of the National Park Service. This chapter aims to understand the nature of the historic restoration that Rose Kennedy created and thereby show possible ways of interpreting the site as a memorial.

The analysis throughout all four chapters attempts to take into account the particular circumstance that Rose Kennedy's memories are the chief source for the historical recreation of the site and for the history of the Kennedy family in their Brookline years. Like all people's memories Mrs. Kennedy's were incomplete, filtered, and biased toward events that evoke strong emotional associations. They therefore pose challenges to recording a more factual and complete history as well as to presenting in an objective way the site and its furnishings to the public. The Historic Resource Study thus supplements the memoirs and reminiscences of Rose Kennedy with a broad array of source materials. These include the private papers of Rose Fitzgerald and Joseph Kennedy, census manuscripts, town directories, Brookline newspapers, biographies and biographical histories of the Kennedys, National Park Service site reports, and a wide array of secondary works.

Chapter One investigates the development of the house, neighborhood, and town where the Kennedys settled. It is divided into two parts. The first part concerns the history of Brookline up until about the time the Kennedys arrived. It shows that proximity to

Boston stimulated real estate and commercial development of the Coolidge Corner area where the Kennedys lived. Somewhat surprisingly, the population in and around Beals Street was predominantly lower middle-class and transient, whereas the Kennedy's subsequent neighborhood, near Abbottsford Road, was distinctly more upper-middle-class. Modes of transportation, namely the trolley and the automobile, made a distinct impact upon the Coolidge Corner landscape. The second part of the chapter sketches urban society in Brookline in the early twentieth century and examines the way the young Kennedy family participated in it. It finds that although they used some of the institutions and activities that were available in Brookline, the Kennedys were essentially cosmopolites, whose orbits often took them outside the town for social activities and entertainment.

The second chapter explores the social identities of Rose Fitzgerald and Joseph Kennedy up to and including this early period of their marriage. It shows that their socio-economic, ethnic, and religious identities were complex, which sometimes overlapped and sometimes were in tension with one another. In particular, the chapter sheds light on what it meant for the Kennedys to live as ambitious third-generation Irish Catholics in Boston at a time—the early twentieth century—when Anglo-Protestants still dominated elite society. They felt conflicting impulses: on the one hand, to assimilate into the majority Protestant culture and society, and on the other hand, to stand apart proudly and hold fast to a distinctly different identity.

The third chapter illuminates the Kennedys' family and home life, including how they lived in and used the house at 83 Beals Street. In the early twentieth century, the size and functions of American homes were evolving away from those of the Victorian era. Partly as a result, the Kennedys, like other Americans of the time, mixed traditional and modern activities. For example, they decorated the traditional parlor with the time-honored fixture of a piano but also with the modern entertainment device of the phonograph. Then as now, the question of who will perform the household business of cleaning, laundry, and cooking was paramount. The answer for the Kennedys was that Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy, the wife and mother, would serve as a professional manager of a team of paid servants. Yet despite the picture of a harmonious family life that Rose Kennedy left, there are hints that the haven of 83 Beals Street was not always an ideal or even tranquil place.

The fourth chapter traces the establishment and development of the John F. Kennedy birthplace as a national historical site. Placing the creation of the Kennedy memorial in the

context of the evolution of historic preservation and public history, the chapter highlights two conflicting concepts of history and historic preservation: nostalgic or “subjective” history and professional or “objective” history. It shows that in presenting to the public sites such as the George Washington memorial at Wakefield, Virginia, the National Park Service has tried to negotiate between demands for an idealized hero-worship history and the relatively objective standards of professional historians. It documents that National Park Service personnel at first felt frustrated with Rose Kennedy’s relaxed approach to historical accuracy and documentation before embracing the value of the site as the president’s mother’s evocation of the past. From this latter perspective, the chapter notes that Rose Kennedy omitted the trappings of official pomp and instead presented a vernacular type of memorial that celebrated the histories of family, motherhood, home, and neighborhood.

The chapter also traces the role that the public has played in defining the meaning of the John F. Kennedy National Historic Site. In making the Kennedy house a place of pilgrimage to contemplate the lives of John F. Kennedy and later his close relatives, the public expresses the enduring popular appeal of the president and his family. As a result, the Kennedy birthplace takes its place among the important sites dedicated to the memory of the late president.

### **A Note on Socio-Economic Class**

To explain the meaning of certain events and trends of social history, the narrative on the following pages refers at times to different socio-economic classes. Social scientists have long wrestled with meaning of such terms as working, middle, and upper class, which can at any point involve one or more of the following attributes: social status, wealth, occupation, and values. For present purposes, the text will divide American society into broad categories of working, middle, and upper classes. The working class is made up of lower blue-collar occupations, such as manual laborers. The middle class has been highly influential in the United States by virtue of its numbers, values, and buying power. It encompasses the better paid blue-collar occupations—such as skilled mechanics— as well as service workers such as police, white-collar workers, and small businessmen. At the upper end, the middle class includes professionals—such as teachers, clerics, and lawyers—and proprietors of medium to large sized firms. The members of the upper class are the

rich, of whom some may work but none generally need to. Each group has its own lower and upper ends. Economically mobility complicates matters further, as individuals and families may move economically from class to class, but may still retain the social values of the class that they have left.

Although their relatives had known hard times as members of the working class, both Rose Fitzgerald and Joseph Kennedy started out life in the upper-middle class, by virtue of their fathers' prominent positions in Boston politics and, in Rose Fitzgerald's case, the family's financial prosperity. Both attended private schools, with Joe later attending Harvard College, the most prestigious college in the region and possibly the nation. Joseph Kennedy did well as a banker while the family lived in Brookline but earned greater wealth as a businessman after the family left Brookline. At some point later in their lives they can be said to have entered the upper class, although, in a time when Protestants dominated the elite, it was difficult for Irish-American Catholics to gain acceptance into the top rung of American society.



## CHAPTER ONE

# Home, Hometown, and Urbanism: Brookline, Coolidge Corner, and the Neighborhood

### Introduction

When she created a memorial to John F. Kennedy at 83 Beals Street, Brookline, Massachusetts, Rose Kennedy hoped it would impart both the early family life and background of the president and, at the same time, a social history of home and neighborhood of the early twentieth century. While fashioning this presidential birthplace site, Mrs. Kennedy relied primarily on her memories to reconstruct the house and experiences of the Kennedy family in the years immediately after she and Joseph Kennedy married. As a rule, however, memories are inaccurate and especially memories of youth, which tend to take on a glowing hue. In her house furnishings and reminiscences, Rose Kennedy remembered certain facts, forgot others, and nostalgically pictured the daily routine as part of simpler, more optimistic time of life. Yet despite relying on fallible memories, Mrs. Kennedy succeeded in evoking what life might have been like for her family during the 1910s and 1920s in the Boston suburb of Brookline.

Perhaps one reason that visitors often feel that the John F. Kennedy birthplace represents an authentic piece of history is Rose Kennedy's assumption that the young Kennedy family had experienced a particularly interesting historic epoch. The years that the Kennedys lived in Brookline—from 1914 to 1927—fell in the latter part of the heyday of the big city. Historians have noted the distinctiveness of the urban society of this period, which began about 1880 and lasted about five decades.<sup>1</sup> During this period, entrepreneurs and municipal governments fostered the development of bustling neighborhoods, replete with a wide variety of houses, stores, churches, and schools, within a few miles of active, crowded downtowns to which they were connected by rapid transit lines. The vital society of this era—recently labeled “urbanism”—was rooted in local communities, thanks to a

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<sup>1</sup> For examples, see Gunther Paul Barth, *City People: the Rise of Modern City Culture in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York : Oxford University Press, 1980); Alexander von Hoffman, *Local Attachments: The Making of an American Urban Neighborhood, 1850 to 1920* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1994).

myriad of religious and secular voluntary associations that linked urban dwellers to one another and to the neighborhoods and cities in which they lived. Over the course of the twentieth century, however, the automobile, highways, and increasing affluence spurred massive population movements to more distant suburbs and eroded the big city and its urbanist way of life.

The following chapter builds upon Rose Kennedy's thematic interpretations of the John F. Kennedy National Historic Site by documenting the development of the house, neighborhood, and town where the Kennedys settled in the second decade of the twentieth century and the relationship of this young family to the locally oriented urban society of that time and place.

The chapter begins by tracing the history of the Town of Brookline to the time that the Kennedys arrived. Proximity to the vigorously expanding city of Boston, the chapter reveals, influenced Brookline's development and helped to transform it from a market-farm village into a suburb of diverse population and economic activity. In the late nineteenth century introduction of trolley service between Brookline and Boston stimulated real estate development along Beacon Street and in the Coolidge Corner area, which blossomed into a major residential and retail shopping area that rivaled the older district of Brookline Village.

Urban growth in the Coolidge Corner area, in turn, led to the building of the house that the Kennedys bought in 1914. Real estate development in the Coolidge Corner area encouraged the sale of the George Babcock farm to James M. Beals, whose family in turn subdivided the land into house lots. After a series of investors acquired the subdivision's lot 47, a real estate agent from Newton, Massachusetts in 1909 built the house at 83 Beals Street.

When the Kennedys moved to Beals Street in 1914, analysis of census data shows, they enjoyed relatively high social and economic standing. The population of the immediate neighborhood turns out to have been predominantly lower middle-class and, to a surprising degree, transient. In 1920 the Kennedys moved to a larger house a few blocks away, on Abbottsford and Naples Roads, where they shared the upper-middle-class status with a large proportion of their neighbors.

In the early twentieth century, the arrival of the automobile changed the landscape of Brookline and the Coolidge Corner area, as owners—such as the Kennedys, who were among the first in their immediate neighborhood to own a car—accommodated the



machines by building garages to house them. In time, the automobile would contribute to the demise of the big city and its urbanist culture.

The chapter then investigates the major elements of early twentieth-century urbanist culture in and around Brookline, Massachusetts. It sketches the history of the town's houses of worship, schools, and retail shops and services and surveys the entertainments, clubs, and theaters that were available to Brookline residents in the second decade of the twentieth century.

During the time they lived in Brookline, the Kennedys partook of what their local community offered: houses, a church, shops, and, for a time, the local school. Nonetheless, the evidence strongly suggests that the Kennedys used only some of the institutions and activities that were available in Brookline. Many years later, Rose Kennedy would look back fondly at the life her family lived in Brookline, but at the time she and her husband lived a cosmopolitan way of life. Like other urban cosmopolites, they traveled in many orbits, only a few of which were local. When they left Brookline in 1927, there would be relatively few ties to the town to break.

## **PART I: THE HISTORY OF BROOKLINE AND THE KENNEDYS' NEIGHBORHOODS**

### **Early History of Brookline**

From its beginning, Brookline functioned as an auxiliary community to Boston, the center of first the colonial and later the state government. Brookline was one of several communities the English Puritans founded soon after they came to Massachusetts Bay in 1630. At first they called the area "Muddy River"—a reference to the stream that runs through it—and thought of it as a place of fertile land, marshes, meadows, and forest. During the seventeenth century, the area functioned as a reserve of land for the small peninsula of Boston, whose farmers used it as a place to graze their cows. By 1700, the area that became Brookline had increased its number of residents—thanks in part to the conferring of land grants there—to the point that the inhabitants petitioned the Massachusetts General Court for permission to incorporate as a town separate from Boston. After two unsuccessful tries, in 1700 and 1704, the community received permission in 1705 to incorporate as the Town of Brookline. Soon after, the inhabitants instituted a town meeting form of government—a version of which still persists to this day—and built

the first public and municipal buildings. The first meetinghouse for public worship (the parish boundaries were identical to the town boundaries) was erected in 1714 in what is known today as the Brookline Village area. The appointment of a minister meant that Brookline residents no longer had to travel to Roxbury for religious services. A schoolhouse apparently existed as early as the 1680s, although no firm record of it exists. The first school that can be documented was built in 1713. As the town grew, it divided into precincts and added more schools.<sup>2</sup>

Even after it established political and ecclesiastical autonomy from Boston, the town remained closely tethered to the provincial capital. Throughout the eighteenth century, the town's inhabitants, numbering around 300 in 1705, engaged primarily in agricultural activities, which thrived thanks to the growing market created by the increasing number of people and port activity in nearby Boston. The topography of Brookline's land was well suited to agricultural pursuits, and remained essentially unchanged until the mid-nineteenth century. Essentially rectangular, about four miles by a mile and a half, the land was described as a rolling and hilly countryside. The land was bounded by the Charles River on the east and by the Muddy River on the southeast, the latter between Brookline and Roxbury. The shores of the Muddy River were made up of low-lying salt marches, with much of the grazing and farming land that residents sought. These boundaries, with several slight adjustments to the east and south, have remained largely intact since the town's incorporation.<sup>3</sup>

Starting in the late eighteenth century, the town, or portions of it, began to evolve from a summer colony for Bostonians into a full-time elite suburb. By 1770, according to historian Ronald Dale Karr, the town was also considered one of the wealthiest communities in New England, based on per capita income. After the American Revolution, "artisans and tradesmen arrived, were joined by large numbers of farm laborers, and a village settlement grew up around an ancient crossroads tavern." But another type of resident, drawn by the picturesque beauty of the land, brought most of the wealth: "A small

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<sup>2</sup> John Gould Curtis, *History of the Town of Brookline, Massachusetts* (Boston and New York: Houghton and Mifflin Company, 1933), 1-9, 64-73; Ronald Dale Karr, "Brookline and the Making of an Elite Suburb," *Chicago History* 13:2 (Summer 1984): 36; Marion L. Sharp, "Three Glimpses of Brookline, in 1700, 1800, and 1900," *Brookline Historical Publication Society*, publication no. 11: 1-2; *A History of Brookline, Massachusetts, From the First Settlement of Muddy River Until the Present Time, 1630-1906* (Brookline: Brookline Press Company, 1906), 63-64.

<sup>3</sup> *A History of Brookline, Massachusetts*, 6, 15.

but significant group of wealthy Boston merchants purchased large estates, primarily in the southern and far northern sections of the town. At first these merchants and their households resided in Brookline only in the summer, but by 1840 some had made the town their primary address. . . .”<sup>4</sup> These men, primarily merchants, included names familiar to New England history today—Thomas Handasyd Perkins, the “Merchant Prince” of Boston, Amos Lawrence, Theodore Lyman, John Lowell Gardner, William Weld, and George Cabot.

The expansion of Boston’s population and economy during the nineteenth century stimulated Brookline and other nearby communities to attract more residents and become more complex kinds of places. The Town of Brookline’s population grew steadily, from 1,365 in 1840 to 5,164 in 1860 to 6,650 in 1870. At the same time, the town evolved into a mixture of land uses, activities, and population similar to towns within Boston’s economic and social orbit such as Cambridge, Somerville, and neighboring West Roxbury.<sup>5</sup> In addition to farms and estates, Brookline developed factories. Its population ranged from the wealthy to manual laborers. The town was home not only to New England Protestants, but also to immigrant Irish Catholics. Brookline differed from other towns in that it developed and retained a reputation as a community made up primarily of posh suburban residences, but it too functioned as a multifaceted part of the Boston metropolitan area.

As part of the complex Boston economy, for example, the town of Brookline developed an industrial sector. From the early nineteenth century, tanneries, a sawmill, a chocolate factory, a forge, a knitting factory, and carriage building shops appeared, some of these located near the Muddy River on the Roxbury-Brookline border. After 1850, new industries arrived; most of these were light manufacturing concerns whose business did not noticeably interfere with life in a residential town. Among these was the firm of E.S. Ritchie and Sons, makers of scientific and nautical instruments, located in Brookline Village, later moving to new quarters in 1883 on Cypress Street on the western edge of the village. Other concerns located in the village during these years included manufacturers of electrical equipment, fishing tackle, screen doors, and furniture. The one notable exception to light

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<sup>4</sup> Karr, “Brookline and the Making of an Elite Suburb,” 37.

<sup>5</sup> For the motley character of early suburban development around Boston, see Henry C. Binford, *The First Suburbs: Residential Communities on the Boston Periphery, 1815-1860* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1985); von Hoffman, *Local Attachments*, 1-21.

manufacturing was the Brookline Gas Company, established in the early 1850s at the corner of Brookline Avenue (then Western Avenue) and Washington Street, at the eastern edge of Brookline Village. The Brookline Gas Works supplied street lighting and residential customers. In the 1880s an electric company was formed, and electric street lamps were installed in the town as of 1885. The generators were located on Pearl Street, not far from the gas company.<sup>6</sup>

Brookline Village, in the northeastern part of the town of Brookline, was the earliest neighborhood to be settled densely. Karr dates the true beginning of the suburbanization of Brookline from the early 1840s, when the town's first subdivision was laid out near Brookline Village. Beacon Street was first laid out during this time across northern Brookline from the Mill Dam to Newton, linking Brookline to Boston for the first time. Gradually streets were laid out in the area between Brookline Village and the Charles River at the northern boundaries of the town. As in other early Boston suburbs such as Cambridge, Dorchester, and West Roxbury, the increased availability of public transportation—in this case between Boston and Brookline Village—produced a small class of commuters who traveled to Boston to work during the day and returned to their homes in Brookline by night. The large coaches known as omnibuses made ten daily trips to Boston, and a branch of the Boston and Worcester railroad also stopped nearby. Just a few years later, in 1858, the horse-drawn streetcar, which ran on rails and gave a noticeably smoother ride than its predecessor, the omnibus, began to serve Brookline. Hence, as in other communities surrounding Boston, the accessibility of rail transport in and out of Boston coincided with the increase of the number of middle- and upper-middle-class commuters living in Brookline.<sup>7</sup>

Scores of poor Irish immigrants, part of the large waves of mid-nineteenth century immigration, also moved to Brookline in the mid- and late nineteenth century, where large

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<sup>6</sup> Karr, "Brookline and the Making of an Elite Suburb," 36; Ronald Dale Karr, "The Evolution of an Elite Suburb: Community Structure and Control in Brookline, Massachusetts, 1770-1900" (Ph. D. diss., Boston University, 1981), 170-173; "A Historical Sketch: Brookline, Massachusetts," John F. Kennedy National Historic Site (hereafter JOFI) files, 2; "Some of the Early Industries in Brookline: 1800's through 1900," JOFI files (typewritten manuscript). These sources do not give specific locations for all of the light manufacturers; for further information, see *The Brookline, Jamaica Plain, and West Roxbury Directory for 1868* (Boston: Dudley & Greenough, 1868), *Greenough's Directory of Brookline for 1883-1884* (Boston: W.A. Greenough & Co., 1884), and George W. and Walter S. Bromley, *Atlas of the Town of Brookline, Norfolk County, Massachusetts, 1888* (Philadelphia: G.W. Bromley, 1888).

<sup>7</sup> Karr, "Brookline and the Making of an Elite Suburb," 37.

estates offered ample opportunities for unskilled and working class people. This movement of Irish immigrants to Brookline was quite similar to the arrival in the adjacent community of Jamaica Plain, a neighborhood that was originally a part of Roxbury, then West Roxbury and eventually Boston, and that contained large estates, some of which straddled the boundaries of the two places. Most of the Irish in Brookline settled in Brookline Village near the railroad tracks. The largest cluster of Irish households was located in “the Marsh,” a poorly drained area on the eastern edge of the Village between the railroad tracks and Western Avenue (later Brookline Avenue), on Pearl Place and Davis Place (later Emerald Street). A smaller but also significant cluster of Irish settled in what was known as “Whiskey Point,” another damp area of land, on the western edge of Brookline Village. Both settlements offered proximity to the large estates of the wealthy as well as to the relatively comfortable homes of the middle class residents, who employed domestic help.<sup>8</sup>

Irish men worked as day laborers and gardeners, and Irish women worked primarily as domestics. Karr estimates these immigrants made up 31 percent of Brookline’s male work force in 1850, and 37 percent in 1870. An Irish-born man or woman headed twenty-two percent of Brookline households in 1850; in 1870, that number was 40 percent. In terms of the workforce, 78 percent of these Irish men in 1850 worked as day laborers while only about 12 percent of their New England native counterparts did; most of the Irish women who worked were employed as domestic staff. In 1870 most Irish men, about 62 percent, still worked as day laborers, while the number of New England natives working at these jobs had dropped to about 4 percent. In 1870, 63 percent of the New England-born household heads worked at white-collar jobs, while only 3% of the Irish-born residents held similar jobs. Patterns of domestic help were similar—while about 60 percent of households with a New England native at the head employed live-in domestic servants, only 4 percent of Irish households employed servants. More than half of Yankee households owned real estate, while less than a quarter of Irish households could afford to do so.<sup>9</sup> The areas surrounding working-class Brookline Village consisted of upper-class residences; the rest of Brookline remained mostly farms and estates.

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<sup>8</sup> Karr, “Evolution,” 180. For comparison of Irish working-class immigrants to nearby Jamaica Plain, see von Hoffman, *Local Attachments*, 18-19, 38-39, and *passim*.

<sup>9</sup> Karr, “Brookline and the Making of an Elite Suburb,” 37-38.

As the century progressed and turned into the twentieth century, there were increasing signs of an Irish-Catholic middle class presence. Some Irish rose into the ranks of the Brookline middle and upper-middle-classes. Among them, presumably, was Thomas B. Fitzpatrick, whose home on Winthrop Road was sumptuous enough to merit a picture in a town history published in 1906. Despite the increasing presence of an Irish-Catholic middle class in Brookline, however, and a trickle of immigrants from other lands, including Eastern Europe and Germany, Brookline in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries remained primarily an American-born Protestant community. As Karr notes, “The political, economic, and social life of nineteenth-century Brookline remained firmly under the control of its Protestant Yankee plurality, particularly those prosperous families who kept live-in servants.” In this respect, Brookline differed from the city of Boston, which elected its first Irish-born mayor in 1885 and whose political control shifted to the Irish in the early years of the twentieth century.<sup>10</sup>

By 1885 the Town of Brookline consisted primarily of the heavily populated core of Brookline Village, surrounded by upper-middle class housing, with farms and estates occupying the rest of the town. Indeed, despite the influx of lower and middle-income residents in and around Brookline Village, Brookline in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century had a reputation as one of the wealthiest communities in New England as well as one of the most beautiful in the country. In the early twentieth century, guidebooks and histories of Boston and Brookline touted the concentration of wealth and picturesque landscapes in Brookline. One 1903 guidebook stated: “Brookline is the richest suburb of Boston and in many respects the most attractive, with numerous beautiful estates and tasteful ‘villas’ and charming drives.” Published three years later, a town history illustrates this point with photographs of local estates, mansions and “villas.”<sup>11</sup>

By the early twentieth century, in fact, the Town of Brookline contained elements of city, suburb and country-estate district, all of which were part of greater Boston. Located in a northeast part of Brookline that was closest to central Boston was the still-developing urban section known as Coolidge Corner, where the Kennedys moved in 1914. Its relatively

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<sup>10</sup> Photograph of the Fitzpatrick house in 1906: *A History of Brookline, Massachusetts*, 14; Karr, “Brookline and the Making of an Elite Suburb,” 37-38, 44; Karr, “Evolution,” maps 181, 193; von Hoffman, *Local Attachments*, 18-19; “A Historical Sketch: Brookline, Massachusetts,” 1-2, JOFI files.

<sup>11</sup> Karr, “Brookline and the Making of an Elite Suburb,” 36; *A History of Brookline, Massachusetts*, 5.

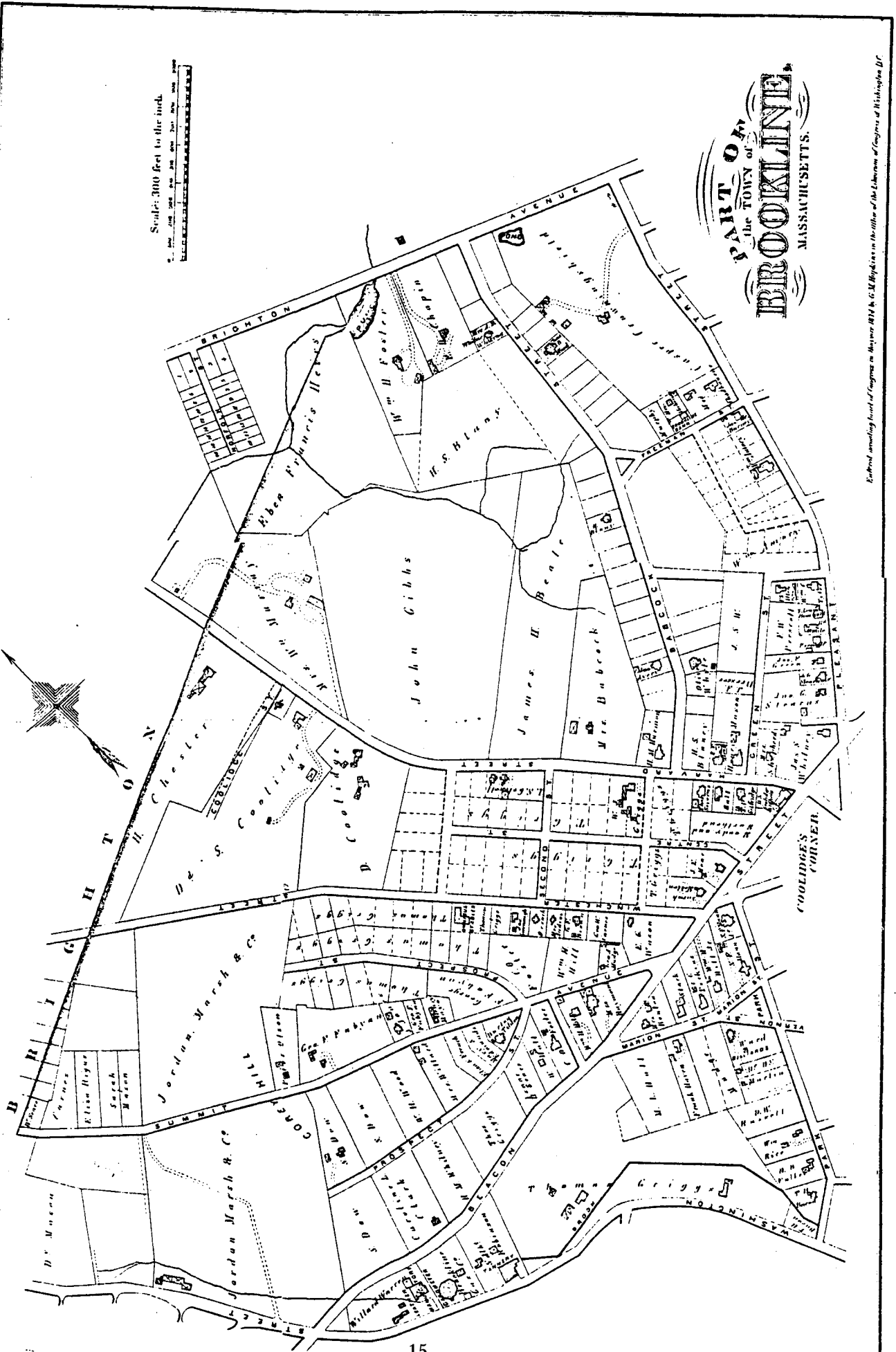


Figure 1. Coolidge Corner area, 1874. Reprinted from Atlas of the Town of Brookline, Norfolk County, Massachusetts. (Philadelphia: G. M. Hopkins & Co. 1974).

Engraved according to a plan of the Coolidge Corner in the Office of the Librarian of Congress at Washington D.C.







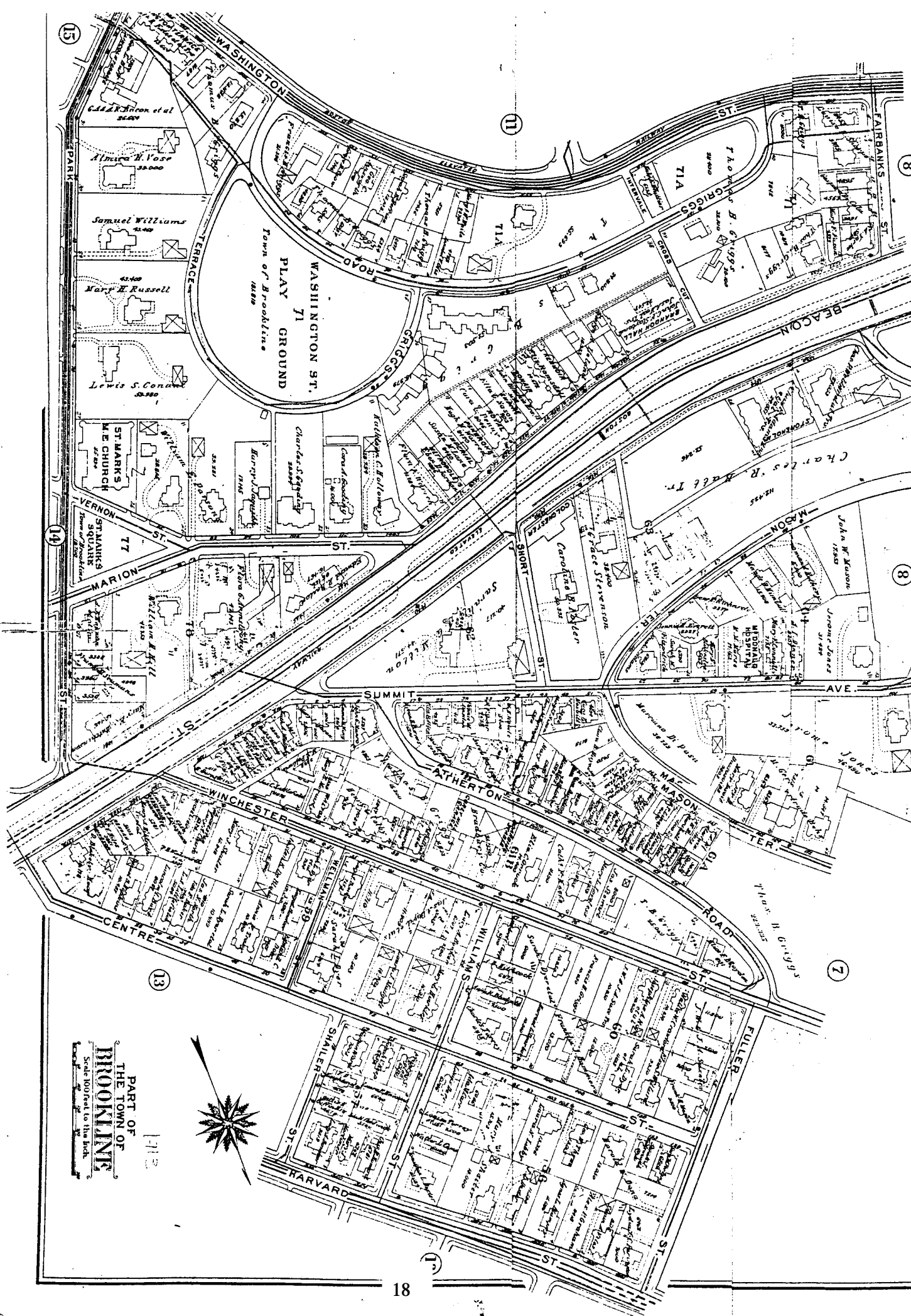


Figure 4. Coolidge Corner area (north), detail, 1913. Reprinted from Atlas of the Town of Brookline, Norfolk County, Massachusetts Philadelphia: G. W. Bromley and Co., 1913.

dense array of single and multiple-family residences, apartment buildings, and commercial businesses of all kinds presented what one writer in 1906 termed “a citified appearance.”<sup>12</sup> A second area at the junction of several major old highways (now Route 9, the Riverway, and Harvard Street) comprised the oldest settled area of Brookline Village, with its retail shops, homes and businesses. A third area in the middle northeastern part of the town was composed of the relatively open undulating spaces of Fisher, Aspinwall and Corey Hills, which were sparsely laid out with small estates and the occasional cluster of homes. A fourth area, located in southwest Brookline, was more genteel still. It still consisted of large estates and country homes, including the well-known estates along the Brookline-Jamaica Plain (Boston) border that belonged to the families of Charles Sprague Sargent, Edward Brandegee, and Larz Anderson. Led by the growing Coolidge Corner and Brookline Village sections, the town of Brookline increased its population so much that in 1915 it was forced to institute a representative form of town meeting government to meld the interests of its diverse communities.

### **Henry Whitney and the Development of Beacon Street**

The advent of trolley car service between Brookline and Boston accelerated the development of the town and particularly the Coolidge Corner area. The improvement in transportation stimulated suburban development—including attracting the increasing number of Boston-bound commuters—by making it more convenient to travel to and from the Back Bay and downtown. In 1886 Henry M. Whitney, a Boston steamship operator and real estate speculator, began to carry out his plan to develop Beacon Street, a popular country drive. At least one would-be developer, George Griggs, realizing that the Beacon Street link to Boston would create potential investment opportunities, had made an earlier attempt to develop Beacon Street. In the 1850s, Griggs, a descendant of one of the oldest established families in Brookline, had inherited a 65-acre farm and attempted to subdivide and develop it without success. In the 1860s, Whitney also saw the opportunities in developing Beacon Street. He began buying land in Brookline in 1868 and continually added to his holdings, making a significant number of purchases in 1886. In the fall of that year, Whitney and a few associates formed the West End Land Company as a real estate

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<sup>12</sup> *A History of Brookline, Massachusetts*, 38-39.

development syndicate; Whitney transferred nearly 4 million square feet of holdings to the company.<sup>13</sup>

Also in the fall of 1886, Whitney, along with other businessmen, some of whom had also participated in helping to form the West End Land Company, founded the West End Railway Company to provide streetcar service to Brookline along Beacon Street. In 1887 Whitney purchased large amounts of stock in the other four Boston streetcar lines and convinced the companies to merge into one large system, creating a syndicate that at the time was the world's largest single transit system. Whitney promised improvements and more efficient management of the railway system to help alleviate congested Boston traffic. Whitney continued to expand service lines for the West End Railway, and in 1889 he began converting the system from horse to electric power, starting with the Beacon Street line.<sup>14</sup>

Whitney's ventures proved to be exceptionally well timed. Just before the formation of the West End Land and the West End Rail companies, in August 1886, 100 Brookline citizens had requested permission to take control of Beacon Street from the state, with the intention of widening the street into a 200-foot wide boulevard, adding trees, and including a central strip for streetcar tracks. Although Whitney in 1884 lost a bid to another company to run a streetcar line down Beacon Street between Boston and Brookline, his influence and willingness to commit valuable resources to the venture—including the donation of half the land needed for the widening and \$100,000 towards expenses—secured his company the project.

At a town hearing in early 1887, Whitney argued that his transit project was democratic because it would carry members of the working and middle classes to the exclusive Back Bay where they could experience the verdant landscape of the Commonwealth Avenue mall.

...What have we added to this avenue of a democratic nature? We have placed on it a railroad track. The only objection that any citizen can make to Commonwealth Avenue is, that it is a place that the rich can enjoy. We have placed on this avenue a railroad from one end to the other. That brings it within the ability of men who live

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<sup>13</sup> Matthew Edel, Elliott D. Sclar, and Daniel Luria, *Shaky Palaces: Homeownership and Social Mobility in Boston's Suburbanization* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), 205-209; Sam Bass Warner Jr., *Streetcar Suburbs: The Process of Growth in Boston, 1870-1900* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press and The M.I.T. Press, 1962), 25-29; Karr, "Brookline and the Making of an Elite Suburb," 44.

<sup>14</sup> Edel et al, *Shaky Palaces*, 205-209; Karr, "Brookline and the Making of an Elite Suburb," 45.

within reasonable distance of the avenue to enjoy its blessings in going to and from their business. There are hundreds and thousands of men who will dwell within this region within the next thirty years, whether this avenue is built or not, for whom the ability to ride back and forth over an avenue of this kind will be a blessing, the value of which it is impossible to overestimate. It will be to the laboring man, the mechanic, the clerk, and to the poor woman, the only opportunity which they may have of looking upon a green tree or green grass from one year's end to the other. I say, that in addition to the increased value of the land, the carrying out of this improvement in the manner which we have proposed is a thing which will bring the greatest good to the greatest number of people.<sup>15</sup>

Reflecting the vision of suburban development, Whitney emphasized the link between Brookline and Boston, as no transportation line traveled across town to connect Brookline's neighborhoods to each other.

Whitney's vision included the way his land would be used once it was purchased. Whitney sold most of his land in Brookline for residential use, some to large developers but much of it also in smaller, individual-lot size parcels, especially in the area behind Beacon Street. Whitney placed restrictions on these deeds prohibiting public stables or "any other businesses offensive to a neighborhood of dwelling houses," and usually also determined the minimum value of any home built on the property. "By investing only about 12 percent of his total land holdings and by paying for part of the project," historians Matthew Edel, Elliott D. Sclar, and Daniel Luria note, "Whitney convinced the Town of Brookline to help create the conditions by which the value of his real estate would be greatly increased." Thus Whitney, in particular in the Coolidge Corner and Beacon Street areas, was largely responsible for the disappearance of some of the large country estates of Brookline in the early and mid-nineteenth century as these were recycled and developed into myriad suburban house lots.<sup>16</sup>

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the West End Land Company initiated or spurred development of land parcels in the Coolidge Corner area for residential and commercial use. Real estate atlases, which were published periodically from 1874 onwards, reflect the changes in land use and ownership.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> *A History of Brookline*, 38; "Beacon Street Historic Neighborhood Brochure: Washington Square/Upper Beacon," Brookline Preservation Commission, 1996.

<sup>16</sup> Edel et al, *Shaky Palaces*, 207-209.

<sup>17</sup> Griffith Morgan Hopkins, *Atlas of the Town of Brookline, 1874*; George W. and Walter S. Bromley, *Atlas of the Town of Brookline, Norfolk County, Massachusetts, 1888 to 1927*.

A case in point is the former Griggs property along Beacon Street between Center Street and Lancaster Terrace. The land had a long history. In 1638 George Griggs received a 28-acre land grant, which was handed down to family members for the next two centuries. Gradually the heirs enlarged the tract, and by the 1850s, as mentioned above, it extended over 65 acres. In 1874 Griggs family members still owned large parcels of this land, including the future Beals Street portion, which they planned to subdivide into individual house lots. (See fig. 1, 1874 atlas). By 1893 the proposed development across Beacon Street on Griggs property was well underway, and the West End Land Company now owned another part of the undeveloped Griggs property along Beacon Street. (See fig. 2, 1893 atlas.) On the 1893 atlas, dotted lines representing future individual house lots and a “Proposed Gardner Road North” indicated the plans for the Griggs property adjacent to the West End Land Company holdings. By 1907 some of these planned homes and a section of the proposed road—including a circular-shaped area surrounding a playground on Washington Street known today as Griggs Terrace—were complete, and all of the West End Land Company properties were developed as residential lots. (See fig. 3, 1907 atlas.) By 1913 various owners had subdivided the remaining larger parcels of land, and the larger Coolidge Corner area of Beacon Street had become fully urbanized.<sup>18</sup> (See fig. 4, 1913 atlas.) Development of the remaining small properties continued well into the Kennedys’ tenure in Brookline.

Whitney’s engineering of the extension of the electric trolley along Beacon Street allowed the Coolidge Corner area of Brookline not only to become one of the primary residential areas of Brookline, but also one of the town’s busiest retail areas.<sup>19</sup> Members of diverse ethnic, religious, and socio-economic groups arrived in the Coolidge Corner area, and new houses of worship, schools, services and stores appeared to serve them. In the process, Coolidge Corner emerged as a major shopping area in Brookline. Five years after the opening of Beacon Street as a small street in 1852, the Coolidge family started the first commercial venture when it built a store at the corner of Beacon and Harvard Streets: “The old store, with its town pump in front, and its hay scales, was a familiar landmark.... [It] was

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<sup>18</sup> Edel et al, *Shaky Palaces*, 212; Curtis, *History of the Town of Brookline*, 104-105; atlases.

<sup>19</sup> Edel et al, *Shaky Palaces*, 208-209.

a great place to gather the neighbors, who were mostly farmers, on a rainy day or in winter time. . . .”<sup>20</sup> The Coolidges thus bestowed their name on the intersection.

By the time Joseph and Rose Kennedy purchased their home at 83 Beals Street in 1914, the Coolidge Corner area had become a bustling community closely linked to the big city. Many, perhaps most, of the 191 apartment buildings built in Brookline in 1913 were located in the Coolidge Corner area.<sup>21</sup> One historian noted in 1915 “the town continues to grow, especially in the northern part; the increase about Coolidge Corner is most marked. . .” and that Beacon Street had become so built up as to be unrecognizable from what it looked like 30 years earlier.<sup>22</sup> Coolidge Corner had become an urban node within a genteel suburb.

Although it is impossible to know precisely why the Kennedys selected the Coolidge Corner area of Brookline as the place to begin their life together, probably numerous factors affected their decision. The town’s reputation for beauty and wealth gave it cachet as a residential address. The proximity of Coolidge Corner to downtown Boston via trolley made it convenient for Rose and her husband to travel into the city when they desired, a fact that Rose Kennedy recalled years later when describing her first home “in the Boston suburb of Brookline, yet only about twenty-five minutes from the center of the city by trolley, the usual means of transportation in those days.”<sup>23</sup> The neighborhood of Coolidge Corner not only offered middle-class housing at a reasonable price for the young couple, but also enough amenities, retail stores, and services to cater to the immediate needs of a cosmopolitan couple and soon-to-be family. For a place to worship, for example, St. Aidan’s church was located near their new home. If the Kennedys were interested in having them as neighbors, professional and middle-class Irish Catholics also lived in the area. Indeed, the Kennedys apparently had friends who lived in the town. At least one Brookline

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<sup>20</sup> *A History of Brookline*, 38.

<sup>21</sup> Curtis, *A History of the Town of Brookline*, 319.

<sup>22</sup> “Changes at Coolidge Corner since the Beacon Street Widening,” Proceedings of the Brookline Historical Society for 1953, Brookline, Massachusetts, 15. The author was quoting from earlier documents.

<sup>23</sup> Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy, *Times to Remember* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1974), 71.

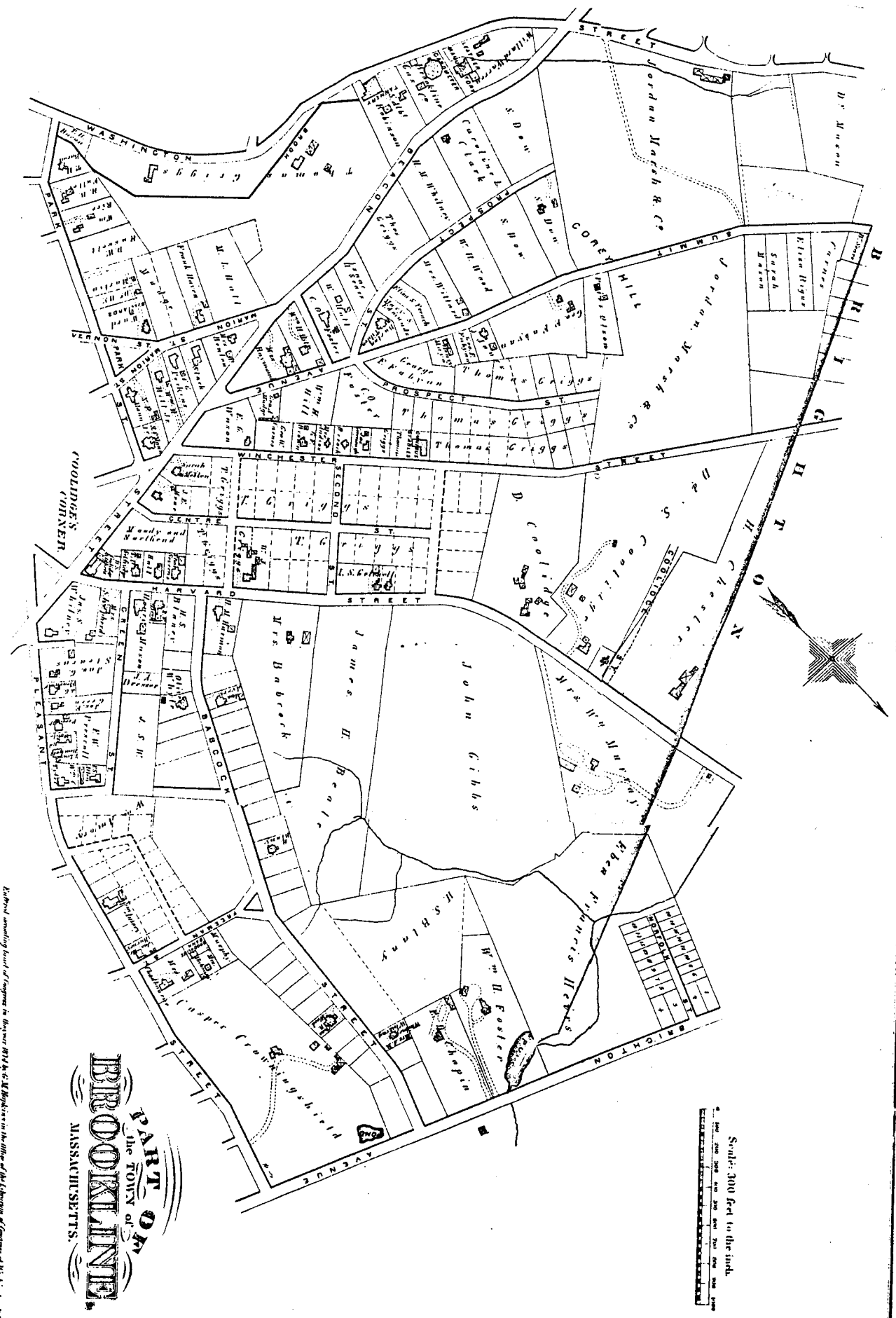


Figure 5. Coolidge Corner area, 1874. Reprinted from Atlas of the Town of Brookline, Norfolk County, Massachusetts (Philadelphia: G.M. Hopkins & Co., 1874).





acquaintance, probably Charles J. Kickham, sent the newly engaged couple a note of congratulations during the summer of 1914.<sup>24</sup>

## Beals Street History and Profile

Although the street where the Kennedys moved was unassuming looking, it had a long history. By the early twentieth century, suburban development had spread to the Beals Street area. Edward Devotion, a French Huguenot, originally purchased the land on which Beals Street now lies from the heirs of Jacob Eliot about 1700. Devotion's son Edward Jr. (the benefactor of Brookline schools and for whom the Devotion School was named), sold the land with existing buildings to Solomon Hill in 1739. Numerous owners bought and sold the land in the following decades before two Boston merchants, Israel and Augustus Thorndike, sold it to a farmer, George Babcock, in 1835.<sup>25</sup>

The Babcock farm, which extended almost to the Brighton line, persisted until Babcock's death. In July 1868 Babcock's widow, Lucy Babcock, sold a 13-acre lot of the former Babcock farm, including a pasture and pond, to James M. Beals of the *Boston Post*.<sup>26</sup>

In 1874 approximately half of the land on the northwestern side of Harvard Street from Beacon Street from Babcock Street to the Brighton line was subdivided. (See fig. 5, 1874 atlas.) The northeastern side of the street consisted primarily of four large properties:

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<sup>24</sup> Undated card, Box 2, 77-37 series, Folder "Rose Fitzgerald Engagement to Joseph P. Kennedy, 6/21-7/6/14, and undated," Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy papers (RFK papers hereafter), John F. Kennedy Library (hereafter JFK Library). The surname of the signature was difficult to read, but the Brookline Directory for 1914 reports that Charles J. Kickham, a physician, boarded at 19 Kendall and had an office at 31 Harvard. Also listed at 19 Kendall were Agnes Kickham, John E. Kickham (builder), and Lawrence Kickham.

<sup>25</sup> On January 9, 1835 Israel and Augustus Thorndike, Boston merchants, sold to George Babcock for \$4,583.33, "the Marshall farm now occupied by said Babcock containing about seventy-six acres of upland more or less in said Brookline and about eleven acres sixteen rods of marsh in Brighton. . . ." Norfolk Registry of Deeds (hereafter NRD), (Record Book) 105: 44.

<sup>26</sup> Rufus Babcock of Weston, acting on behalf of widow Lucy Babcock, sold George Babcock's property to James Beals for \$13,020.70 on July 6, 1868. NRD, 369: 1. Research in directories failed to disclose Beals' precise position at the *Post*. He was listed variously as working in the Post Building at 17 Milk Street in Boston (1877 Boston directory, "house at Brookline") and later at 222 Franklin Street, Boston (1881 and 1883 Brookline directories). Beals was not listed in Brookline directories prior to 1875; after 1875 he was listed as working in Boston and living on the corner of Park and Auburn Streets in Brookline (1875, 1879-80). Beals' listings in the Brookline and Boston directories are not consistent; for example, in the Boston 1883 directory his business address is listed as P.O. Box 1645, Boston. Beals' son was James H. Beals, junior, who was apparently the executor of the James H. Beals estate recorded in Norfolk deeds after Beals' death.

the remainder of the Babcock property including the Edward Devotion House belonging to Mrs. Babcock, the property belonging to James Beals, extending from Harvard Street halfway to Brighton Avenue, the large property belonging to John Gibbs, and the property of Mrs. William Murray. The 1893 atlas reveals that the Town of Brookline had taken over Mrs. Babcock's property, and that the area closest to Beacon Street was undergoing development, but little else had changed to the area immediately adjacent to the Beals property. (See fig. 6, detail of 1893 atlas. The lines in the middle of the streets connote sewer pipes.)

A few years later, however, a slow transformation of the property was underway. Beals died about 1897, and soon afterwards in November 1897 his son and trustee of his estate, James H. Beals Jr. made arrangements with Benjamin B. Newhall, a Boston real estate agent who moved to Brookline in 1898, to subdivide the property for future development. In 1897 Newhall entered a plan for the Beals estate that laid out two roads, which later became Beals and Stedman streets, and subdivided 70 house lots along them.<sup>27</sup> (See fig. 7, Plan of Building Lots, Estate of James H. Beals.) It would be twelve years before the future Kennedy house would be built.

In 1898 Newhall began a series of purchases from the Beals estate, buying several lots, including lot 47 which would become 83 Beals Street where the Kennedy family would live. Although Newhall died in 1903 before completing the development of Beals and Stedman Streets, his widow Ellen continued the project, arranging with contractors to build houses at their expense in exchange for a share of the sale price.<sup>28</sup>

By 1900 just seven years later, Beals and Stedman Streets were built, connected to sewer service, and houses now occupied dozens of the individual lots. (See fig. 8, detail of 1900 atlas.). Many of these houses, however, were as yet unoccupied. The census of 1900 recorded only a few occupants that year, and the town directory listed only three names but many vacancies on Beals Street. The owner of lot 47, the site of the future 83 Beals Street,

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<sup>27</sup> Stedman was the name of a Brookline family. Newhall had made a mortgage on November 22, 1897, to the Beals' estate, which was probably a speculative loan to pay Newhall for arranging the subdivision, to be repaid from the proceeds of the sale of lots; NRD, 803:203; plan, NRD, 800: 640 (end page).

<sup>28</sup> On April 2, 1898, Newhall purchased lots 4, 8, 44, 45, 47 (the future 83 Beals Street), 48 and 50, as well as a "parcel on unnamed street" (Stedman) for \$9,794.95; NRD, 811:581. For Ellen Newhall, see JOFI files entitled "How We Got Where We Are: A History of Beals Street."

was Oscar Johnson of Cambridge (likely a tradesman such as a builder) who had acquired it—perhaps as an investment—and lot 44 by virtue of mortgages he issued to Benjamin Newhall in 1899.<sup>29</sup>

In 1901 George H. Poor, acting as a trustee for an individual, J. Lowell Parker, acquired the mortgage from Newhall probably as an investment. The history of the mortgages of lot 47 on Beals Street then became tangled by tax delinquencies, but in September 1906 Poor sold lots 44 and 47 to Mary M. Poor of Andover, likely a relative, for \$1,600.<sup>30</sup>

The following year, in November 1907, Poor sold the lot to Robert M. Goode, a Newton real estate agent who would finish the development of the site. On the same day of his purchase Goode took out a \$1,000 mortgage from Otis Norcross, a real estate lawyer in Boston. Less than two years later, on April 10, 1909, Norcross discharged this loan and issued Goode a new mortgage of \$4,000 for insurance on a new building which Goode was about to erect. Earlier that same month, on April 6, Goode had filed an application to build a single-family wood and frame dwelling on the lot. In the following months, builders constructed the future home of the Kennedys, and on September 17, Goode sold the property, complete with building, to Daniel J. Kiley, a lawyer in Boston, subject to the

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<sup>29</sup> *Directory of Brookline, Massachusetts*, 21. (Boston: W.A. Greenough & Co., 1900). On October 30 1899, Johnson provided mortgages to Newhall of \$3,100 for lot 44, and \$2,736 for lot 47; NRD, 859:225, 226, 229. Cambridge directories contained multiple listings for people named Oscar Johnson between 1900 and 1907. Almost all of them were listed as tradesmen. In 1900, they include: a carpenter, a stoneworker, a molder, a cornice maker, a bricklayer, and a piano maker. In 1905 and 1906, an Oscar Johnson is listed as a “builder,” with his work address “Oxford Avenue,” and home address “ditto, corner Fairview Avenue.” *Directory of the City of Cambridge* (Boston: W.A. Greenough & Company, 1900-1907).

<sup>30</sup> NRD, 944:292. A registry document entered by the Collector of Taxes of the Town of Brookline dated June 23, 1902 mentions that Oscar Johnson failed to pay taxes when due on April 26, 1902, and therefore the property was sold at public auction to the highest bidder, John Conroy, who bid \$23.82. Collector of Taxes of the Town of Brookline deed lots 44 and 47 to John J. Conroy, originally entered June 11, 1902, NRD, 923:624 (lot 47); 923:622 for lot 44. For whatever reason Johnson was still listed on the atlas and in the registry as the owner of record, although it seems that Poor had bought the property. Poor apparently defaulted, however, because the property, along with lot 44, was foreclosed on April 23, 1904, see NRD, 971: 289. On April 30, 1904, John Conroy, “in consideration of \$1 and other consideration paid by Mary M. Poor of Andover” gave Mary Poor “all the right, title and interest which I acquired under a deed from the Collector of Taxes of the Town of Brookline to me dated June 11<sup>th</sup> 1902. . . .” including releasing all rights to both lots 44 and 47, see NRD, 989:639. On September 14, 1906, G.H. Poor, Trustee, the “assignee and holder of a certain mortgage given by Oscar Johnson to Benjamin B. Newhall” sold lots 44 and 47 to Mary M. Poor of Andover for \$1,600, see NRD, 1036:181.

\$4,000 mortgage. According to Brookline directories, Kiley lived at the property—now 83 Beals Street—for three years.<sup>31</sup> (See fig. 9, detail of 1913 atlas.)

On February 1, 1913 Kiley sold 83 Beals Street to Howard S. and, his wife, Laura B. Kline, residents of Manhattan, with Kiley in turn also passing along the \$4,000 mortgage. Apparently they sought a base in the Boston area because Kline, according to that year's directory, worked as a "buyer" (probably a purchaser for a wholesale firm) in Boston. The Klins only occupied the house for a year and a half, before they sold the house to Joseph Kennedy on August 20, 1914 for \$6,500. The Kennedys would live there until September 1920 when they would sell the house to their close friends, Edward and Mary Moore (he worked in the insurance field), and move to Abbotsford Road. By this time the Columbia Trust Company held the \$4,000 mortgage—interestingly, Joseph Kennedy was the president of Columbia Trust—and now discharged it. The Moores would stay at 83 Beals Street until 1928 when they would move to New York and sell the property to Lucy Myerson, the wife of Simon Myerson, a physician, of Brookline.<sup>32</sup>

The modest single-family house at number 83 Beals Street was the first of many homes of Rose Fitzgerald and Joseph Patrick Kennedy. And although it was by far the least elegant of the Kennedy houses, Rose Kennedy recalled it affectionately in her autobiography as a cozy traditional American home:

It [83 Beals Street] was a nice old wooden-frame house with clapboard siding; seven rooms, plus two small ones in the converted attic, all on a small lot with a few bushes and trees. It would have blended perfectly into most of the main streets of America.<sup>33</sup>

By using the word "old" to describe her home, Rose probably intended to convey the age of its architectural style as of the 1970s when she wrote about it, not its age at the time she moved into it. Interestingly, she emphasized that the home was a typical house,

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<sup>31</sup> In April 1908 Goode reapportioned his properties, taking a slice about 10 feet wide from one side of lot 47 and adding it to the side of adjoining lot 44 (which he had also bought). See NRD, 1080:460 (plan); 1080:461 (deed). "Application for Permit to Build" on 83 Beals Street, photocopy in JOFI files; "Ownership of Land," typescript, JOFI files; NRD, 1068:571; 1106: 628-629; 1121: 266-7. The amount cited in the Kiley is "one dollar and other considerations."

<sup>32</sup> NRD, 1239:351-2; 1289:478-9; 1468:73-4; 1809:25-6.

<sup>33</sup> Kennedy, *Times to Remember*, 71.

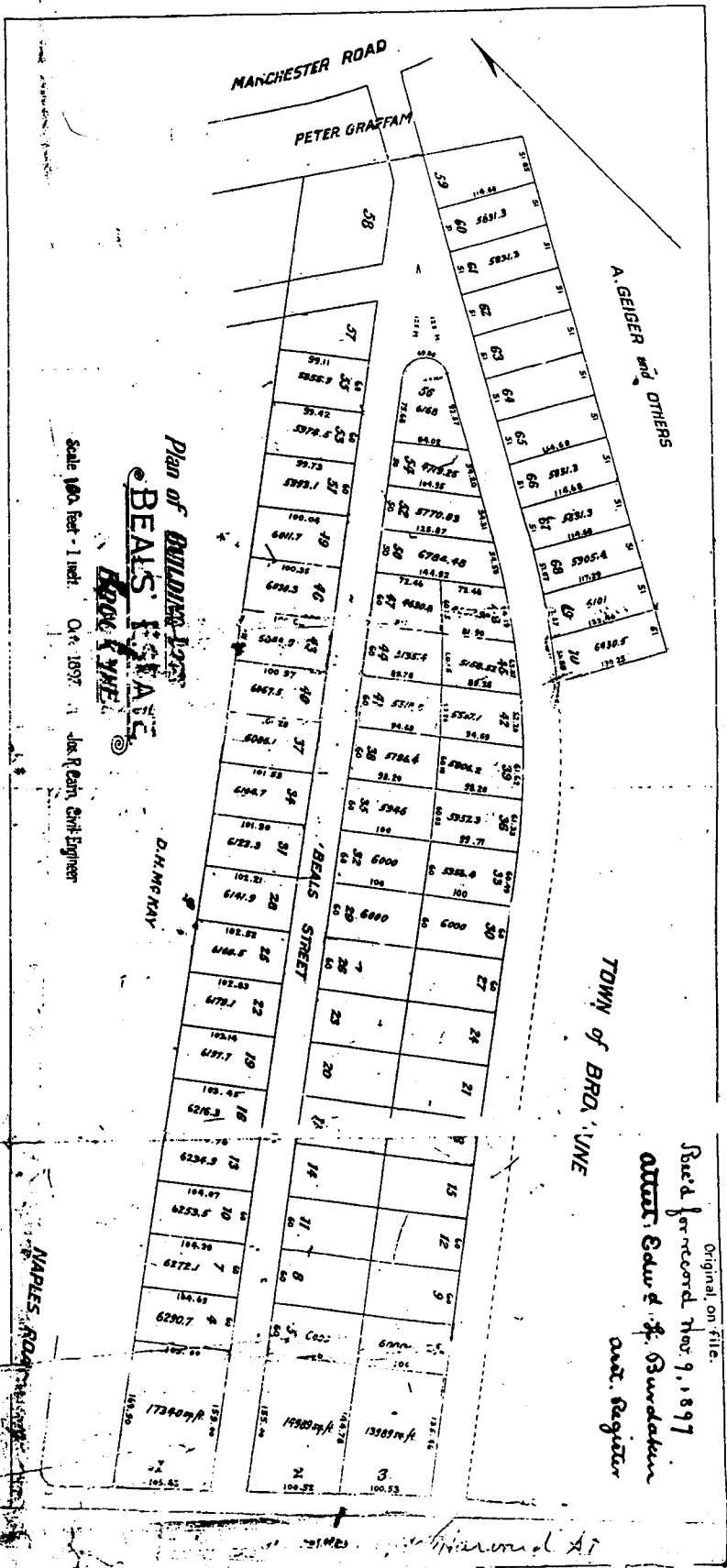


Figure 7. Plan of building lots, Beal Estate, Brookline, 1897. The site of the future Kennedy home, 83 Beals Street, is lot 47. Reprinted from Norfolk County Registry of Deeds, Record Book 800:640.

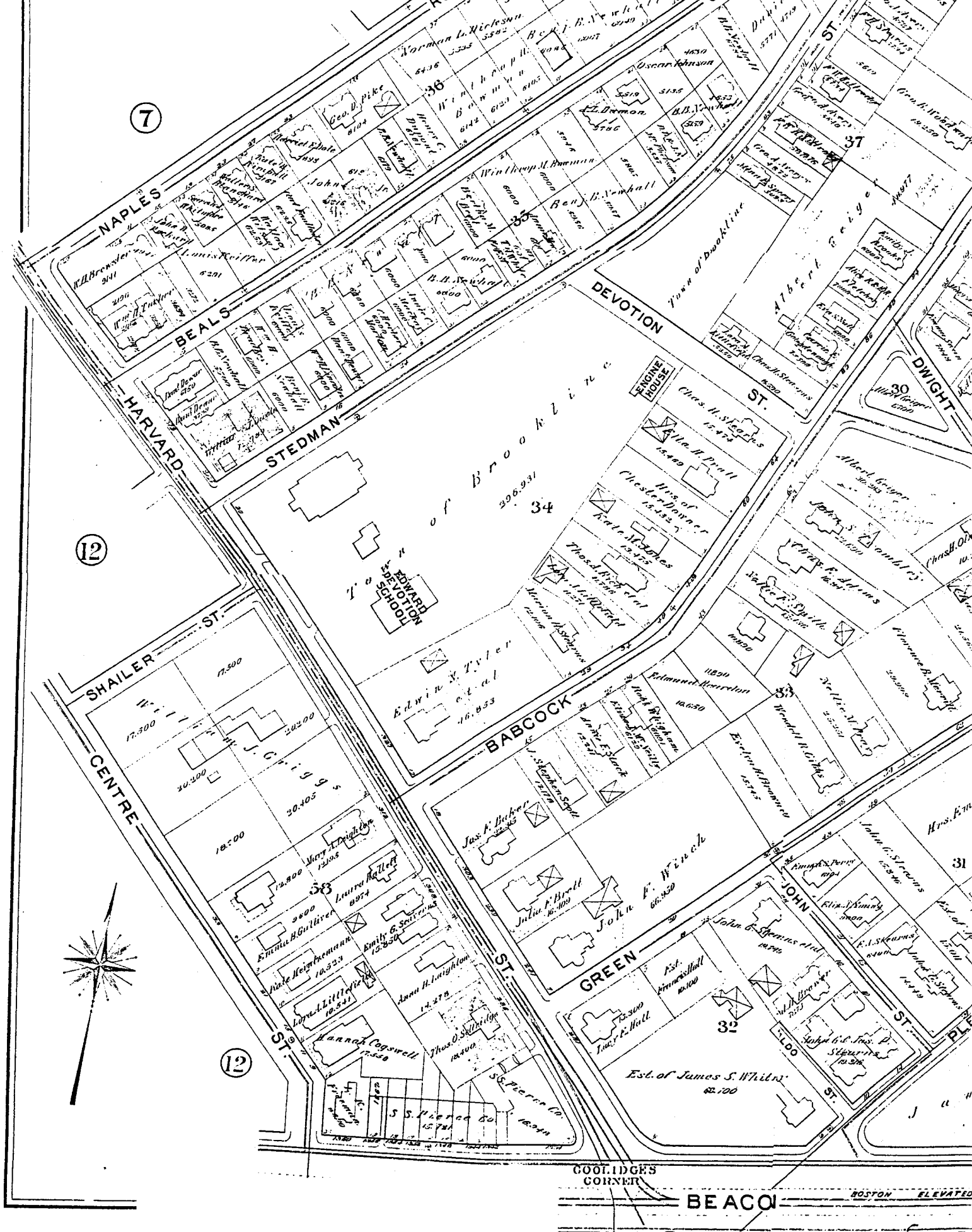


Figure 8. Coolidge Corner area, detail, 1900. Reprinted from Atlas of the Town of Brookline, Norfolk County, Massachusetts (Philadelphia: G.W. Bromley and Co., 1900).

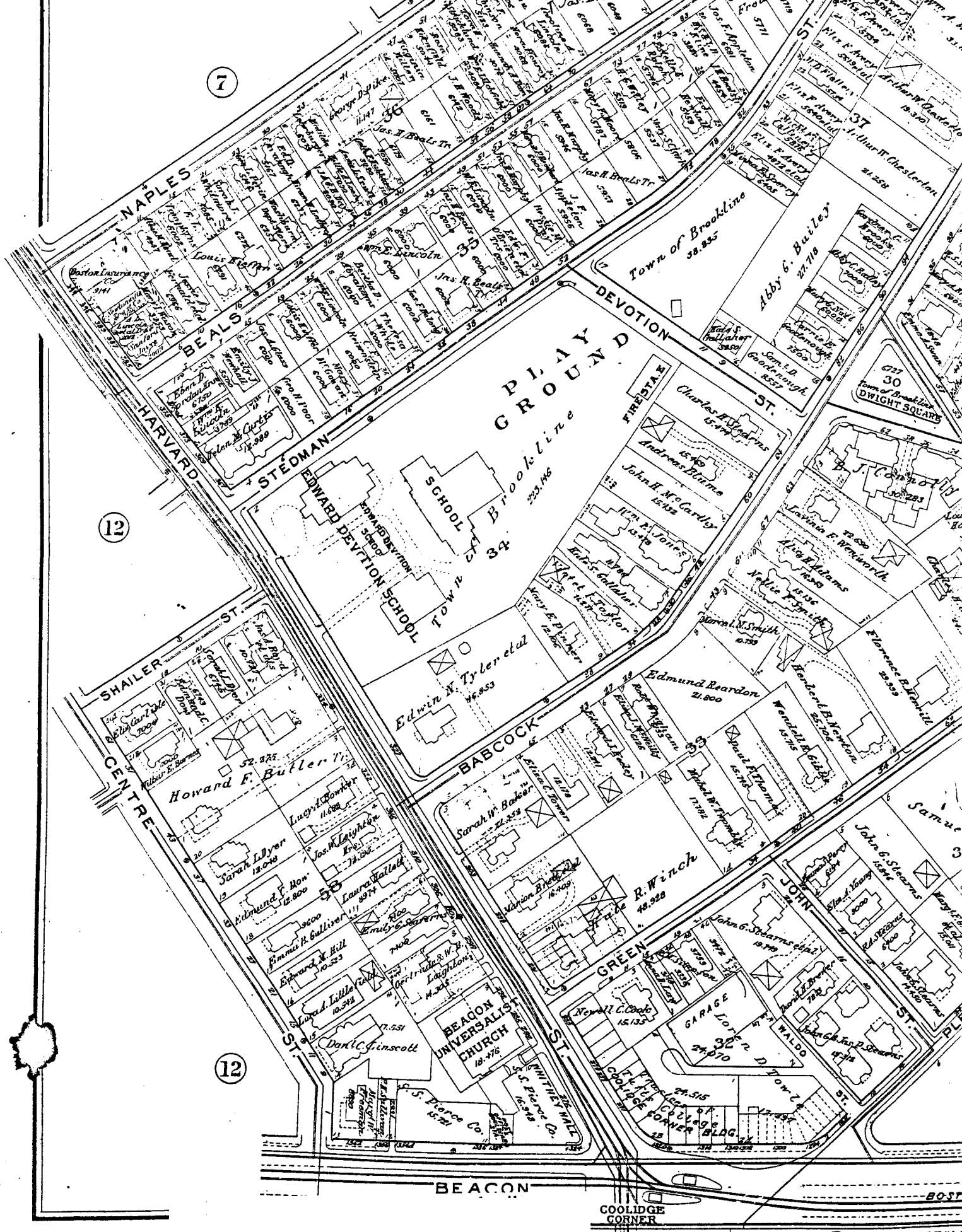


Figure 9. Coolidge Corner area, detail, 1913. Reprinted from *Atlas of the Town of Brookline, Norfolk County, Massachusetts* (Philadelphia: G.W. Bromley and Co., 1913).



one that would fit in any town, which is in keeping with her idea that the restored house could reflect a typical American home of the time.

The area around Beals Street was still being actively developed even as the Kennedys moved there in October 1914, and Rose remembered it as relatively undeveloped. In 1967 Rose Kennedy remembered that the streets had sidewalks but that the neighborhood was “not [yet] densely populated.”<sup>34</sup> “There was a sense of openness in the neighborhood,” she wrote a few years later, “with a vacant lot on one side of us and another across the street, and fine big shade trees lining the sidewalks.”<sup>35</sup> Real estate atlases from the time confirm that the Kennedy house at 83 Beals Street was the last one on their side of the street, with open spaces across the street and next door. The big shade trees, however, may have been a trick played by Rose’s memory: photographs dating from this era in possession of the National Park Service do not show large, mature trees; most trees in the area probably were no older than the houses which themselves had been recently built.

By the time the Kennedys moved away from Brookline in 1927, the rest of Beals and Stedman Streets were developed. In 1973 Rose Kennedy commented that her old neighborhood was “built up now and to my eye seems rather congested and drab.”<sup>36</sup> Her description may reflect the contrast between the appearance of an incompletely developed area with new housing stock—as Beals Street was when she first saw it—and a built up area with relatively old homes. Then too Rose now looked back at this prosaic neighborhood from the perspective of her and her husband’s later rise to great wealth and stature.

The population of the neighborhood to which Joseph and Rose Kennedy moved was lower middle class in character, a fact that might not have been apparent in 1914 when they arrived—amidst the new construction and turnover of residents—but probably was by 1920 when they moved away. The manuscripts of the United States Census provide the information to construct a socio-economic profile of the Beals Street neighborhood. For research purposes, the neighborhood that Joseph and Rose Kennedy moved to was defined as every residence on Beals Street between Harvard Street and Gibbs Street, and the even-numbered side of Stedman Street between Harvard Street and Gibbs Street. (The Kennedy

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<sup>34</sup> Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy interview, November 20, 1967, JOFI files, 17.

<sup>35</sup> Rose Kennedy’s memory may be faulty here—NPS staff members note that photographic evidence of Beals Street belies the presence of “fine big shade trees.”

<sup>36</sup> Kennedy, *Times To Remember*, 71-72.

house did not exist as of 1900, and so does not appear on the 1900 census.) This method yielded one household in the 1900 census, 46 households in the 1910 census, and 59 households in the 1920 census.

The information obtained from the 1900 and 1910 censuses reflects the rapid development of the street. While most of Beals and Stedman Streets were laid out by 1900, and a number of homes were already built, the dearth of information available from the 1900 census suggests the homes shown were brand new, and perhaps not yet occupied. The one household surveyed in 1900 on Beals Street, however, was characteristic of the low white-collar families that would predominate among the street's inhabitants during the next twenty years and beyond. Fred Ashley, a "clerk in rubber," his wife Helen, both American-born of American parents, as well as a son and Helen's mother, all shared a one-family home along with one live-in Swedish servant. Beals and Stedman Streets would be home to a variety of income and professional levels, but Fred Ashley in 1900 typifies in some ways the kind of resident who would move to the area.

The Beals and Stedman Streets census manuscripts for 1910 provide a comprehensive snapshot of the street's inhabitants.<sup>37</sup> Most domiciles were rented. Of the 46 households in 1910 that were surveyed, only 4, or just less than 9%, owned their own homes. The overwhelming majority of households—42 or 91%—rented houses, apartments, or, in 16 cases, rooms in boardinghouses. The majority of 115 wage earners and heads of households were American, including domestics and heads of households for whom no occupation was listed. Of the residents of Beals and Stedman Streets, those born in Massachusetts (39) or in other New England states (12) accounted for 44%, and those born in states outside of New England (18) made up another 15% of the heads of households. The number of foreign-born residents (46) composed 40% of the population.

By 1920 the number of homeowners in the Beals and Stedman Streets area had increased sharply, but most people still rented their homes. Out of 59 households surveyed,

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<sup>37</sup> For the calculations used in this study, comprehensive household information was available for the following addresses in the 1910 census: 5, 7, 10, 12, 15, 16, 19, 22, 25, 26, 29, 30, 35, 39, 40, 43, 44, 49, 51, 53, 54, 56, 57, 58, 60, 66, 73, 75, 77, 79 Beals Street, and 16, 20, 24, 32, 44, 48, 52, 72 Stedman Street. The house at 83 Beals Street is not listed in the 1910 census. From the 1920 census, household information was available for the following addresses: 5, 6, 7, 10, 15, 16, 19, 22, 25, 29, 30, 35, 36, 38, 39, 40, 43, 44, 49, 51, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 60, 66, 67, 70, 73, 77, 79, 83 Beals Street, and 4, 6, 16, 20, 24, 32, 38, 44, 48, 50, 72, 78, 84 Stedman Street.

COMMONWEALTH

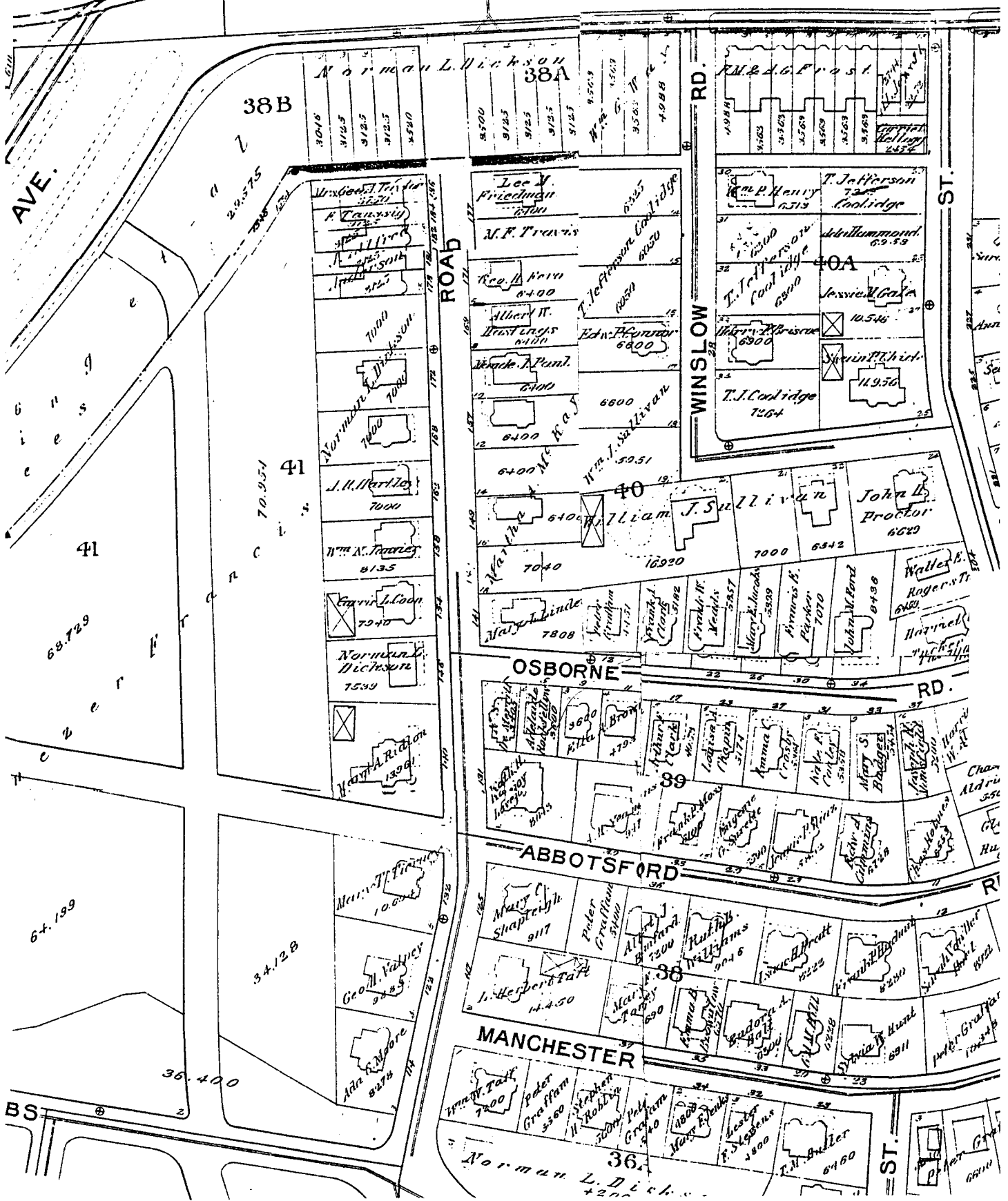


Figure 10. Abbotsfield Road area, detail, 1900. Reprinted from Atlas of the Town of Brookline, Norfolk County, Massachusetts (Philadelphia: G.W. Bromley and Co., 1913).



Figure 11. Abbotsfield Road area, detail, 1913. Reprinted from Atlas of the Town of Brookline, Norfolk County, Massachusetts (Philadelphia: G.W. Bromley and Co., 1913).



Figure 12. Abbotsford Road area, detail, 1927. Reprinted from Atlas of the Town of Brookline, Norfolk County, Massachusetts (Philadelphia: G.W. Bromley and Co., 1927).

17 or 29% owned their homes, while 40 or 68% rented.<sup>38</sup> The number of roomers—listed also variously as “boarders” or “lodgers”—had increased dramatically, from 16 in 1910 to 47 in 1920, possibly indicating that neighborhood residents were even more transient in 1920 (roomers were found in both owner-occupied and rented homes).

It is difficult to summarize the range of living arrangements in the Beals and Stedman Streets area, other than to say residents of households tended to be family members, occasionally with servants or lodgers. Apparently, however, no one lived entirely alone; no household was found consisting of one person. Clearly the neighborhood was multigenerational. Some older couples lived alone; some lived with one or another adult child, that child’s spouse, and perhaps grandchildren. A few widows and widowers lived with a near relative or a servant, and perhaps an adult child. Some couples were younger and had perhaps not started a family, or remained childless, with or without a servant in the home. A number of families already had several children; the size of these families ranged from one young child to five children ranging widely in age. In this respect the Kennedy family was certainly typical of many of the younger families in the neighborhood. This range of households could be found in census years 1910 and 1920.

Few families appeared to have remained for longer than 10 years in the neighborhood, or at least on the same street. Between 1910 and 1920, only a few heads of household had remained at the same address; one had moved to a different house on the same street; and at least one widow remained after her husband’s death. Families expanded and contracted; where one house in 1910 had contained four family members and a servant, the same house in 1920 might hold a different family consisting of eight family members and perhaps a servant. The number of persons per household was fluid. At least two houses, 16 Beals Street and 48 Stedman Street, remained primarily boarding houses run by renting heads of household.

The ethnic and professional makeup of the streets’ residents varied widely. Dividing the 1910 and 1920 populations of Beals and Stedman Streets into two categories, non-domestic wage-earners and domestic staff, provides a more precise picture of the residents, often demonstrating sharp divisions along lines of nationality. The first category, non-domestic staff wage earners, includes anyone who was listed as earning a living, whether a head of household, a grown child living at home, or a boarding house lodger. The second

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<sup>38</sup> The status of ownership at two residences in 1920 was unknown.

category, domestic staff wage earners, comprises live-in servants who worked as chauffeurs, maids, and cooks, and who were listed as part of the household in census reports.

The great majority of the non-domestic wage earners in both 1910 and 1920 were born in the United States (see Table 1.1). The percentage of American-born residents, however, decreased from 84% in 1910 to 74% in 1920. Most of the American-born (63 in 1910, 104 in 1920) were from New England. Matching the decline in the share of the

**Table 1.1**

**Non-Domestic Wage-Earners on Beals And Stedman Streets, by Birthplace, 1910 and 1920**

	<b>1910</b>	<b>1920</b>
Massachusetts	35	50
Other New England	12	23
Other U.S.	16	31
Germany	7	2
Canada	3	11
England	1	6
Russia	0	11
Ireland	1	1
Iceland	0	1
Austria	0	2
Hungary	0	1
Poland	0	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>140</b>

	<b>1910</b>	<b>1920</b>
Total New England:	47 (63 %)	73 (52 %)
Total U.S.:	63 (84 %)	104 (74 %)
Total Foreign:	12 (16 %)	36 (26 %)

Note: Non-domestic wage earners include homeowners, renters, wage-earning family members, and boarders.

Source: Tabulation of U.S. Census Records

American-born, the percentage of foreign-born residents increased from 16 to 26% between 1910 and 1920. Note that because the census data sheets list only the birthplace of the person and the birthplace of his or her parents, it is only possible to identify two

generations of country of origin from the census. This means that third-generation Americans such as Joseph and Rose Kennedy, both of whom were born in the United States and whose parents were also born here, were too far removed from their family's country of origin for the census taker to record their ethnicity. The census manuscripts only indicate that such families were American-born of American-born parents without further clues as to the family's origins (other than surnames).

The members of the domestic staff in households on Beals and Stedman Streets tell another story in 1910. Largely Irish (see Table 1.2) and all female, these women worked as maids, nursemaids, "maids of all work," and cooks.<sup>39</sup> These workers were by definition blue-collar, and comprised a little more than one-third, or 35 %, of the total wage-earning population on Beals and Stedman Streets in 1910.

During the 1910s the number of domestic staff workers living on Beals and Stedman Streets dropped significantly. (The topic of domestic staff is examined more thoroughly in the "American Home" chapter.) During this period, changes in lifestyles, including the rise of prepared foods and a general decrease in the size of families, led to the building of smaller-sized homes and less reliance on live-in domestic help. Out of 46 households surveyed in 1910 (38 on Beals Street, 8 on Stedman Street), 26 households on Beals Street and 6 households on Stedman Street, or 70% of all households, employed at least one live-in domestic. Of these, 7 households on Beals Street and 1 on Stedman Street employed two live-in domestics, usually including a cook. (No home listed more than two live-in domestics.) The decrease in live-in household staff 10 years later is striking. In 1920, of 59 households (43 on Beals Street, 16 on Stedman Street) only 8 on Beals Street and 4 on Stedman Street, or 20% of all households still retained live-in help. Only three households, all on Beals Street, including the Kennedy home, listed two live-in servants. None were listed as cooks, which also reflects changing middle-class lifestyles during this period.

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<sup>39</sup> Distinct from servants such as cooks or nursemaids whose work was specialized, a "maid of all work" was responsible for a wide range of duties in the home, as defined by her employer. Responsibilities could include everything from housekeeping, making the beds, laundry, light cooking, running errands, negotiating with vendors and merchants, seasonal tasks (such as changing curtains), and whatever other help was needed in the home. A "maid" usually had a more focused set of responsibilities, such as a "lady's maid."



**Table 1.2****Domestic Wage Earners on Beals And Stedman Streets, by Birthplace, 1910 and 1920**

	1910	1920
Massachusetts	4	4
Other New England	0	0
Other U.S.	2	2
Irish	20	4
Canada	6	1
Sweden	3	0
Denmark	2	0
Finland	1	0
Norway	1	0
Scotland	1	0
Greece	0	1
Newfoundland	0	1
Poland	0	1
France	0	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>15</b>

	1910	1920
Total U.S.:	6 (15 %)	6 (40 %)
Total Foreign:	34 (85 %)	9 (60 %)

Source: Tabulation of U.S. Census Records

Also striking in 1920 was the fact that only 4 or 26% of domestics were Irish, a sharp contrast to 1910 when 20 or half of the 40 domestics recorded were Irish-born. In 1920 the Kennedy house was the domicile of the Irish-born Mary O'Donahue (who immigrated in 1908), and the French-born Alice Michelan (who immigrated in 1914), neither of who was a U.S. citizen.

The inhabitants of the Beals Street neighborhood can also be grouped by their occupations. The following analysis uses three major categories: high white-collar, low white-collar, and blue collar. (See Appendix A for details of these categories.) High white-collar included professionals such as lawyers and physicians, and major proprietors or managers, such as high-ranking bankers (the category we ascribed to Joseph Kennedy in 1920). Low white-collar included the clerks and salesmen who dominated this category, as well as other occupations such as cashiers, journalists and artists. Blue-collar occupations is

a large category that included anyone who worked as a domestic, or in the building trades, in the food industry, including tailors and upholsterers, barbers, and shoemakers, among many others. The vast majority of inhabitants assigned to this category were domestic staff.

Within the non-domestic staff wage earners, occupations show a largely middle-class character (see Table 1.3) in 1910 and 1920. These included a small percentage of high white-collar professions (a lawyer and an electrical engineer) but overwhelmingly those working in low-white collar positions—clerks, salesmen, and small businessmen, who made up 44% in 1910 and a much larger 72% in 1920. Blue-collar workers, other than domestics, had very little presence in the neighborhood—in 1910 the 37% was comprised almost exclusively of domestic help, while in 1920 domestic help represented three-quarters of the overall blue-collar population. The shift towards a higher socio-economic level continued throughout the decade—in 1915 the Brookline town directory listed a physician and a banker (Joseph Kennedy) among the Beals Street heads of household, as well as an architect and a civil engineer, along with clerks and salesmen and other low-white collar occupations. The 1917 and 1919 Beals Street directories similarly list a range of professions from high-white collar to predominantly low-white collar. The turnover of names on Beals Street in the directories, and the increasing number of boarders living on Beals Street and Stedman Streets (16 in 1910, 47 in 1920) suggests that at least part of this neighborhood was transient, convenient for salesmen and clerk to change domiciles in search of different employment or cheaper accommodations.

**Table 1.3**

**Beals and Stedman Street Wage Earners, by Occupational Groups, 1910 and 1920**

	1910	1920
High-white-collar	6 (5 %)	5 (3%)
Low-white-collar	51 (44%)	112 (72%)
Blue-collar	43 (37%)	20 (13%)
Unknown*	15 (13%)	18 (12 %)
Total	115	155

\*Wage-earners’ profession was considered “unknown” if income was listed as “own income” or if occupation was listed as “none.”

Source: Tabulation of U.S. Census Records

The demographics of Beals and Stedman Streets in 1910 and 1920, therefore, present a picture of a new, lower middle-class neighborhood, in which boardinghouse roomers lived side-by-side with upper-middle-class professionals. It was an area in which home ownership was unusual but increasingly affordable to a mostly low-white collar middle-class population. It was also an area in which domestic staff was decreasing, responding in part to post-World War I consequences of immigration and emigration, but most particularly to changes in middle-class lifestyles.

Over time, then, Rose and Joseph Kennedy became less like their Beals Street neighbors. As the Kennedys began their climb to great wealth, the neighborhood became predominantly lower middle-class. Perhaps it is not surprising that the Kennedys decided to move to a different type of neighborhood.

### **Abbottsford Road, 1920-1927**

In 1920 the Kennedy family sold the Beals Street home to family friend and business associate Edward Moore and his wife Mary. The Kennedys moved to the Abbottsford Road neighborhood, which although only a few blocks away was a step up in socio-economic status. The Abbottsford Road area had larger property lots, larger homes, and wealthier residents than did Beals Street. Within a few short years of their moving to Brookline, the Kennedys improved their domestic environment by purchasing the elegant, twelve-room home at the corner of Abbottsford and Naples Roads, referred to interchangeably as either 51 Abbottsford Road or 131 Naples Road.

The house at the corner of Abbottsford and Naples Roads was built in 1897, for Frederick B. Lovejoy, a prosperous businessman in the iron and steel industry, who apparently only lived there a year, before renting out the property. (See fig. 10, 1900 atlas.) A series of tenants followed: George E. Plimpton, a downtown businessman; H. Murrell, a master mariner; John A. Ferguson, manager of a belting company on High Street in Boston. In 1908, Lovejoy sold 51 Abbottsford/131 Naples Road to Charles E. Osgood, a proprietor or manager of a furniture business, who along with his family occupied it for the next ten years. (See fig. 11, 1913 atlas.) The house remained vacant for two years until the Kennedys—through Rose—purchased it from Walter D. Hannigan for \$16,000 on March 16, 1920. The cost of the house and the land, almost an acre, was more than two times the

\$6,500 the couple had paid for the Beals Street house six years before.<sup>40</sup> (See fig. 12, 1927 atlas.)

Although an older structure than the house at 83 Beals, the Abbottsford Road home was built on a larger scale, reminiscent of Rose's girlhood home on Welles Avenue in Dorchester. It was designed in the Queen Anne style that was fashionable in the late nineteenth century. The architecture incorporated turrets, tall chimneys, decorative windows and numerous varied decorative architectural elements, which mimicked in an abstract way a small castle. The twelve rooms were more than ample for the Kennedy family. Here over the next seven years the family would continue to expand in size as it gained in wealth. As noted above, the family also gained a garage, in which the Pierce Arrow limousine, and later a Rolls Royce (driven by a chauffeur), were housed.<sup>41</sup>

As census data shows, the Kennedys were more like their new neighbors—in socio-economic terms—than their former neighbors on Beals Street. For research purposes, the Kennedy's Abbottsford Road neighborhood was defined as an approximate square drawn around the Kennedy house and bounded by Osborne, Manchester, and Fuller Roads.<sup>42</sup> Eighteen households were surveyed; of these, 10 were owned, 5 were rented, while the status of 3 residences is unknown. The 2:1 ratio of owners to renters in the Abbottsford Road neighborhood thus provides a striking contrast to that of the Beals Street neighborhoods where it was 1:9 in 1910 and 1:2 in 1920. The total number of wage-earners

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<sup>40</sup> For owners and tenants, see *Directory of Brookline, Massachusetts, 1896-1922*. NRD, 1448:393. Nigel Hamilton, in *JFK, Reckless Youth* (London: Century, 1992), 42, inaccurately states the family paid \$18,000 for the Abbottsford house. Ronald Kessler, *The Sins of the Father: Joseph P. Kennedy and the Dynasty He Founded* (New York: Warner Books, Inc., 1996) noted the correct purchase price.

<sup>41</sup> Doris Kearns Goodwin, *The Fitzgeralds and the Kennedys* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), 313-314; Charles Higham, *Rose: The Life and Times of Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy* (New York: Pocket Books, Simon & Schuster, Inc., 1995), 80; Greer Hardwicke and Roger Reed, *Images of America: Brookline* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 1998), 124; Rose Kennedy interview dated November 20, 1967, JOFI files, 15; Gail Cameron, *Rose* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1971), 92.

<sup>42</sup> The dimensions from the Kennedy house are: 125 feet to the rear, 100 feet to the right bounded by Osborne Road, about 230 feet to the left bounded by Manchester Road, and about 275 feet in the front bounded by Fuller Road. The properties that fell within these boundaries are: 1, 5, 9, 11 Osborne Road; 117, 122, 127, 132, 140, 146 Naples Road; 40, 46, 51 (the Kennedy house), 70, 74 Abbottsford Road; 171-173, 175, 177, 179, 193, 197 Fuller Street; and 47 Manchester Road. Addresses for which we were only able to obtain minimal or incomplete information were not used in the tabulations. These were: 122 Naples, 70 Abbottsford (not listed in either the 1920 census or 1920 Brookline town directory), 74 Abbottsford, 47 Manchester, 17 Osborne, and 51 Abbottsford (listed as "vacant" in town directory).

**Table 2.1**

**Abbotsford-Naples Roads Wage Earners, by Occupational Groups, 1920**

High-white-collar	6 (15%)
Low-white-collar	16 (39%)
Blue-collar	12 (29%)
Unknown*	7 (17%)
Total	41

\* Wage earners' profession was considered "unknown" if income was listed as "own income" or if occupation was listed as "none."

Source: Tabulation of U.S. Census Records

surveyed in this sample was 42; of these 23 were male (1 was a domestic/chauffeur), and 19 were female (11 of these were servants). The proportion of domestics to all wage earners—12 out of 42 or 29 %—was much higher on Abbotsford Road (Table 2.1) than on Beals Street in 1920, when live-in domestics accounted for about 10% of wage earners surveyed.

As on Beals Street, American-born non-domestic wage earners dominated the population in the neighborhood (Table 2.2). American-born residents represented 81% (74% on Beals Street in 1920), while a smattering of other nationalities made an appearance. The three Japanese men recorded in the census reports appear to be an anomaly. Listed as boarders in a neighborhood that did not list any other instances of boarders, all three men lived at the same address. One was listed as a U.S. military officer; all had recently immigrated to America (1916 and 1919), but none were yet naturalized as U.S. citizens.

In the Abbotsford Road neighborhood, 15% of wage earners worked in high white-collar jobs, a much higher percentage than the 5% and 3% of wage earners in the Beals Street neighborhood in 1910 and 1920, respectively. The larger size of the homes, higher status jobs and incomes of the heads of household, and higher proportion of live-in domestic workers all point to a neighborhood that was socially and financially superior to the Kennedy family's former Beals Street neighborhood.

**Table 2.2**

**Non-Domestic Wage-Earners on Abbottsford-Naples Roads, by Birthplace, 1920**

Massachusetts	Other New England	Other U.S.	England	Russia	Japan	Unknown
13	5	7	1	1	3	1

Total New England: 18 (58 %)

Total U.S.: 25 (81 %)

Total Foreign: 6 (19 %)

Note: Non-domestic wage earners includes homeowners, renters, wage earning family members, and boarders.

Source: Tabulation of U.S. Census Records

The birthplace of domestics was slightly more varied on Abbottsford Road than was the case on Beals Street. While foreign-born domestics on Beals Street in 1920 represented five countries (Ireland, Newfoundland, Canada, Poland, and France), domestics in the Abbottsford Road neighborhood hailed from six countries: Sweden, Newfoundland, Canada, Ireland, England, and the West Indies (see Table 2.3).

**Table 2.3**

**Domestic Wage Earners on Abbottsford-Naples Roads, by Birthplace, 1920**

MA	Other N.E.	Other U.S.	Sweden	Newfoundland	Canada	Iris h	England	West Indies
1	0	1 (VA)	2	2	1	2	2	1

Total U.S.: 2 (17 %)

Total Foreign: 10 (83 %)

Source: Tabulation of U.S. Census Records

## Automobility in Brookline

The rage for the automobile that swept across the United States in the early twentieth century gave the town of Brookline a new status symbol and changed its landscape as well. The first registration of automobiles in Massachusetts began in 1903; starting the following year and continuing through 1911, the ownership of automobiles was noted in the town directories. According to historian Arthur Krim, the earliest surviving automobile garages in Brookline (that is, structures built as housing for cars, as opposed to horse carriage barns adapted as garages) date from 1901. To his surprise, Krim found that automobile ownership was early and prevalent in Brookline and that “there was a rapid adoption of the automobile among all classes in Brookline, from the Chestnut Hill estates and suburban houses of the Graffam district, to the working class area of The Point within the first decade of the twentieth century. Certainly by 1910, the automobile garage had become a common fixture throughout Brookline. . . .”<sup>43</sup>

Joseph and Rose Kennedy contributed to the automotive trend. Starting off their marriage without a car, Rose commented, “Only a few of our friends [at the time] had cars, so it wasn’t as if we felt deprived. Most of us took the trolley cars, or, if we were in Boston, either the trolleys or the subways.” However, within a year or two, the couple bought an automobile. Rose remembered: “One of the great thrills of my life was the day my husband drove home in our very own brand-new, gleaming black Model T Ford.” She went on to memorably describe their first ride in the new car, which ended in a minor accident. In 1919 the couple bought a Pierce Arrow limousine, a much fancier and more expensive luxury car.<sup>44</sup>

Little is known about where the Kennedys kept their cars during their years on Beals Street. Krim’s research revealed that there was no garage on the Kennedy property until long after the family had moved on. Years later, Rose herself was vague about those details, commenting only in an interview that the car was probably kept outside (although it is possible also that the car was garaged somewhere nearby). In any case, it seems probable

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<sup>43</sup> Arthur Krim, “Carriage Barn and Auto Garage Survey Project,” Phases I and II, Brookline Preservation Commission, 2000-2001.

<sup>44</sup> Kennedy, *Times to Remember*, 72; Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy, Interview with Nan Rickey, November 20, 1967, JOFI files, 14; Arthur Krim, “Carriage Barn and Auto Garage Survey Project.” Regarding the Pierce Arrow’s prestige, the same year the Kennedys purchased theirs, Woodrow Wilson was presented with the same car as a gift after his return from France where he had negotiated the Treaty of Versailles (see Internet site [www.woodrowwilson.org](http://www.woodrowwilson.org)).

that some of their neighbors also owned automobiles, as Krim discovered several double garages on Beals Street that date from the early 1920s. In 1921, a year in which more than 100 garages appeared in the Coolidge Corner area, Pearl Landers had a double garage built on her property at 30 Beals Street. Landers lived there in a two-family house with her husband Saul, a restaurateur, another couple, and a (possibly widowed) nurse. In the same year, James Seagal, the owner of the two-family house at 26-28 Beals Street, erected another double garage. In 1923 Paul Malachesfsky (a tailor in 1925) and his wife, Friesene, arranged to build a two-car garage along with a new house at 50 Beals Street. The same year two couples, Helen Kently and her husband George, a chauffeur, who lived in a 1905 house at 58 Beals Street, and Isaac Ruby, a jeweler and his wife Celia, owners of the 1906 house at 60 Beals Street acquired a new double-garage for their properties. In 1924 Morris Zeiderman, a Brookline merchant who moved to 16 Beals Street earlier the same year had a two-car garage built; as did the owners of 36 and 38 Beals Streets, sculptor George Loesser (36 Beals Street) and salesman Arthur Kennedy (no relation to the Kennedy family). The double garages on Beals Street indicate that owners and tenants either already owned automobiles or the owners expected that they and their tenants would likely own cars soon.<sup>45</sup>

Automobiles and garages were even more common in the Abbottsford Road neighborhood where the Kennedy family moved in 1920. John Linder, a Boston merchant, purchased a home at 145 Naples Road in 1902 and then had a garage built there. Linder's low registration number, 1281, indicates he was one of the first in Massachusetts to own a car. Other early garages in the neighborhood included the one listed as an "auto shed" on permits at 40 Abbottsford Road (now significantly altered) for owner Albert J. Bamford, a Boston real estate agent who had owned his home since 1898, and who drove a T.B. Jeffery automobile; a 1909 auto garage built at 26 Abbottsford Road for Edward Pierce, who owned a Speedwell automobile (Pierce's occupation according to the 1920 census was "wholesale merchant"); and a 1912 garage built at 25 Abbottsford Road for James Head, a Boston lawyer. In addition, two sets of garages were built in 1916 behind apartment houses at 202-208 Fuller Street and 9-25 Alton Place, reflecting the growing popularity of the automobile.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Arthur Krim, "Carriage Barn and Auto Garage Survey Project," Phases I and II, Brookline Preservation Commission, 2000-2001; Curtis, *History of the Town*, 318-319.

<sup>46</sup> Arthur Krim, "Carriage Barn and Auto Garage Survey Project," Phases I and II, Brookline Preservation Commission, 2000-2001.



The house at 51 Abbottsford Road (referred to interchangeably in the research sources also as 131 Naples Road), where the Kennedys moved, also had a relatively early garage. In 1910 a previous owner, Charles Osgood, who drove a Pullman automobile, had purchased the home (it was erected in 1897) and apparently built a single-car garage of wood (unlike many of the other early garages which were built of concrete or stone). When the Kennedys moved to the home in 1920, they housed their Pierce Arrow limousine in the garage. Photographs of the Kennedy children dating from 1926 in the JOFI files show the garage in the background.<sup>47</sup>

Eventually, the automobile stimulated development of upper- and middle-class suburbs further from Boston. The sense of newness and, to some extent, fashionable prosperity would pass on to other more remote communities. Had the Kennedys remained in the Boston area, their own sense of status and style might very well have motivated them to move to a well-to-do suburb such as Dover or Weston. The wide dispersion of urban dwellers to suburban and exurban communities played a large part in eroding the vitality of close-knit urbanist communities of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

## **PART II: URBAN LIFE IN BROOKLINE**

The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were the heyday of the big city, an era in which it was exciting to live in places such as New York, Philadelphia, and Chicago. By the turn of the twentieth century New York, Philadelphia, and Chicago had become giant metropolises with over a million inhabitants, while other great cities, including Boston, boasted populations of over half a million people.

During the heyday of the big city, downtowns were the largest and most crowded centers of business, government, and entertainment, but surrounding them were growing, bustling neighborhoods. Filled with a wide variety of houses, stores, businesses, churches, and schools, the neighborhoods served as the basic unit for much of the organized social life of the city. Before the automobile era, citizens demanded and received ever-more rapid forms of transit to take them back and forth between downtowns and other neighborhoods.

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<sup>47</sup> Arthur Krim, "Carriage Barn and Auto Garage Survey Project," Phases I and II, Brookline Preservation Commission, 2000-2001.

As the number of residents, homes, and businesses multiplied in and around Boston, a vigorous culture emerged that, to various degrees, knitted city dwellers to one another and the places where they lived. In the introduction to his history of the Boston neighborhood of Jamaica Plain—which borders the Town of Brookline, the author described the localist way of life during the heyday of the big city.

...the vigorous intensity of local urban life during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries would startle the modern observer. In the era of the shopping mall, our collective memory dimly recollects the corner grocery store and saloon but forgets the carpenter shops, real estate offices, factories, and other enterprises which were once part of the urban neighborhood. In a more religious age than our own, city dwellers not only attended Sunday and weekday church services, but also returned to the parish hall for teas, concerts, theatricals, and parties. In the evening, residents scurried along the streets to social clubs, where they competed in bowling and whist tournaments, and fraternal lodges, where they donned exotic robes and chanted mysterious mumbo-jumbo. Politics too placed great demands on people's time with its incessant club meetings, rallies, parades, and annual rounds of elections to party conventions and governmental offices.<sup>48</sup>

Other scholars have noted the distinctiveness of the vital, locally oriented urban society of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Social scientists in particular have explored urban society of the big city era as a rich source of social capital and civic engagement. The author of a recent history of New Haven, Connecticut, has labeled this vital, locally based way of life as “urbanism,” and concluded that decades of policies such as urban renewal only contributed to its demise.<sup>49</sup>

The Kennedys lived in Brookline from 1914 to 1927, during the latter stages of urbanist society in the heyday of the big city. The following pages sketch the emergence of different components of urbanist culture in Brookline. The brief histories and descriptions of Brookline's churches, schools, shops, and entertainments are meant to be suggestive, rather than exhaustive, accounts of the many institutions and organizations available to early twentieth-century Brookline residents. As a housekeeper and mother, Rose spent a good deal of time with her children in the neighborhood; however, for the most part she

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<sup>48</sup> von Hoffman, *Local Attachments*, xv-xvi.

<sup>49</sup> Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000); Peter Dobkins Hall, “Vital Signs;” Theda Skocpol, “How Americans Became Civic,” and other essays in Theda Skocpol and Morris P. Fiorina, *Civic Engagement in American Democracy* (Washington, D. C.: Brookings Institution, 1999); Douglas W. Rae, *City: Urbanism and its End* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003).

and her husband acted more as cosmopolitan than localists during the years they lived in the Boston suburb.

### **Institutions of Brookline: Churches**

A primary part of urbanism, the vital culture of the big city that flourished from about 1880 to 1930, was the associational life that flowed from churches. Over its history, the town of Brookline developed a rich set of local institutions, starting with religious bodies. Brookline's earliest residents shared the First Church in Roxbury for their worship with the residents of that town, until the town's first meetinghouse was erected in 1714. The meetinghouse was used until the 1840s, when the First Parish Church (Unitarian) was built in 1848. The influx of new residents during the nineteenth century brought religious pluralism to Brookline, and as early as the 1820s different Protestant denominations began erecting their own places of worship. The growing variety of religions reflected the shift of the role of the church from a central town institution to a voluntary organization.

The earliest churches in Brookline were built in the densely settled area of Brookline Village. In 1828, a Baptist Church was built at the corner of Washington and Harvard Streets; the congregation quickly grew, however, and within the year had moved to a new location nearby. A range of other Protestant denominations formed in Brookline during the mid- and late nineteenth centuries. An Episcopal congregation was organized in 1849, and St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Brookline Village, designed by famed architect Richard Upjohn, was complete by December 1851.<sup>50</sup> Responding to a growing geographic distribution of worshippers, the second Episcopal Church, the Church of Our Saviour, was built in 1868 on the corner of Monmouth and Carlton Streets in the Longwood area of Brookline, at the time part of the larger locality of Coolidge Corner, but today a distinct area of Brookline with many hospitals and medical facilities, and the well-known Longwood Cricket Club. A third Episcopal church, All Saints, was organized in Brookline in 1894, and built on the corner of Beacon Street and Dean Road, on the Newton side of the town.

Evangelical denominations also began to enjoy a growing membership. As of 1863, Methodists began to meet in the town hall, until they purchased the Harvard Church building for their use in 1873. Financial difficulties forced the sale of the building several

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<sup>50</sup> *A History of Brookline, Massachusetts*, 42-43, 53-57.

years later in 1876, and for a few more years the Methodists again met in the town hall for services. Finally in 1879 a chapel was built at the corner of Cypress and Washington Streets in Brookline Village. That building was eventually sold to the Universalists in 1895, while a new Methodist church was built at the corner of Park and Vernon Streets, also in Brookline Village. In 1894 Presbyterians began to hold services; their church on Prospect Street near Coolidge Corner was built in 1897.<sup>51</sup>

Other churches were also formed in Brookline during the late nineteenth century, further reflecting the religious diversity of the town. Orthodox Congregationalists had worshipped at churches in Brighton and Roxbury, but in 1844-1845 built a church of their own at the corner of School and Washington Streets (Harvard Church). In 1899, the second Orthodox Congregational Church, the Leyden Congregational church of Brookline, was completed on Beacon Street opposite Englewood Avenue, very close to Newton. Swedenborgians organized into a congregation in 1852 and built a church at the corner of Highland and Irving Streets, completed in 1862. In 1866 the Unitarian Christ's Church was built on Colchester Street—that chapel was used until 1902, when the congregation moved to the corner of Beacon and Charles Streets. The Universalist Church, founded in 1891, bought the Methodist chapel in 1895 as the First Universalist Church of Brookline. In 1904, the Beacon Universalist Church on Harvard Street (next door to the S.S. Pierce Building) replaced the residence of Admiral Thomas Selfridge.<sup>52</sup>

Hence, by the time Joseph and Rose Kennedy moved to their home on Beals Street, the town was well served by a variety of churches catering to different Protestant denominations. At least seven of these were located on or near Harvard Street between Coolidge Corner and Brookline Village. Several more were situated along Beacon Street, the street that bisected northern Brookline. A very few were located in southern Brookline, the area that was still primarily devoted to grand estates.

More relevant to the Roman Catholic Kennedys were Brookline's three Roman Catholic churches: St. Mary's of the Assumption, built in the densely populated Brookline Village in the mid-nineteenth century; St. Lawrence's, created nearly 50 years later serving residents in the western edge of Brookline and in Newton; and finally, St. Aidan's,

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<sup>51</sup> *A History of Brookline, Massachusetts*, 58-60. Prospect Street is now known as Mason Terrace.

<sup>52</sup> Curtis, *History of the Town*, 318-319; 1920 Brookline town directory, 464; *A History of Brookline, Massachusetts*, 60-63.

constructed in 1911 and 1912 to serve Catholics in the Coolidge Corner area. The arrival of numerous Irish-Catholic immigrants and their concentrated settlement in Brookline Village during the mid-nineteenth century spurred the erection of the first Catholic church in the town, St. Mary's Church of the Assumption in 1853, on Andem Place in the heart of the village. After a disastrous fire in 1855, the church was repaired and enlarged, increasing the seating capacity to over 1,000—an impressive number given the approximate population of the town at the time (close to 5,000), reflecting the growing population of Irish-Catholic residents. The expanding congregation soon required a new church, which was erected at the corner of Harvard Street and Linden Place in 1881. The number of Roman Catholics continued to increase, however, particularly in the Chestnut Hill/Fisher Hill district, where a second Roman Catholic church, St. Lawrence's, was built in 1896-97.<sup>53</sup>

By 1910 the expansion and development of the Coolidge Corner district necessitated the founding of yet another Roman Catholic Church, St. Aidan's, where the Kennedys worshipped during their years in Brookline. In May 1911, the Roman Catholic archdiocese of Boston broke ground for St. Aidan's church at the corner of Pleasant and Freeman Streets. It was a well-documented event, and Cardinal O'Connell of Boston himself laid the cornerstone with his coat of arms on it.<sup>54</sup> The firm of Maginnis & Walsh, the leading architectural firm in the country for Roman Catholic churches, was selected for the commission. Choosing a design based on small village churches one might have found in Medieval England, Ireland or France, the architects designed St. Aidan's in an English Tudor Revival style. (Most of the firm's larger churches were designed in more grand styles from Byzantine or the Italian Renaissance.) Completed in 1912, St. Aidan's was meant to complement in size and fit aesthetically into the neighborhood of single-family homes and apartment houses built in various historical revival styles.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> *A History of Brookline, Massachusetts*, 57-58.

<sup>54</sup> Pamphlets preserved in the archives of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Boston document the groundbreaking and building of St. Aidan's through photographs of the various events. The pamphlets, with advertising from local businesses, were probably distributed to parishioners. We made several attempts to review the St. Aidan sacramental records to analyze the socio-economic makeup of the congregation in the years when the Kennedys were parishioners. Unfortunately, the records, currently stored at St. Mary's Church, were not made available on the grounds that the parish lacked the staff to supervise the documents.

<sup>55</sup> Roger Reed and Greer Hardwicke, *Study Report on the Establishment of St. Aidan's Church Local Historic District, Brookline, Massachusetts*. Internet version: <http://www.e-views.net/StAidans/PresComnReport.html>.

Of all the local institutions, by far the most important to the Kennedys during their years in Brookline was St. Aidan's Roman Catholic Church. The family, in particular Rose Kennedy, had a close relationship with Father John T. Creagh, the church's second pastor, whose 38-year tenure from 1913 to 1951 well outlasted the Kennedy's residence in Brookline. John F., Robert, Rosemary, Eunice and Patricia were all baptized at St. Aidan's (Joseph Jr. was born in Hull during the summer vacation and baptized there), and Rose Kennedy attended services at St. Aidan's every day. Rose Kennedy made sure to incorporate the church in her everyday walks with her children. "Almost always," she wrote, "on the way home [from our walks], we stopped in at our parish church. . . I wanted them to understand. . . that church isn't something for Sundays and special times on the calendar but should be part of daily life."<sup>56</sup>

Another prominent house of worship in the Coolidge Corner area emerged in the early twentieth century. Starting around 1911, Eastern European Jews began moving to Brookline in great enough numbers to form private prayer groups, meeting in members' apartments and even renting Whitney Hall on the upper floors of the S.S. Pierce Building for high holidays. Scouring various sites, the congregation finally purchased land on Harvard Street, and by 1924 or 1925 Brookline's first synagogue, the Congregation Kehillath Israel on Harvard Street was completed, directly across from the head of Beals Street. Temple Ohabei Shalom on Beacon Street, a much older congregation that had relocated from Boston soon joined that temple.<sup>57</sup>

### **Institutions of Brookline: Schools**

No urban institution is more important than schools, and this was true as well in the heyday of the big city. Over its history, Brookline, like other New England towns, took care to establish schools for its children. During the early settlement period, inhabitants typically sent their children to schools in Boston or Roxbury. In 1686 the need for a local school was taken up among inhabitants, and a schoolhouse was apparently erected in 1687 (location unknown). Until the formal separation of Brookline from Boston in 1705,

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<sup>56</sup> Kennedy, *Times to Remember*, 83.

<sup>57</sup> Internet source "The Jewish Friendship Trail," <http://www.angelfire.com/biz/LikeJACKnMARIONS/>

however, the question of how taxes to support the schoolhouse would be levied and paid, and how repairs would be handled, was apparently a controversial topic, raised continually by both sides. In 1711 the town voted to allow the inhabitants to pay for the costs to erect two schoolhouses and hire schoolmasters, giving residents the flexibility to make these decisions (likely undertaken by only but the most wealthy), with only a small portion of the town children's schooling expenses to be defrayed by the town. This system was in place for a number of years. In 1716 the town was divided into three school districts; those limits were redefined in 1723, although it is unclear how many schools existed at the time.<sup>58</sup>

The first documented schoolhouse built in Brookline was erected around 1713 at the junction of Walnut and Warren Streets, near the First Parish Church. Over the next few decades town residents argued over whether to erect another schoolhouse with varying results. By 1730 at least two schools were in operation, although debate continued about building a school in a convenient location to all the town's schoolchildren.

Edward Devotion Jr., the son of a French Huguenot, was the first official benefactor of public schools in Brookline. At his death in 1744, Devotion left a bequest in the amount of \$3,700 to be used towards the building and maintenance of a school. It is not clear if the new school that was built in 1746 at the junction of modern-day Walnut and Warren Streets on land donated by Joseph and Moses White was a direct consequence of that bequest, but Devotion's gift must have had a significant impact. By 1781 records indicate at least 50 of the town's children were attending daily classes, along with children from neighboring communities. A brick schoolhouse replaced the wooden schoolhouse on the White land in 1793. It is difficult to ascertain the locations of other, smaller schools, since records of these have not often survived, however at least one other school, known as the Puttersham schoolhouse, was built in 1768 near the junction of New and Grove Streets. The school was enlarged in 1839 and as of 1906 was called the Newton Street School.<sup>59</sup>

As the population of Brookline began to expand rapidly during the nineteenth century, additional schools became an urgent necessity. With the building of a new Town Hall on Washington Street in 1844 (another Town Hall on the same site would be built in 1873), the 1825 Pierce Hall on Walnut Street, which had previously served as both a school

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<sup>58</sup> *A History of Brookline, Massachusetts*, 63-65.

<sup>59</sup> *A History of Brookline, Massachusetts*, 65-70.

and town meeting place, became a high school exclusively. In 1857, another high school was built, on School and Prospect Streets; that building was used until 1895, when yet another new high school was built at the corner of Tappan Street and Gorham Avenue (and still in use as of 1906). By the early twentieth century, at least three primary schools (Edward Devotion, William H. Lincoln, and Pierce) educated the youngest denizens of Brookline; many of these children presumably went on to grammar schools (Edward Devotion, William H. Lincoln, and Pierce) and possibly to other schools, high schools or trade schools (for example the High School, the New Manual Training School, the Longwood School, the Newton Street School, the William H. Lincoln Shop, and the Robert C. Winthrop School). Of these, the Newton Street School was the oldest surviving Brookline school (built 1768 as the Puttersham schoolhouse, enlarged 1839). In addition, Brookline had a Roman Catholic parochial school, part of the parish of St. Mary's of the Assumption in the Brookline Village neighborhood.<sup>60</sup>

Eschewing the journey to the Roman Catholic school in Brookline Village, the Kennedys sent Joseph Kennedy Jr., John F. Kennedy, and later Rosemary Kennedy to attend the Edward Devotion School on Harvard Street. The Devotion School had been opened in two phases: the primary school started in 1892, and the grammar school was added in 1899. Although the Devotion School was named for Edward Devotion Jr. and built next to the early settler's mid-eighteenth century house (that has survived to the present day and is now owned by the Town of Brookline) on land he had originally owned, it is unclear (but doubtful) whether Devotion's 1744 bequest was still benefiting Brookline schools in the late nineteenth century. In the early twentieth century, the Devotion School was known to have high academic standards.

In 1924 the Kennedys took their sons out of the Brookline public school system and sent them to private schools. They first sent Joseph Junior and John Fitzgerald to Noble and Greenough, a private elementary day-boarding school for boys located on Boston's Beacon Hill, and, after Noble and Greenough eliminated its lower school (grades one through six), to the Dexter School, founded in 1926 to serve the families of the former

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<sup>60</sup> A primary school typically comprises the first three or four grades of elementary school, and sometimes includes a kindergarten. A grammar school is a secondary or preparatory school. The schools mentioned in both categories here under the same name had distinct primary and grammar schools. *A History of Brookline, Massachusetts*, 70-73; for list of schools, see *Directory of Brookline, Massachusetts*, XXXVI (Boston, Massachusetts: W.A. Greenough & Co., 1915) and Brookline directories for preceding and subsequent years.



Lower Noble and Greenough School. Indeed, Joseph Kennedy and other parents helped purchase property for the new school in Brookline on Freeman Street, between Pleasant and St. Paul Streets. Like its parent institution, the Dexter School was exclusive. Except for the names of John F. Kennedy and a boy named Hans Zinsser, for example, the surnames of the “Class of 1929” belonged to old New England Protestant families such as the Appletons, Brewers, Jacksons, and Parkers.<sup>61</sup> Sending the Kennedy boys to such a school meant they would mingle with the sons of such wealthy and powerful Protestant families—the kind of early social integration that would guarantee admission for the boys later on to exclusive schools such as Harvard College, and would help them later in life socially and professionally. The decision to help found the Dexter School and send their sons there was one more sign that the cosmopolitan Kennedys sought to advance their sons’ social status in a Protestant-dominated world.<sup>62</sup>

### **Shops and Services in Coolidge Corner**

The hallmark of the lively local urban place was its retail establishments, which often functioned as community centers as well as providers of goods and services. As the population of the Coolidge Corner area grew in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, businesses sprouted to cater to the needs of the residents. In 1898 the Coolidges’ store was torn down and replaced with the S.S. Pierce Building. Designed by the architectural firm of Winslow and Wetherell, the building represented the “suburban counterpart” of the S.S. Pierce Building in Copley Square (no longer extant). Winslow and Wetherell, an important and prolific Boston architectural firm of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, worked within a wide repertoire of decorative styles. (The firm also designed other buildings in Brookline, most notably at 1600 Beacon Street—located close to Coolidge Corner—the imposing “Stonehurst,” a stone mansion built in 1890 and demolished in 1959. Stonehurst belonged to Eben Jordan Jr., heir to the Jordan Marsh &

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<sup>61</sup> Stephen Haskell, Dexter School official, telephone interview by Elise M. Ciregna, December 27, 2003.

<sup>62</sup> Goodwin, *The Fitzgeralds and the Kennedys*, 355-356; “Historic Neighborhood Brochure: Devotion House to JFK Birthplace,” Brookline Preservation Commission, 1996; *A History of Brookline, Massachusetts*, 69.

Company department store and a philanthropist, who helped to fund the building of the Boston opera house and start the New England Conservatory of Music.)<sup>63</sup>

By the time S.S. Pierce's opened its branch in Coolidge Corner the store had been a Boston institution for more than half a century. Founded in 1831 by Dorchester native Samuel S. Pierce (1807-1880), the store built its reputation by catering to the tastes of Boston's elite classes. Offering such cosmopolitan imported delicacies as foie gras, caviar, and escargots (as well as the pink snail shells to cook them in), the store was also famed for responding to the rather exotic requests of some of its patrons as well, including reindeer tongue and truffled lark. The first S.S. Pierce store was located in Boston at the corner of Tremont and Court Streets in a large granite building that also housed the offices of the firm. The luxury, quality and diversity of the merchandise as well as the excellent service of S.S. Pierce's staff led to more stores in the fashionable Tremont-Back Bay areas of the city. After Samuel Pierce's death his son Wallace Lincoln Pierce took over the family business. Maintaining the high standards set by Samuel Pierce, the Coolidge Corner store opened in 1900, one of the first examples of a downtown Boston store opening a suburban branch.<sup>64</sup>

By 1914 Coolidge Corner was growing so rapidly that an observer could comment that it had become "an important business center, bidding fair to equal, if not exceeding, the business of the so-called Village section," heretofore the town's main retail area.<sup>65</sup> "In 1912, the Whitney estate at Coolidge Corner was sacrificed to a block of stores and offices," Brookline historian John Gould Curtis noted. "By 1915, the invasion of the automobile business had got under way; and in addition to the clustering of stores around Coolidge Corner, others were spreading out from the Village along Washington and Harvard Streets. . . Fine estates were subdivided by real estate promoters."<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Jordan Hall at the New England Conservatory is named in honor of Eben Jordan. Douglass Shand-Tucci, *Built in Boston: City and Suburb, 1800-1950*, rev. ed. (Amherst: University of Amherst Press, 1988), 75; Karr, "Evolution," 306-307; "Beacon Street Historic Neighborhood Brochure: Washington Square/Upper Beacon," Brookline Preservation Commission, 1996.

<sup>64</sup> Anthony Mitchell Sammarco, "S.S. Pierce and Company," *Dorchester Community News*, 1992 (exact date unknown), and oral communication between Elise M. Ciregna and Mr. Sammarco, February 2003; Karr, "Evolution," 306-307.

<sup>65</sup> Lilla N. Morse, "Changes at Coolidge Corner since the Beacon Street Widening," Proceedings of the Brookline Historical Society for 1953, Brookline, Massachusetts, 15. The author is quoting from a 1914 Society report by a Mr. Stearns.

<sup>66</sup> Curtis, *History of the Town*, 318-319.

Numerous retailers took up residence to provide everything from basic necessities to luxuries to the residents of the Coolidge Corner area. Blanchard's Market, Thomas' Fish Market, and other grocers provided meat, fruit, vegetables, and fish. The Coolidge Corner Gift and Candy shop on Beacon Street offered sweets and items for celebrations. A variety of establishments, including drug stores, optometry shops, clothing, hat, and shoe stores, hardware stores, and coal distributors, supplied other necessities. In addition, plumbers, electricians, as well clothing "cleansers" as provided their services. Jewelers and an Oriental rug store catered to those who could afford their wares.<sup>67</sup>

In the years after World War I, Coolidge Corner continued to grow into a bustling urban area, thanks in part to a building boom. In 1915 the town had a central library near Brookline Village (at Washington Street near School Street) and a reading room at Coolidge Corner, but by 1919 Coolidge Corner had a branch library building (299 Harvard Street), the town's first. Also in Coolidge Corner proper, the Brookline Trust Company constructed a large bank, which one contemporary described as a "splendid modern building."<sup>68</sup> According to Curtis, in the Coolidge Corner area in 1920 \$2.5 million was spent on the construction of nearly 130 buildings; in 1921, about \$3.5 million was spent on 229 buildings.<sup>69</sup>

## Entertainments, Clubs, Theaters

Entertainment provided a large part of the excitement of living in urban communities during the heyday of the big city. Some of the best-known entertainment—such as vaudeville—was commercial, but most entertainment was created locally by amateurs. Such

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<sup>67</sup> For full range of retail and service establishments in Coolidge Corner and surrounding areas, see advertisements in *The Chronicle* (September 5, 1914) vol. 41, no. 36; *The Chronicle* (October 17, 1914) vol. 41, no. 42; *The Brookline Townsman*, (October 17, 1914) vol. 11, no. 50; *The Brookline Chronicle* (March 16, 1918 and January 22, 1921) no volume or issue no. available. See also advertisements in the *Directory of Brookline, Massachusetts*, 1920.

<sup>68</sup> Curtis, *History of the Town*, 319; for libraries, see, *Directory of Brookline, Massachusetts*, XXXVI and XXXX (1915, 1919).

<sup>69</sup> Morse, "Changes at Coolidge Corner since the Beacon Street Widening," Proceedings of the Brookline Historical Society for 1953, Brookline, Massachusetts, 15; Curtis, *History of the Town*, 318-319. More than half of the 1921 buildings, however, were automobile garages.

locally-based activities were a product of the rich set of voluntary associations that were part of the urbanist culture.<sup>70</sup>

A survey of entertainments available in Brookline during the period when the Kennedys resided there reveals a wide range of activities but little evidence that the Kennedys chose to partake of them. Between 1914 and 1921, the town's clubs catered to everything from literary tastes to sporting interests and bird watching. The Brookline Bird Club was particularly active; in one week alone in October 1914 (the month that Joseph and Rose Kennedy settled into their house on Beals Street), the Club's events included walks in Arlington Heights, Newton and Waltham, a lecture on "The Birds of Northern Scotland," and in conjunction with the Massachusetts Audubon Society, another lecture, "Our Children and the Birds." Other entertainments that month included music concerts at St. Paul's, St. Luke's, and Harvard Churches; a neighborhood sewing bee for the Red Cross Society at the Parish Society of All Saints Church; a meeting of the Brookline Equal Suffrage Association; a meeting of the John Paul Jones Chapter of the D.A.R.; a "sale and supper" at the G.A.R. Hall on Pierce Street; a meeting of the Brookline Historical Society (meetings and lectures were usually held in the Edward Devotion House); and a "lecture and entertainment" by the Christian Endeavor Society of the First Presbyterian church. Civic-minded Brookline residents could also join groups such as the Brookline Anti-Tuberculosis Society or the Firemen's Relief Association.<sup>71</sup>

For men, fraternal organizations provided an outlet for activities separate from church groups or clubs whose memberships were dominated by women, although a few orders had women's auxiliary groups. As elsewhere in the Boston area, most of the town's lodges were predominantly Protestant, reflecting the papal proscription against Catholic participation in Protestant fraternal organizations. Brookline had at one time two Masonic lodges, and a lodge for the Independent Order of Odd Fellows, the Ancient Order of United Workmen, the Benevolent Protective Order of Elks, the Knights of Pythias, and the Royal Arcanum, among other orders. Catholic men too joined fraternal organizations, albeit Catholic ones such as the Order of Foresters (which had three "courts" in Brookline) and the Knights of Columbus. In 1914, *The Brookline Townsman* expressed local pride in the

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<sup>70</sup> See von Hoffman, *Local Attachments*, 119-166 for a detailed survey of local associational life.

<sup>71</sup> See *The Chronicle* [Brookline], Saturday, October 17, 1914, vol. 41, no. 42, and *The Brookline Townsman*, Saturday, October 17, 1914, vol. 11, no. 50; also Brookline Town Directory, 1920, 469.

election of the “Grand Knight” of the local chapter of the Knights of Columbus, which it proclaimed to be “the youngest man to receive that honor in the State.”<sup>72</sup> After the war, the ranks of the lodges thinned somewhat, but the town still could count eleven fraternal orders with fifteen groups among them. (Most groups met in the town center area at Brookline Village.)<sup>73</sup>

Among the events where Brookline residents of both sexes could meet were dancing parties, held every night of the week except Sunday, and in Coolidge Corner, in Whitney Hall, located on the upper floor of the S.S. Pierce building. A wide variety of organizations sponsored dances and balls, and sometimes the hosts were individuals (possibly dancing teachers), as in the case of “Mr. Gibson’s dance at Whitney Hall,” scheduled for the evening of October 24, 1914.<sup>74</sup>

Sporting events were also popular in Brookline. These ranged from the football games of the Brookline High School, which attracted the public, to the matches in private clubs such as the Longwood Golf Club. The large estate owners of Brookline occasionally provided entertainment for the town’s residents – in September 1914, 200 spectators showed up to watch a baseball game on the Larz Anderson estate between the “Andersons” and the “Brandegees,” the employees of Mrs. Larz Anderson and Mrs. Edward Brandegee, respectively.<sup>75</sup>

For most plays, operas and film entertainments, the local newspapers indicate Brookline residents went into Boston. In the heyday of the city’s theatrical productions, Boston stages included the Wilbur, Colonial, Shubert and Majestic Theatres, as well as the Tremont Temple, Boston Theatre, and Castle and Square Theatres. *The Chronicle* hailed in October 1914 the engagement of the “Biophone,” “one of the most remarkable examples of ‘talking pictures’ ever invented,” which featured European opera stars.<sup>76</sup> Brookline residents also traveled to more far-flung entertainments such as plays at the Plymouth

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<sup>72</sup> *The Brookline Townsman*, Saturday, October 17, 1914, vol. 11, no. 50.

<sup>73</sup> *Directory of Brookline, Massachusetts*, XXXVI and XXXX (1915, 1919).

<sup>74</sup> See *The Chronicle* [Brookline], Saturday, October 17, 1914, vol. 41, no. 42, and *The Brookline Townsman*, Saturday, October 17, 1914, vol. 11, no. 50.

<sup>75</sup> *The Chronicle*, September 5, 1914, vol. 41, no. 36.

<sup>76</sup> *The Chronicle*, September 5, 1914, vol. 41, no. 36, 11.

Theater, musical comedy at Norumbega Park, and amusements at Paragon Park at Nantasket Beach.<sup>77</sup>

In the first years that the Kennedys lived in Brookline, the first World War affected local clubs, either by taking away members or diverting their activities to supporting the war effort. In March 1918, for example, the Brookline Swimming Club announced that twenty-five of its men were in the armed services. That same month, the Brookline Catholic Woman's Aid Society hosted an event at which the invited speaker, Miss Catherine McMahon, recounted her "interesting experiences in the French war zone." Many clubs and organizations, especially those connected to local churches, devoted much effort to war relief. After the war ended, club life gradually returned to normal, although now the local scene included more veterans' groups and patriotic organizations such as the American Legion.<sup>78</sup>

### **The Kennedys, Daily Life, and the Coolidge Corner Neighborhood**

Although all residents of large cities such as Boston in the early twentieth century participated in urban culture, they did so in different ways and to different degrees. Almost all urban dwellers traveled around the city sometimes, but the number, frequency, and regularity of such trips varied greatly. In an era when homes were often near places of work, some "localists" might remain in their neighborhoods for much of the time—working at a local business, attending a local church, shopping locally, and participating in local clubs. Others were cosmopolites. For example, as the author has written earlier, "Isabel Weld Perkins, heiress to the William F. Weld fortune, and her husband, Larz Anderson, a diplomat, lived out their lives in global networks, touching down occasionally at "Weld," their lavish country estate on the Jamaica Plain-Brookline border."<sup>79</sup> Most neighborhood residents probably fell somewhere in between the extremes of localism and cosmopolitanism.

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<sup>77</sup> For theaters and other entertainment venues in Boston and elsewhere, see *The Chronicle*, September 5, 1914, vol. 41, no. 36, 11; *The Chronicle*, October 17, 1914, vol. 41, no. 42, 13.

<sup>78</sup> *The Chronicle*, March 16, 1918. For a sample of post-World War I activities, see *The Chronicle*, January 22, 1921.

<sup>79</sup> von Hoffman, *Local Attachments*, 166.

At first glance, the existing record indicates that her role as mother and housekeeper kept Rose Kennedy in and around their house in the Coolidge Corner area for much of her time. In her autobiography, Rose Kennedy described her daily walks with the children around the neighborhood:

Most mornings, while the domestic chores were getting under way, I would put the current toddler in a kiddy car and, with one or two older ones on either side, set off to the shopping center. I didn't buy much—perhaps a box of talcum powder or some other household item that needed replenishing—but it was an interesting adventure for the children and good for me. Sometimes we went into the five-and-ten, and that was especially exciting for them. Almost always, on the way home, we stopped in at our parish church.<sup>80</sup>

The “shopping center” that she mentioned, although not named, was Coolidge Corner, with its plethora of stores. While the “five-and-ten” remains unidentified, Rose mentioned in the November 1967 interview with Nan Rickey “the shops were up there [including] S.S. Pierce’s.” Later in the same interview Rose remembered that because she was too busy to preserve jams, she was probably already buying them at “Pierce’s” by that time. And in her autobiography, referring to her famous index card collection that recorded the health of each of her children, Rose mentioned buying the cards nearby: “One day . . . while passing a stationery store in our shopping area, I stopped in and bought a supply of file cards and index tabs and set to work cataloguing [the children’s health events].”<sup>81</sup> Although unnamed, the store could have been “Miss Ayer’s Novelty Shop,” which listed its merchandise as stationery, and included other specialties such as “doll hospital” and “circulating library” among its services. The shop was located in the S.S. Pierce Building.<sup>82</sup>

There were other kinds of interactions as well. Rose Kennedy alluded to daily routines, rhythms, and exchanges and otherwise. During the Abbottsford Road years, she devised a system of dividing her porch that allowed each of her children some measure of fresh air and room to play, while at the same time keeping the little ones secure.

With a folding gate to block the entrance, the children would play there in fresh air and in full safety and, moreover, with the full panorama of neighboring life to

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<sup>80</sup> Kennedy, *Times to Remember*, 82.

<sup>81</sup> Kennedy, *Times to Remember*, 83.

<sup>82</sup> Kennedy, *Times to Remember*, 82-83; November 1967 transcript of interview with Nan Rickey, 14 and 33 (JOFI files); *The Brookline Chronicle*, 1914 and 1918.

entertain them. Cars passing by, people walking along (many of them acquaintances who waved), the letter carrier, the milkman with his wire basket loaded full as he came to our house and empty as he left, the policeman passing by on his patrol, the grocery boy, tradesmen, visitors, and friends of all degrees and kinds—everybody with a smile and cheerful greeting for the children.<sup>83</sup>

However real or romanticized her recollections in later life were, Rose recalled the Beals Street and Abbottsford Road neighborhoods as places with a Norman Rockwell-like quality in which everyone was friendly and helpful. These reminiscences are in keeping with Rose Kennedy's nostalgic memory of the family's years in Brookline as simple, happy times. But they also reveal that the gender roles of housekeeper and mother dictated a local orientation to daily life.

Despite her warm memories of Brookline, however, Rose Kennedy apparently made extensive use of the big city nearby. Rose's allusion to two convenient trolley lines, on nearby Commonwealth Avenue as well as on Beacon Street, suggests she made regular use of them for excursions into the city. Some of her destinations were meetings of the Ace of Clubs, a women's literary club she founded (described below), and other civic groups, golf dates, and luncheons and teas with friends. The only other excursions that Rose mentioned, even obliquely, were her shopping trips to buy her clothes "off the rack" in Brookline and Boston. One biographer has noted that Rose bought her copies of Parisian couture from the Mary Murphy dress shop on Boylston Street in Boston. Rose's allusion to two convenient trolley lines, on nearby Commonwealth Avenue as well as on Beacon Street, suggests she regularly made excursions into the city.<sup>84</sup>

Joseph Kennedy, the surviving historical record indicates, spent less time in Brookline than his wife. As the family breadwinner, Joseph Kennedy, went to work in the city and seems to have spent little time in Brookline during the weekdays. No evidence of his possible interactions with retailers in Coolidge Corner or Brookline has been found; rather the evidence suggests that Kennedy regularly shopped in downtown Boston. Kennedy apparently was a familiar customer, for example, of jeweler, Mr. L. Rosenberg, in the Niles Building in downtown Boston. In April 1922 Kennedy returned a bracelet to Rosenberg,

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<sup>83</sup> Kennedy, interview with Nan Rickey.

<sup>84</sup> Kennedy, *Times to Remember*, 83, 90; Laurence Leamer, *The Kennedy Women* (New York: Villard Books, 1994), 168; Anna Coxe Toogood, "John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site, Historic Furnishings Plan" (Washington, D.C.: United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1971), 16.



stating in his note that the piece was not exactly what Mrs. Kennedy “wants to get,” and mentioning that he would stop by soon to “try and describe just what I am in the market for.” Similarly in July 1920, when he sought furnishings for the Kennedys’ new home on Abbotsford Road, Joseph Kennedy corresponded with Joseph Palais, the owner of an Oriental rug and carpet store located on Dartmouth Street in the Back Bay. It is hardly surprising that Joseph Kennedy had few daily interactions with Brookline merchants, since by all accounts Kennedy worked long days either in Quincy or in Boston, and later was away for weeks at a time in New York.<sup>85</sup>

Moreover, the historical evidence uncovered so far indicates that, despite the many activities available in Brookline, neither Joseph or Rose Kennedy belonged to local clubs or participated in local social activities. The only club to which Rose Kennedy is known to have belonged was the Ace of Clubs, a Boston-area women’s literary club whose members were well-educated, well-to-do Roman Catholic women who had attended school outside the United States. Rose helped found the Ace of Clubs in 1910 and was active in it until 1927 when the Kennedys moved to New York. As in other women’s clubs, the members of the Ace of Clubs discussed current events and organized affairs such as an annual charity ball. The Ace of Clubs met on Tuesdays in the luxurious Hotel Somerset (in the Rose Room, a venue arranged by Rose’s father) located not in Brookline, but in Boston at Commonwealth Avenue and Charlesgate, at the entrance to the Back Bay Fens. As for Joseph Kennedy, he affiliated with groups such as the Middlesex Club of Massachusetts, a Republican Party organization in Boston, and the Woodland Golf Club, located in Auburndale in Newton, Massachusetts, that were also located outside Brookline.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> “Understanding that you are going to be in the market for some nice Oriental Rugs,” Joseph Palais, “Oriental Rugs and Carpets, 200 Dartmouth Street,” wrote to Joseph Kennedy on July 13, 1920, “I am taking the liberty of writing you, to let you know that we carry one of the largest and most complete stock of Oriental Rugs to be seen. . . .” (Apparently Kennedy had let it be known in Boston that he was looking for these.) Kennedy responded to Palais several days later, “I am in the market for four fairly large-sized rugs. I will call on you sometime in the very near future.” Joseph Palais, to Joseph P. Kennedy, July 13, 1920; Joseph P. Kennedy to Joseph Palais, July 26, 1920; Joseph P. Kennedy personal papers (JPK papers hereafter), Box 42, Folder Misc. correspondence, 1919-1920, JFK Library.

<sup>86</sup> Goodwin, *The Fitzgeralds and the Kennedys*, 203-204. As noted in Chapter Two, Rose later in life asserted that she started the Ace of Clubs after the Junior League refused her admission. Laurence Leamer, *The Kennedy Women: The Saga of an American Family*, (New York: Villard Books, 1994), 113.

Similarly, the surviving records suggest that Joseph and Rose Kennedy as a couple rarely if ever partook of public entertainments in Brookline. Several biographical sources note that during the music season, they traveled to hear weekend concerts at Symphony Hall, in the Fenway neighborhood of Boston, and during the fall they attended Harvard College football games at Harvard Stadium in Allston, just across the Charles River from the Harvard campus in Cambridge. No researchers have uncovered evidence in their personal papers of any ties to specific Brookline clubs or attendance at Brookline-area events other than those related to St. Aidan's church.<sup>87</sup>

It appears, then, that despite Rose's localist daily routines, both the Kennedys were essentially cosmopolites, who preferred to go outside Brookline for their public entertainment and social and cultural activities. There is no direct evidence as to why they eschewed Brookline, but it was not uncommon for upper and upper-middle class urban dwellers to look beyond their local community and associate with groups and individuals throughout the Boston region—and sometimes even further than that. The social networks created by far-flung clubs and entertainments connected members of the upper and upper-middle classes to one another and provided entry to new members.<sup>88</sup> As the Kennedys already belonged to metropolitan area networks—Rose through her father, the former mayor of Boston, and Joe through his school and business ties—and fervently aspired to the highest social ranks, they would naturally gravitate to cosmopolitan, rather than local, organizations and affiliations.

Furthermore, as noted in the history of the neighboring community of Jamaica Plain, late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century city dwellers could choose to associate with people and institutions both inside and outside their neighborhoods. The sociologist Morris Janowitz dubbed this central characteristic of modern urban life the “community of limited liability,” because it did not commit its members to the deep and abiding ties that characterized pre-modern folk cultures. Along a spectrum of most-to-least involved with local communities, the Kennedys would fall somewhere between the center and the extreme of least involved.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Cameron, *Rose*, 83-84; Higham, *Rose*, 60-61.

<sup>88</sup> For the variety of social orbits in the Boston neighborhood of Jamaica Plain, see von Hoffman, *Local Attachments*, 165-166.

<sup>89</sup> von Hoffman, *Local Attachments*; Morris Janowitz, *The Community Press in an Urban Setting* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967).

## Conclusion

Because the documents in Joseph P. and Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy's collections at the John F. Kennedy Library pertain mainly to their later lives, their interactions and connections with the people and places in the Beals Street neighborhood remain largely elusive. Although we can determine from census reports that there were two live-in servants in the Kennedy household in 1920, there is no record, for example, of who the laundress was, or where the cook purchased the family's vegetables, meat and fruit. We do not know who delivered the milk or coal, or what plumber or electrician was called in when repairs were needed. Although there were a number of commercial garages that catered to the growing number of car owners in Brookline, we don't know where the Kennedys kept their Ford garaged (assuming they used such a service—there was no garage on their property). Similarly, Rose Kennedy described some of her daily routines in the neighborhood—particularly her daily walks with her children to the shopping area and then to St. Aidan's—but we must allow for her perspective from a vantage point many years later and her wish to show the typicality of her family's experience.

The lack of documents historians might hope to find is not surprising. During the years they lived in the small, unassuming house at 83 Beals Street and the larger house on Abbottsford and Naples Roads, the Kennedys were busy living their lives and not overly concerned with record keeping. Joseph Kennedy was an active young man beginning a career in which he would rise to the top of a number of professions. In these years, Rose Kennedy gave birth to and raised the first of her nine children, managed a household that included two live-in servants and outside daily or weekly domestic helpers. After their stay in Brookline the Kennedys moved many times and had more children. More records survive from later years, as is probably the case with most families. In addition, only when the elder sons were groomed for politics—and in John's case when he reached the highest office in the land—could the couple become aware of the value of mundane records of their early years of their marriage.

What can be stated with confidence, however, is that the Kennedys moved to an ancient town that owed much of its character to the city of Boston, had a well-established reputation for beauty and wealth, and was surprisingly diverse in religion, ethnicity, and economic class. The Kennedys were part of an influx of residents to the newly developed area of Coolidge Corner, which provided many of the amenities and institutions that a

growing family would need. Besides the nearby retail and food stores, the neighborhood had a relatively new and impressive Roman Catholic Church, as well as the Edward Devotion primary and grammar schools nearby, and the Kennedys made use of the local services and institutions. As homeowners and with a breadwinner who was one of the country's youngest bank presidents, the Kennedys stood out in the Beals Street neighborhood. While they occupied a high socio-economic rank, the heads of most of the other households were transient low-white collar clerks and salesmen. More residents of the Abbottsford Road neighborhood held similar status and perhaps earned similar incomes as the Kennedys, which may have made that area more congenial to the Kennedys.

However much they enjoyed and made use of Brookline, both Joseph and Rose Kennedy looked outside their Brookline neighborhood for work, shopping—particularly of the personalized or luxury type—and certain leisure time activities such as clubs. As far as the Kennedys were concerned the town of Brookline offered only some of the resources and social activities available to them in the Boston metropolitan area. Like other urban cosmopolites, they moved in much broader field than their neighborhood.

Eventually, in 1927, the Kennedys left Brookline altogether. In hindsight, it is apparent that as they gained wealth and prominence, the family would outgrow the pleasant but prosaic life they found in a corner of Brookline, Massachusetts. When they did, the break with Boston where many of their family and friends lived was probably more difficult than with the suburb that they called home. Although they lived there for thirteen years, the Kennedys do not appear to have had strong ties to Brookline.

## CHAPTER TWO

### The Social Identities of Rose Fitzgerald and Joseph Kennedy

#### Introduction

Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy, the principal creator of the birthplace memorial to John F. Kennedy, once explained that she hoped the site would convey the “background” of her son who became president of the United States.<sup>90</sup> To achieve that end at 83 Beals Street, Mrs. Kennedy provided furnishings and reminiscences to convey the house and home life for her, her husband, Joseph P. Kennedy, and their young children during the time they lived in Brookline (from 1914 to 1927). In the presentation of the memorial to her son, Rose Kennedy projected a sense of the social identities of herself and Joseph Kennedy, who as John’s parents were, after all, a most important part of his personal background.

Inevitably Rose Kennedy’s presentation of the birthplace site emphasized certain forms of social identity and muted others. To name but one example, despite Rose Kennedy’s devout Catholicism and evidence that she owned crucifixes at the time she moved to 83 Beals Street, she did not include such “overt religious artifacts” in her furnishings.<sup>91</sup> Thus, the important question of the social identities of Rose Fitzgerald and Joseph Kennedy remains open to investigation and interpretation.

Indeed, as with many Americans, the socio-economic, ethnic, and religious identities of Rose Fitzgerald and Joseph P. Kennedy were complex, overlapping, and mutable. Although perhaps impossible to grasp completely, they suggest rich interpretive themes for the John F. Kennedy National Historic Site that fascinate its visitors. These issues are not only relevant to understanding the lives of John F. Kennedy’s parents, Rose and Joseph, but also offer a way for Americans, many of whom tend to see themselves

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<sup>90</sup> Rose Kennedy, interview by Nan Rickey, 21 Nov. 1967, transcript, JOFI files, 52; Memorandum H22-HA, 28 November 1967, JOFI files.

<sup>91</sup> Janice Hodson, “Report on Status of Collections, John F. Kennedy National Historic Site,” February 2003, 6, in JOFI files, and reprinted as Appendix C of this Historic Resource Study.

through such lenses, to see or compare themselves to the famous former residents of 83 Beals Street.

In the spirit of Mrs. Kennedy's goal of interpreting President Kennedy's background, then, this chapter explores the historical record in an attempt to reconstruct the social identities of Rose and Joseph Kennedy, the two most formative influences in John F. Kennedy's life. The analysis examines their own family backgrounds and follows their lives up to and including the time that they lived in Brookline, Massachusetts.

### **Complexities of Social Identity**

Social identity, however strongly felt, is both complex and adaptable, especially in the heterogeneous and dynamic context of American society. One's own attitudes and those of others shape it. Americans identify with many aspects of their heritage and social environment, some more so than others or more so in different times than others. Even as many Americans feel loyalty to their nation, they also think of themselves as members of other groups, say, as Midwesterners, Baptists, or the middle class. Events—as varied as an attack on the United States (such as Pearl Harbor or September 11, 2001), an economic depression, or a civil rights movement for a racial minority group or women—may intensify a particular allegiance. The beliefs and prejudices of the majority may force or encourage people to affiliate (or be affiliated) with a particular group. For example, the treatment of African Americans by white Americans that resulted in racial ghettos reinforced the sense of racial identity among blacks. At the same time, political movements and/or shifts of popular opinion may cause members of ethnic groups—such as German-Americans after World War I or Japanese-Americans during World War II—to suppress their parochial ethnic identity and instead express an identity with the national culture and loyalty to the government. Thus, we should bear in mind that, however strongly people present themselves (or are represented by

others) as members of a particular social group, social identity is layered and mutable.<sup>92</sup>

An examination of the background, upbringing, and early married life of Rose Fitzgerald and Joseph Kennedy, reveals most obviously four types of social identity: socio-economic class, ethnicity, religion, and gender. Although we treat such types of identity as distinct, they almost always overlap. This chapter considers in detail the first three aforementioned types of social identity—socio-economic class, ethnicity, and religion—and touches on the fourth, gender. (Chapter 3, which concerns home and family life, examines gender, or more particularly, gender roles in greater detail.)

In reviewing the events of the Kennedys' early lives, the reader should keep in mind not only the Kennedys' personal ambitions, strong sense of ethnic solidarity, and commitment to their faith, but also the complex Boston society in which they lived. Both in their youth and many years later, the Kennedys perceived that society from their own particular vantage points, which led them to emphasize the exclusivity of Boston society and blame it on religious prejudice. They may not have perceived or later recalled or chosen to call attention to certain aspects of Boston, such as the friendships across religious differences or class divisions within the Irish Catholic population.

Rose Fitzgerald and Joseph Kennedy were both third-generation descendants of Irish immigrants. Their grandparents had risen from the ranks of the Irish working classes to achieve a modest affluence. Their fathers, in their turn, built on the financial achievements of their parents and in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-centuries became important and powerful members of the Democratic political organization in Boston. Rose Fitzgerald and Joseph Kennedy grew up in comfortable circumstances, part

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<sup>92</sup> The subject of ethnic and racial identity versus national identification is complex and much studied. Some key works in the field are Milton M. Gordon, *Assimilation in American Life: the Role of Race, Religion, and National Origins* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964); John Higham, *Strangers in the Land, Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925*, (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1992) and *Send These To Me: Jews and Other Immigrants in Urban America* (New York: Athenaeum, 1975); Philip Gleason, "American Identity and Americanization," in Stephan Thernstrom, Ann Orlov, Oscar Handlin, eds., *The Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1980). For a study that shows the effects of racial discrimination on group solidarity, see Allan H. Spear, *Black Chicago: The Making of a Negro Ghetto, 1890-1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967). In recent years, scholars have studied the subject of white identity, which they also have found to be mutable. See, for example, Noel Ignatiev, [\*How The Irish Became White\*](#) (New York: Routledge, 1995).

of Boston's Irish-Catholic high society and—thanks to their fathers' (especially Rose's) preeminent political positions—part of the city's influential political circles as well.

Although both Rose Fitzgerald and Joseph Kennedy enjoyed the privileges of what might be called the upper-middle class, it is important to understand that they greatly aspired to higher social status. In the context of a nation founded and to a great extent controlled by Protestants, this meant affiliating with institutions primarily identified with Protestants and succeeding in fields of endeavor where Protestants dominated. The Kennedys nonetheless took great pride in their families' Irish background and therefore thought of themselves as part of the populous ethno-national category known as Irish-Americans. They also strongly identified themselves as Roman Catholics, although they differed somewhat in their relationship to the church. Thus the Kennedys, like many Americans of different ethnic and religious backgrounds, felt contradictory impulses: on the one hand, to assimilate into the majority Protestant culture and society, and on the other hand, to stand apart proudly and hold fast to a distinctly different identity. These impulses and their experiences in turn shaped their perceptions of their society and the place they held in it.

Rose Fitzgerald and Joseph Kennedy grew up in Boston, Massachusetts, a city in which Irish Catholics had been since the middle of the nineteenth century the largest ethnic-religious immigrant group. Most of the Irish arrived in Boston as unskilled and poorly paid workers. Many of the newcomers and their children stayed mired in poverty, but over time succeeding generations climbed the economic ladder. The Kennedys came to maturity at the end of a period in which the Irish emerged into the mainstream of Boston's political and economic life. Indeed, their fathers—John F. Fitzgerald and Patrick Joseph Kennedy—were important Irish-American leaders in Boston's politics and government.

The emergence of the Irish, it should be noted, was not a simple matter of assimilation, although more assimilation of one sort or another took place than some historians (and many of Boston's Irish-Americans) have acknowledged. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Irish Catholics took over or built their own separate institutions in a number of fields—politics and education being the most prominent and relevant to this discussion. Relying on the large Irish-Catholic population, these institutions existed apart from or in opposition to Protestant dominated ones. To a certain extent, then, the fervent sense of group identity that flourished among the Irish in



the early twentieth century propelled their upward economic movement and the building of their institutions which in turn allowed for other paths of ascent.<sup>93</sup>

Rose and Joseph Kennedy, both extraordinarily ambitious individuals, identified themselves as Irish Catholic, but each to varying degrees also sought status in Protestant society. They both sought education from Protestant schools—unsuccessfully in Rose’s case—and chose to begin their married life in a community that, although undergoing changes, was considered largely Protestant. Joe in particular strove to gain admittance to Protestant social clubs. Years later when Rose looked back on her early married life with Joe, she would describe Boston as being divided into two societies, that of the Protestant Brahmin elite and the Irish Catholics, and express resentment that as Irish Catholics they had not been accepted by the Boston Brahmins. Although the details of Joseph’s and Rose’s affiliations with predominantly Protestant institutions are beyond the scope of this study, it is clear that the Kennedys’ impulse to join such organizations reflected their ambition to succeed in a Protestant dominated society.

Previous research has demonstrated that the Kennedy view of Boston society, however sincere and strongly held, was oversimplified. True, members of Boston’s wealthy old families held sway in the city’s great institutions, closely controlled exclusive social clubs, and often were guilty of snobbery and ethnic and religious prejudice—to the point of supporting immigration restriction. The Boston elite, however, also produced prominent liberals and cosmopolites—Charles W. Eliot, Oliver Wendell Holmes, and James Jackson Storrow, to name a few well-known examples—who tolerated people of different faiths and economic backgrounds. Some even married people outside their blue-blood circles, including Jews.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Oscar Handlin, *Boston's Immigrants, A Study in Acculturation* (Cambridge, 1941; revised ed., New York, 1974), for example, portrays Boston’s Irish as an immigrant group that was ultimately unassimilable and built its own institutions. For interpretations that portray ethnic assimilation in Boston as more complex and fluid, see Stephan Thernstrom, *The Other Bostonians, Poverty and Progress in the American Metropolis, 1880-1970* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1973); Donna Merwick, *Boston's Priests, 1848-1910: A Study of Social and Intellectual Change* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1973); and Alexander von Hoffman, *Local Attachments: The Making of an American Urban Neighborhood, 1850 to 1920*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994).

<sup>94</sup> For the anti-immigrant attitudes of Boston Brahmins such as Henry Cabot Lodge, see Barbara Miller Solomon, *Ancestors and Immigrants: A Changing New England Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971); for progressive reformers, see Arthur Mann, *Yankee Reformers in an Urban Age: Social Reform in Boston, 1880-1900* (Cambridge, 1954; New York, 1966); Sam Bass Warner Jr.

Not only did Brahmins hold all sorts of political and social attitudes, New England Protestants varied widely in their wealth and social standing. Besides the blue-bloods, there were multitudes of white-collar middle-class Protestants—who instead of belonging to the Unitarian church might belong to the Episcopal, Congregationalist, Baptist, or other smaller denominations—who had migrated from other sections of New England. There were even working-class “swamp Yankees,” New England migrants of lowly origins.

Similarly, the Irish by the end of the nineteenth century spanned the economic and social spectrum. Among Bostonians with Celtic ancestors or birthplaces were the working-class “shanty Irish,” middle-class clerks, school teachers, and small entrepreneurs, and the well-to-do whom the working-class Irish referred to as “lace-curtain Irish” or, more contemptuously, as “the two-toilet Irish.” At least a few of this latter group of Irish entered the golden circle of Brahmin Boston. Until he died in 1890, John Boyle O’Reilly, an Irish nationalist, poet, and Catholic newspaper editor, traveled in Brahmin circles, and after his death, his daughter, Mary Boyle O’Reilly, carried on a career as a liberal reformer. Another daughter married a Harvard professor and founded the progressive Shady Hill School in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Finally, in the early twentieth century Boston was home to many other ethnic and religious groups besides the Protestant elite and the Irish Catholics. Although the Irish were by far the largest immigrant group, in the early twentieth century the next largest foreign-born group came from Germany. The Germans tended to belong to either the Roman Catholic church—establishing a German-language church in Boston’s South End neighborhood—or the Lutheran church. Smaller groups of immigrants came from the Canadian maritime provinces, Great Britain, and Scandinavia. From the late nineteenth century until immigration restriction law was passed in 1924, Italians and eastern European Jews arrived in Boston in large numbers, replacing the Irish in the inner-city neighborhoods of the North End, West End, and East Boston.<sup>95</sup>

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*Province of Reason* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984); and von Hoffman, *Local Attachments*.

<sup>95</sup> Thernstrom, *The Other Bostonians*; von Hoffman, *Local Attachments*.

## The Family and Early Life of Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy

Rose Kennedy's paternal grandparents, Thomas and Rosanna Cox Fitzgerald, were part of the exodus of Irish Catholic immigrants fleeing Ireland during the 1840s and 1850s, driven away by the great famine in Ireland brought on by repeated failures of the potato crops. Thomas Fitzgerald, a potato farmer like his father, arrived in Boston sometime in the early 1850s. After an early attempt to farm with cousins in Acton, Massachusetts proved unsuccessful, Fitzgerald joined his immediate family in the North End of Boston, where he worked as a fish peddler, which required long hours and stamina but allowed Fitzgerald to begin to save money. While in Boston, Thomas Fitzgerald met Rosanna Cox, whom he married in November 1857. The couple soon began having children; their family would eventually number nine boys (in addition to another son and two daughters, all of whom died in infancy). John Fitzgerald, Rose Kennedy's father, their third surviving child, was born on February 11, 1863.

Around that time Thomas Fitzgerald joined his younger brother James in a successful grocer's and attached bar establishment. His partnership with his brother would prove lucrative enough for Thomas Fitzgerald to eventually purchase his own and several other tenement buildings. After living in cramped tenement quarters for years, the Fitzgerald family lived in relatively commodious quarters on the first two floors of the building, and rented the third floor to four Irish Catholic families, a more typical situation. As the co-owner of a grocery and saloon and a real estate investor, Thomas Fitzgerald had become one of the many proprietors of small local businesses that catered to the masses of working-class Irish.<sup>96</sup>

Having apparently inherited his father's drive and energy, young John Fitzgerald was determined to improve his family's situation as well as his own. A good student and athlete, he was involved in numerous activities and organizations, and early on demonstrated exceptional leadership qualities. In 1877 Fitzgerald was one of the few school-age children in the North End to graduate from grammar school, a significant accomplishment—most Irish-Catholic children in Boston never finished their primary education, having to go to work instead to contribute to the family's income, and usually left school when they reached the legal age to do so, at fourteen. After graduating from

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<sup>96</sup> Doris Kearns Goodwin, *The Fitzgeralds and the Kennedys* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), 3-20.

grammar school Fitzgerald contributed to the family's income and worked as a newsboy for two years, becoming the most successful one in Boston. Through a series of maneuvers that presaged his political career, he eventually gained the most coveted spot in Boston, in front of the State House at the corner of Park and Beacon Streets. That post gave him a vantage point from which to view Brahmin Boston and life on Beacon Hill, and a goal to aspire to. Fitzgerald also became a local historian, becoming a tour guide of the historic sites of the North End for tourists.<sup>97</sup>

Upon the sudden death of his forty-five year old mother—in her thirteenth pregnancy—Fitzgerald returned to school, urged by his father and brothers to continue his education and become a doctor. In 1879 Fitzgerald entered Boston Latin High School, the prestigious school founded by Protestant English colonists in 1635, which in late nineteenth century Boston was already accommodating a diverse ethnic male student body that included ambitious Irish and Jewish students in addition to Protestants. Upon completion of high school in 1884, Fitzgerald entered directly into the Harvard Medical School, one of the most respected medical academies in the country and a bastion of old upper-class Protestant New England families.<sup>98</sup> By attending premier educational institutions, the young Fitzgerald was on track to join the professional—and Protestant dominated—ranks of society.

Thomas Fitzgerald's sudden death the following year, however, ended John Fitzgerald's hopes of becoming a doctor. Although Thomas Fitzgerald left an estate worth over \$18,000—an astounding accomplishment—most of this was tied up in real estate. In order to keep his five underage younger siblings together as a family, John Fitzgerald accepted a job offer from Matthew Keany, the “ward boss” of the North End.<sup>99</sup>

The history of late nineteenth and early twentieth century urban politics in America is complex, but it may be summarized here by stating that many cities experienced the emergence of a dominant ethnic group which displaced a longstanding dominant group of a

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<sup>97</sup> Goodwin, *Fitzgeralds and Kennedys*, 37-44 (historic tours, 63-64).

<sup>98</sup> The families prominent in the Harvard Medical School and the affiliated Massachusetts General Hospital included the Warrens, Jacksons, and Bigelows; among the best known Brahmin physicians were Henry Ingersoll Bowditch and Oliver Wendell Holmes. Frederick Cople Jaher, *The Urban Establishment, Upper Strata in Boston, New York, Charleston, Chicago, and Los Angeles* (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1982), 64, 101.

<sup>99</sup> Goodwin, *Fitzgeralds and Kennedys*, 60-62, 66-68, 71-72.

different ethnic or racial background. In Boston this displacement was achieved by the Irish, who became dominant politically over the course of about thirty years, starting with the election in 1884 of an Irish mayor, Hugh O'Brien, eventually displacing the traditionally Protestant leadership. As one scholar has argued, the "symbols of the transition in progress followed closely," including the first Irish Catholic to deliver the Fourth of July oration in 1885 and the closing of the Boston Public Library on St. Patrick's Day in 1892. Hence, Fitzgerald entered politics just as the Irish were taking over the Democratic party in Boston.<sup>100</sup>

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the basic unit of political parties in cities such as Boston was the neighborhood ward organization. The leaders of these local political organizations, known as ward bosses, chose candidates and organized their election campaigns, which in those years took place frequently. In Boston, as in other cities, the ward boss helped his immigrant constituents with a myriad of problems in their daily lives, in exchange for their loyalty and votes. The ward bosses, or "party bosses" as one historian has called these men, "became necessary and useful components of urban rule, uniting the decentralized structure of government, catering to the needs of jobless newcomers," and in general "making the system work for those in the immigrant neighborhoods."<sup>101</sup> The ward boss represented a powerful paternal figure to local working-class constituents. Such a man was Matthew Keany.

Keany was well known to the Fitzgerald family; he had been a friend of Thomas Fitzgerald, and was one of three men who witnessed the dying Fitzgerald's last will. Keany therefore knew intimately the terms of the will, and understood that Fitzgerald's wishes were that his son, John, continue his medical school education. Thomas Fitzgerald's will provided that his real estate assets be used to support all of his remaining children (none of the real estate was to be sold until the youngest child, then ten years old, reached the age of twenty-one, eleven years hence). A local priest suggested placing Fitzgerald's younger brothers with relatives, an arrangement that would still not allow him to continue attending medical school without breaking up the family. This situation prompted Fitzgerald to drop out of medical school to try to keep his family together. To help the young man out, Keany

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<sup>100</sup> Peter K. Eisinger, "Ethnic Political Transition in Boston, 1884-1933: Some Lessons for Contemporary Cities," *Political Science Quarterly* 93:2 (Summer 1978): 219-220.

<sup>101</sup> Jon C. Teaford, "Finis for Tweed and Steffens: Rewriting the History of Urban Rule," *Reviews in American History* 10:4, (December 1982): 135.

offered John a position as an assistant in his ward office, where Fitzgerald soon became a ward heeler, the person who recruited and organized people to attend the local ward meetings and vote. In addition, his patron also helped Fitzgerald obtain a clerkship at the Custom House, a well-paying but relatively undemanding job. Thwarted by fate in his attempt to build a career as a professional by attending old Boston institutions, Fitzgerald found another opportunity that would allow him to rise in Boston's Irish-dominated local Democratic party. Fitzgerald's loyalty and hard work for Keany over the next few years was well repaid, as Keany taught him and helped him create his own loyal network of followers. Within a few years John Fitzgerald was successful professionally and financially enough to finally marry the woman he had courted for years, Mary Josephine (Josie) Hannon of Acton, Massachusetts.<sup>102</sup>

Josie Hannon was the daughter of the cousins with whom Thomas Fitzgerald had farmed upon his arrival in America before he joined his immediate family in the North End of Boston. They were closely related: Thomas Fitzgerald was a first cousin of Josie Hannon's mother Mary Ann Hannon, which made John and Josie second cousins.<sup>103</sup> By all accounts Josie Hannon was a shy and withdrawn young woman, and therefore the affection she and Fitzgerald shared was a classic case of opposites attracting. Her family was at first reluctant to give the young couple permission to marry because of the cousins' close blood relationship and the fear that the couple would produce weak or retarded children. An official dispensation was obtained from the archdiocese, and the couple married in Concord in September 1889. The young couple first lived in the Fitzgerald family home on Hanover Street with the unmarried Fitzgerald brothers, but within a few months Josie Fitzgerald was pregnant, so John Fitzgerald moved himself and his wife to another building the family owned, on Garden Court Street.<sup>104</sup>

Rose Elizabeth Kennedy, named for Rosanna Cox Fitzgerald and Rosanna's younger sister Elizabeth, was born in this building on July 22, 1890. A few months after Rose's birth, Fitzgerald made his first foray into elective politics, a campaign to win a seat on

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<sup>102</sup> Goodwin, *Fitzgeralds and Kennedys*, 68-76.

<sup>103</sup> Goodwin, *Fitzgeralds and Kennedys*, 77.

<sup>104</sup> Goodwin, *Fitzgeralds and Kennedys*, 89-90.

the Common Council.<sup>105</sup> With the backing of his old mentor Matthew Keany, Fitzgerald in December 1891 won his first election easily. The death of Keany in 1892 gave Fitzgerald the opportunity to move in and take over the leadership of Ward 6, which he also accomplished, becoming the boss of the North End. From then on Fitzgerald progressed from one elected political position to another, including state senator (two terms), the sole Catholic congressman (three terms), and finally as Mayor of Boston, in 1906 (for a two-year term) and again in 1910 (for the newly created four-year term).<sup>106</sup>

Although her father was away much of time, especially during the years when he commuted regularly between Washington and Boston, Rose Kennedy remembered her childhood as a happy time. The family grew to include Rose's sisters Eunice, born in 1892, and Agnes, born in 1900, and her brothers Thomas, born in 1895, John Jr., born in 1897, and Frederick, born in 1904. In 1897, in response to Josie Fitzgerald's longing to be away from the city and closer to her family in Acton, John Fitzgerald moved his growing family to West Concord. Even with its Irish farmers and agricultural laborers, West Concord retained much of the character of a traditional—and thus Protestant dominated—New England farming town. Rose remembered the house fondly and described those years in idyllic terms suggestive of the popular nineteenth-century prints published by Currier and Ives:

It was a big, old, rambling, architecturally hybrid but wonderfully comfortable house in West Concord, just a few miles from Acton, where my mother's parents lived on a hill. It was there that I spent the rest of my childhood.

They were wonderful years, full of the traditional pleasures and satisfactions of life in a small New England town. Years of serenity, order, neighborly human relationships, family affection: trips with horse and buggy to my grandparents' house, climbing apple trees and gathering wildflowers in the woods behind the house... Warm milk fresh from the cows at a neighbor's farm... Every household had a special, perfect recipe... Saturday night... was the night for baked beans and brown bread.<sup>107</sup>

The childhood Rose Kennedy remembered was one that combined an upper-middle-class mores with Irish-American social life. Rose's family provided her with horses to ride, and singing, dancing and piano lessons—much like the way other American upper-

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<sup>105</sup> Goodwin, *Fitzgeralds and Kennedys*, 92.

<sup>106</sup> Goodwin, *Fitzgeralds and Kennedys*, 92-93; 95-96; 99-103; 110; 196.

<sup>107</sup> Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy, *Times To Remember* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1974), 11-12.

middle-class families of all backgrounds brought up their children. Family vacations took them to Old Orchard Beach in Maine, where many Irish Catholics from the North End also vacationed, giving Josie and John Fitzgerald a chance to visit and mingle with old friends and political acquaintances, including the Kennedy family. Although Rose did not remember the encounter, she apparently met Joseph Kennedy during one of these trips, a fact brought up to them years later when a newspaper clipping of a photograph of the Fitzgerald and Kennedy families posing together was found.<sup>108</sup>

In these warm reminiscences of life in New England—including the traditional New England meal of baked beans and brown bread—Rose Kennedy eschewed any mention of ethnicity or religion in favor of familiar images of secular, albeit historically Protestant, New England country life. Her words suggest that Rose, either in her youth or looking back on it years later, embraced the nostalgic picture of New England perpetuated by the popular media and by extension identified herself at least partially as a child of mainstream American society.

Rose described her mother as the disciplinarian in the family, and both of her parents as devout and dutiful Catholics. She characterized her father's connection to the Church as more pragmatic, while her mother's devotion to the Catholic faith was deeply rooted in her everyday conscience and routines, which included nightly Rosary readings with the children, and the regular maintenance of a shrine to the Blessed Virgin in the Concord home.<sup>109</sup>

In 1903 the family moved again, this time to Dorchester. Fitzgerald had endured criticism as a “carpetbagger” for having his family live in West Concord while he was still legally a resident of Boston, but with plans to run for Mayor of Boston, politics required that he establish an actual residence in the city. Rose Kennedy explained her father's decision not to move back to the North End, which represented her father's roots: “Despite my father's love for the dear old North End. . .he preferred his own family to have the fresh air and open spaces of small-town and suburban Dorchester.”<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Kennedy, *Times*, 17.

<sup>109</sup> Kennedy, *Times*, 14.

<sup>110</sup> Kennedy, *Times*, 23.



By the early twentieth century, the North End had become a tenement neighborhood home to Italian and East European immigrants, which may have influenced the Kennedys' decision not to return to the North End. Rose's explanation and the social ambitions of the Fitzgerald family suggest that they probably would have preferred a spacious suburban-style house in the outer city area to the crowded working-class North End regardless of the ethnicity of North Enders.

It is also likely that Fitzgerald, now well off and able to choose from a wider variety of housing options, preferred to locate his family in a more elegant home than could be found on the narrow streets of the North End. The house on Welles Avenue in Dorchester was described in one biography as “‘a refitted mansion of the towered grandeur of the architecture of the [1870s]’ . . .it had a porch decorated with scrollwork and a prominent mansard turret. At the top of the stairs, Fitzgerald installed a large stained-glass window bearing the coats of arms of the many ancestors of the Fitzgeralds. For the center shield he picked the Gaelic motto ‘Shawn A Boo’—which meant John the Bold.”<sup>111</sup> Prominent and lavish, it was a house that represented Fitzgerald's ascendance in Boston society.

As in West Concord, by Rose Kennedy's account, life in Dorchester was comfortable and happy. Rose Kennedy attended Dorchester High School. Based on graduation lists of the school, the student population was predominantly Protestant, with a sizeable population of Irish Catholic students, and a smattering of students of other ethnicities such as Eastern European and Italian. An excellent student, she became that school's youngest graduate, at the age of fifteen. She also continued her dancing and piano lessons.<sup>112</sup>

It is unclear why Rose Fitzgerald attended a public school instead of a Roman Catholic parochial school, but the reason may have been that attending a public high school was better for the public image of her father who was pursuing a career in Boston politics. Indeed, in 1906, John Fitzgerald, by now known by the moniker, “Honey Fitz,” ran as a candidate for and won the election as mayor of Boston.

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<sup>111</sup> Gail Cameron, *Rose, A Biography of Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1971), 42. Cameron does not provide a source for the description of the house.

<sup>112</sup> List of Dorchester High graduating students for the year 1906 (year of Rose Fitzgerald's graduation), *The Dorchester Beacon*, June 30, 1906, 1-8, in Boston Public Library, Microtext Room, Boston, Mass; Kennedy, *Times*, 28.

Rose Kennedy inherited her father's drive and ambition. While still a junior in high school, Rose Kennedy applied to attend Wellesley College, a school known for its idealistic and reform-minded faculty and students, and was thrilled when she was accepted. Much to her dismay, however, her father did not allow her to go, and insisted Rose attend instead the Convent of the Sacred Heart in Boston. In denying his daughter an education at an elite Protestant women's college—something he himself had not been denied, first at Boston Latin and then at Harvard Medical School, although that education had been cut short—Fitzgerald was acceding to the advice of the powerful Irish-Catholic Archbishop William O'Connell. Years later, in 1939 Fitzgerald wrote to O'Connell and thanked him: "All Rose's children are going to the Sacred Heart and I want you to know that it was your guidance that determined the course of our children. . . ." O'Connell responded three days later: "I was very much touched by the story of Rose and the children and your goodness in referring to me as the motivating cause. . . ."<sup>113</sup>

O'Connell's apparent modesty in his reply, however, belies his authority and power over Catholic society in Boston in early and mid-twentieth century Boston. O'Connell, who later became Cardinal, had already embarked on his long career as leader of the Boston diocese (1907-1944), in which he devoted himself to building up Catholic institutions, especially schools. As James O'Toole wrote in his biography of O'Connell, the prelate "approved of higher education for young Catholics [but] thought it best accomplished in Catholic schools—just as he was eager to promote other forms of advancement."<sup>114</sup>

O'Connell's ambitious program to develop Catholic institutions expressed a sectarian impulse among a segment of the Irish Catholic population. (Other Irish, such as those who resisted O'Connell's campaign to send their children to Catholic grammar schools, were not so inclined towards separatism.) To ensure that his program succeeded, he was especially concerned that a public figure such as Mayor Fitzgerald set an example for the rest of the city's Catholic community. Fitzgerald, well aware of the Archbishop's far-reaching influence on many of his own constituents and equally anxious not to alienate the Archbishop, agreed that both Rose and her sister Agnes would attend Sacred Heart,

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<sup>113</sup> Fitzgerald to O'Connell, October 20, 1939, and O'Connell to Fitzgerald, October 23, 1939; O'Connell Papers, Box 5, Archives, Archdiocese of Boston.

<sup>114</sup> James M. O'Toole, *Militant and Triumphant: William Henry O'Connell and the Catholic Church in Boston, 1959-1944* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992), 238.

essentially putting his political career ahead of Rose's hopes.<sup>115</sup> Rose Kennedy barely mentioned this incident in her memoirs, but it remained in her mind a devastating blow. Doris Kearns Goodwin writes of an interview with Rose Kennedy: "When asked at the age of ninety to describe her greatest regret, she was silent for a moment and then, with a bitterness of tone which she did not often allow herself to betray, she said, 'My greatest regret is not having gone to Wellesley College. It is something I have felt a little sad about all my life.'"<sup>116</sup> Clearly Rose Kennedy considered this a major disappointment in her life, possibly an early stumbling block to her own intellectual ambitions.

Rose Fitzgerald instead obtained her college education at the Convent of the Sacred Heart in Boston, and with her sister Agnes, at the Blumenthal convent boarding school in Holland. The education she received was Catholic, cosmopolitan, and conservative. As Rose put it, "In those times, it was considered a great advantage for a young person to have gone to school 'abroad' and I find myself still in agreement with this. . . . Blumenthal's students were predominantly German and French and mainly from the aristocracy or at least the well to do. No distinctions were made, no talk allowed about titles."<sup>117</sup> The curriculum at each of the schools was rigorous, ranging from the fine arts and literature to religion and theological rhetoric. At Blumenthal in particular, girls from wealthy or well-to-do families were trained on how to run a household: "Blumenthal's curriculum was unusually concerned with the practical things of this world. It was assumed that the girls when they married would be devoting their lives to *Kinder, Kirche, und Küche* (children, church, and cooking) and needed to prepare for all the duties implied in that expression. It was further assumed that. . . they would have servants to do all the actual work, but in order to instruct and supervise the servants and to run an efficient household they should be proficient in what has been called 'domestic science.'"<sup>118</sup> Rose finished her formal education at the Sacred Heart Convent in Manhattanville, New York, graduating in 1910. Instead of the education she had hoped to get at Wellesley College, which likely would have emphasized independent intellectual thought, Rose received an education that emphasized her future role as wife, mother, and woman of faith and virtue. In this regard, the ideals of

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<sup>115</sup> For the often tense relationships between O'Connell and powerful Boston politicians, including Fitzgerald, see O'Toole, *Militant and Triumphant*, Chapter 6.

<sup>116</sup> Goodwin, *Fitzgeralds and Kennedys*, 144.

<sup>117</sup> Kennedy, *Times*, 31.

<sup>118</sup> Kennedy, *Times*, 32.

her schooling were closer to the nineteenth century ideal of the American woman as the moral and spiritual anchor of the home than to the liberal reformism of Wellesley College's professor Vida Scudder.<sup>119</sup> Rose Kennedy dutifully would assume the traditional wifely roles in her marriage, to which she would add her own brand of independence and innovation.

By the time Rose Fitzgerald completed her education abroad, she was a well-educated, well-traveled and cultured young lady who could speak several languages. As the Mayor's daughter, she was a public figure who often accompanied her father on outings—her mother preferring to remain a private figure—and was accustomed to being part of the constant excitement her father generated. After finishing her formal education, Rose, her intellectual ambitions not yet fulfilled, continued to pursue learning. When she returned to Boston, Rose took courses in language, art, and music. She was the youngest member of the Public Library Investigating Committee (which recommended books for children) and the member of a number of clubs. Rose also continued to be involved with the Catholic Church and volunteered to teach Sunday school.<sup>120</sup>

The picture of Rose that emerges during these years is that of a confident and ambitious young woman who, despite the traditional roles of wife and mother that she was being trained for, had aspirations of transcending those prescribed roles. Rose clearly relished her status as her father's companion in his public life, a prominent role that provided her with the opportunity to see herself as an independent and intelligent woman. These glimmers of independence—her taste for public life, her choice of Wellesley, her continued emphasis on her education—give some indication that Rose perhaps had not planned an entirely traditional role of a stay-at-home wife and mother. Rose in her memoirs would stress how efficient (even businesslike) her mothering and household supervision had been, and how she and her husband were equal partners in their marriage. Even these clues seem to indicate that Rose's ambitions perhaps before her marriage had

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<sup>119</sup> Scudder graduated from the Girl's Latin School (the school's first graduating class) and Smith College (its fourth graduating class) and studied at Oxford, before becoming a professor of English at Wellesley. A Christian Socialist and ardent promoter of the settlement house movement, she was less interested in the feminist goal of equal rights than in persuading educated women to find meaning in their lives by working for economic equality and social reform. Mann, *Yankee Reformers*, 217-228.

<sup>120</sup> Kennedy, *Times*, 47-48.

led her to hope for a somewhat less prescribed role than the one she entered into, and for which she had been trained. (See Chapter Three for more details.)

During this time Rose Fitzgerald also prepared for her coming-out party on January 2, 1911. A lavish affair involving months of preparation, the debut was held at the Welles Avenue home, attended by over 450 guests, including prominent politicians, bankers, doctors, lawyers, priests, all of the members of the Boston City Council, and the governor of Massachusetts. Goodwin notes that the guests who attended represented an “unusually cosmopolitan gathering, including men and women prominent in both Catholic and Protestant circles. . . . [but] the young people were almost entirely Catholic.”<sup>121</sup>

It was customary for a prominent, wealthy and well-educated young society woman to be invited to join high-society women’s clubs such as the Junior League and the Vincent Club. As one biographer explains, these “clubs were the core of the Boston social system. Here the young debutantes launched their social careers under the guise of doing charitable work; to be *anyone* you had to belong.”<sup>122</sup> No invitations were extended to Rose Fitzgerald, however, an exclusion which may have been because of the Protestant membership of the clubs or perhaps because her father, recently elected mayor in a mean-spirited campaign, was considered anathema to most of the city’s upper-crust. Rose’s response to her exclusion was to create the Ace of Clubs, designed to “foster an interest in the social, educational, cultural and charitable activities of its members,” a club whose membership was open only to young women who had gone to school abroad, and hence an exclusive institution like the others.<sup>123</sup>

Rose Fitzgerald’s response to this snub is interesting because it highlights her perception and later account of Boston as a place divided between high Irish Catholic society in Boston, of which she was a central figure, and the “other” long-established Protestant society. In her autobiography Rose Kennedy referred to the “two societies” in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Boston: One of them was almost entirely Protestant and was mainly of English descent, through with admixtures of Scottish, Scot-Irish, and even some Irish. . . . in any case, all descended from colonial or

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<sup>121</sup> Goodwin, *Fitzgeralds and Kennedys*, 202.

<sup>122</sup> Cameron, *Rose*, 60-61.

<sup>123</sup> Laurence Leamer, *The Kennedy Women: The Saga of an American Family* (New York: Villard Books, 1994), 113. Leamer also notes: “Years later Rose admitted to her daughter-in-law, Joan Kennedy, that she had formed the club in part because she [had been excluded from] the Junior League.”

early American settlers, blended into the general breed called Yankee...or 'proper Bostonians.' Their main citadel and symbol was...Back Bay where wealthy and distinguished families...lived serenely amid ancestral portraits and mahogany sideboards and silver tea services in spacious houses on large grounds. With the advantages of inherited wealth and status...they controlled the banks, insurance companies, the big law firms, the big shipping and mercantile enterprises, and almost all the usual routes to success, and thus were a self-perpetuating aristocracy. They had many admirable qualities. But they were a closed society.

The other predominant group consisted of Irish Catholics, descendants of those impoverished hordes who had fled from the great famines of the 1840s to 1860s. Through hard effort and much ingenuity, often by way of politics but in every other way open to them, large numbers of these second- and third-generation offspring had achieved prosperity, and many had achieved a cultural level fully equal to that of the Back Bay Brahmins.<sup>124</sup>

Some evidence supports the thesis of two separate societies existing side-by-side. Each "society" had clubs that corresponded to one in the other, for example, the Protestant Junior League and the Irish Catholic Cecilian Club were two organizations aimed at performing good works. The male Protestant elite joined the Masonic Lodges, which by papal edict Catholics were prohibited from joining, but Catholic men enrolled in the Catholic fraternal organization, the Knights of Columbus. Additionally, as Goodwin notes: "So separate were these two societies in the first decade of the twentieth century that the newspapers carried two separate social columns on different pages, 'one about them, one about us,' Rose recalled."<sup>125</sup> It must be noted, Boston was a sectarian society in which there a startling array of organizations and institutions for every kind of grouping imaginable, not only along ethnic and religious lines, but also bringing together people who shared types of jobs or work places or leisure interests.<sup>126</sup>

Nonetheless both Rose and Joe Kennedy returned time and again to the "us vs. them" theme, when they experienced or remembered the occasional disappointment or rejection in a Protestant-dominated society. Both Rose and Joe Kennedy, however, were

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<sup>124</sup> Kennedy, *Times*, 49-50.

<sup>125</sup> Goodwin, *Fitzgeralds and Kennedys*, 203.

<sup>126</sup> von Hoffman, *Local Attachments*, 119-166.

part of the prosperous third generation of descendants of Irish immigrants that she referred to, far removed from the hardships their grandparents had endured. Both were ambitious and driven. The occasional professional or societal setbacks attributable to prejudice against Irish-Catholics, although they clearly rankled even years later, rarely slowed their ascent to wealth and success. In any case, Rose's ambitions as a young Irish Catholic high society woman did not include a Protestant husband. In 1914 Rose Fitzgerald finally married the man she had long been in love with, Joseph Kennedy.<sup>127</sup>

### The Family and Early Life of Joseph Kennedy

In many ways Joseph Kennedy's background was similar to Rose Fitzgerald's. His grandparents, Patrick Kennedy and Bridget Murphy, also emigrated from Ireland in the 1840s, although unlike many other Irish, they left behind a relatively prosperous tenant farm, made unprofitable because of the increasingly high rents British landowners were exacting as a result of the potato crop disasters. Kennedy landed on what was known as "Noddle Island," what we now know as East Boston, and soon after married Bridget Murphy. Patrick worked there as a cooper; Bridget worked as a hairdresser at Jordan and Marsh Company in Boston and later opened a variety store on Noddle Island, where she became a well-known figure who could help other Irish immigrants with finding jobs or housing. Soon after the birth of their fourth child, Patrick Joseph Kennedy, in January 1858, the elder Patrick Kennedy died of cholera and Bridget was left to raise the children alone.<sup>128</sup>

Patrick Joseph Kennedy, or "P.J." as he was known, grew up in East Boston, working on the waterfront and eventually opening a saloon. The bar became a place where, like his mother before him, people came to him with their problems for help. In 1885 P.J. Kennedy was elected to the Massachusetts House of Representatives from Ward 2, East Boston, with strong backing from the liquor lobby. Soon after, he opened two more bars, one in the Maverick House hotel, and eventually a liquor import business, P.J. Kennedy and Company

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<sup>127</sup> Kennedy, *Times*, 69.

<sup>128</sup> Ronald Kessler, *The Sins of the Father: Joseph P. Kennedy and the Dynasty He Founded* (New York: Warner Books, Inc.), 6-8.

in Boston's South End.<sup>129</sup> Within a couple of years, in 1887, Kennedy married Mary Augusta Hickey of Brockton. Mary Hickey was from a comfortable family, the daughter of another bar owner with three prominent and successful brothers, one a police lieutenant, another a physician who had graduated from Harvard Medical School, and the third a funeral director.<sup>130</sup>

The following year, the couple's first child, Joseph Patrick Kennedy was born. By that time the young family lived in comfortable surroundings in a three-story house in East Boston. After five terms as a state representative, P.J. Kennedy was elected to the Massachusetts Senate. He was also appointed city wire commissioner, making him the man responsible for the electrification of Boston.<sup>131</sup> He also invested in Suffolk Coal Company and, when Joe Kennedy was still a toddler, was an incorporator and vice president of Columbia Trust Company. With his continuing political successes—reelection to the Massachusetts Senate, acting fire commissioner, and two more appointments as wire commissioner—Kennedy became one of the most powerful ward bosses in late nineteenth-century Boston, along with Honey Fitz in the North End, and other Irish politicians such as Joseph Corbett of Charlestown and James Donovan of the South End, as well as a wealthy banker. After a move to a large brick mansion on Webster Avenue in East Boston, Joe Kennedy grew up enjoying the privileges and comforts of wealth, which, in the words of one niece, included “servants and teams of horses, lovely clothing, and European travel.”<sup>132</sup>

Joe Kennedy, whether taking after his father or through his own motives, proved to be extremely ambitious from an early age. As a young boy he attended several parochial schools and worked a number of odd jobs, pushing himself to succeed at each. Much like John Fitzgerald before him, he envisioned taking his first steps to professional success in traditional Boston Protestant educational institutions—first Boston Latin School, and then Harvard College. Although Joe Kennedy was not a particularly good student at Boston Latin, he was well-liked and an outstanding athlete, and in his senior year was awarded the

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<sup>129</sup> Goodwin, *Fitzgeralds and Kennedys*, 227; Kessler, 8.

<sup>130</sup> Goodwin, *Fitzgeralds and Kennedys*, 227; Kessler, 9. Note: Kessler's account of the three Hickey brothers differs from Goodwin's. He states that Charles Hickey was the mayor of Brockton, Jim Hickey was a police captain, and John Hickey was a doctor in Winthrop. Neither book cites a source for this information.

<sup>131</sup> Kessler, *Sins*, 10.

<sup>132</sup> Kessler, *Sins*, 8-12.



John F. Fitzgerald cup, donated and awarded by Fitzgerald, for having the highest baseball batting average among Boston high school boys.<sup>133</sup> As a prestigious school, Boston Latin prepared its students to enter Harvard College and other schools in the Ivy League. It is questionable if Kennedy's scholastic performance at Boston Latin—he received generally poor grades—would have granted him admission to Harvard College had it not been for P.J. Kennedy's prominent position in Boston politics, and for the possible assistance of John Fitzgerald, a political ally, if not a personal friend, of P.J.'s. Kennedy biographer Ronald Kessler noted that the two often “traded favors”—for example, in his first act as mayor Fitzgerald reappointed Kennedy as wire commissioner—and speculated, without any supporting evidence, that at P. J. Kennedy's request Fitzgerald may have intervened with the Harvard admissions committee on Joseph Kennedy's behalf.<sup>134</sup>

Kennedy's choice of Harvard, perhaps predictably, was especially irksome to Archbishop O'Connell. As O'Connell biographer James O'Toole explains, “O'Connell's concerns for Catholics at Harvard was not merely that they would lose their faith. He was also worried that they would lose their docility and deference to church authority...The realization that Catholics were now “making it” [in Protestant society] meant that even greater diligence was needed, lest in the midst of newfound prosperity they lose touch with the [Catholic principle of]...‘obedience.’”<sup>135</sup> Young Joseph Kennedy was determined to “make it,” and to him, that meant going to Harvard.

If Kennedy had hoped for entry into several exclusive Harvard clubs, however, his hopes—as Rose's would be before her coming out—were disappointed. He was denied entry to the most exclusive and prestigious clubs, such as the Porcellian and the Fly, clubs whose membership were exclusively Brahmin, a rejection he felt keenly.<sup>136</sup> Nevertheless, Kennedy was active in a number of other clubs during his college years, including exclusive clubs such as the Hasty Pudding and Delta Upsilon. Already the ambitious businessman, while still in college Joe Kennedy started a bus tour business with a friend. The business was successful for several years; Kennedy emerged three years later having profited to the

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<sup>133</sup> David E. Koskoff, *Joseph P. Kennedy: A Life and Times* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc.), 17.

<sup>134</sup> Kessler, *Sins*, 16-17.

<sup>135</sup> O'Toole, *Militant*, 238-239.

<sup>136</sup> Koskoff, *Joseph P. Kennedy*, 19.

tune of \$5,000, an outstanding sum of money for a full-time college student. After graduating from Harvard Kennedy worked at the bank his father had helped found, the Columbia Trust, and then got a job working as an assistant bank examiner (a job his father helped him land through connections).<sup>137</sup>

## The Early Career of Joseph Kennedy

The story of Joseph Kennedy's early career is one of determined efforts to succeed in business and social life. He and Rose Fitzgerald had conducted their courtship for several years since they were teenagers. Their fathers, of course, were political cronies and knew each other well. Although John Fitzgerald had hoped for a son-in-law with a much more impressive lineage or inherited wealth and continually tried to interest Rose in other suitors, the couple had remained steadfast in their affections. Several biographers have suggested that Fitzgerald hoped Hugh Nawn, the son of close friend and political ally Harry Nawn, a wealthy contractor, would eventually marry Rose.<sup>138</sup>

The final hurdle to Fitzgerald's acceptance of Kennedy as a son-in-law came in 1914 as the Columbia Trust Company was almost sold to another institution by stockholders. Wishing to avert a merger of the institution his father had helped to found and of which the elder Kennedy was a vice-president, Joseph Kennedy borrowed huge amounts of money from banking acquaintances to become its controlling stockholder. On January 29, 1914 Kennedy became the president of the Columbia Trust Company and, at age twenty-five, was thought to be the country's youngest bank president. With such a promising and ambitious young man as Rose's desired husband, John Fitzgerald could no longer openly object to the marriage. And Rose Fitzgerald, the Mayor's daughter, was a prize catch for Kennedy, one of the many reasons he had pursued the relationship for so many years.<sup>139</sup>

In striking contrast to Rose's lavish, showy coming-out party, the wedding was a small, private family ceremony. Although not conclusively, biographers have attributed the surprisingly modest nature of the wedding to several possible factors, most notably Fitzgerald's recent withdrawal from the mayoral race after a scandal in which he was alleged to have had a romantic relationship with a young woman (although never proven, the

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<sup>137</sup> Koskoff, *Joseph P. Kennedy*, 20.

<sup>138</sup> Goodwin, *Fitzgeralds and Kennedys*, 219.

<sup>139</sup> Koskoff, *Joseph P. Kennedy*, 21-22.

Elizabeth “Toodles” Ryan affair caused the Fitzgerald family much embarrassment and distress), and Fitzgerald’s reported longstanding strong dislike of Joe Kennedy. These explanations, however, belong to the realm of speculation.<sup>140</sup>

What the Kennedy wedding lacked in glitter, it made up in prestige. The couple was married by Cardinal William O’Connell in his study, a rare honor. “I’d always wanted to be married by a Cardinal and I was,” Joe would remark later.<sup>141</sup> Whether or not the young Kennedy had hoped to be married by a cardinal is debatable, but he certainly took great pride in it.

By all accounts, Kennedy’s tenure as president of the Columbia Trust Company was successful. Kennedy was a popular banker, remembered in later years by former patrons as taking a personal approach towards all of the bank’s patrons, regardless of their socio-economic status, perhaps like the relationships his father as a ward boss had developed with his constituents. One Republican politician, Tom Pappas, remembered that when he was an orphaned young man of sixteen left with several businesses to run and debts to pay off, Joe Kennedy “‘was wonderful’ ” to him, and that Kennedy had “made all his problems disappear.” Kennedy also received an appointment from his father-in-law, then Mayor of Boston, as the city-appointed director (there were three directors, one of whom was appointed by the Mayor’s office) of the Collateral Loan Company, a “large semipublic pawnshop established by the city to protect the poor from ‘loan sharks.’” Kennedy took on the task of examining the financial records of the company and discovered that large sums of money had been embezzled, generating considerable publicity. That position was short lived—Kennedy resigned after only a few months, unable to make headway in the case.<sup>142</sup>

Kennedy took the next step in his career in 1917, just after the United States entered into World War I. Having decided against enlisting on moral grounds—the only one of his circle not to join the armed services—Kennedy received a job offer from the Bethlehem Steel Corporation as assistant general manager at Bethlehem’s Fore River Shipyards in Quincy, Massachusetts. After being recommended for the position by both Guy Currier, Bethlehem’s lawyer, and his father-in-law, John Fitzgerald, based on his financial skills and

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<sup>140</sup> Goodwin, *Fitzgeralds and Kennedys*, 252-253, 258-259.

<sup>141</sup> Koskoff, *Joseph P. Kennedy*, 22. Koskoff’s source is listed as: *Boston Globe* eve. ed. April 28, 1944, p. 5.

<sup>142</sup> Koskoff, *Joseph P. Kennedy*, 23.

expertise, Kennedy accepted the position, which put him in charge of 2,200 shipbuilding workers. The salary was \$15,000; the job, wrote Kennedy later, helped him to feel he “ ‘was doing something worthwhile for his country.’ ”<sup>143</sup>

As a young businessman, Joe Kennedy continually sought opportunities to mingle with members of Boston’s aristocracy. After two unsuccessful attempts to be named a trustee of the Massachusetts Electric Company—rejections which the company’s president informed Kennedy were because of “hostility towards Irish Catholics”—Kennedy was finally named to the board. When asked by a friend why he had been so insistent on getting on the board, Kennedy’s response reportedly was: “Do you know a better way to meet people like the Saltonstalls?” Among other trustees on the board of the Massachusetts Electric Company were powerful Boston men such as Charles Francis Adams (grandson of John Quincy Adams) and Galen Stone, of the Hayden, Stone and Company brokerage house. These men, Kennedy calculated, would become useful business allies and represented the “right connections.” Kennedy’s third, and successful, attempt to join the board was announced on the same day, May 29, 1917, that his second son John F. Kennedy, the future president, was born. Kennedy’s persistence in trying to join the board of the Massachusetts Electric Company would pay off in several ways. After the end of World War I, Galen Stone offered Kennedy a position directing Stone’s office at Hayden, Stone and Company. Kennedy began work there in June 1919, and quickly learned about the stock market, learning how to manipulate stock in an age before market regulations. It was as a broker that Kennedy first became interested in the film industry, which would eventually occupy much of his professional time.<sup>144</sup>

Joe Kennedy did not seek to cultivate connections only in business terms. He made consistent attempts to join (or accepted invitations to join) primarily Protestant social and golf clubs. In a letter dated August 5, 1919 Kennedy wrote to Mr. N.W. Emerson at the Woodland Golf Club thanking him for rushing his membership to the club. He was a member until at least 1922.<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> Goodwin, *Fitzgeralds and Kennedys*, 277-278. Koskoff, *Joseph P. Kennedy*, 24.

<sup>144</sup> Koskoff, *Joseph P. Kennedy*, 23-25.

<sup>145</sup> Joseph P. Kennedy to Mr. N.W. Emerson, August 15, 1919, Box 40, folder “Clubs, 1920, 1922-1925,” JPK papers, JFK Library. During his years as Ambassador to Great Britain, Kennedy appeared to sympathize with the Nazis. William E. Leuchtenburg, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1963), 288.

So intent was the young and ambitious Kennedy on affiliating with establishment Protestant or Brahmin organizations that he considered joining the Republican Party and soon was recruited for an old-line Republican social club. (In his later political and governmental career, Kennedy would be a conservative, even an arch-conservative.) On October 11, 1920 Louis A. Coolidge sent Kennedy a letter soliciting his membership in the prestigious Middlesex Club in Boston, stating: "It [The Middlesex Club] is the oldest Republican club in New England. It is one of the best known Republican clubs in the United States." The letterhead listed the names of the various officers of the club, including: Louis A. Coolidge, President; Charles H. Ramsey, Treasurer; and the Honorable Henry Cabot Lodge, Vice President. Kennedy accepted the membership. Several days later he received another letter from Coolidge, indicating "We welcome you with open arms. I know you can be of great assistance."<sup>146</sup>

The invitation from the Middlesex Club, usually mentioned only briefly, if at all, in biographies, seems unusual on several levels. As a Democrat, from a powerful Democratic political family, it is difficult to ascertain exactly what Kennedy's contribution to the club was expected to provide, and how Kennedy himself would benefit from membership. A closer look at the membership of the club, however, may help provide some clues to Kennedy's acceptance of the invitation to join the club.

The most intriguing piece of possible evidence is the presence of prominent Brahmin Henry Cabot Lodge as one of the club's officers. As historian Peter Eisinger has noted, much of Brahmin society in Boston radically altered their views of the Irish immigrant population during the decades between 1880 and 1910. In 1881 Lodge, one of the most powerful Republican politicians of his era, wrote that the Irish were "a very undesirable addition. . . . They were a hard-drinking, idle, quarrelsome and disorderly class. . . and did much to give to government and to politics the character for weakness and turbulence. . . ." According to Eisinger, Lodge, "a prime mover in the U.S. Senate to restrict the flow and origins of immigration, blamed the immigrants (by whom he chiefly meant the Irish) for the rise of professional politicians, municipal corruption, city debts, and

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<sup>146</sup> Louis A. Coolidge to Joseph P. Kennedy, October 11, 1920, Box 40, folder "Clubs, 1920, 1922-1925," JPK papers, JFK Library.

inefficient urban administration, particularly in Boston.”<sup>147</sup> By 1909, however, through close political working experience with the Irish, and arguing for restrictions on Southern and Eastern European immigrants, Lodge stated of the Irish that they “presented no difficulties of assimilation, and they adopted and sustained our system as easily as the people of earlier settlement.”<sup>148</sup> While at least some of Lodge’s change of heart can be attributed to his fear of recent immigrants, his comments also reflect the advances the Irish had made in terms of assimilation into Boston Protestant society. Lodge’s presence as an officer of the Republican Middlesex Club therefore takes on a potential new meaning in light of the acceptance of Kennedy, a Democrat. Lodge was part of the Brahmin aristocracy, and yet had declared himself sympathetic, even laudatory, of the Irish population’s successful assimilation into Boston society. Of course, Lodge and his fellow Republicans may have looked at the matter in politically practical terms: the presence of Irish-Americans might broaden the party’s appeal. More research is necessary to determine the exact nature of the Middlesex Club, its members and its activities, before coming to any definitive conclusions about Kennedy’s involvement with the club. (Ironically, many years later in 1952, Joseph’s son, John Fitzgerald Kennedy ran successfully for the U. S. Senate against Henry Cabot Lodge Jr.)<sup>149</sup>

Kennedy nonetheless also experienced occasional rejection, most notably the ordeal and eventual rebuff he endured when he applied for a summer membership (i.e., finite) to the Cohasset Country Club, an incident that has been related by several biographers. In the summer of 1922 Kennedy applied for the summer membership with the expectation of spending time with friends and business acquaintances, including Bob Fisher and Dudley Dean, who summered in Cohasset. The summer membership should have been, in Doris Kearns Goodwin’s words, a “routine request.”<sup>150</sup> Bob Fisher was a close friend of Kennedy’s from their Harvard days; Dean was the treasurer of a company that had its

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<sup>147</sup> Eisinger, “Ethnic Political Transition,” 228. Lodge successfully opposed U.S. membership in the League of Nations during his tenure as Senate majority leader (1918-1924).

<sup>148</sup> Eisinger, “Ethnic Political Transition,” 230.

<sup>149</sup> Amanda Smith, Kennedy’s granddaughter, describes Louis Arthur Coolidge (1861-1925), an assistant secretary of the treasury under President Theodore Roosevelt, as Lodge’s “former private secretary,” and a “Republican Party activist.” Amanda Smith, ed., *Hostage to Fortune: The Letters of Joseph P. Kennedy* (New York: Viking, 2001), 26.

<sup>150</sup> Goodwin, *Fitzgeralds and Kennedys*, 325.

offices in the same building as Hayden, Stone and Company. A letter from Dean to Fisher on May 7, 1922 obliquely referred to potential trouble on the horizon:

I had a chat with Hugh Bancroft [one of the election committee members] Saturday. . . .Bancroft is not the controlling spirit and he knows of Mr. K. very favorably; but he emphasized that a great many of the members regarded the outfit as a rather close corporation in a social way because of long acquaintance and not very heavily on the golf end per se. In other words, those having that special regard wanted to see old faces, continually. . . .it looks as tho it wouldn't be as easy sailing as I imagined when you broached the matter. However. . . .I will gladly see it to a conclusion and do all I can.<sup>151</sup>

Dean, Bancroft, and others exchanged correspondence about the matter during the entire summer, but by August the application was permanently stalled. It was clear that despite Kennedy's successes in business, he could still experience rejection from the Protestant establishment, whose members might tolerate certain Irish Americans in political clubs where social standing was less important, but apparently not at social summer clubs where family status was crucial. Another Harvard friend of Kennedy's, Ralph Lowell, later remarked: "It was petty and cruel. The women of Cohasset looked down on the daughter of Honey Fitz and who was Joe Kennedy but the son of Pat, the barkeeper." This comment, from a scion of one of Boston's most exalted Brahmin families, reveals that class prejudice as well as ethno-religious intolerance was at work.<sup>152</sup>

These three cases—an application in 1919, an acceptance in 1920, another application in 1922—illustrate Kennedy's carefully orchestrated attempts to achieve a foothold in Protestant circles. The timing of these attempts to assimilate further into Protestant society also coincides with the family's move to a larger home in a tonier area of the Coolidge Corner neighborhood. Since Kennedy hardly had the time for leisurely activities such as golf, it seems likely that he applied (or accepted invitations) to golf and other types of clubs to become acquainted with their prominent, powerful, and wealthy members. In a way Kennedy's strategy towards clubs can be seen as the second part of an ambitious "two-pronged" approach, along with board and business associations, in which his goal was to become associated with other men like him, or who could somehow advance his business and social aspirations. It was an approach that occasionally failed, as in the Cohasset Golf Club incident, but that more often proved successful. In this light, Kennedy

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<sup>151</sup> Fisher to Dean, May 7, 1922, Box 40, folder "Clubs, 1920, 1922-1925," JPK papers, JFK Library.

<sup>152</sup> Goodwin, *Fitzgeralds and Kennedys*, 326.

emerges as a kind of Irish-Catholic Silas Lapham (the hero of William Dean Howells's famous novel set in Boston), a parvenu almost desperate to be accepted among the highest ranks of society.

Other little-known, unpublished documents give clues to Joe Kennedy and his quest for professional success. Although there is little of his preserved correspondence of any kind from the very earliest years of his marriage, a number of letters from the years 1921 on document the fact that all, or nearly all, of his business clothes were custom made by Schanz of New York City, apparently a high-end tailoring outfit. (The letterhead displays simply "Schanz" and the address: 14 East 40<sup>th</sup> Street, New York.) Discussions in the letters range from cloth to changing measurements (Kennedy's, when a custom-made pair of pants fit badly), to negotiations over price—Kennedy paid \$35.00 for a pair of "trousers" in 1921. He also bought coats and vests from Mr. Schanz, all custom-made to his specifications.<sup>153</sup> Custom-made clothes were clearly a luxury item, at a time when manufactured clothes were available and designed to be affordable for young businessmen. In contrast a firm advertising in the *Boston Globe* offered "All wool 2-trouser suits for young men," including two pairs of pants, a jacket, and a vest, for \$39.50, only a little more than Kennedy paid Schanz for a pair of pants. Joe's practice of ordering custom-made suits, which were better-fitting and therefore better in appearance, can be understood as one more way in which Joe sought professional acceptance and success, and helped to express his importance to the professional world.<sup>154</sup>

## The Brookline Years

As a young engaged couple, Rose Fitzgerald and Joe Kennedy looked for a house during the summer previous to their marriage. Kennedy purchased the home at 83 Beals Street in September 1914, the month prior to their marriage, and the house was fully furnished before they married. Rose explained their reasons for buying a house, ascribing them to Kennedy's need for privacy:

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<sup>153</sup> Box 40, folder "Miscellaneous business & personal correspondence, 1917-1923," JPK papers, JFK Library.

<sup>154</sup> See, for example, *The Boston Globe*, July 1, 1919, advertisements for C.F. Hovey Co., 6 (referred to above), Jordan Marsh, 16, or L.P. Hollander & Co. (for coats), 4.



Most of our young married friends lived in rented apartments, and as a place to start our life together an apartment would have been perfectly fine for me. But not for Joe. From the very beginning, “home” was the center of his world and the only place that really, finally, counted in his plans, no matter where those plans took him from time to time. Moreover, despite all his capabilities for persuasion and leadership—tete a tete across a table, or as a team captain, or as administrator of vast enterprises in business and government, as he would be in years to come—he had a strong need for privacy, for independence, for being able to choose the people he wanted to be with in close association. In later years when he became a leading figure in Wall Street he was known as a “lone wolf.” These traits of temperament were manifested in the first big decision he made for us. Home could not be an apartment but had to be a house. I gladly seconded the notion.<sup>155</sup>

Joe Kennedy, already heavily in debt because of his dealings with the Columbia Trust Company, had to borrow money to purchase the home. As one biographer has noted, the house itself was probably not the couple’s first preference. In her own notes Rose referred to the house as “rather a common looking little house in Brookline.”<sup>156</sup> They were buying a slightly used house in a developing neighborhood, but had no control over the size or appearance of the home, suggesting purchase of the home was a compromise, what we might call today a “starter” or “first” home. Biographer Charles Higham notes:

Joe Kennedy’s was the only house in the neighborhood to have been built, some six years earlier, [for previous occupants] rather than being custom-built for its owners. . . . This humiliating fact must have bitten into Rose’s soul. The effect of the house was externally not displeasing, as formal and artificial as a doll’s house. But inside, it was, as it remains today, oddly unprepossessing. Too many small rooms were jammed into the limited space. The top floor, or attic, housed the maids. Directly below, the master bedroom was plain and almost square. . . . Next door was a tiny sewing room. There was only one bathroom, shared by everyone, including the servants.<sup>157</sup>

In fact, we have no evidence that 83 Beals Street was unusual in being built by a speculative builder—common practice in Boston’s outer city and suburban areas—or that Rose felt humiliated by the purchase of a previously occupied house, yet it is true that larger homes existed on the other end of Beals Street. Number 83 Beals Street was the last house on the road at that time; undeveloped fields occupied the space next to and across the house, a feature that pleased Rose: “There was a sense of openness in the neighborhood, with a vacant lot on one side of us and another across the street, and fine big shade trees

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<sup>155</sup> Kennedy, *Times*, 70.

<sup>156</sup> Smith, *Hostage*, 14.

<sup>157</sup> Charles Higham, *Rose: The Life and Times of Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy* (New York: Simon & Schuster Inc., Pocket Books, 1995), 52-53.

lining the sidewalks.”<sup>158</sup> She stated the open area reminded her of the Dorchester house she grew up in, which was surrounded by “five or six acres of land,” although her family’s Welles Avenue property was probably closer an acre in size.<sup>159</sup> She also stated that the choice of Brookline was ideal because “it was the place where many of the newly married couples were living.” The house had other features as well that must have appealed to the couple. It was near the bustling retail center of Coolidge Corner with stores and grocers within walking distance. In addition, the trolley was nearby, putting Boston within easy reach (for Rose, as Joseph never commuted by trolley).

A number of biographers have noted as particularly significant in terms of the couple’s choice of neighborhood, however, was that the town of Brookline was an exclusive, Protestant suburb of Boston. Why would an upwardly mobile young Irish-Catholic couple, each from a wealthy and prominent Irish-Catholic political family, choose a community so seemingly alien to their own roots? The answer to that is speculation, of course, since apparently neither Rose or Joseph Kennedy left a recorded document addressing this issue but it seems clear from Rose Kennedy’s statement that they “chose Brookline”<sup>160</sup> that their choice of town was deliberate. Certainly biographers have extrapolated, particularly from Joe Kennedy’s remarks and actions through the years beginning well before his marriage, that the couple’s ambitions extended to being recognized as part of high society. While not denying their Irish-Catholic heritage, the Kennedys aspired to the kind of respect and recognition they would have expected had they been from a Brahmin family.

In the light of their desire to be accepted as members of old-line Protestant society, the Beals Street home appears to have been a compromise between status and affordability, and a temporary one at that. Neighbors noted that while on Beals Street, the Kennedys kept

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<sup>158</sup> Kennedy, *Times*, 70.

<sup>159</sup> Rose Kennedy undated transcript, 1. JOFI files. The Fitzgeralds’ neighborhood on Welles Avenue was already developed by 1904. In 1910, the Fitzgerald property comprised 29,426 square feet. In addition, Mary Fitzgerald (the house’s official owner) also owned two adjacent lots of 6,000 sq. feet each on Harley Street in the back of the Welles Avenue property (the house was on the corner of Welles and Harley), which in effect extended the back yard and perhaps inspired Rose’s sense of the expansive size of the family property. Also, while the Welles Avenue house was larger than most in the neighborhood, there were two or three other nearby properties with houses that were as large or even slightly larger. Atlas of the City of Boston, Dorchester (Philadelphia: G.W. Bromley and Co.), 1904. 1910.

<sup>160</sup> Rose Kennedy undated transcript, 1. JOFI files.

to themselves and did not mingle. In later years a neighbor commented: “‘They used to say that Joe was trying to get up in the world. He was trying to promote himself and his family.’”<sup>161</sup> Joe Kennedy’s granddaughter Amanda Smith, in her edited collection of Kennedy’s letters, notes that “Joseph Kennedy was a man who has been often (and quite accurately) characterized as self-conscious and hyperconcerned about the image that he and his family projected.”<sup>162</sup> It is highly likely that although the Kennedys chose Brookline deliberately, they thought of the house at 83 Beals Street as a way station they would occupy before moving on to bigger and better accommodations.

Indeed, one should not make too much of the choice of Brookline as an upper-crust Protestant enclave. As explained in Chapter One, in the early twentieth century although the old Yankee elite retained control of the town government, Brookline’s population included a significant number of Irish-Catholic working-class families and an increasing number of white-collar workers.

Despite the home’s modest size, the Kennedys sought to emulate the life of privilege and wealth to which they aspired through displays of taste and wealth. They hired maids and nannies to perform most of the household and childrearing chores—a topic to be discussed in detail in Chapter Three—while Rose supervised the household, as she had already been trained to do.

As a young married woman, Rose was determined—as she had been as a young unmarried woman—to be an educated, energetic individual who interacted with the world outside her home. Rose’s attitude reflected the values current during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries of educated upper-class women (especially Protestant but by no means exclusively so), who sought cultivation and personal expression outside the home through such means as women’s literary clubs. Over the course of the twentieth century, such views would gradually become obsolete as upper-middle-class women increasingly attended colleges and pursued careers, drawing a starker contrast with those who continued to be “only” stay-at-home mothers.<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> Leamer, *Kennedy Women*, 155.

<sup>162</sup> Smith, *Hostage*, xvii.

<sup>163</sup> Theodora Penny Martin, *The Sounds of Our Own Voices: Women's Study Clubs, 1860-1910* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1987); Karen J. Blair, *The Clubwoman as Feminist: True Womanhood Redefined, 1868-1914* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1980).

Within the home Rose refused to find wifedom or motherhood limiting. She maintained that her roles were fully as important to the family as her husband's. Characterizing her marriage as having a "synergistic" quality and comparing it to a business relationship with equal partners, she wrote: "We were individuals with highly responsible roles in a partnership that yielded rewards which we shared."<sup>164</sup>

Although Rose considered herself an equal partner in the couple's marriage, the Kennedys' relationship often embodied an assumption of separate-but-equal distribution of authority. For example, Joseph made the decisions about their sons' education. During the boys' early years they attended the Edward Devotion School, a public elementary school located nearby. Although perhaps Rose preferred that Joe Jr. and John attend either a public or parochial school, where they might mingle with boys from a range of social classes and backgrounds, in 1924 Joe decided to send their sons to the Lower Noble and Greenough School, which comprised elementary grades 1 through 6. In 1926 when the Noble and Greenough School decided to eliminate its lower grades and become exclusively a college preparatory institution, the Kennedys sent their sons to the Dexter School in Brookline, which Joseph Kennedy and other Noble and Greenough parents helped to found. (See Chapter 1 for further explanation.) The Dexter School provided a rigorous curriculum and plenty of competitive sports. It also "provided early training in the mores of private school life for those born to positions of privilege and wealth." The school's students came from some of the most prominent Brahmin families of Boston, with surnames such as Storrow, Appleton, and Saltonstall. Years later Jack Kennedy characterized the Dexter School as a "junior-grade Groton," one in which he and his older brother Joseph Jr. were the only Catholics.<sup>165</sup>

If Joe chose the schools for the boys, Rose decided about the girls' schooling. Despite her later misgivings about her own missed opportunity to attend Wellesley College, Rose sent her daughters to schools that resembled those she had attended. Finding that Kathleen was distracted by boys from her studies at a private day school, Rose sent her to a Sacred Heart convent school in Connecticut. This decision does not seem to have caused any anxiety for Kathleen, since her Protestant girlfriends were also attending equally strict boarding schools. Later, Rose sent Kathleen to a Sacred Heart convent in northeastern France for a year; Kathleen's unhappiness with this school prompted Rose to transfer her

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<sup>164</sup> Kennedy, *Times*, 79.

<sup>165</sup> Goodwin, *Fitzgeralds and Kennedys*, 355-356.

daughter to a convent school closer to Paris, something her own parents had not done when Rose was miserable in Holland. None of Rose's daughters, however, exhibited the intense drive for education that Rose had as a young woman.<sup>166</sup>

The furnishings and decorations in the Kennedy home sought to emulate wealth and status. Echoing the Brahmins that Rose wrote about in her autobiography, the couple also displayed their silver on their sideboard, though in admittedly more modest surroundings. These and other decorations and furnishings in the home—such as the grand piano—are discussed in their cultural and iconographic context in the following chapter on American home and family life.

Early in their marriage the couple acquired another status symbol, an automobile. That decision seems to have been part of their master plan for success. Rose states in her autobiography: "With a home of our own and furniture of our own, the next goal was to have a car."<sup>167</sup> Although Rose does not emphasize this purchase as especially significant or ambitious—preferring instead to relate an anecdote of their first mishap with the car—it is clear even from her statements that ownership of the car was unusual among her set: "Only a few of our friends had cars, so it wasn't as if we felt deprived. Most of us took the trolley cars or . . .the subways."<sup>168</sup> The Kennedys probably garaged their car at one of the numerous commercial garages that existed in Brookline at the time, attesting to the growing popularity and availability of the automobile in the early twentieth century.<sup>169</sup>

The Kennedys were also devout Catholics. Both Joseph and Rose Kennedy continued to practice their faith publicly as well as privately. The family attended St. Aidan's church regularly on Sundays, and most of their children were baptized there. The church had been built nearby in 1911 and 1912, to serve the growing Catholic population of Brookline. According to one biographer, the Kennedys always attended the later service on Sundays: "They [Catholics who aspired to become part of an American gentry] did not kneel and pray next to cooks and parlor maids. It became understood that early mass was

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<sup>166</sup> Goodwin, *Fitzgeralds and Kennedys*, 355, 457, 482-83, 489-90.

<sup>167</sup> Kennedy, *Times*, 72.

<sup>168</sup> Kennedy, *Times*, 72.

<sup>169</sup> Arthur Krim, "Carriage Barn and Auto Garage Survey Project," Phases I and II, Brookline Preservation Commission, 2000-2001.

for the working folk, and the eleven-thirty mass for the elite. For the late mass, they came then in their furs and finery. When mass was over the parishioners stood outside their church, sometimes for an hour or more, looked at each other's clothes and jewels, talked of real estate and business, clubs and children. The Kennedys, however, came out of the church, nodded to right and to left, and departed saying hardly a word. . . . 'I remember the beautiful squirrel coat that Rose Kennedy had,' recalled May Johnson, a parishioner. 'They paid no attention to anyone, just to the service.'<sup>170</sup> Rose in particular emphasized the religious education of the children. She wrote of her daily walks with the children in the neighborhood: "Almost always, on the way home, we stopped in at our parish church. . . I wanted them to understand. . . that church isn't just something for Sundays and special times on the calendar but should be part of daily life."<sup>171</sup>

At home, the furnishings reflected the family's Irish heritage. The Kennedys owned plates decorated with shamrocks, a wedding gift from family member Margaret Kennedy Burke. According to Anna Coxe Toogood's July 1971 Historic Furnishings Plan, Rose also "distinctly remembered that 'the spreads on the beds were heavy linen bedspreads which my father and mother had bought in Ireland and then had given to me. They were hand-embroidered with shamrocks, thistles and other Irish symbols. I recall that one had a lighthouse and, an Irish doe, and they were quite unique, as I never have seen any quite like them.'<sup>172</sup>

As the Kennedys continued to add children to the family, the house on Beals Street grew progressively more crowded, until Rose and Joseph Kennedy used the new wealth he had acquired to purchase their next house, just a few blocks away, in October 1920. The house, located at 51 Abbottsford Road on the corner of Naples, was a large, twelve-room home with a wrap-around veranda. Built in 1897 for a businessman in the iron and steel industry, the house was designed in the popular Queen Anne style, displaying shingled gables, turreted corners, tall corbelled chimneys, and numerous decorative windows of different sizes, shapes, and styles. It was a house that was much more in the grand style of the home Rose Kennedy had known as a young girl on Welles Avenue, and reflected the

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<sup>170</sup> Leamer, *Kennedy Women*, 155.

<sup>171</sup> Kennedy, *Times*, 82-83.

<sup>172</sup> Anna Coxe Toogood, "John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site, Massachusetts, Historic Furnishings Plan" (Washington, D.C.: United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1971), 28.

Kennedy family's rise in wealth and social ambitions. Indeed, about the time the Kennedys moved to the house on Abbottsford Road, the family, Rose Kennedy later recalled, "graduated" from the Ford car they had used for years to a Pierce Arrow limousine, and later to a Rolls Royce. To achieve the complete effect of owning a Rolls Royce, they hired a chauffeur to drive it.<sup>173</sup>

Within a few years Joe Kennedy's work and business deals had shifted almost exclusively to New York and Hollywood, and in 1927 Joseph Kennedy decided to move his family to New York. The move was most difficult for Rose Kennedy, who left deep roots that she cherished in her native New England. Perhaps because she was not involved in the day-to-day business world of her husband, Rose also felt less keenly the frustrations of negotiating in a Protestant-dominated culture, as Joseph Kennedy apparently did. When asked later in life if anti-Catholic and anti-Irish sentiment had played a role in his decision to move his family away from Boston, Joseph Kennedy reportedly replied: "That's exactly why I left Boston. I felt it was no place to bring up Irish Catholic children. I didn't want them to go through what I had to go through when I was growing up there." Perhaps Joseph Kennedy felt that New York was a less insular society, where Irish Catholics were judged less on lineage and breeding than on business acumen, and where incidents such as the mortifying Cohasset Golf Club rejection were less likely to happen. Or perhaps New York and Hollywood offered the main chance for the wealth and prestige that both the Kennedys craved. Whatever the case, when the Kennedys left the community of Brookline where they had lived for thirteen years, they closed the Boston chapter of their lives.<sup>174</sup>

## Conclusion

In American society of the early twentieth century, wealthy Protestants generally of British ancestry still occupied the innermost circle of prestige and status. The notion that the American elite could or should be pluralistic or multicultural in ethnic and religious background had not gained ascendancy. If the pluralistic ideal remains to be realized today, it was far from reality a century ago. Thus, the ambitions and social identities of Rose

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<sup>173</sup> Goodwin, *Fitzgeralds and Kennedys*, 313-314; Higham, *Rose, Life and Times*, 80; Greer Hardwicke and Roger Reed, *Images of America: Brookline* (Charleston, South Carolina: Arcadia Publishing, 1998), 124; Rose Kennedy interview dated November 20, 1967, JOFI files, 15; Cameron, *Rose*, 92.

<sup>174</sup> Goodwin, *Fitzgeralds and Kennedys*, 367.

Fitzgerald and Joseph Kennedy in the 1910s and 1920s were not only complex, but also in tension with the social realities of the time.

Both Rose Fitzgerald and Joseph Kennedy enjoyed the privileges of what might be called the upper-middle class and aspired to even higher socio-economic status. Joseph was determined to succeed in business and social life within American society, and would do so. As his career prospered, he gained wealth and the family acquired symbols of wealth such as a large house and a fancy new model automobile. Anyone with the money could acquire such artifacts of wealth, however, and they did not by themselves guarantee social acceptance in the highest circles of American society. Relentlessly ambitious, Joseph Kennedy aspired for a time to the presidency of the United States, and when he saw he could not attain it, he transferred those aspirations to his sons.

At the same time, both Kennedys identified with parts of the society that did not belong to the legacy of the Anglo-Protestant elite. Both took great pride in their families' Irish heritage and therefore thought of themselves as part of the populous ethno-national category known as Irish-Americans. Both considered themselves practicing Roman Catholics, although they differed somewhat in their relationship to the church.

These ethnic and religious parts of their identities diverged from their experiences of growing up in Boston and the surrounding region. Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy, for example, seems to have appreciated and enjoyed the New England landscape and culture she encountered in rural towns. She therefore felt a sense of belonging to a region whose culture was rooted in an Anglo-Protestant tradition. Rose's father, John Fitzgerald for a time had attended Harvard Medical School. Joseph Kennedy attended the Boston Latin School and Harvard College. The Kennedys participated in the New England Protestant-dominated society in which they grew up.

The Kennedys' social backgrounds and their aspirations to enter the high ranks of American society, however, brought them into conflict with institutions of the Protestant elite. Both Rose Fitzgerald and Joseph felt the sting of rejection from organizations dominated by upper-class Protestants. Ever persistent, Joseph eventually found his way into such organizations as the Middlesex Club, and he made a point of sending his sons to upper-class Protestant schools. Perhaps the climax to the ongoing saga of the Kennedys' ethno-religious conflicts came when John Kennedy faced and overcame the issue of his Roman Catholic religion in the 1960 presidential campaign.



As they aspired to rise in American society, the Kennedys, like many Americans of different ethnic and religious backgrounds, felt conflicting impulses. On the one hand, they wished to assimilate into the majority Protestant culture and society, and on the other hand, they wanted to stand apart proudly and hold fast to a distinctly different identity. These impulses and their experiences in turn shaped their perceptions of their society and the place they held in it. The social identities of John F. Kennedy's parents—like those of other Americans as well—were complex, ambiguous, and at times even contradictory.



## CHAPTER THREE

# Kennedy Family Life and the American Home

### Introduction

The central element of the presentation of the John F. Kennedy National Historic Site, as Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy envisioned it, was to reproduce the Kennedys' physical home and family life at 83 Beals Street, Brookline, Massachusetts, at the time of the birth of the thirty-fifth president of the United States. Her purpose was, as she wrote to the Secretary of the Interior in 1967, to show visitors "how people lived in 1917 and thus get a better appreciation of the history of this wonderful country."<sup>175</sup> Her reference to "people" was ambiguous. On the one hand, Mrs. Kennedy seemed to imply average Americans. On the other hand, she meant to reproduce the lives of the particular people who had inhabited the birthplace site. The latter, of course, were the members of the Kennedy family, whose personal histories—as offspring of Boston's political leaders and progenitors of the nation's high officials—made them unique. The John F. Kennedy National Historic Site, therefore, invites consideration of both the social history of the general populace and the particular story of the Kennedys as it applies to the history of 83 Beals Street.

Unfortunately the historical documentation of the Kennedy family's experiences in the presidential birthplace house during this period is relatively sparse. Most of what we know about their use of the house and their family life in it comes from Rose Kennedy's reminiscences—recorded decades after the Kennedys left Brookline—and surviving Kennedy family records. As might be expected, Rose Kennedy's recollections and the surviving family documents of her family's life in Brookline are incomplete. Missing from the historical record is any direct evidence about such topics as the difference that wealth made in the Kennedys' life, their precise dealings with servants; the relationship between Rose and her husband, or, what would be particularly helpful for present purposes, the activities of the young Kennedy children, especially John.

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<sup>175</sup> Letter, Mrs. Joseph P. Kennedy to Honorable Stewart Udall, March 15, 1967, in "Background Book" on 90<sup>th</sup> Congress, JOFI files.

Yet, however incomplete, Rose Kennedy's reflections and the Kennedy family documents when combined with social history of the American home and family illuminate social changes in American domestic life and a sense of how the Kennedys responded to or participated in those changes.

By the early twentieth century, the American middle-class home had begun to evolve away from the standard Victorian house. The size of the average middle-class house had become smaller than in the nineteenth century, and the types and functions of rooms within the home had changed. The arrangement and use of the rooms at the Kennedys' house in Brookline reflects some of these changes. It was a modest size house, which lacked a back staircase—a standard feature in the previous century. The Kennedys' use of the parlor reflected its evolution from its traditional formal function to the mix of formal and informal entertainments, public and private that during the twentieth century became known as the living room. Following current fashions, the Kennedys maintained a room, the nursery, with appropriately scaled furniture tailored to children, and in their bedroom, they kept twin beds. The family also could afford to take advantage of the latest twentieth-century technology, a house powered by electricity, a Victrola for entertainment, and two telephones.

At the same time, the Kennedys also maintained certain features of the American home that appeared in the nineteenth century and persisted into the twentieth century. They used the house as a medium to display objects—such as prints of famous paintings and that fixture of the middle-class home, the piano in the parlor—that reflected the taste and culture of the occupants. The Kennedys also maintained a formal dining room and kept a domestic staff, practices which persisted among the upper class even as many middle-class families adapted the dining room to other functions and no longer used servants.

Moreover, the traditional role of the woman of the house as wife, mother, and household manager was still very much intact; it was this role that Rose Kennedy recalled in detail when she looked back at the Kennedys' early family life. The father, Joseph Kennedy, like many breadwinners left the home to work during the day, and therefore does not figure as much in the following account of home life. The daytime, after all, was a time of activity within the home—the time that Rose Kennedy, the children, and the Kennedy servants spent together in it. The time-consuming business of keeping the family fed and the children clothed and healthy takes up much of Mrs. Kennedy's memories, even if she played a supervisory rather than direct role in much of the daily routine. Echoing the ideas

of nineteenth-century and Progressive Era reformers who asserted the important role of childrearing in society, Rose considered herself a professional homemaker, equal in status to other educated women and men.

Although Rose Kennedy's recollections paint a picture of a harmonious and typical family life at 83 Beals during the 1910s, she also hints that the Brookline house was not always tranquil or even the ideal place to be. The efforts of servants and mother to organize the family in the morning and care for babies throughout the day provided moments of tribulation. Setting aside the mysterious departure of Rose Kennedy from her family for a short while in 1920, the fact that the family deserted the Brookline house at least a couple of times a year and took much delight in doing so suggests that escape from the house made living in it more tolerable.

### **The House at 83 Beals Street**

In her wedding log Rose Kennedy noted that upon returning from their honeymoon, she and Joseph “went to live at Beals Street Wednesday October twenty-eight,” to their fully furnished home. By the early twentieth century, it was common for urban middle- and upper-middle-class families to settle in one- or two-family homes in residential communities, such as Brookline, on the outskirts of American cities. In these communities, the husband typically commuted to a job in the city, as Joe Kennedy did, although he may have used his Model-T automobile instead of the usual trolley or train. And in such suburban communities, the wife—as Rose Kennedy would—stayed home to raise the children and manage the household. Despite the comings and goings of its residents, however, the family house stood at the center of the American suburban way of life.<sup>176</sup>

The house at 83 Beals Street where the young Kennedy couple settled was different from the large and formal Victorian home at 39 Welles Avenue in Dorchester in which Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy had spent part of her girlhood and where her parents had presided at balls and Rose's coming-out party. Compared to her parents' home, Rose Kennedy remembered, “the atmosphere in which we lived in the early days [on Beals Street] was

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<sup>176</sup> Since Joseph Kennedy, not Rose Kennedy, drove the car, and Rose later could not know recall where he parked the car, it seems unlikely that the car sat unused for much of the week. Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy, Wedding Log, Box 76-6, RFK Papers, JFK Library.

simple,” with still-undeveloped areas across the street and next-door. In fact, the house was typical of middle-class suburban family homes across the country, a concept that Rose echoed when she described the house years later:

The house was laid out as most of the houses were in those days with a living room, dining room, kitchen, and the laundry in the basement. The second floor had the master’s bedroom which held easily a large bed or twin beds. Adjoining it was a small room which was used as my boudoir or writing room. We also had a guest room and a small study which was later converted into a nursery when the children began to arrive. On the top floor, there were the maids’ quarters.<sup>177</sup>

Rose’s description alludes to the pared-down size of middle-class homes that were increasingly common in the early twentieth century. The shrinking size of the standard middle-class home was in large part related to the rise in the costs of building supplies and labor in the early twentieth century. (Indeed in the first decade of the 1900s the phrase “high cost of living” came into vogue.) In addition, by the turn of the twentieth century, American families on average—the Kennedys would not be part of this trend—had fewer children than they had decades before. Furthermore, inexpensive domestic help became less available, making it more difficult to run large houses with such specialized spaces as music rooms, stair halls and reception rooms, and conservatories. Efficient use of space and modern technologies became fashionable. As houses became smaller, the compact bungalow replaced the spacious Victorian home as the symbol of the middle-class suburban domicile.<sup>178</sup>

Reflecting a decreasing reliance on domestics to run elaborate households such as the Fitzgerald’s Dorchester home, the house Joseph and Rose Kennedy moved into possessed the relatively smaller and less formal floor plan of the early-twentieth-century middle-class home. By the early twentieth century, the Victorian formal, single-use spaces that once required a domestic staff had disappeared from all but the largest and most formal homes. Houses now were built with one set of stairs, to be used by all members of the household, instead of one staircase for the family and another for the servants. While the dining rooms and parlors used for formal purposes survived, these rooms were smaller and

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<sup>177</sup> Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy, undated transcript, JOFI files, 1.

<sup>178</sup> Clifford Edward Clark, *The American Family Home, 1800-1960* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 171-192.

served more purposes than in the previous century. Ideally these primarily public spaces were still located in the front of the house, separated from utilitarian spaces, such as the kitchen, and more private rooms, such as bedrooms, which by the twentieth century were usually located above the home's first level.

The parlor in particular in American homes was undergoing a major transition in the early years of the twentieth century. The Victorian-era house plan incorporated dual parlors. One was a highly formalized space with the “best” furniture and objects in the home, reserved for formal entertainments; the other was a less formal family “sitting room” where the family relaxed on a daily basis. By the early twentieth century the typical middle-class home generally only had one parlor, a room that increasingly became a multi-purpose space, used for both formal entertainments and as an informal family room. The transition would become complete by the 1930s when the parlor became known as the “living room.” Although Rose would later refer to the “living room” at 83 Beals Street, in the 1910s she and Joseph, as well as most Americans, still usually referred to that room as the “parlor.”<sup>179</sup> The Kennedy family parlor in the 1910s exemplified the dual uses of this room—a family gathering place and place to entertain guests.

In the Kennedy home, semi-private spaces were also kept out of sight: the laundry was in the basement; the kitchen was in the back of the first floor. Basements, a relatively new form of household space, replaced the traditional cellar during the late nineteenth century. Cellars were traditionally carved out of the earth under the house, built with dirt floors and fieldstone walls, and used primarily for storage of foodstuffs. Provided with better ventilation and lighting, basements were larger and usually lined with cement, offering an ideal utilitarian workspace. The laborious work of washing the household laundry, including soaking, rinsing, soaping, scrubbing, bluing (for whites), starching and drying clothes, was strenuous and intensive and required adequate room and a source of piped-in water. Additionally, the useful basement space kept such labors out of the way of

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<sup>179</sup> “Among manufacturers and consumers, the term *living room* replaced *parlor* gradually. In furniture advertising, the former term was common by around 1910. By 1919 it had completely replaced *parlor* in articles in the *Grand Rapids Furniture Record*, a trade magazine for the furniture business. However, through the first thirty years of the twentieth century, houses continued to have parlors. . . .” Katherine Grier, *Culture and Comfort: Parlor Making and Middle Class Identity, 1850-1930* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997), 218. For an example of Joseph Kennedy’s use of the term “parlor,” see below in this chapter, Joseph P. Kennedy to Sergeant Christopher Dunphy, typed letter, January 18, 1918, Box 41, Folder D, 1919-1923, JPK papers, JFK Library.

the other work in the home—and out of sight as well. The early twentieth-century kitchen, the setting for daily and constant activity, usually was situated in the rear of the single-family home, a location that was private enough not to interfere with entertaining in the dining room or living room, but close enough to those rooms to allow for efficient serving.<sup>180</sup>

The most private spaces in the home were the bedrooms, isolated by the plan of the house from the public, family, and workspaces on the first floor. In early America, sleeping quarters were semi-public spaces that were used for many purposes, but by the mid-nineteenth century, the custom of private sleeping “chambers” or “bedrooms,” separated from the more utilitarian spaces and workrooms, was firmly established. Both the notion that the isolation of the bedrooms promoted the morals of the inhabitants—by reducing the opportunity for promiscuous encounters—and a growing sense of the need for privacy contributed to the new arrangement. By the early twentieth century, the bedrooms were located on a floor above the public living and dining spaces in all houses but the smallest cottage. (In apartments bedrooms were located by necessity on the same floor, but separated from the public rooms by location within the flat.) In the Kennedy home, the bedrooms of all of the members of the immediate family were located on the second floor, above the living and dining rooms and the kitchen on the first floor.<sup>181</sup>

The Kennedy’s house contained on the third floor servant’s quarters, a feature that in the early twentieth century was disappearing from middle-class American homes. As the use of domestics declined over time, servant’s quarters disappeared from house plans: during the years 1908-1940, the Sears Roebuck company’s mail-order home publications included only four house plans incorporating servants’ quarters—one in 1912, two in 1913, and one in 1918. For the large majority of the middle class in the early twentieth century, live-in servant help was becoming a thing of the past, for the simple reason that servants were becoming rare. Locally in Brookline, for example, the census records indicate that in 1920 out of 43 households on Beals Street, only five had one live-in servant, only three households retained two servants, and no family employed more than two live-in servants.

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<sup>180</sup> Thomas Schlereth, *Victorian America: Transformations in Everyday Life, 1876-1915* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1991), 113.

<sup>181</sup> Scholars have produced an extensive literature on the subject of the sleeping quarters. See, for example, Richard L. Bushman, *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993).



The Kennedy family was one of the three families reported as having two servants as part of the household. The census listed Mary O'Donahue and Alice Michelin as working as "servant, private family." Already the Kennedys were affluent enough to be among those who could afford to keep servants.<sup>182</sup>

In addition, the Kennedy house lacked a back staircase. This meant that servants and family members had to share the house's single stairway, and given the small size of the house, the contact between servants and family members must have been frequent. Victorian-era houses routinely included a servants' passageway, but due to the overall decline in domestic service, middle-class homes constructed after about 1910 (the Beals Street house was built in 1909) omitted the service staircase.<sup>183</sup>

One thing that had not changed since the nineteenth century, however, was what some historians have referred to as the woman's "sphere," the concept of the home as the domain of the woman of the house. Acting as the director of the activities in the house, a woman was expected to exert an uplifting influence. Her moral influence was especially important in regard to children, who were at a stage of life when they were perceived as particularly susceptible to environmental influences. The mother was the member of the household who was charged with ensuring her children were well brought up, educated, and instructed in religion.<sup>184</sup>

As Joseph Kennedy was the commuting husband and the financial provider of the family, so Rose Kennedy was its moral epicenter. She took charge not only of supervising the servants' work within the home, but also of regulating and maintaining the virtue of its inhabitants, and in particular of inculcating her children with the proper religious and ethical values. Rose acknowledged in later years that her role as mother was the traditional one expected of women: "People credit the mother for having brought up the family in a

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<sup>182</sup> Candace M. Volz, "The Modern Look of the Early Twentieth-Century House: A Mirror of Changing Lifestyles," in *American Home Life, 1880-1930: A Social History of Spaces and Services*, Jessica H. Foy and Thomas J. Schlereth, eds., (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1992), 25-27, 31. U.S. Census Records, 1920. See Chapter One, "Brookline: Town Life and Neighborhood," for addresses of households.

<sup>183</sup> Clark, *American Family Home*, 167-168.

<sup>184</sup> Nancy F. Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" in New England, 1780-1835* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977); Mary P. Ryan, *Cradle of the Middle Class: The Family in Oneida County, New York, 1790-1865* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 145-203; Clark, *American Family Home*, 25-36.

simple, God-fearing atmosphere and for having inspired them to work for God and country. That belief about the mother's influence on the child is as old as creation and it has been idealized in poem and song. In the case of the Kennedys, it was true that I exerted the most influence on them when they were young."<sup>185</sup>

The furnishings of the home also expressed female hegemony within the domestic sphere. Two rooms in particular, the parlor and the dining room, represented a stage set of sorts, in which displays of furnishings and objects expressed to visitors (the "public") ideals of domesticity, refinement and gentility as understood by society.

The decoration of parlors was especially important, since this was the room that more than any other in the early twentieth century retained its formal aspect as a space in which to receive guests, and from which guests would form an impression of the home's occupants. In the Victorian era, the parlor became a repository of objects of art and nature, which were meant to teach, inspire, remind, and in general evoke edifying associations. According to Katherine Grier, the decoration of a parlor also signaled a "popular interest in being cosmopolitan, reflecting the nineteenth century's continuing fascination with the eighteenth-century European cultural ideal now called 'gentility'... a model of personal excellence originating in the uppermost classes of society [which] stressed individual cultivation and social display..."<sup>186</sup> The manner in which Joseph and Rose Kennedy furnished their parlor suggests they also participated in this self-conscious display of gentility and culture.

Rose Kennedy's wedding log records that the newlyweds received gifts of furniture, marble busts, bronze ornaments, lamps, pictures, and Oriental rugs. These were objects meant for display, and usually in parlors. When she restored the home in the late 1960s, however, Rose Kennedy chose to adorn the home with relatively few such objects. The spare modernist aesthetic in interior design in vogue since the 1950s likely influenced her memory of the décor, but whatever the case, no documentation has been found showing which of these objects the Kennedys originally placed or where they placed them in their home at 83 Beals Street.

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<sup>185</sup> Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy, undated transcript, JOFI files, 13.

<sup>186</sup> Katherine C. Grier, "The Decline of the Memory Palace: The Parlor after 1890," in *American Home Life, 1880-1930*, 53-54; for the evolution of the parlor and its objects in the nineteenth century, see Louise L. Stevenson, *The Victorian Homefront: American Thought and Culture, 1806-1880* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1991).

Nonetheless, Rose Kennedy recalled some of the objects in her parlor and described them in unmistakable terms of cultural display: “On the walls in the living room, we see copies of famous paintings which I had seen while traveling abroad. We have a copy of Turner’s painting of Venice, for instance, and another one of Franz Hals and Rembrandt. I was very happy with these prints, as I had studied the originals in the European galleries, and it gave me great pleasure to have the copies on the walls in my home.”<sup>187</sup> In this statement Rose explained why when she lived in 83 Beals Street she had wished to display prints of famous paintings in her parlor: she had studied and traveled abroad, had the opportunity to view and enjoy the original works, and been educated enough to appreciate the quality of these works to the degree that she had purchased copies of them. All of these motives were contained in the seemingly simple act of placing prints on the walls, where the Kennedys could appreciate them and guests would recognize the refinement of the inhabitants of the Kennedy home. This was the kind of self-conscious display that the upper and middle classes engaged in, reminiscent of the nineteenth-century custom of tourists on the Grand Tour in Europe bringing back souvenirs, including copies of Old Master’s paintings, to display in their homes as tangible proof of their travels. Other objects that Rose recalled as original to the 1910s decoration of the home were the ornamental vases on the mantelpiece—carefully selected objects that referred to the “popular understanding of what it meant to be a civilized person.”<sup>188</sup>

Although in her restoration of the birthplace Mrs. Kennedy intended to place copies of paintings on the walls that had hung in her former home, it is difficult today to gauge how accurately she was able to replicate the décor of sixty years earlier. Regardless of the specific authenticity of the prints currently hanging in the historic site, the customs of the early twentieth century and Rose’s later testimony strongly suggest that in the 1910s the Kennedys displayed similar art work not only for enjoyment, but also as a way of displaying their culture and refinement.

The piano in the parlor was another expression of the culture of the occupants. The Ivers and Pond baby grand piano in the Kennedy home was a wedding gift to Rose from her uncles Jim and Ed Fitzgerald. Pianos had been a feature of upper- and middle-class parlors

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<sup>187</sup> Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy, undated transcript, JOFI files, 4.

<sup>188</sup> Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy, personal interview, November 20, 1967, JOFI files, 1; Grier, *American Home Life, 1880-1930*, 61.

since the late nineteenth century, when mass production techniques made these available to a large number of middle-class families.<sup>189</sup> As early as 1869, the influential writers on the home, Catharine Beecher and Harriet Beecher Stowe, included room for a piano in the parlor in even in their most modest home plans. According to one historian, music in the home was associated with “the virtues attributed to music—cultural refinement, self-expression and creativity, medicine for the soul—but also with the work ethic, for to play the piano demanded toil, sacrifice, and perseverance. Because it was the woman’s task. . .to sustain this value system. . .music, women, and the piano became closely associated, even into the twentieth century.”<sup>190</sup>

The piano also represented for Rose Kennedy a connection with her beloved father. She mentioned that she often played the piano, “especially when my father, the late Mayor Fitzgerald, came to visit us.” Rose had on numerous occasions provided the piano accompaniment when her father sang his signature song “Sweet Adeline” during her girlhood; playing that and other songs along with him during family gatherings were a cherished memory for her.<sup>191</sup>

Traditionally the parlor also served as a place for quiet family evenings and entertainment. These functions harked back to its use in Victorian times and, lacking some of the pedagogical character of earlier days, forward to its later primary purpose as a family or living room. In both the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, the parlor/living room provided a space for the male breadwinner to rejoin the wife and children and complete the family circle.

Rose portrayed a typical weeknight evening in the Kennedy parlor in archetypical images of an American middle-class family in repose—as it might have been described in popular stories or advertisements. “In the big chair near the table, my husband sat every evening reading the papers, *The Boston Transcript*, in those days,” she recalled, “and I sat opposite him, reading or sometimes darning stockings. . .”<sup>192</sup> The children would join the

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<sup>189</sup> Grier, *American Home Life, 1880-1830*, 155.

<sup>190</sup> Craig H. Roell, “The Piano in the American Home,” in Jessica H. Foy and Karal Ann Marling, eds., *The Arts and the American Home, 1890-1930* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1994), 85.

<sup>191</sup> Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy, undated transcript, JOFI files, 3.

<sup>192</sup> Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy, undated transcript, JOFI files, 4. Rose noted that the price of newspapers at that time was one cent.

couple before they went off to bed: “They played around a little in their pajamas and bathrobes like all children. Perhaps say their prayers and then [around 8:00] they’d say goodnight, and go to bed. . . .”<sup>193</sup> Although it is impossible to say to what extent Rose’s description was a product of selective memory, it presents an unmistakable tableau of an average family in domestic tranquility.

Not all evidence supports this picture of a living room inhabited by a happily married couple content with life with their young children. Countering Rose’s depiction is an incident in early 1920 when Rose Kennedy apparently became so discontented with either her marriage or family life that she left Joseph for a brief time to live with her parents. It is tempting to speculate on the basis of Joseph’s affairs with women that are known to have occurred years later, but the historical record tells little about either the exact circumstances or reasons for this event. We can say that Rose was about eight and a half months pregnant at the time, which surely added to whatever other stresses she was enduring, and that she returned home within a few weeks, in time to give birth to Kathleen on February 20, the same day that John F. Kennedy contracted scarlet fever. There is no further evidence of marital discontent between the Kennedys, although later events would have put a stress on many marriages. Suffice it to say that remembered images of family life, like objects in the parlor, are chosen to display what we want people to see; they may emphasize certain features and obscure or ignore others.<sup>194</sup>

Occasionally, the Kennedys used their parlor as a *de facto* guest room for casual friends. In a January 1918 letter to Christopher Dunphy, a mess sergeant in training at Camp Devens, Joseph Kennedy invited his friend to stay overnight at his family home: “I hereby tender the service of my parlor on any night provided advance notice is given. . . .” Dunphy, who soon after had occasion to take advantage of the offer, wrote Joe a thank you note stating, “I think the Parlour [sic] is very nice and comfortable.”<sup>195</sup>

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<sup>193</sup> Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy, personal interview, November 20, 1967, JOFI files, 11 and 24.

<sup>194</sup> Doris Kearns Goodwin, *The Fitzgeralds and the Kennedys* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987): 305-309.

<sup>195</sup> Kennedy to Dunphy, January 18, 1918; Christopher Dunphy to Joseph P. Kennedy, handwritten note, undated, Box 41, Folder D, 1919-1923, JPK papers, JFK Library.

Although he is rarely mentioned in Kennedy biographies, Dunphy appears to have been a close friend of Joseph Kennedy. Kennedy’s personal papers include many recommendation letters he wrote for Dunphy throughout Dunphy’s hotel management career as well as Dunphy’s letters of appreciation. Other letters from Dunphy indicate that he speedily provided favors Kennedy

The dining room functioned as the other area in the home for self-representation and display of taste. Rose's wedding log lists gifts of silver, china, and cut glass, all the types of objects she could have chosen to display. The original dining room table, sideboard (what Rose sometimes called a "buffet"), serving-table, and china cabinet all served to display silver, china and glass pieces. Rose Kennedy's wedding log noted gifts of silver (among them a tea set and a coffee set, as well as a large ice-cream platter from Sir Thomas Lipton, a family friend), china, and cut glass. The Limoges porcelain from her sister-in-law Margaret Burke had been hand-gilded by her as a young student in a convent school. Other hand-painted china included cups painted with shamrocks from Sir Thomas Lipton (not a wedding gift) and a punch bowl, used "on the fourth of July or other holidays."<sup>196</sup> Rose also noted several times that the couple did not receive cocktail glasses when they married since these did not yet exist, but that she and Joseph never developed a taste for these, and subsequently never had them at home either. She noted as well that neither did they customarily drink coffee.<sup>197</sup>

Occasionally practicality influenced decisions of the young lady of the house; Rose mentioned that the young Kennedy's silver flatware pattern "was always recommended for brides because it was easy to take care of, it's so plain." Other decorative touches in the dining room included displays of fresh flowers and fruit on the table.<sup>198</sup>

Of course, the dining room was also another place for the family to gather, in this case for daily meals. Rose Kennedy described the family's routine of dining as somewhat formal (by later standards), in the manner of a proper upper-middle class family of the early twentieth century: "My husband and I sat at the main table, of course, and the children, when very small, sat at a small table and joined us at the big table as they grew older." A suggestion of the formal way the Kennedys dined in these years—Mrs. Kennedy indicated years later—was that at dinnertime the family used some of its finery. According to Rose,

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requested (such as special accommodations), suggesting that Kennedy's recommendations helped Dunphy's career.

<sup>196</sup> Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy, Wedding Log, Box 76-6, RFK Papers, JFK Library; Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy, undated transcript, JOFI files, 4; Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy, personal interview, November 20, 1967, JOFI files, 30-31. About the punch bowl, in her 1971 report Anna Coxe Toogood mentioned that Mr. Luddington had stated that the bowl was a gift to Mrs. Kennedy from her mother. Anna Coxe Toogood, "John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site, Historic Furnishings Plan," United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1971, 25.

<sup>197</sup> Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy, undated transcript, JOFI files, 7-8; Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy, personal interview, November 20, 1967, JOFI files, 20-21.

<sup>198</sup> Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy, personal interview, November 20, 1967, JOFI files, 28-29.

the children used their “porringers, their silver knives, forks and spoons and their napkin rings” while the family used monogrammed white damask napkins and a damask tablecloth. Rose’s memories of formal dining indicate that the Kennedys were out of step with the early twentieth-century trends toward informal meals in kitchen nooks or dinettes and the use of dining rooms as multipurpose areas. Nonetheless, her recollections are plausible since formal dining persisted in the upper-middle class and especially in the upper class, to which the Kennedys aspired.<sup>199</sup>

The most functional and utilized space in the home was the kitchen. The kitchen was another room that by the 1910s had already undergone significant changes from the late nineteenth century, as communities increasingly installed electric, fuel and water systems. Across America, wood- or coal-burning stoves by 1915 were regularly being replaced with gas stoves.<sup>200</sup> An interview with Rose Kennedy and comments by Mr. Luddington (Mrs. Kennedy’s decorator, who worked with her on the refurbishment of the house) in 1967 indicated that soapstone sinks and combination gas and coal stoves were typical of the period, but did not indicate whether in fact the kitchen contained such appurtenances during the years the Kennedy family lived on Beals Street.<sup>201</sup> In any case, all of the cooking took place in the kitchen, as well as many of the chores associated with nursing children, making the kitchen a center of daily activity in the Kennedy home.

The bedrooms on the second floor in the Kennedy home were standard for their time. By the late nineteenth century the second floor had “absorbed” all of the sleeping spaces for family members in the home, from an earlier model in which the master bedroom was often still on the first floor, connected to reception rooms and the front hall. Prescriptive advice as to sleeping arrangements of husbands and wives throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries varied widely; some suggested sleeping in the same bed, others sleeping in separate beds, and still others sleeping in completely separate rooms. Some of this advice was tied to contemporary discussions about the appropriate frequency

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<sup>199</sup> Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy, undated transcript, JOFI files, 9; Clark, *American Family Home*, 163-164.

<sup>200</sup> Ruth Schwartz Cowan, “Coal Stoves and Clean Sinks: Housework between 1890 and 1930,” in *American Home Life, 1880-1930*, 211.

<sup>201</sup> Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy, personal interview, (with comment by Mr. Luddington), November 20, 1967, JOFI files, 34.

of sexual relations for the comfort and protection of a pregnant wife. The wide variation in prescriptive opinion and advice freed couples to exercise their own options, which were sometimes dictated by economic resources or lack thereof. One historian has noted that “the 1920s and 1930s saw the rising popularity of twin beds for married couples who did not have the budget or the taste for completely separate suites of rooms.”<sup>202</sup> According to Rose, twin beds “had been fashionable for about fifteen years” when they lived on Beals Street—suggesting that the couple were faithful to a particular strain of prescriptive literature or fashion.<sup>203</sup> As a private space, toiletries and personal items were here displayed that would have been inappropriate in more public spaces of the home. Mrs. Kennedy recalled that she used the small, attached study for writing, reading, and sewing, and a private space away from children and servants (who, as mentioned above, would have been hard to avoid within the small confines of the house). Apparently the room also functioned as a makeshift nursery for the newborn babies, John, Rosemary, and Kathleen.<sup>204</sup>

The nursery and children’s rooms served as areas where the children slept, played, and where the nursemaid could supervise their activities. (Judging from Joseph’s letter to Chris Dunphy in January 1918, the guest bedroom had by then been converted to a children’s bedroom, necessitating the use of the parlor as an informal guest room.) Rose described the practical furnishings (bassinet) and books and toys that were included in her children’s lives, although the young age of her children (Joseph Jr. was less than two years old when John was born) suggests some of these appurtenances more likely belonged to a later time than the restoration date of 1917. By around 1900, child-sized furniture and distinct, somewhat spare spaces for children had become the norm in middle-class homes.<sup>205</sup> Thus, as restored, the Kennedy nursery (and child-size dining room furniture) was not unusual in these respects.

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<sup>202</sup> Elizabeth Collins Cromley, “A History of American Beds and Bedrooms, 1890-1930,” in *American Home Life, 1880-1930*, 120-125.

<sup>203</sup> Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy, undated transcript, JOFI files, 5.

<sup>204</sup> Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy, personal interview, November 20, 1967, JOFI files, 37. Toogood, “Historic Furnishings Plan, 20-29.”

<sup>205</sup> Karin Calvert, “Children in the House, 1890-1930,” in *American Home Life, 1880-1930*, 86.



## Making the House Work

In terms of other services, the Kennedy household was typical of middle-class homes. While we do not know exactly if coal or gas (or a combination of these) were used for the stove, we do know that the Kennedys used electricity in the home, another innovation of the late nineteenth century. The use of electricity spread rapidly in the early twentieth century as utility companies installed wiring and new lighting devices and home appliances became available. In addition, the Kennedys had two telephones, which, although Rose did not remember it as unusual, was uncommon. At this time the ownership of telephones was spreading from wealthy individuals and professionals (such as physicians) to the general population. In 1900, Americans (including many public establishments) owned some 1.3 million telephones, or about one telephone for every 58 people. By 1920 there were 13.3 million telephones nationwide, or one for every eight people. Like the use of electricity, telephone ownership tended to be concentrated in urban areas.<sup>206</sup>

Even at the beginning of her marriage before her children were born, Rose required at least one servant to work in her household. Raised in relative wealth in which a household of domestic servants did the cooking, cleaning, laundry and childcare, Rose's upbringing and education had focused on managing a household and servants once she was married. One of her first tasks as a new bride was likely the hiring of her "maid-of-all-work."

The history of domestic service in America has been extensively studied by economic as well as cultural, social and even art historians.<sup>207</sup> Since the first part of the nineteenth century, Americans needing domestic help decried the deep-seated disdain in which American-born citizens generally held service—they considered the work to be

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<sup>206</sup> Schlereth, *Victorian America*, 115 and 190. Schlereth states that in 1907 8% of the country's residences were wired for electricity; by 1920 that figure had risen to nearly 35%. Almost all of this occurred in urban areas of America. The research for this study did not uncover evidence as to whether the Kennedys had two telephones on one line or two telephone lines.

<sup>207</sup> See, for example: Daniel E. Sutherland, *Americans and Their Servants: Domestic Service in the United States from 1800 to 1920* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981); David M. Katzman, *Seven Days a Week: Women and Domestic Service in Industrializing America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978); and Elizabeth L. O'Leary, *At Beck and Call: The Representation of Domestic Servants in Nineteenth-century American Painting* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1996).

degrading—a conflict which amused observant foreigners such as Fanny Trollope and Charles Dickens. The mass immigration of the mid-nineteenth century helped to rectify the servant “problem,” as it was commonly referred to, but as large numbers of unskilled Irish filled the need for servants and laborers, Americans continued to perceive the job of servant as demeaning, and identified the Irish as lower-class.<sup>208</sup> During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Irish servants were common in the Boston area, including Brookline. As discussed in Chapter One, the large majority of Irish men and women in Brookline worked as day laborers, gardeners, and domestic workers. According to the 1910 census, half of the domestic staff on the Kennedy side of Beals Street was Irish-born (20 out of 40 servants were Irish-born, and 2 American-born servants had Irish-born parents – see Table 1.2, Chapter One).

Rose Kennedy indicates in her autobiography that she and Joseph had “started out” with a maid-of-all-work.<sup>209</sup> The maid-of-all-work or general housemaid was, according to one labor historian, the “most frequently encountered arrangement in American homes.” As often the only live-in servant in the home, this woman generally performed all the household work and worked long hours, occasionally with some light housekeeping help from the woman of the house.<sup>210</sup> Rose did not have to go far to find this first domestic for her home. She recalled years later: “[Our] maid was \$7.00 a week. She had been getting \$6.00 working for a friend of mine and then she wanted a raise so my friend recommended her and she came to me quite happily and she did the work here. [She] put on the black uniform and white apron, and served the dinner at night.” The maid-of-all-work’s duties included cooking the meals and cleaning in addition to serving the meals to the family in uniform in the evening. She had one afternoon off a week and every other Sunday off, according to Rose “the usual wages and conditions in those days.”<sup>211</sup> Although the name of

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<sup>208</sup> Susan Strasser, *Never Done: A History of American Housework*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Henry Holt and Company, LLC, 2000), 164-167.

<sup>209</sup> Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy, *Times to Remember* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1971), 75.

<sup>210</sup> Sutherland, *Americans and Their Servants*, 94.

<sup>211</sup> Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy, personal interview, November 20, 1967, JOFI files, 24; Kennedy, *Times to Remember*, 75. Rose’s recollection about the maid’s time-off arrangements being “usual” is supported by historian Susan Strasser, who notes that although arrangements varied widely, servants typically enjoyed one afternoon and one evening off a week—similar to the amount of time off for the Kennedy maid. Strasser, *Never Done*, 171.

this woman remains unknown,<sup>212</sup> cooking the meals was an important part of the daily routine. Rose Kennedy described in detail in later years some of the daily and weekly work of the kitchen, apparently referring to homes in general of the time and perhaps to her own girlhood: “In the kitchen, the bread was mixed by hand and baked two or three times a week, depending on the family.” Rose also recalled that as a girl she would often be called on to help shell peas if there were many people to feed, and so perhaps the Kennedy children were also put to such tasks on occasion.<sup>213</sup>

Rose Kennedy’s memories of cooking and family dinners seem to have been powerful ones. In particular, she recalled the Kennedy family custom of preparing and serving Boston baked beans and brown bread on Saturday nights and sometimes as leftovers on Sunday morning. She fondly remembered these quintessential New England foods—recipes for them appeared in Fannie Merritt Farmer’s highly popular *Boston Cooking-School Cook Book*<sup>214</sup>—which she associated with her roots in the region. (For more on Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy’s affinity for New England culture, see chapter 2.) According to Rose, Boston baked beans were always cooked at home and served in “big bean pots:”

Years ago the must in every household in Boston were baked beans and brown bread for Saturday night dinner. The beans were soaked in water the night before, the salt pork and molasses added the day they were to be cooked and they were put in the oven to simmer all day long and were ready about six or seven o’clock for Saturday night dinner. Brown bread, and it was brown as it was usually baked in a high mold, would be served piping hot. On the top of the beans, we poured some delicious catsup but the *pièce de resistance* was the homemade piccalilly [a pickled relish made of various chopped vegetables and hot spices]... The lady of the house had her own recipe. She chose just the right vegetables and cooked it patiently over the coal stove, moving it back and forth if she wanted it to cook quickly or slowly, and she sampled it frequently, perhaps helped by another member of the family until all of it was cooked and just the right degree, pungent in flavor but not too sharp, and just the right consistency so that the green pickle variety would flavor the soft, brown, rather tasteless beans.<sup>215</sup>

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<sup>212</sup> The first census records of the Kennedy family date from 1920, by which time their domestic staff had changed.

<sup>213</sup> Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy, undated transcript, JOFI files, 9; Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy, personal interview, November 20, 1967, JOFI files, 35.

<sup>214</sup> First published in 1896, Fannie Farmer’s influential cookbook was still widely popular during Rose’s early married life. Cunningham, Marion and Jeri Laber, eds. *The Fannie Farmer Cookbook*. 12<sup>th</sup> ed. Paperback. (New York, NY: Bantam Books, 1983): front page material and introduction, ix-xi. This edition contains the complete text of the original hardcover edition.

<sup>215</sup> Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy, personal interview, November 20, 1967, JOFI files, 32.

No matter how good we thought the baked beans were Saturday night, they seemed even better Sunday morning when they were placed in the frying pan and cooked again in their own juice and served for Sunday breakfast perhaps with codfish cakes.

For Saturday night during many years, we had them and it had been the case in most of the Boston homes. Gradually I found, however, that some of the cooks who came and were very good cooks did not know how to bake Boston Baked Beans, and I drew the conclusion that in a great many families in Boston, this custom was being discontinued. When we went to New York, we began to discontinue it.<sup>216</sup>

Mrs. Kennedy does not indicate whether she, in fact, ever cooked her own baked beans, or whether the cooks she hired were not American- or Boston-born and therefore unfamiliar with the custom of Boston baked beans, but as the manager of the household she clearly knew *how* the beans should be made, and could supervise this activity without entrusting it entirely to the cook. Some of her knowledge of making the beans had come from direct experience in childhood: “I can remember that [the beans] were baked all day because, if the cook happened to be out, one of us children was told to go in and pour a little hot water on the top of the beanpot because the water on the top was apt to dry up much more quickly than the water on the bottom.”<sup>217</sup>

As to other kinds of food preparation, Rose Kennedy commented that she “never did any preserving really because I never had very much time. . . [but by then] we were starting to buy. . . probably at [S.S.] Pierce’s.”<sup>218</sup> She might have purchased canned and prepackaged foods at S.S. Pierce’s and other necessities such as meat and produce elsewhere in the neighborhood. The milkman delivered milk in “his wire basket.”<sup>219</sup> Commercially available canned goods had become available during the 1880s and 1890s, thanks to improvements in canning technology and mass distribution. By 1900 Campbell’s, Pillsbury, Borden’s, Libby’s, and Heinz advertised and sold brand-name products nationally. The difficult task of preserving foods at home had for the most part become a thing of the past.<sup>220</sup>

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<sup>216</sup> Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy, undated transcript, JOFI files, 10-11.

<sup>217</sup> Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy, undated transcript, JOFI files, 11.

<sup>218</sup> Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy, personal interview, November 20, 1967, JOFI files, 35.

<sup>219</sup> Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy, undated transcript, JOFI files, 12.

<sup>220</sup> Strasser, *Never Done*, 22-23, 26-28.

One household service not provided by the maid-of-all-work was the laundry.<sup>221</sup> The cleaning of laundry by hand (which included ironing) was demanding and time-consuming work, requiring physical strength and endurance to lift heavy pots of water for boiling, scrub clothes and fabrics vigorously, wring them out prior to setting them out to dry, and manage the continuous—and hazardous—reheating of the heavy irons during the ironing process. In the days before all-purpose detergents and bleaches, laundresses also needed an extensive working knowledge of stain-removal formulas and techniques applicable to different kinds of fabric, and to be able to make their own bleaches, starches, and cleaning compounds. Rose Kennedy recalled that her laundress came in “by the day” once or twice a week. After World War I the production of home washing machines would soar, transferring the responsibility for this household chore to the homemaker (although it is unknown if Rose herself purchased one of these).<sup>222</sup>

The role that occupied Rose the most, however, and the one for which she would become famous, was her role as mother, educator, and protector of her children. Rose indicated in her autobiography the awesome nature of the experience of a couple starting a family: “The great new experience we shared, which affected our thinking about everything else in life, was parenthood.”<sup>223</sup> Rose chose to give birth at home (or, in the case of first-born Joseph Jr., at the vacation house they had rented in Hull, Massachusetts), a conventional, upper-class choice at a time in which hospitals were considered unsanitary because they catered primarily to the indigent and charity cases. Although hospitals were gaining popularity as a birthing place in the early twentieth century, Rose chose the “old-fashioned” methods of home birth to give birth to her first children: “I followed the customs of my time, which also had been those of my mothers and my forebears.” These methods included the administration of ether (chloroform), and, because the ether rendered the mother unconscious and incapable of assisting with the birth, the use of forceps. The forceps especially were difficult instruments and had the potential to damage

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<sup>221</sup> Mrs. Kennedy mentions the laundress several times in her interviews; however in her autobiography (p. 75) she mentions that the maid-of-all-work was also expected to do the laundry, a situation that probably changed as children were added to the family.

<sup>222</sup> Daniel E. Sutherland, *Americans and their Servants*, 92; Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy, interview, November 20, 1967, JOFI files, 26; David M. Katzman, *Seven Days a Week: Women and Domestic Service in Industrializing America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 130.

<sup>223</sup> Kennedy, *Times to Remember*, 74.

the mother and especially the newborn. By 1915 suburban, wealthy and middle-class women had begun to choose to give birth in hospitals because they felt hospitals were “scientific” places where they could receive newer, safer forms of anesthetics, which were usually only administered there. In fact, Rose delivered her last two children, born in 1928 and 1932, in a hospital.<sup>224</sup>

For Rose’s home births, the Kennedys engaged the services of family doctor Dr. Frederick Good, an anesthetist, and a nurse to help Rose for several weeks after the birth. Dr. Good was apparently a family friend as well—in a note to him in 1920 to his office at 95 Newbury Street Joseph addressed him as “Fred.”<sup>225</sup> When Rose started feeling contractions the nurse would arrive first to prepare all the necessary utensils and supplies, including fresh sheets, towels and boiling water. The doctor and his anesthetist would arrive later, and the ether would be administered. Rose and her doctor always used the bed that was nearest the window (as was the case with John F. Kennedy’s birth on May 29, 1917) to take advantage of daylight when possible. Rose did not remember anything of John’s birth or most of the other births because of the ether. By the time Rose would come out of the ether, the successful birth would have taken place. Dr. Good and the anesthetist would then be finished with their work. Dr. Good’s fees for pre-natal and post-natal care and delivery was about \$125 and the anesthetist was paid \$25. Once the child was born, the nurse took over the care of mother and baby for the next several weeks. Rose mentioned several times in interviews that she was required to stay in bed for three weeks after each birth “because if you didn’t stay in bed a long time, why you would never recover.” She initiated breastfeeding—another “old-fashioned method” that was beginning to lose currency at the time—immediately. (Apparently Rose also relied on baby formula to feed her infants, perhaps when they were older or when she was away from the house.) Because of her long convalescence Rose missed the baptisms of her children, which usually took place soon after their births. The nurse received about \$25 a week for her services.<sup>226</sup>

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<sup>224</sup> Kennedy, *Times to Remember*, 77. According to Schlereth, in 1910 over half of the babies born in American were delivered at home. Schlereth, *Victorian America*, 273.

<sup>225</sup> Joseph P. Kennedy letter to Dr. Frederick L. Good, April 3, 1920, Box 42, Folder “Misc. correspondence 1919-1920,” JPK papers, JFK Library.

<sup>226</sup> Kennedy, *Times to Remember*, 75 and 78; Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy, personal interview, November 20, 1967, JOFI files, 39.

For most of the day-to-day chores of taking care of the children the Kennedys employed a live-in “hospital-trained” nursemaid, who was paid \$3.00 or \$4.00 a week. The first nursemaid recorded by biographers was Irish-born Katherine Conboy, known as “Kit,” apparently a well-loved nursemaid who took good care of her charges. Her duties included cleaning the baby equipment, washing diapers, diaper changing, bathing, feeding, and sewing, among others.<sup>227</sup>

Washing and sterilizing baby bottles and utensils, making baby formula, and pureeing foods (before the advent of manufactured baby foods) was a process that happened in the kitchen. As Rose remarked later on, the kitchen would become the locus of activity, and sometimes tensions, in the mornings:

In those days, there was no diaper service, no preparation for the infant feeding formula. The bottles for the babies had to be cleaned and sterilized at home on the kitchen stove and woe to the nursemaid if she put her bottles on the stove when the [cook] was preparing the lunch or cooking a cake. Words would fly and kettles would be pushed back and forth and the diapers would stop boiling, and there would be recriminations galore and a fight from the kitchen.<sup>228</sup>

The management of the children and nursemaid took up a good deal of Rose’s time. Numerous references in her autobiography and interviews refer to the management role she was responsible for in the home: “I did little diaper changing, but I had to be sure there were plenty of good-quality diapers on hand, and that they were changed as needed and properly washed and stowed for use.” About the sterilization of the baby bottles she commented: “I didn’t do much of it myself, but I had to be sure it was done properly, and on a schedule that wouldn’t interfere with another vital schedule.” About the occasional squabble in the kitchen between the cook and the nursemaid getting in each other’s way, Rose referred to her role on these occasions as the professional arbiter: “from a management point of view, [these fights caused] a precipitous drop in morale and efficiency.”<sup>229</sup> Rose’s best skills as a conciliator and manager were put to the test. During these hectic mornings Rose usually took the opportunity to run errands in the

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<sup>227</sup> Kennedy, *Times to Remember*, 81-82; Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy, personal interview, November 20, 1967, JOFI files, 24; Higham, *Rose*, 59. Several biographers mention Katherine Conboy; Higham states he got the information about the staff from “Boston census records,” however our census research did not reveal the same information.

<sup>228</sup> Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy, undated transcript, JOFI files, 13.

<sup>229</sup> Kennedy, *Times to Remember*, 81.

neighborhood, taking the older children with her so that the nursemaid could focus on the duties at hand, which included trying to dry the diapers:

Diapers were washed and boiled at home in those days and hung laboriously one by one on the clothesline and just as laboriously gathered in. And during the New England winter, they would sometimes hang stiff and stark on the line from the frost and then be brought in to melt on the sputtering radiators. And so, while all this activity took place in the morning, I would put one child in his kiddycar and with one or two others on each side, I would go forth on foot to do the morning shopping at the chain grocery store. On the way back we would usually stop and a visit at the neighborhood church.<sup>230</sup>

The “chain grocery” store<sup>231</sup> to which Rose referred was probably S.S. Pierce’s, a Boston store with suburban branches, one of which was located in Coolidge Corner. (See Chapter One for the history of the S.S. Pierce store.) Taking the children with her for a walk and leaving the two women to work out their arrangements was probably also an effective household management strategy. Rose also tried to be sensitive to the needs of the hard-working staff—she stated she never made plans that would keep her beyond five o’clock in the afternoon: “I’d always be home at 5 o’clock. . .if you had maids they’re tired or busy or they’re getting dinner or they’re having their own supper or evening meal, so I always made it a point to be [at home] with them. . . .And then [the nurse and I] would get them ready for bed [including bathing them.]”<sup>232</sup> It is unclear how long Kate Conboy remained employed in the Kennedy home. Biographer Charles Higham notes the addition of a second Irish-born nursemaid, Mary O’Donahue to the household staff in 1920, however 1920 census records indicate only O’Donahue and Alice Michelan, the general maid, in residence on Beals Street at that time.<sup>233</sup>

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<sup>230</sup> Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy, undated transcript, JOFI files, 14.

<sup>231</sup> In the 1890s chain stores, the best known of which are the A & P grocery and Woolworth’s stores appeared in different locations across the United States. The term “chain [grocery] store,” according to the Oxford English Dictionary, was in use in the United States by 1910.

<sup>232</sup> Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy, personal interview, November 20, 1967, JOFI files, 45-46.

<sup>233</sup> Charles Higham, *Rose: The Life and Times of Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy* (New York: Pocket Books, Simon & Schuster, Inc., 1995), 79; 1920 U.S. Census records.



## Child Raising at Home

Despite the large number of day-to-day childcare responsibilities that were entrusted to the nursemaid, Rose acted as the disciplinarian, occasionally using a ruler to spank a child who had been particularly naughty.<sup>234</sup> At least two biographers note that Rose relied on the then-popular book by Dr. L. Emmett Holt, entitled *The Care and Feeding of Children*, for much of her childrearing techniques, although the sources of these statements are not documented.<sup>235</sup>

Although we do not know as yet if Rose specifically used Holt's book for guidance on raising the children, some of the information contained in the 1915 edition of the book seems to parallel the methods she used. Holt's book was divided into four sections: "The Care of Children" (primarily the bathing and hygiene of children), "Infant Feeding," "The Diet of Older Children," and "Miscellaneous." Holt recommended breastfeeding an infant through the first three or four months, and weaning a child to a bottle by the ninth or tenth month. (Earlier weaning was reserved for mothers who were ill, or pregnant again.) Weaning a child from bottle-feeding was to occur preferably by the time the child was one.<sup>236</sup> He gave extensive recommendations on the types of milk—sterilized, "peptonized" ("in which the curd has been partially digested"), condensed, buttermilk, and protein, among others—appropriate for children.<sup>237</sup> Holt was also specific on other topics. A nursery's "furnishings [should] be very simple. . . [no] unnecessary hangings and upholstered furniture. . . no plumbing, no drying of napkins or clothes, no cooking of food, and no gas burning at night."<sup>238</sup> Holt was insistent on daily bathing, starting when the infant was ten days of age.<sup>239</sup> Holt's recommendations on care other than bathing or feeding were

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<sup>234</sup> Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy, personal interview, November 20, 1967, JOFI files, 19.

<sup>235</sup> Higham, *Rose*, 59; Goodwin, *The Fitzgeralds and the Kennedys*, 302-303. Goodwin indicates she used an 1894, or first edition, of Holt's book. By 1915, the book was in its eight edition, expanded and enlarged, which is the basis for the following discussion. L. Emmett Holt, *The Care and Feeding of Children: A Catechism for the Use of Mothers and Children's Nurses*, eighth edition (New York, NY: D. Appleton and Company, 1915) [available at Harvard University's Countway Library of Medicine].

<sup>236</sup> Holt, *Care and Feeding*, 44-57.

<sup>237</sup> Holt, *Care and Feeding*, 58-69, 108-120.

<sup>238</sup> Holt, *Care and Feeding*, 25.

<sup>239</sup> Holt, *Care and Feeding*, 15.

briefly outlined in the final section. Among these were admonitions never to play with babies under six months of age, to use careful judgment in providing safe and appropriate toys that would stimulate the imagination, the importance of teaching a child to be neat, the importance of exercise, and to never kiss infants due to the risk of transmitting disease.<sup>240</sup> There is no specific information beyond these points that deals with the relationships between mother and child, or the emotional life of children. Although it is difficult to know exactly how much influence Holt's books may have had on Rose Kennedy, according to her account she adopted methods of childrearing in line with many of Holt's recommendations.

Rose Kennedy also made herself personally responsible for making sure her children learned about history, religion, and that they developed an appreciation for reading. Lessons in American history were important for the Kennedy children—Rose's father, John Fitzgerald, had instilled in her a love for American history—and often involved visits to historic sites. "I believed they should know history and especially the history of their own country and, when they grew old enough to understand, I used to take them to the landmarks in Boston and the countryside, explaining what had happened there and discussing events with them so they would remember them."<sup>241</sup> As noted in Chapter Two, Rose also made sure the children were exposed to Catholicism early, and that religion became a fundamental aspect of their lives. Her walks in the morning with the children usually culminated in a visit to their parish church of St. Aidan's, because "I wanted them to understand...that church isn't just something for Sundays and special times on the calendar but should be part of daily life."<sup>242</sup> On Sundays the children attended the children's Mass at St. Aidan's and Sunday school afterwards. At home Rose and Joseph would reinforce the lessons learned in church: "We would talk about the sermon, [for example] what did the priest say and what was the gospel about when they were home at dinner. And if they didn't pay attention one Sunday they'd pay attention the next Sunday... We would have a different child say [grace] ...so you wouldn't know which one was going to say grace."<sup>243</sup>

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<sup>240</sup> Holt, *Care and Feeding*, 165-166, 171-174.

<sup>241</sup> Kennedy, *Times to Remember*, 7.

<sup>242</sup> Kennedy, *Times to Remember*, 82-83.

<sup>243</sup> Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy, personal interview, November 20, 1967, JOFI files, 49-50.

Evidently Rose also followed at least some prescriptive literature of the day in selecting books for her children: “At Christmastime and at other times during the year, exhibitions were held at the schools or at the Women’s Exchange in Boston. They were set forth to interest the children in different classes and were arranged in the proper perspective regarding the age and capabilities. . . of the children. They also were chosen with the idea of displaying illustrations which were in harmonious colors and artistically drawn.” Rose continued, acknowledging that her carefully selected books were not always as popular as others: “My children, however, were indifferent to these edifying pictures because Jack’s favorite book was one called “Billy Whiskers,” which my mother bought at a department store one day. The illustrations seemed to me crude and the colors harsh, but the boys adored the stories and delighted in the whole series, pictures and all.” Among the other, presumably more appropriate, books was one about King Arthur, to which Rose attributed John Kennedy’s later love of the Broadway musical, *Camelot*.<sup>244</sup>

Rose also claimed to make good use of the front porch of the house. Although use of the porch as an outdoor living area had begun to decrease somewhat especially in upper-middle-class and urban America, spurred in part by the advent of the automobile and the attendant noise, Rose indicates she set up dividers on her porch so that each child could have his or her own protected play area, in the fresh air but secure from the street. This arrangement also provided a much-needed respite for the children’s mother. It is not clear from Rose’s statements if she was referring to her home on Beals Street or on Abbottsford Road, particularly since the porch on Beals Street seems somewhat small for this accommodation. In any case, Rose would take the opportunity to read the newspapers inside or outside, but within sight of the children whom she checked on occasionally from wherever she was sitting.<sup>245</sup>

Rose’s somewhat unconventional but practical use of the porch reflected some of her more modern, and even advanced, views on childrearing. Foremost among these ideas was that Rose considered child raising as a “profession:” “I looked on child rearing not

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<sup>244</sup> Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy, undated transcript, JOFI files, 6-7. The association of the Kennedy administration with *Camelot*, developed after the president’s assassination, may have inspired Rose Kennedy to display and possibly select the King Arthur book in the reconstructed nursery at the site.

<sup>245</sup> Volz, *American Home Life, 1880-1930*, 30. Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy, undated transcript, JOFI files, 12.

only as a work of love and duty but as a profession that was fully as challenging as any honorable profession in the world and one that demanded the best that I could bring to it.”<sup>246</sup> The “profession” of motherhood did not have to “keep a woman tied down and make her dull and out of touch. She did not have to become an emaciated, worn-out old hag, nor did she have to be a fat, shapeless, jolly, happy go lucky individual whose only subject for conversation was as the Germans used to say: ‘Kinder, Kirche, Kuchen,’ or, ‘children, church and cooking.’”<sup>247</sup>

Even if she expressed it somewhat defensively, Rose’s notion of her role as a professional in the household reflected the efforts by social reformers from the mid-nineteenth century to promulgate the importance of the training and expertise of the housewife and mother. By the Progressive Era, they had succeeded in establishing the field of home economics as a branch of the social sciences and adding it to the curriculum of secondary schools and colleges.<sup>248</sup>

The most famous expression of Rose’s “modern” techniques to childrearing had to do with the index cards she kept on each child, on which she recorded the child’s date of birth, baptism, confirmation, and health-related information such as inoculations, illnesses, weight, eye exams, and occasionally notes on pharmacies used and prescriptions. Although no local pharmacies were noted on the cards (others in Palm Beach and New York were noted), several of the children received “Schick tests” (for susceptibility to diphtheria, developed in 1916). Years later in England, when Rose told British journalists about her methods, they called it “American efficiency.” Rose noted simply “But it was born of Kennedy desperation,” implying that her growing brood required effective management techniques.<sup>249</sup>

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<sup>246</sup> Kennedy, *Times to Remember*, 81.

<sup>247</sup> Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy, undated transcript, JOFI files, 13.

<sup>248</sup> Clark, *American Family Home*, 159-162, 170; Sarah Stage and Virginia B. Vincenti, eds., *Rethinking Home Economics: Women and the History of a Profession* (Ithaca : Cornell University Press, 1997).

<sup>249</sup> Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy, undated transcript, JOFI files, 16 and 19; Children’s health record index cards, Box 76-44, RFK papers, JFK Library.

## Kennedy Family Life

When the children were old enough to eat at the same time as their parents, they usually ate at the small child-sized table in the dining room until they were big enough to eat at the adult's table. By the time the Kennedy family moved to Abbottsford Road in late 1920, at least Joe Jr. (5 years) and perhaps John (3 years) were joining their parents for dinner. After dinner the children would spend time with the parents in the parlor before being put to bed. Joseph and Rose usually took an hour walk in the evenings before retiring for the night.

On weekends, after visits with family and dinner, the family probably also enjoyed playing or listening to music. Rose, an accomplished piano player, had often played for her father, and enjoyed playing. She lamented the coming of the radio when the children got older: "My daughters all took lessons on the piano, but, alas, none of them practiced long enough to make any progress. One discouraging circumstance in those days was that the radio developed and intrigued everyone. The question asked by the children to which there seemed to be no adequate answer was "why should we learn to play the piano? No-one will want to listen to us, everyone wants to hear the radio."<sup>250</sup> Despite this, however, Rose notes that both she and Joe loved classical music, and in the years they lived on Abbottsford Road occasionally went into the city to hear the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Rose and Joseph also received a Victrola phonograph from Rose's uncle Henry as a wedding gift. According to one historian, by 1919 about two hundred phonograph companies were producing two million phonograph records a year, suggesting that the couple had an ample supply from which to purchase music for home listening on their Victrola.<sup>251</sup>

In other respects, the family's entertaining activities seem to have been limited to small dinners and bridge games at home with one or two other couples. One biographer described a typical weekend night at home for the couple (although it is unclear if this took place during the Beals Street years or later, on Abbottsford Road): "Marie and Vin Greene or another close couple would come over and then walk with the Kennedys around the

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<sup>250</sup> Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy, undated transcript, JOFI files, 3.

<sup>251</sup> Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy, undated transcript, JOFI files, 16; Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy, Wedding Log, Box 76-6, RFK Papers, JFK Library; Donna R. Braden, "'The Family That Plays Together Stays Together': Family Pastimes and Indoor Amusements, 189-1930," in *American Home Life, 1880-1930*, 156.

Chestnut Hill Reservoir, or play bridge on Friday night, or perhaps have dinner together on Sunday. ‘Rose and I played with great seriousness,’ says Marie Greene of the bridge games, ‘showing our hand and bidding up.’ . . .Afterward Joe ordered ice cream from Murray’s on Boylston Street in Brookline, and after it was delivered in a cab, they’d all sit around eating it with great delight.”<sup>252</sup>

In later years Rose had difficulty remembering these evenings, perhaps because of the importance she had come to place on her role as nurturer and teacher of her children. Asked by one interviewer about the young couple’s evenings, Rose stated: “. . .If we had dinners they were small dinners and very informal, followed by conversation and very informal with a few friends. No, I don’t think we ever played [bridge]. We played a little before the children were born because I couldn’t stay still. Unless I had my mind occupied, and so sometimes we’d play bridge so I’d keep quiet, but it wasn’t the usual routine.”<sup>253</sup>

There is some evidence, however, that the couple entertained more formally at least occasionally. As evidenced by one of Rose’s “At Home” card, which listed the “Second and Fourth Tuesdays in January” (undated but probably 1915), Rose probably did entertain a number of guests on those days in her home, likely soon after her marriage, as she indicated later on. She also mentioned that when she did have guests she usually served tea in the afternoon.<sup>254</sup> Rose was also still active with the Ace of Clubs, the club she had founded as a young woman, which met weekly in downtown Boston at the Hotel Somerset.

According to Rose, the Christmas holiday was always the greatest event of the year for the family. Preparations started in early December, with the selection of a tree that was placed in the parlor and decorated with great care. When Joe Jr. was three years old, the family put out its first crèche. Christmas was a religious holiday first and foremost, and Rose and Joseph taught their children the meaning of Christmas in the Roman Catholic religion and sang traditional hymns. The children also enjoyed the more secular aspects of Christmas, by then well established in American society. Joe and Rose’s close friends Edward and Mary Moore (Edward was Joseph’s sometime secretary and confidant; the couple would later buy the Beals Street house from the Kennedys) each took the children

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<sup>252</sup> Gail Cameron, *Rose: A Biography of Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy* (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1971), 83.

<sup>253</sup> Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy, personal interview, November 20, 1967, JOFI files, 8.

<sup>254</sup> Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy, personal interview, November 20, 1967, JOFI files, 28, 37, and 38.

shopping and helped them select gifts for their parents, sometimes “a red and green cloth pen wiper” for Rose and a “fancy pen holder” for Joseph. The children hung stockings on the mantel. Like many parents, Rose’s memories of Christmases when the children were young were of the excitement of the holiday gift-giving: “And what a time they had wrapping [the presents], pasting the paper with fancy stickers, trying to tie the ribbon with clumsy fingers and then hiding and concealing them. There would be the Christmas tree with the presents which Santa brought them, and then there would be the family Christmas dinner, after which we all sit around the table and open them. Each one, in turn, according to his age. What exclamations of delight and joy and wonder, and sometimes some arguments and invidious comparisons over their gifts. Usually the boys received similar presents and the girls similar ones, and so there was little jealousy. Of course, in later years, they had increased allowances and shopped in the important shops on Fifth Avenue.” At least one Christmas—1919—Joe Jr. received the exciting gift of a pony, for which his father would later have difficulty finding a pony cart.<sup>255</sup>

## Home Away from Home

Even though the home was at the core of the Kennedys’ family life, escaping that home—and its regular routine—seemed just as central to home and family. Of course, recreational vacations were hardly unique to the Kennedys; they were an important part of the middle-class life. Resorts had sprouted in the United States since early in the nineteenth century. Although reformers such as John Harvey Kellogg promoted spas for health, Americans also enjoyed them as places of recreation. From the late nineteenth century, railroad companies offered transportation and special fares to scenic coastal and inland spots and popular entrepreneurs added a wide variety of sports and amusements at Saratoga Springs and Coney Island. For most middle-class Americans, it was not difficult to

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<sup>255</sup> Kennedy, *Times to Remember*, 97-98; Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy, undated transcript, JOFI files, 15; Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy, personal interview, November 20, 1967, JOFI files, 5 and 7. Much of this took place in later years when the family lived on Abbottsford Road. About the pony, Joseph P. Kennedy letter to Mr. Stone (his employer at Galen and Stone), Boston, May 18, 1920, Box 40, Folder “Miscellaneous business and personal correspondence, 1917-1923,” JPK papers, JFK Library.

visit the seaside or inland lakes and mountains for at least a day, and better-heeled Americans—such as the Kennedys—could afford to go more often and stay longer.<sup>256</sup>

The Kennedys often went away on vacations, typically at least twice a year. In the summer the Kennedys usually went to the beach. Joseph Kennedy usually took care of the arrangements during these years, in 1919 renting a cottage in Hull from Mrs. Cora Weston of Allerton, Massachusetts, “No. 5 Beach Avenue, Kenberma, with furniture and fixtures therein contained. . . . I assume that No. 5 Beach Avenue is the home that I have rented for the past two or three years.”<sup>257</sup> For fall and winter vacations Joseph usually chose to go north. In July 1920 Chris Dunphy (the friend who had spent a night in the Kennedys’ comfortable “parlour,” now in hotel management) wrote Kennedy confirming reservations for three double rooms at “The Mount Pleasant, Bretton Woods” for September 3, the Friday before Labor Day. Another letter from Chris Dunphy in August, apparently in response to a query from Joe, confirmed that Mass was held on the first Friday of each month, and that it was possible to go to confession as well on that day.<sup>258</sup>

But of all the vacations the family took on a regular basis it was the ones spent at Poland Springs, the popular winter resort spa in Maine, that Rose Kennedy remembered best. The earliest available reference to a vacation at Poland is in the form of a note from Joseph to “Mr. James Ricker” of the Mansion House at Poland Springs dated November 27, 1922 requesting accommodations for Rose, Mrs. Moore and the two Kennedy boys from December 27 through the New Year. In the note Joseph stated “you may remember that I spoke to you about this reservation when leaving last year. . . .” suggesting that the family were regular guests.<sup>259</sup> (Indeed, when the management could not accommodate Kennedy’s

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<sup>256</sup> The extensive literature on the history of resorts and tourism in the United States includes John F. Sears, *Sacred Places: American Tourist Attractions in the Nineteenth Century* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1998); Jon Sterngass, *First Resorts: Pursuing Pleasure at Saratoga Springs, Newport, and Coney Island*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001); John F. Kasson, *Amusing the Million* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978); Harvey Green, *Fit for America: Health, Fitness, Sport, and American Society* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 103-157.

<sup>257</sup> Joseph P. Kennedy letter to Mrs. Cora Weston, February 25, 1919, Box 40, Folder “W, Y – 1918-1923,” JPK papers, JFK Library.

<sup>258</sup> Letters from Chris Dunphy to Joseph Kennedy, July 31, 1920 and August 24, 1920, Joseph P. Kennedy memorandum to Chris Dunphy, 1920, Box 41, Folder “D 1918-1923,” JPK papers, JFK Library.

<sup>259</sup> Joseph P. Kennedy to James Ricker, November 27, 1922, Box 40, Folder “Miscellaneous business and Personal Correspondence, 1917-1923,” JPK papers, JFK Library.



reservation on such short notice, the flurry of apologies and offer of alternate accommodations, and notes back and forth, culminating in the delivery of a case of Poland Springs water to Joseph's office in Boston, suggests that the Kennedys were patrons the Poland Springs spa wanted to keep.) Rose noted that the family had been going to the resort since about 1916, and recounted the winter activities the family enjoyed: "Sleighs met us at the railroad station and we were bundled into raccoon coats, with blankets over our legs, and taken to the hotel with bells jingling and steel runners crunching in the snow. We reveled in the adventures of skiing the gentle slopes and coasting on the snow and skating on the ice rink."<sup>260</sup> Rose's memories of those vacations, based on her diary entries of the period, seem to recount idyllic vacations with the children, when the everyday cares of work, household supervision, and childrearing—the routines of domestic life—were put away temporarily.

Within six years of moving to Brookline, the size of the Kennedys' growing family as well as their ambitions in life surpassed the capacities of their home at 83 Beals Street. The house was increasingly ill suited to accommodate the bustling two-servant staff and the additional children (as well as overnight guests, as Chris Dunphy's experience bears out), and in 1920 the Kennedy family moved to the fancier and more commodious house on nearby Abbottsford Road. There the Kennedys adopted some of the trappings of an upper-class lifestyle by maintaining and hiring additional domestic staff (such as a chauffeur) and replacing their Pierce Arrow limousine with an even more luxurious model, a Rolls Royce. Then in 1927 as Joseph Kennedy's career shifted to New York City, the Kennedys left Brookline for the metropolis to the south.

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<sup>260</sup> Kennedy, *Times to Remember*, 88.



## CHAPTER FOUR

# John F. Kennedy National Historic Site and the Problems of History and Memorialization

### Introduction

This chapter traces the establishment and development of the John F. Kennedy birthplace in the context of the field of historic preservation and the practice of public history. The presentation of this birthplace highlights two conflicting concepts of history and historic preservation: nostalgic or “subjective” history, and professional or “objective” history. Private parties, generally made up of politically influential amateurs in history and historic preservation, who delivered presidential birthplace sites to the federal government complicated the efforts of the National Park Service to negotiate between nostalgia and professionalism in their management of the sites. The National Park Service’s goal of promoting patriotism at presidential sites further reduced the agency’s room to maneuver. The aim of celebrating the life of a national leader led the National Park Service to present mythic versions of the history of the sites.

The history of the John F. Kennedy National Historic Site in Brookline was similarly complicated. Here the public, including local people and officials, started the process of creating the presidential memorial. In time, Rose Kennedy, the president’s mother, acquired the property and took up the task of restoring the house at 83 Beals Street, which had been her home some sixty years earlier. Her approach was nostalgic and subjective—especially since she relied heavily on memory, a notoriously inaccurate instrument. Mrs. Kennedy and her assistant’s relaxed attitude toward historical accuracy and documentation frustrated the National Park Service personnel, who nonetheless were not in a position to do much about it.

In creating a memorial to her son, Rose Kennedy decided to restore the house to the time John F. Kennedy was born in 1917. This decision, when realized, led to the creation of a memorial with surprisingly little material about the president—who, after all, was barely more than a toddler when the family moved out of the house in 1920. Despite the assertion of public memory scholars that elites created national historic sites to encourage patriotic hero-worship, Rose Kennedy left the official pomp to other sites, such as the John F.

Kennedy Library. Instead, the president's mother spoke in the vernacular of communal and localist memorialization. In her furnishings and interpretation of the house, Rose Kennedy loosely evoked—rather than scrupulously reproduced—interwoven histories of family, home, and neighborhood.

Through the years the public has also helped to shape the identity of the John F. Kennedy National Historic Site. Despite competition from the lavishly designed and equipped Kennedy Library and Museum, the Kennedy birthplace has attracted a steady, if not spectacular, flow of visitors. Unlike the Kennedy Library, the Beals Street house is a historic site directly connected to the lives of the Kennedys. Perhaps this is a reason that the public has continued to treat the Kennedy house as a place of pilgrimage to contemplate and experience emotions related first to John F. Kennedy and later to his close relatives as well. The public's behavior, even when independent of the approaches encouraged by either Rose Kennedy or the National Park Service, testifies to the popular appeal of the Kennedy birthplace.

## **The Early Preservation Movement in the United States**

Like the practice of history, but perhaps even more so, the field of historic preservation has struggled with the problem of accuracy in historical interpretation. From the nineteenth century through the early twentieth century, the young and evolving field of historic preservation lacked a clear consensus on the most useful or appropriate theoretical and conceptual frameworks to restore and interpret historic sites. Historic sites are complex combinations of tangible assets, such as architecture, artifacts, or landscapes, that are imbued with significance by abstract notions such as memory—real or invented—hero worship, and patriotism. Well into the twentieth century, the leaders in efforts to preserve historic sites were enthusiastic antiquarians and lay historians. During the twentieth century, however, the historians and museum curators and administrators who took the most active role in historic preservation of sites enrolled in graduate programs created specifically to train professionals to work in public history. The curriculums of these graduate programs were modeled on graduate history programs and were based on the concepts of scientifically based inquiry, research, and documentation. Increasingly during the twentieth century, trained museum curators and administrators came to dominate the field of public history.

The emergence of professional history in the preservation field created tensions between amateur enthusiasts and professionals over the most appropriate methods of restoration, reconstruction, and interpretation at historic sites. The conflict arose from two different concepts of history and research method. One concept of history celebrated a past based on nostalgic memory, myth, and loyalties to group, place, or nation. By its very nature, this attitude toward the past seeks to extol worthy characteristics, remembered or imagined, without undue regard for objectivity or accuracy. Many of the amateurs who worked to build historic monuments and preserve historic sites conceived of history in this way.

The other concept held that the practice of history was a scientific endeavor with the goal of certifiable authenticity. Arising from the professional historians' belief in objective "scientific history," its underlying assumption is that historical materials from the past can be objectively interpreted, and its goal is to record or recreate the past accurately. In practice, historians marshaled evidence to support diverse and sometimes opposing interpretations of history, which also often celebrated persons, groups, ideas, or nation. Indeed, academic scholars acknowledge that totally objective interpretation of the past is impossible, and some argue that all interpretation is a subjective ideological tool. Nonetheless, most professional historians believe that scientific objectivity is a worthy and at least partially attainable goal. Often trained in the same or similar graduate programs and thus sharing the professional historians' desire for objectivity in historical interpretation, museum and site curators often strive for "authenticity" by attempting to present or reproduce materials and artifacts from a particular historical period as accurately as possible.

The field of historic preservation has incorporated both approaches to site preservation and interpretation during its own evolution. In 1910 William Sumner Appleton formed the country's first permanent preservation organization, the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities, dedicated to saving and preserving significant houses in New England. Appleton, a wealthy Boston Brahmin, scoured the New England countryside for what he considered architecturally significant or worthy structures and attempted to preserve or recreate the architecture of these buildings according to rigorously accurate methods.

Nonetheless, Appleton's values colored his work, resulting in inconsistent applications of his methods. An elitist with a taste for medievalism, his great purpose was to

celebrate New England's colonial and British past. Take, for example, the case of the home of Paul Revere, which first drew Appleton to the cause of historic preservation. The building was constructed originally about 1680, was thereafter extensively rebuilt, and presumably was substantially changed by the time Revere lived in it nearly a century after its construction. By the early 1900s, Revere's former home had become a tenement for poor immigrants. Appleton joined the Paul Revere Memorial Association whose goal was to save the building that had been the home of a patriotic hero of the American Revolution. Through this organization, Appleton and Joseph Everett Chandler led the scrupulous re-creation of a house of the seventeenth century, rather than the later eighteenth century when Revere had resided in it. The entire restoration, moreover, was an exercise in imagination as only a few remnants of the building's original interior structure had survived.<sup>261</sup>

Many others joined the effort to preserve and recreate historic sites in order to celebrate or commemorate the past as they perceived it. Architects, antiquarians, and decorators, participating in the Colonial Revival movement, incorporated architectural fragments from significant or important structures into their homes—as did, for example, Henry Davis Sleeper at his home, Beauport, in Gloucester, Massachusetts—helping to foster an appreciation for a mythical, lost “golden” age of Colonial America. Henry Ford, whose modern production of the automobile helped to spur the partial destruction of America's rural landscape, took an eclectic interest in the past and worked to save historic buildings in Massachusetts and create his own historical museum in Dearborn, Michigan. Ford's goal was to celebrate the progress of civilization through technology, although, in the words of Michael Kammen, “he behaved more like a magpie (in the name of authenticity) than a discriminatory collector.”<sup>262</sup>

Similarly the epoch creation of Colonial Williamsburg combined amateur and professional approaches to preservation, nostalgic myth, and authenticity. In 1926 John D.

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<sup>261</sup> Michael Holleran, *'Boston's Changeful Times': Origins of Preservation and Planning in America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1998), 216-236. After a subsequent preservation campaign, Appleton founded The Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities.

<sup>262</sup> Charles Bridgham Hosmer, *Preservation Comes of Age: from Williamsburg to the National Trust, 1926-1949*, (Charlottesville, VA: Preservation Press, National Trust for Historic Preservation in the United States/University Press of Virginia, 1981), 2-3; Michael G. Kammen, *The Mystic Chords of Memory: the Transformation of Tradition in American Culture*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), 354.

Rockefeller Jr. brought together professional architects and historians to begin the reconstruction and interpretation of the old Virginia town of Williamsburg. The monumental task of creating Colonial Williamsburg helped to set the standards of reconstruction, restoration, research, and documentation for the preservation field.<sup>263</sup> The increasing professionalization of the practice of history and its related disciplines—research, documentation, and re-creation using documentary sources, archeological evidence, and a clear methodological approach—would become the standard procedures for the National Park Service and other professional organizations.

Yet Colonial Williamsburg was as much a product of historical nostalgia and amateur enthusiasm as other early historic preservation projects. Rockefeller created Colonial Williamsburg as a way of teaching patriotism and the public virtues of America's colonial forebears. To this end, he wished to make Williamsburg an attractive place that would “preserve the beauty and charm of the old” by omitting any “alien or inharmonious surroundings.” Hence, the creators of the historic site used colors in house paints and fabrics that were brighter than any available to colonists, justifying the decision by saying the colonists “would surely have used such colors if they could have found or afforded them.” For similar reasons, to make white tourists feel comfortable, the homes of African Americans moved from the restored site were relocated away from public view, and black workers were required to wear eighteenth-century livery.<sup>264</sup>

In their attempts to create and maintain presidential homes and birthplace sites, National Park Service personnel incorporated both attitudes toward historic preservation—subjective-nostalgic and objective-scientific—and at times the approaches conflicted with each other. In the 1930s under director Horace Albright, the National Park Service expanded its responsibilities from managing scenic areas to include maintaining historic sites, a number of which amateur groups had established and, in some cases, continued to operate. The agency's overall goal in maintaining the historic sites was subjectively patriotic: to encourage appreciation of the leaders, institutions, and places of the United

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<sup>263</sup> Hosmer, *Preservation*, 3-8.

<sup>264</sup> David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge [England]; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 13, 145, 326, 326: note 90, 329; Kammen, *Mystic Chords*, 368-370.

States.<sup>265</sup> At the same time, the leaders of NPS, following a kind of bureaucratic imperative, moved to establish the organization's historical work on an independent, professional footing worthy of respect and distinct from amateur historic preservation efforts. In 1931 Albright hired an academic historian to raise the research and interpretation of its historic sites to professional standards. Thereafter the NPS continued to hire and consult with professionally trained historians. In 1933 NPS staff members in planning a survey of the educational potential of the historic sites declared that they had "divorced" antiquarianism from their historical methods, which they adopted in order to "win the confidence of the 'educational world.'"<sup>266</sup>

Nonetheless, even after the NPS established historic sites, the interest groups connected with the sites felt strongly that the sites should express idealized, even mythic themes about American history. This was especially true in regard to presidential homes, which by definition celebrated national hero-leaders. Since the groups, which often could marshal political support, continued to take an interest and often operate sites, the NPS had to take the groups' interpretations into account. Furthermore, intra-organizational competition for funds placed pressure on site managers to try to increase the number of visitors. Thus, although the curators and other members of the National Park Service who had the responsibility to care for these properties often adhered to the goal of professional objective history, they had to negotiate the goals of outside groups, the inherent purpose of the presidential memorials, and the need to attract the public.<sup>267</sup>

### **Presidential Memorial Efforts, 1920s-1940s**

The National Park Service's first opportunity at historic preservation, George Washington's birthplace at Wakefield in Westmoreland County, Virginia, is a good example of the way competing goals and methods complicated the historical work of NPS. In June 1923 a number of "interested citizens" led by Josephine Wheelwright Rust formed the

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<sup>265</sup> John Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992), 169-205; Kammen, *Mystic Chords*, 465.

<sup>266</sup> Bodnar, *Remaking America*, 178; Kammen, *Mystic Chords*, 465.

<sup>267</sup> David Glassberg, *Sense of History: The Place of the Past in American Life* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts, 2001), 17.



Wakefield National Memorial Association. Rust was interested in making a showplace of the birthplace of the country's first president, and modeled the structure of the association on the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association. To this end Rust enlisted Washington's descendants, officers from the Daughters of the American Revolution, and Charles Moore, chairman of the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts. Rust submitted a bill to Congress that allowed the association to "build, operate, and maintain" on the site owned by the United States government a "replica...of the home in which George Washington was born." The association also wanted the federal government to take custody of the site. Rust's efforts were successful, and on January 23, 1930, President Hoover signed an act that established the George Washington Birthplace National Monument under the auspices of the National Park Service.<sup>268</sup>

The establishment of the George Washington Birthplace National Monument opened the problem of how to proceed, as Washington's house had burned down in 1779 and its location was uncertain. The Wakefield National Memorial Association undertook the restoration of the site, including the house and 50 acres around it with the hope of opening it as a "shrine" to Washington, with a reconstructed house and surrounding park.<sup>269</sup> Professional historians and biographers, however, objected to the ill-researched, subjective approach of the association. The years that followed brought controversy and conflicting opinions over how the site should be treated, the authenticity of the proposed reconstruction, and the exact location of the original house. At one point during the project, the original foundations were found, but the association, unconvinced, ignored the evidence and proceeded with its original plan to erect a replica of a house whose original appearance and even footprint were unknown. The National Park Service personnel and other professionals objected to the romanticized approach used by the formidable and intransigent Mrs. Rust and her group.

Despite the untimely death of Mrs. Rust in June 1931, work proceeded throughout the 1930s as the Wakefield National Memorial Association worked on furnishing the "Memorial Mansion." Another non-professional historian, Louise du Pont Crowninshield

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<sup>268</sup> The following account is drawn from Hosmer, *Preservation*, 478-491.

<sup>269</sup> Hosmer, *Preservation*, 478.

became president of the association. Crowninshield, the sister of Henry F. du Pont, who made the family home Winterthur, Delaware, into a nationally recognized museum of American decorative arts, had already played an important role in saving Kenmore, the plantation of George Washington's sister and brother-in-law, as a historic site in Fredericksburg, Virginia. Despite continued tensions between Park Service professionals and the association, the National Park Service appreciated Mrs. Crowninshield's efforts to make Wakefield into an attractive historic site and her "knowledge, good judgment and fine taste." The National Park Service was perhaps also being tactful, since Crowninshield at the same time was helping to furnish the Richard Derby House at the Salem Maritime Historic Site in Salem, Massachusetts.

Wakefield was opened to the public in 1932 and became an instant success. Early on the "visiting public [found] Wakefield to be a place of quiet, a source of inspiration."<sup>270</sup> Despite the expert work in later years that conclusively determined that the reconstructed mansion was improperly sited and therefore unauthentic as a reconstruction, over six hundred thousand tourists had already visited the site, attesting to its continued popularity. NPS officials "believed that too much bluntness would cost the National Park Service both the scenic and inspirational values that had been carefully built up for ten years."<sup>271</sup>

The reference to "inspirational values" here is significant. A central mission of the NPS, after all, was to inspire patriotism. Despite the lack of formal, defensible research and restoration, the initial motive of the Wakefield National Memorial Association had been met: to provide a place of inspiration symbolized by the mythical and heroic qualities of George Washington. Some combination of public popularity, need to work with its allies, and the National Park Service's embarrassment about its complicity in the fictions about the Washington birthplace prevented it from making significant changes.<sup>272</sup>

Wakefield was by no means the only case in which the NPS subordinated professional research standards to promoting nostalgic myths. In the 1930s the War Department transferred to the National Park Service the Abraham Lincoln Birthplace National Historical Site in Kentucky. Here was allegedly the location of the famous log

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<sup>270</sup> Hosmer, *Preservation*, 493.

<sup>271</sup> Hosmer, *Preservation*, 610.

<sup>272</sup> Kammen, *Mystic Chords*, 466-7.

cabin where Lincoln was born. The myth of the ancient American log cabin dated from the mid-nineteenth century and provided a popular symbol of the humble beginnings of America's great leaders. Similar to the Washington house at Wakefield, however, the original Lincoln log cabin no longer existed—indeed it had disappeared by 1865. In the early twentieth century the owner of *Collier's Magazine* and an association of amateur Lincoln buffs had produced a log cabin out of other supposedly similar ones. In an internal review, the NPS found both the structure and the site to be “fictionalized.” Yet the agency continued until 1968 to promulgate the myth of the popular site by taking the public position that the “cabin was traditionally believed to be the one in which Lincoln was born.” As at Wakefield, the popularity of the site and its success at achieving the ends of patriotic inspiration were too great to resist.<sup>273</sup>

The transfer of Franklin Delano Roosevelt's home in Hyde Park, New York, bears a somewhat different history. Roosevelt himself, while president, offered the National Park Service land from his Hyde Park estate upon which to build the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library. The offer was controversial and incited partisan debate, primarily because Roosevelt was in effect donating a building to the memory of his administration while still in office. Ultimately the government accepted the donation, and the construction of the library went forward.

Roosevelt had already anticipated donating his home at Hyde Park to the National Park Service, and to this end the legislation, passed in 1939, accepting the donation set out conditions, such as that Roosevelt's wife and children could reserve a life interest in the property. In 1943 Roosevelt worked through the terms of the gift with the National Park Service. Despite National Park Service policies in place requiring thorough research and documentation before accepting new properties, the agency accepted the president's gift with little discussion, focusing on naming the site, which officially became the “Home of Franklin D. Roosevelt National Historic Site.”<sup>274</sup>

The sudden death of Roosevelt in April 1944 prompted National Park Service administrators to begin planning for public viewing of the mansion. The family officially turned over the property to the National Park Service. The home of the beloved president

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<sup>273</sup> Bodnar, *Remaking America*, 191-192 (NPS quotations, 192).

<sup>274</sup> Hosmer, *Preservation*, 758-759.

“had suddenly become sacred in the eyes of the public,” and mourners of all ages paid their respects at Roosevelt’s grave on the estate.<sup>275</sup> National Park Service officials realized that both mourners and visitors to the house were fascinated to see the “domestic side of a family that had been at the apex of power for over twelve crucial years of American history.”<sup>276</sup> The agency made the Roosevelt family’s home life the primary object of the interpretation. Eleanor Roosevelt, the late president’s widow, took an active part in helping the NPS prepare the interpretive statement of the house. At dedication ceremonies held on April 12, 1945, the first anniversary of the president’s death, Mrs. Roosevelt spoke of the “healing quality” of the house for her husband during a stressful presidency. Not surprisingly, the NPS descriptions of the house and home life were not candid about the Roosevelt’s estranged relationship, yet the omission indicates the subjective quality of the interpretation. Nonetheless, the Hyde Park site proved enormously appealing to visitors. In effect, as Hosmer writes, the house became another shrine devoted to the memory of the late president. Here the public could pay their respects to Franklin Roosevelt and feel that they had glimpsed his life behind the scenes.

### **Establishment of the John F. Kennedy Historic Site**

The restoration and refurbishment of the John F. Kennedy birthplace historic site parallels in certain ways the development of these earlier presidential memorials. At Washington’s historic site in Wakefield and Lincoln’s in Kentucky, the original structure at the center of the memorial no longer existed. The structure and site of the Kennedy birthplace remained intact, but the original interior furnishings had been removed from the site, and some had been lost or destroyed. As at Franklin Roosevelt’s home, a close family member would influence the interpretation of the Kennedy historic site as a family’s private home. All of the sites—including the Kennedy birthplace—fit well with the National Park Service’s goal of promoting patriotism through the celebration of a national leader, yet at each site the public played a role in shaping the presidential memorials. Finally, these historic places have in common the conflict between the nostalgic-idealized approach to history and professional-style research methods.

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<sup>275</sup> Hosmer, *Preservation*, 763.

<sup>276</sup> Hosmer, *Preservation*, 763.

Yet the Kennedy site differs from other presidential historic sites in important respects. Unlike most other presidential birthplaces, the Kennedy historic site is located in an urban setting. A member of the president's family, his mother, recreated its historical-period furnishings. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, its central interpretive theme concerns family life almost to the exclusion of the accomplishments of the man whose memory it honors.

After the Kennedys departed 83 Beals Street in Brookline, the house changed hands like any other property in the neighborhood. In September 1920, the Kennedys sold the house to their friends Edward E. and Mary H. Moore (Edward was also a business associate of Joe Kennedy). Thereafter the house changed owners in 1928 and again in 1944 and 1953. Each subsequent family that lived in the house put its own imprint on it, by refurnishing the rooms and making improvements, such as painting the woodwork and repapering the walls. By the time of John F. Kennedy's election to the presidency, the succession of occupants and the passage of time had altered the interior décor that Rose and Joseph Kennedy had lived in.<sup>277</sup>

After the election and, even more so, after the assassination of John F. Kennedy, members of the public from Brookline and the Boston metropolitan area began to use the birthplace site as a place of remembrance. Despite the many ownership transfers of the property, local people in and around Brookline in the 1960s still remembered 83 Beals Street as the former Kennedy family residence and birthplace of John F. Kennedy. Such was the local interest and pride that in September 1962, the Town of Brookline celebrated Kennedy by placing a commemorative bronze plaque with his image on a granite slab at the house. After Kennedy was assassinated, people gathered at the house to mourn, remember, and honor the late president—almost immediately treating the site as a memorial shrine.<sup>278</sup>

While members of the public were using the house *informally* as a shrine, local residents and officials made the first efforts to transform 83 Beals Street into a *formal* memorial site. Apparently just days after the fatal shooting of the president on November 26, 1963, a Brookline veterans' organization proposed that the town use the powers of

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<sup>277</sup> The subsequent owners were Silas and Lucy Myerson, 1928-1944; Louis and Sarah Pollack, 1944-1953; Alice Farrell, January 20, 1953 (one day only); and Louis and Martha Pollack, 1953-1966. See "Ownership of Land," Typescript document, JOFI files.

<sup>278</sup> Memorandum from Edwin W. Small to National Park Service Regional Director, December 30, 1963, folder "Site Establishment Records," JOFI files.

eminent domain to obtain eight houses adjacent to 83 Beals Street and raze them to build a memorial park in Kennedy's honor. By late December of the same year, the Town of Brookline had appointed a John F. Kennedy Memorial Committee to make plans to acquire the Kennedy birthplace. During the following winter and spring the town's residents discussed the idea. At an April 7 town meeting, the assembled failed to act on a proposal that the Town "raise and appropriate a sum of money for the purchase, or taking by eminent domain, of the [JFK] birthplace." Apparently the immediate neighbors of the birthplace site—perhaps out of fear that their own homes might be taken as part of the project—so strongly objected that the town dropped the idea. Nonetheless, it was not members of the Kennedy family or the federal government who made the original efforts to memorialize John Kennedy at 83 Beals Street; these were undertaken at the grass-roots level by local residents and their representatives in the town meeting.<sup>279</sup>

Meanwhile, there were moves afoot within the federal government to preserve the site. Under the headline "John F. Kennedy Birth Site Urged For National Shrine," the *Boston Globe* reported on May 7, 1964 that the Federal Advisory Board on National Parks had declared that "the birthplace of President Kennedy at 83 Beals Street, Brookline, should be designated as a national historic landmark." The birthplace received this federal designation the following year, and in 1967 was placed on the National Register of Historic Places. At the same time, the National Park Service took an interest in the disposition of the house, no doubt to see if it could acquire the property. From December 1963 onwards, Edwin W. Small, Superintendent at the Minute Man National Historical Park Project, sent memos to the agency's Regional Director reporting on the efforts in Brookline to turn 83 Beals Street into a memorial.<sup>280</sup>

Thus, as in the cases of the George Washington and Abraham Lincoln birthplace sites, the public, including townspeople in Brookline, first defined 83 Beals Street as a memorial to John F. Kennedy. Already in the 1960s the house had developed a popular identity as the birthplace and early home of a president, whose reputation—deserved or undeserved—was heroic and bordering on mythical. In his memo of December 30, 1964,

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<sup>279</sup> Memorandum from Edwin W. Small to Regional Director, Minute Man National Historical Park Project, March 24, 1964; Memorandum from Edwin W. Small to NPS Regional Director, Minute Man National Historical Park Project, May 11, 1964, both in folder "Site Establishment Records," unmarked box, JOFI files.

<sup>280</sup> Memoranda from Edwin W. Small to National Park Service Regional Director, December 30, 1963, March 24, 1964, May 11, 1964, etc., folder "Site Establishment Records," JOFI files.

Superintendent Small used the word “pilgrimage” to describe the public’s visits to the house. Apparently reflecting the popular conception of the house, the headline writer in the *Boston Globe* referred to the home as a “shrine.” That the public initiated the idea of the Kennedy birthplace as a memorial supports the view of David Glassberg that fervor for national heroes is often a grass-roots phenomenon and not necessarily, as Bodnar has argued, something promulgated solely by society’s elites.<sup>281</sup>

The Kennedy family took the next step in preserving the house at 83 Beals as a memorial to John F. Kennedy. On November 1, 1966 Rose Kennedy’s nephew, Joseph Gargan, purchased the house. The ever-vigilant Edwin Small noted the purchase in a memo dated the next day and included two newspaper clippings: “The content of the item from the *Boston Globe* suggests that Mrs. Rose Kennedy, mother of the martyred president, intends not only to restore and furnish the house but also to tie it in with the John F. Kennedy Memorial Library, plans for which are now underway at a site in Cambridge, not much more than a mile away from the Birthplace.”<sup>282</sup> As the memo suggests, at this point Rose Kennedy apparently already had the stated intention of restoring and refurbishing the house as a memorial, although it is not clear who would manage the house or how.

We do not have any direct evidence about what motivated Rose Kennedy to take up the project of acquiring and restoring her former home as a memorial to her son. The public’s practice of visiting the house to remember the president and perhaps also the town’s efforts to acquire it likely inspired the general idea. The local activity was the reason that public forums (such as newspapers) were discussing the idea of making the Beals Street house a formal place of remembrance of the former president. The connection reported in the *Boston Globe* between the John F. Kennedy Birthplace and the proposed Memorial Library suggests a possible motive Rose might have had for taking a personal hand in planning the birthplace memorial. The Memorial Library was the almost exclusive project of Jacqueline Kennedy and Robert Kennedy.<sup>283</sup> While Robert Kennedy and Jackie Kennedy

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<sup>281</sup> Glassberg, *Sense of History*, 12-13. Bodnar, however, might interpret the actions of the Brookline residents as “ordinary people” expressing “their vernacular interest in local, ethnic, or regional pasts.” *Remaking America*, 251.

<sup>282</sup> Memorandum from Edwin W. Small to Regional Director, Boston National Park Service Group, November 2, 1966, folder “Site establishment records,” unmarked box, JOFI files. Small’s title here is “Project Coordinator.”

<sup>283</sup> In early, but undated, promotional materials of a traveling exhibit of the library, Jackie Kennedy wrote: “I hope what you have seen today will stimulate your interest in this, the memorial which

were planning the memorial library, Rose Kennedy may have taken the opportunity to work on the John F. Kennedy Birthplace as a counterpoint to the library. She may have decided that the house, a personal “artifact” that represented John F. Kennedy’s birth and life as a child, would contrast and complement the Memorial Library, the formal monument to Kennedy’s public life and accomplishments.

Regardless of the Memorial Library, it was logical that among the interested parties Rose Kennedy was the one who would create a memorial to her son at the Brookline house. After all, the birthplace house represented the part of John F. Kennedy’s life in which Rose, as his mother, had played a great and influential role. Perhaps also the creation of a historic site or shrine at the presidential birthplace had a therapeutic value for Rose, who had not only recently lost John, but also years before had suffered the deaths of her eldest son Joseph Jr. and her daughter Kathleen.<sup>284</sup>

Whatever her motivations, after the purchase of the house in November 1966, Rose Kennedy made public, as Edwin Small noted, her plan to repair and furnish the house. By March 1967, if not earlier, she decided that upon completion of the restoration she would give the restored house to the National Park Service. With the assistance of Jordan Marsh’s interior decorator, Robert Luddington, Mrs. Kennedy set about the restoration and refurnishing of the home. Despite working steadily on the project, they were unable to repair the house and fill it with suitable furnishings in time for the site’s original scheduled public opening of May 29, 1967—on what would have been the late president’s fiftieth birthday.<sup>285</sup>

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would have pleased President Kennedy the most. . . . With your help it will soon become a reality.” Jacqueline Kennedy, introduction to pamphlet, “The John F. Kennedy Library Exhibit,” folder “John F. Kennedy Library info. (cont),” unmarked box, JOFI files. (Note: despite the “cont.” label, this is the only folder present.)

<sup>284</sup> In addition, the Kennedys’ eldest daughter, Rosemary, had undergone a lobotomy for mental illness that resulted in a profound deterioration of Rosemary’s mental faculties.

<sup>285</sup> *The Boston Sunday Globe* reported that the opening of the site was delayed and rescheduled for fall 1967, and that “Mrs. Rose Kennedy is attempting to obtain all the old furniture, furnishings and silverware that were in the 11-room dwelling at 83 Beale [sic] Street, when the Kennedy family lived there.” *The Boston Sunday Globe*, May 14, 1967, “JFK Birthplace Public Opening Delayed to Fall.” (Volume and issue number unknown – clipping is identified as being from the *Globe*.) In folder “Site Establishment File,” unmarked box, JOFI files.

Edwin Small explained in a monthly report memo “that repairs being undertaken on the house. . . had taken longer than expected and it was also going to be out of the question to assemble furnishings in the house in time for a suitable observance there. . . .” Memorandum, Monthly Report, May 1967, from Edwin W. Small to Regional Director, Boston National Park Service Group, June 2, 1967, folder “Site Establishment File,” unmarked box, JOFI files.



Meanwhile members of Congress prepared and passed legislation that made the Brookline home a national historic site. The legislation, introduced by Senator John Sherman Cooper, a Republican from Kentucky, stated for the record: “It is appropriate that the birthplace of John Fitzgerald Kennedy, who had such a sense of history, should be preserved by our nation.” The gist of the argument in favor of the legislation was that preserving the president’s birthplace was important because it was, since he died young, one of only two significant places associated with him, the other being his burial ground. With the late president’s relatively recent and tragic death in the background, the legislation progressed smoothly and was passed in the spring of 1967.<sup>286</sup>

The opening of the memorial site was delayed for what turned out to be two years, but eventually, on May 29, 1969, the official dedication ceremonies were held, and the National Park Service took over the ownership and management of the John F. Kennedy birthplace. Fittingly, Rose Kennedy was the center of attention at an event that had something of a feeling of a Kennedy family reunion. In attendance, the *Boston Herald Traveler* reported, were many Kennedy and Fitzgerald relatives, including Rose’s brother and his wife; Joseph Kennedy Sr.’s sister; Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Gargan; and Rose’s cousins and their wives, Mr. and Mrs. James Mullen and the Rev. John Fitzgerald. Of the immediate Kennedy family members, only Senator Edward Kennedy (the only surviving Kennedy son), his wife Joan, and Jean Kennedy Smith (Mrs. Stephen Smith, who was one of Rose’s daughters) were present. The Reverend Thomas F. Wilkinson, the pastor of St. Aidan’s Church, which the Kennedys once attended, gave the invocation. Rose Kennedy gave the main address. The senator, apparently deferring to his mother, did not speak at the ceremonies, although he received an enthusiastic ovation when he was introduced.<sup>287</sup>

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<sup>286</sup> *The Boston Globe*, May 12, 1967, “House Approves John F. Kennedy Shrine Bill.” (Volume and issue number unknown—clipping is pasted to sheet of paper.) In folder “Site Establishment File,” unmarked box, JOFI files; “Hearing before the Subcommittee on Parks and Recreation of the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, United States Senate, Ninetieth Congress, First Session on S. 1161, A Bill to Establish the John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, March 20, 1967 (U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington: 1967). Two binders in JOFI files, marked “Background Books,” preserve various documents, statements and on-the-record discussion of the 90<sup>th</sup> Congress concerning the bill to make the house at 83 Beals a National Historic Site.

<sup>287</sup> Arthur Stratton, “Tears Flow as Mother Gives Nation JFK Birthplace,” *Boston Herald Traveler*, May 30, 1969. Other newspapers, including *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*, covered the event similarly. See copies in Clippings folder, JOFI files.

Although Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis was among the invited, she did not attend. Since the president's widow had been a prime mover in the establishment of the Kennedy Library, it is tempting to speculate about her absence. It may have been because Jackie, one of the world's most famous celebrities, did not wish to detract attention from Mrs. Kennedy's effort. Perhaps one should not make too much of her nonattendance; after all, two of Rose's daughters, Eunice Shriver and Patricia Lawford, were not there either.

Motherhood was a main theme of the site dedication. The newspaper reporters observed that mothers and children formed the bulk of the crowd of between 500 and 800 at the dedication ceremonies.<sup>288</sup> To the women who came, the *Boston Herald Traveler* reported, "the official transfer was incidental. It was to welcome back Rose Kennedy, to hear her and to speak to her, and to greet her son Ted, and her daughter Jean, that they stood in deep rows all along Beals Street."<sup>289</sup> Speaking from the front porch of the house, Rose Kennedy noted Americans' interest in presidential birthplaces in general, her hope that young Americans who visited the house would develop a sense of history and literature and that the adults who visited would be "imbued with the optimism which my husband [Joe] and I shared."<sup>290</sup>

The newspaper coverage of the event stressed Rose Kennedy's belief in the formative role of the mother in a child's life. In words that echoed remarks of her taped tour, Rose Kennedy stated, "Whenever I held a newborn babe in my arms, I used to think that what I did and what I said to him would have an influence not only on him, but on all he met, not for a day, a month or a year, but for time and eternity. A very, very challenging

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<sup>288</sup> The number of attendees varied according to the newspaper. *The Washington Post* stated that "about 500 Fitzgerald and Kennedy relatives and friends and local residents were there"; *The New York Times* observed that a crowd of "700 to 800 waited outside" while Rose gave her guests a tour; *The Brookline Chronicle Citizen* put the number at about 600. *The Record American*, however, diverged significantly from other sources by stating that 2000 people attended the ceremony. Nancy L. Ross, "Dedicated to History," *The Washington Post*, May 30, 1969; Robert Reinhold, "Kennedy's Birthplace Made a National Shrine," *The New York Times*, May 30, 1969; "Simple ceremony marks opening of Kennedy house," *The Brookline Chronicle Citizen*, June 5, 1969; *Record American*, "JFK's Home Part of History," May 30, 1969. Copies in Clippings folder, JOFI files.

<sup>289</sup> Stratton, "Tears Flow," *Boston Herald Traveler*, May 30, 1969. Copy in Clippings folder, JOFI files.

<sup>290</sup> *The Brookline Chronicle Citizen*, "Simple Ceremony," May 30, 1969. Other newspapers related similar versions of the proceedings and quoted various parts of Rose's speech. See Clippings folder, JOFI files.

and exciting thought for a mother.”<sup>291</sup> In her words on the dedication day and in the presentation of the house, Rose Kennedy interpreted the idea of birthplace as one in which maternal influence and, extrapolating from her words, early childhood experience of family and neighborhood was decisive.

At the John F. Kennedy birthplace, as at other historic places—such as the Washington and Lincoln birthplace homes—an interested non-professional party, in this case the president’s mother, prepared and delivered a site to the National Park Service, which then found it advisable to preserve it largely as it was when they received it. Although members of the public had begun to treat 83 Beals Street as a memorial for John F. Kennedy, it was Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy who determined the interior appearance and the main interpretive themes of the historic site. In the years after its official opening, Rose Kennedy and Robert Luddington contributed a small number of additional objects. Otherwise, Janice Hodson, Supervisory Museum Curator at the site, concludes in her report on the house’s collections, “there is no evidence that she continued to be significantly involved with the birthplace after the dedication ceremonies.”<sup>292</sup> In its years as custodian of the Kennedy Historic Site, the National Park Service has made few changes to the house—and those primarily in the kitchen—and has deferred to the interpretive vision and physical arrangement of the house as it was received. For all practical purposes, then, the Kennedy site has remained as Mrs. Kennedy (with the help of Mr. Luddington) created it in the period five to six years after her son’s death.<sup>293</sup>

### **Efforts at Restoration of the John F. Kennedy National Historic Site**

Rose Kennedy, the creator of the John F. Kennedy birthplace memorial, expressed two goals for the interpretation and presentation of the John F. Kennedy Birthplace. She wished, first, to commemorate President Kennedy, and, second, to recreate an example of

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<sup>291</sup> *The Boston Herald Traveler*, May 30, 1969. Copy in Clippings folder, JOFI files. A number of newspapers reprinted this quote, some reporting that Rose Kennedy spoke it from the porch, one attributing it to the taped tour, and others not specifying. It therefore seems likely that she made similar comments in both places.

<sup>292</sup> Janice Hodson, “Report on Status of Collections, John F. Kennedy National Historic Site,” February 2003, 1, in JOFI files, reprinted in Appendix C of this Historic Resource Study.

<sup>293</sup> For changes in the house, see Anna Coxe Toogood, “John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site, Historic Furnishings Plan,” 1971, JOFI files, reprinted Appendix D of this Historic Resource Study; Hodson, “Report on Status,” and folder, Site Establishment File, unmarked box, JOFI files.

domestic life of the early twentieth century, in particular that of the Kennedys in Brookline, Massachusetts in 1917, the year Jack was born. As she was restoring the house in March 1967, she wrote to Secretary of the Interior Stewart Udall:

In recent years, I have realized that this house, because it was a birthplace of a President of the United States, is of historic value to the American people as are the homes of all our Presidents.... It is our intention and hope to make a gift of this home to the American people so that future generations will be able to visit it and see how people lived in 1917 and thus get a better appreciation of the history of this wonderful country.<sup>294</sup>

Hence, to foster interest in the history of the United States, Rose Kennedy not only wanted to honor the house as a presidential birthplace, like other presidential birthplaces or homes, but also to show a “typical” home of an American family of the early twentieth century. As to the precise historical period, Rose Kennedy intended to re-create the house “as it was at the time of the birth of the thirty-fifth President on May 29, 1917.”<sup>295</sup>

In their efforts to replicate the former Kennedy home in its epoch, Mrs. Kennedy and Mr. Luddington attempted to achieve historical accuracy where possible (or perhaps where Mrs. Kennedy thought it would give the restoration more interest). For example, in response to Rose Kennedy’s inquiries, the regional director of the Bureau of Labor Statistics (U.S. Department of Labor) sent Robert Luddington several tables of estimated retail food prices (for selected foods) for the period between 1890 and 1966, and average family food expenditures and food prices for the years 1917-1919.<sup>296</sup>

However, the task of historical reconstruction of the Kennedy house interior proved difficult. It took Rose Kennedy and Robert Luddington longer than they expected to seek what they considered appropriate objects for the house from the Kennedy family’s collections. In cases in which no Kennedy mementos survived, Rose Kennedy and Robert Luddington turned to antique dealers for pieces that dated from the early twentieth century

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<sup>294</sup> Letter, Mrs. Joseph P. Kennedy to Honorable Stewart Udall, March 15, 1967, in “Background Book” on 90<sup>th</sup> Congress, JOFI files.

<sup>295</sup> Memorandum, Project Keyman [Edwin W. Small, Project Coordinator, National Park Service] to Regional Director, 5 April 1967, folder “L-58 Proposed Areas – JFK,” JOFI files, quoted in Hodson, “Report on Status,” 7.

<sup>296</sup> Letter with enclosures, Herbert Bienstock to Robert Luddington, August 30, 1967, “Misc. Correspondence 1968-1972” folder, Box 2, MS 77-29, RFK Papers, JFK Library, and see also Hodson, “Report on Status,” 5.

and to contemporary commercial vendors to obtain reproductions or, failing that, objects similar to the original articles.<sup>297</sup>

Moreover, as Rose Kennedy and Luddington freely admitted during and after the restoration, they relied on Rose's incomplete memory of the house's interior to reconstruct the details of a family life that had occurred fifty years earlier. Luddington carried out the work to the best of his ability, using creativity when gaps in Mrs. Kennedy's memory required an alternative solution. In a methodical 1971 report on the house's furnishings, Anna Coxe Toogood noted that Rose Kennedy's memory sometimes had to be "jogged" by Luddington. Reasoning that he was the same age as the late president and therefore had similar objects early in life, Luddington in several cases "improvised, with Mrs. Kennedy's permission, with articles he remembered from his own childhood. . . ." In the end, according to Hodson, only about a quarter of the objects in the house once belonged to the Kennedys, and some of these came from houses other than the one on Beals Street.<sup>298</sup>

Rose Kennedy's memories presented a filtered image of life at 83 Beals Street. This is not surprising. Memory is fluid; it changes with age, experience, and perspective. Its prime function, as David Lowenthal notes, "is not to preserve the past but to adapt it so as to enrich and manipulate the present."<sup>299</sup> Hence, the memories that Rose Kennedy could conjure up were selective.

As Lowenthal notes, over time the mind erases memory of what it considers unimportant details while it treasures the memory of events and objects that have strong emotional associations. Thus in trying to restore the Beals Street home, Mrs. Kennedy could not recall whether there had been a fence behind the house or where the family's Model T was kept when not in use. Although the major gifts relatives gave the Kennedys at their wedding included both a piano and a Victrola phonograph, when Rose reconstructed the family life, she thought only of the piano. In the taped interview and tour, Rose Kennedy expressed her love of playing piano and her disappointment that her children were indifferent to the instrument. The intensity of her feelings on the subject apparently

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<sup>297</sup> Hodson, "Report on Status," 7-9; Toogood, "Historic Furnishings Plan," (1971), JOFI files, 19-35.

<sup>298</sup> Toogood, "Historic Furnishings Plan," 19; Hodson, "Report on Status," 7.

<sup>299</sup> Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country*, 209.

caused her to remember and therefore replace the piano in the house but omit the Victrola, which did not provoke such an intense association.<sup>300</sup>

In general, perceptions formed after a remembered time often influence the memory of that past. The restoration of the Kennedy birthplace offers a number of examples of later perspectives influencing Rose Kennedy's memories. One is the documented discrepancy between the "the abundance of pictures, mirrors, lamps, marble busts, bronzes and figurines" that the couple received at their wedding and the small number of objects Rose Kennedy chose to display in the restored house's rooms. "The display of numerous small decorative objects would have been in keeping with middle-class taste in the early 1910s," Hodson observes, "less so with the more minimalist aesthetic of the 1950s and 1960s."<sup>301</sup> By the late 1960s Rose Kennedy remembered her house of fifty years earlier in an uncluttered interior style to which she had grown accustomed in the intervening years.

Memory of the recent past—and very possibly the wish to appeal to public taste—appears to have influenced Rose Kennedy's decision to include a copy of the children's book, *King Arthur and His Knights*, and display it in a prominent place in the children's nursery. In interviews Rose indicated that she selected books for the nursery that she remembered her son John loved and that she thought the family would have had. She also alluded to the *King Arthur* book as the probable source of John's enthrallment with the musical play "Camelot."<sup>302</sup> Camelot became a popular symbol of the Kennedy presidency after Jacqueline Kennedy mentioned her husband's fondness for the musical to journalist Theodore White during an interview for *Life* magazine. Recently curator Janice Hodson discovered that Jacqueline Kennedy reviewed Rose Kennedy's audio tour script for the birthplace site and raised the possibility that Jackie may have played a role in displaying the *King Arthur* book. In either case, Rose Kennedy clearly responded to the recent insertion of the Camelot myth into the popular image of the Kennedy White House. In so doing, she

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<sup>300</sup> Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country*, 204-206; Rose Kennedy, November 20, 1967 transcript of interview with Nan Rickey, 14 and 33 (JOFI files), 16-18; Hodson, "Report on Status," 6.

<sup>301</sup> Hodson, "Report on Status," 5-6.

<sup>302</sup> Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy, undated transcript, JOFI files, 6-7; Rose Kennedy, November 20, 1967 transcript of interview with Nan Rickey, 43, JOFI files.

revealed that appealing to the public's interest in and image of John F. Kennedy helped guide her decisions in arranging the interior of the president's birthplace.<sup>303</sup>

Just as interesting in regard to the historic restoration as the matter of the *King Arthur* book is the question of whether there would have been many books in the children's nursery at all. (Rose Kennedy and Robert Luddington collected 38 and displayed 23 books.) At the time set for the restoration, the date of John's birth on May 29, 1917, the Kennedys had one child, Joseph Jr., who was twenty-two months old. Indeed, the Kennedy and Luddington team stocked the children's bedroom with toys—such as a multi-piece Lionel train set—and books that probably would have been used by children older than Joe was at the time. Some of these objects might have belonged more accurately to a time after the family's move to Abbottsford Road, when Joe Jr. was five years old, his younger brother three, Rosemary about two, and Kathleen not yet one. Other articles on display, such as photographs that showed the children in the 1920s, clearly belonged to the later period. Hence, in practice, Rose Kennedy stretched the time period represented in the house to include the early childhood years, which allowed her memory to incorporate remembered objects and events from later times, such as the period of the Kennedy's subsequent house on Abbottsford Road.<sup>304</sup>

The loose definition of the time period of John F. Kennedy's birth allowed Rose Kennedy to escape, at least to a certain extent, the paradox of a strictly interpreted birthplace memorial. Rigorously restricting the household furnishings to the time of the president's birth would have precluded any memorabilia pertaining to him within the birthplace. As it is, many have noticed the paucity of memorabilia or even images of the late president at the site.

For the most part, the memories and selective process that guided Rose Kennedy in restoring the Kennedy birthplace expressed a nostalgic view of her family's early life. Perhaps obviously, the house represents what Rose might have called a "simpler" time in the family's life, when daily concerns revolved around the needs of babies and household management. The home seems uncluttered and neat. The image of a family life that revolved around the children—with the little table in the dining room and toys upstairs—

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<sup>303</sup> Thomas Brown, *History of an Image* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 42-43; Hodson, "Report on Status," 4.

<sup>304</sup> Toogood, "Historic Furnishings Plan," 32; Hodson, "Report on Status," 8, 13.

seems happy and uncomplicated. Similarly the image of the parental couple quietly resting together in the living room after a long day's work presents a picture of a harmonious relationship.

Yet, of course, life in the home *was* complicated. Tending to the children's constant needs, feeding the family, doing laundry, and keeping a house clean was difficult work—noisy, bustling, and even smelly at times. What Mrs. Kennedy chose *not* to include in the interpretation of the house is instructive also. The decision, which may not have been conscious or deliberate, to omit the presence of live-in servants from the house's presentation may have reflected her own personal conception of servants as preferably invisible and “behind the scenes.” Likewise Rose Kennedy's thematic interpretation precludes other aspects—such as at times a sense of frustration with her maternal role during her years in Brookline—that her own reminiscences and other historical records suggest. The degree to which Rose Kennedy's memories or desire to project a favorable image to the public led her to include, emphasize, or censor material for the house is unknown and unknowable. Although the Kennedy birthplace restoration was no doubt more realistic than the whole-cloth re-creations at sites such as Wakefield, reliance on Rose Kennedy's memory produced a nostalgic vision of the Kennedy home on Beals Street.

### **The National Park Service and the Birthplace Restoration**

As at other National Park Service presidential memorial sites, tensions over methods arose between the amateur historians who helped create the sites and the National Park Service professionals. Although Rose Kennedy and Robert Luddington were committed to their project, their methods and apparent lack of interest in providing documentation concerned the National Park Service even before it assumed responsibility for the house in 1969. Park Service personnel were concerned that appropriate Park Service methodologies be at least introduced to the team, and they tried to provide guidance to the two. Officials provided Mr. Luddington with “Furnishings Plans” of other National Park Service properties, the Schuyler House and the Tenant House #1 at Hopewell Village. In a March 14, 1967 memo from Frank Barnes, Regional Chief of Interpretation and Visitor Services of the Northeast Region, to the Superintendent of the Boston NHS, Barnes explained: “These plans, along with the revised Furnishings Plan format you already have, may prove helpful



in explaining our goals to Mr. Robert Luddington.”<sup>305</sup> In a memo dated May 19 the same year, Edwin Small returned the materials, stating:

Mr. Luddington has indicated that he had the opportunity to observe the methods of the National Park Service, and also view some Furnishings Plans, when he spent two days at the home of Franklin D. Roosevelt and Vanderbilt Mansion National Historic Sites during the past winter. It appears that Mr. Luddington will not be providing a Furnishings Plan when the Kennedy Birthplace is finally turned over to the National Park Service for operation but at least will be able to provide accession cards for every item that goes into the 83 Beals Street house.<sup>306</sup>

Small was not concerned about the lack of a furnishings plan from Luddington, which he concluded could be constructed later on by the National Park Service.

During the restoration following a firebombing of the house in 1975—an apparent protest of Senator Edward Kennedy’s support for the controversial policy of school integration through busing—that destroyed the kitchen, NPS authorities raised new questions concerning Luddington’s work during the original refurnishing of the house. In a memo to the file dated February 19, 1976, NPS administrators recorded a meeting between Luddington and NPS officials at the John F. Kennedy Birthplace. The “purpose of the meeting was to investigate the physical evidence left after the fire bombing and to discuss with Mr. Luddington the apparent differences between the previous restoration of the house and the evidence found.” At the meeting, agency personnel brought up discrepancies in the kitchen “involving stove location, floor material, and the existence of cabinets” between what was originally there and what Luddington and Rose Kennedy had installed, as well as “physical evidence that at some time the house contained combination gas-electric fixtures” (not the electric fixtures that Luddington and Rose Kennedy had put in), which Luddington agreed to ask Mrs. Kennedy about. The memo concluded by stating the problematic nature of the restoration:

Mr. Luddington, in general, displayed a flexible attitude toward such changes as light fixtures, light receptacles, etc. His demeanor belied the notion that no changes can be made in the house. At one point he suggested that Mrs. Kennedy’s recollections were not complete and that he was given a considerable amount of

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<sup>305</sup> Memorandum, Frank Barnes to Superintendent, Boston NHS, March 14, 1967, folder “Site establishment file,” unmarked box, JOFI files.

<sup>306</sup> Memorandum, Edwin W. Small to Regional Director, Boston National Park Service Group, May 19, 1967, folder “Site establishment file,” unmarked box, JOFI files.

latitude in the selection of furnishings. . . . Under [the pressure of completing the project] Mr. Luddington made selections that were suitable to an early 20<sup>th</sup> century [sic] without detailed research on the accuracy of these furnishings and appointments.”<sup>307</sup>

The National Park Service’s frustration is palpable in these documents.

The objective of the National Park Service—to obtain absolute, or even close to absolute, historical accuracy—is understandable given its own legacy of trying to incorporate the methods of professional history. The emphasis on accuracy, equated with authenticity, lies in the goal of obtaining objectivity and therefore some kind of mastery over the presentation and interpretation of a historic site (or written history, biography, etc.). Yet even the probability of successfully obtaining the ultimate goal of “absolute” or total objectivity is heavily contested, and the methods themselves as to how to accomplish this are not entirely clear. As Lowenthal states: “There is no true past out there waiting to be accurately reconstructed; as the editors say of memory, so is history ‘socially constructed, not an objective record to be retrieved. . . . [Historians] need to be cognizant of the screens through which historical information and ideas are commonly filtered.”<sup>308</sup>

Although, as noted above, Mrs. Kennedy and Mr. Luddington tried to accurately recreate a historic site, their work did not meet the National Park Service’s standards. Robert Luddington, as the person who worked the most closely with Mrs. Kennedy, probably understood better than anyone her needs and wishes with respect to the refurbishment of the house. Luddington may also have been a more approachable partner for the project than agency staff members. As a decorator Mrs. Kennedy liked and used for her other homes, he also would have maintained the relationship of employee to employer, a relationship that might have been more familiar to Mrs. Kennedy than having to work as part of a team of professional preservation administrators and historians. The fact that Mr. Luddington was born the same year as John F. Kennedy also lends an interesting perspective to the project. Both he and Mrs. Kennedy relied on some of his own childhood memories to help her in the reconstruction. As early as 1969, Park Service personnel

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<sup>307</sup> Memorandum, Denis P. Galvan to Files, February 19, 1976, “Site establishment file,” unmarked box, JOFI files.

<sup>308</sup> David Lowenthal, “The Timeless Past: Some Anglo-American Historical Perspectives,” *The Journal of American History*, volume 75, issue 4 (March 1989), 1264.

realized, “the furnishings...in the house are reminiscent rather than historically accurate.”<sup>309</sup>

If Rose Kennedy and her assistant Robert Luddington fell short of professional historical standards, the National Park Service would not have been able to do much better. Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy had actually lived in the house, whereas any other would-be restorers would have had to extrapolate from documents and observation of similar abodes. NPS officials have themselves reached this conclusion. “Whatever the National Park Service could add to the historical accuracy,” Toogood wrote in 1971, “would be minor in relation to Mrs. Kennedy’s overall effort to recreate her memories of the birthplace of the thirty-fifth President.”<sup>310</sup> In her recent report, site curator Hodson endorsed this view.

The lack of any written documentation from either Mr. Luddington or Rose Kennedy has also been a source of frustration for the National Park Service. In the early years, agency staff members were keenly interested in an authentic and accurate re-creation of the historical birthplace, but their repeated attempts throughout the years to obtain promised records or even a discussion of them from Mr. Luddington met with no success. “Unfortunately, efforts by this historian,” Toogood wrote in her 1971 furnishings report, “to arrange interviews with Kennedy and Fitzgerald family members in Boston and to acquire the documentation for the refurnishing of the house failed. . . .”<sup>311</sup> The failure to obtain Luddington’s documentation of the project in effect blocked the attempt by NPS staff members to replicate or at least to justify in terms of objective historical research a historically “authentic” Kennedy birthplace house.

In recent years the National Park Service changed its policy and has sought to understand the significance of the Beals Street home as Rose Kennedy and Robert Luddington restored it. The rise of scholarship about memory in the past decade and a half has led the agency to value the house as a memorial rather than a facsimile of an historical time or place. (The new approach was in large part an inspiration for undertaking this historic resource study). In order to comprehend the purpose and meaning of the birthplace, the National Park Service now hopes to document the creation of the site in and

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<sup>309</sup> Nan Rickey, *Interpretive Prospectus, John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site* (US Department of the Interior National Park Service, Office of Environmental Planning and Design, 1969), 3, cited in Hodson, “Report on Status,” 7.

<sup>310</sup> Toogood, *Historic Furnishings Plan*, iii; Hodson, “Report on Status,” 14.

<sup>311</sup> Toogood, “Historic Furnishings Plan,” i.

of itself. Recently, after years of trying, Park Service personnel have resumed contact with Robert Luddington, although as of this writing he has still not explained the process of furnishing the house.

### **Interpretation of Historic Memory at the John F. Kennedy Historic Site**

Given the history of the making of the birthplace of President John F. Kennedy into a National Historic Site, it remains to try to understand the interpretation of historic memory at the site. Historians of public memory, particularly John Bodnar, argue that in the United States political and economic elites have created official historic sites to promulgate patriotism among the masses of citizens. As such, official sites stress such patriotic themes as nation-building, the valor of war, and individual heroism for the nation. The citizenry, according to the argument, tries to transform monuments to nationalism or to create their own memorial sites in order to celebrate ties to their ancestors, local community, and/or ethnic group.<sup>312</sup>

Some evidence supports this interpretation of the development of the John F. Kennedy National Historic Site. As we have seen, the National Park Service took up the task of preserving and managing historic sites in order to promote national pride and loyalty among Americans. Moreover, the commemoration of the nation's head of state is by definition an expression of national identity and pride.

As Glassberg has shown, however, the reality is usually more complex.<sup>313</sup> Different groups compete to project their own visions. On the one hand, elites are often divided over their aims for a project, and on the other hand, the grass-roots populace can be zealous in pursuit of patriotic histories. In the cases of the presidential birthplaces reviewed here, the government hardly seemed to exercise hegemony. Far from dictating, the National Park Service was much of the time beholden to private groups.

Both the history and presentation of the Kennedy house are at odds with the theory of the opposition between official and vernacular values. As we have seen, Rose Kennedy, probably inspired to some degree by the earlier attention the public paid to the house, created the historic site and gave it to the National Park Service, which was nonplussed by

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<sup>312</sup> Bodnar, *Remaking America*; but see also, Kammen, *Mystic Chords*.

<sup>313</sup> Glassberg, *Sense of History*.

her methods of restoration. Moreover, the president's mother presented the Kennedy birthplace more in correspondence with allegedly vernacular values than official ones. The presentation paid special attention to—or “privileged” in literary theory jargon—family, home, and neighborhood. Interestingly, Anne Poubeau, a graduate student working with David Glassberg, interpreted the conflict between Rose Kennedy and the National Park Service as one in which Mrs. Kennedy's vision of the site as a replica of everyday life clashed with the National Park Service's insistence “on giving a more Presidential tone to the whole enterprise, and maybe unconsciously transforming it into a shrine to the late President.”<sup>314</sup> Although the evidence reviewed here indicates that the National Park Service was fixated primarily on professional historical methods, Poubeau's observation suggests that the difference between official and vernacular approaches contributed to the division between the parties.

In fact, Rose Kennedy herself wanted *both* to celebrate the president *and* to show what home life was like at the time he was born. The goal of presenting a typical urban home of the early twentieth century, however, nearly overwhelmed the goal of creating a temple to the memory of the president. After purchasing the house to create a memorial, Rose Kennedy chose to restore it as her idea of the family home she and her husband had created in the 1910s, and therefore she did not, as she might have, fill the house with inspiring artifacts related to the life of John F. Kennedy. Far from hero-worshipping patriotism, the birthplace is striking in its lack of memorabilia or even images of the late president. Indeed, when Rose Kennedy first handed over the building to the National Park Service, it contained more photographs of Joseph Kennedy Jr. than of John.<sup>315</sup>

Rather than try to create an exercise in flag-waving, Rose Kennedy surmised that members of the public would be interested in what daily life was like for a family in the early twentieth century. The interpretation Rose Kennedy left in interviews emphasized the couple's early life together, the household with young children, the mother's and, to an extent, the children's experience of the neighborhood including the local stores, school, and Catholic church. In other words, she specifically identified the house with the kind of ordinary people that Bodnar argues created vernacular memorials.

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<sup>314</sup> Anne Poubeau, “Historic Resource Study John F. Kennedy Birthplace, Brookline, Massachusetts” paper, advisor: David Glassberg, History Department, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, May 1999, 11.

<sup>315</sup> Hodson, “Report on Status,” 12-13.

If anything, Rose Kennedy's presentation is a testament to the view, more widely proclaimed in the era before female suffrage, that women exercised their power in society through their influence on children, home, and neighborhood, rather than through holding government office, executive jobs, and other public positions of authority. As it was beginning to be challenged by some feminists—especially suffragettes—this view still held sway in the Progressive Era when Rose Kennedy came of age. Nonetheless, even people of the present day, who generally accept the principle of equality of the sexes, subscribe to the importance of maternal influence on children and society, as numerous scholarly research projects, political pronouncements (“soccer moms,” for example), celebrations, and journalistic screeds can attest.

The aim of celebrating family, domesticity, and place, however, seemed modest in comparison to chronicling the great achievements of a presidency—such as solving the Cuban Missile Crisis, for example. At times Rose Kennedy herself seemed unsure of the value of her enterprise. In considering what objects to place on the third floor of the house, for example, Rose explained in November 1967 to the National Park Service's editor, Nan Rickey, “we got a lot of things from the library you see, and then we have things down in Hyannis, and then, *of course, Jackie has a lot of the things, the really interesting things that we accumulated while he was President, but I kept this really just while he was here and [as] the background. . . .*” (Italics added.) A few days later Rickey invited Mrs. Kennedy to create a booklet for the birthplace site and thought the president's mother “seemed uncertain of the worthwhileness [*sic*] of such an effort for this house where, she felt, the family had lived for such a short time and where so little of importance had happened.”<sup>316</sup>

Indeed, the John F. Kennedy National Historic Site provides a stark contrast with the other memorial created by the Kennedy family and the government, the John F. Kennedy Library. The president's widow, Jacqueline, and brother Robert helped establish the library, and no less a figure than the president of the United States at the time, Jimmy Carter, dedicated it on October 20, 1979. It is set in a nine-and-a-half acre landscaped park next to the ocean and provides views of Boston's skyline and harbor. The building is an imposing structure, designed by I. M. Pei, one of the best-known modernist-style architects

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<sup>316</sup> However, any number of other reasons, including advanced age, may have caused Mrs. Kennedy to step away from the birthplace. Rose Kennedy, interview by Nan Rickey, 21 Nov. 1967, transcript, JOFI files, 52; Memorandum H22-HA, 28 Nov. 1967, JOFI files. Both quotes and citations are in Hodson, “Report on Status,” 8-9, 14.

of his time. The library serves as an archive for the papers and objects of the late president, including, as Rose noted, “the really interesting things that we accumulated while he was President” as well as the papers of other members of the Kennedy family. In addition, the facility contains a visitors’ center and exhibition area, two theaters, and a conference center, added in 1991. There are 21 exhibits—which include huge blown-up photographs—on the life, work, administration, and family of John F. Kennedy, and movies about his life and presidency run around the clock.

The birthplace site differs in almost all respects, except the reference point of John F. Kennedy. It is a generic-looking house with a small yard on a crowded neighborhood street, so anonymous that only a series of signs placed in the vicinity and in front of the house allows strangers to locate it. Its offices and public visitor’s center are small, and its historical holdings are few. In short, one facility is grand, the other humble. Placed together in the framework of memory history, the two sites perfectly epitomize official pomp and vernacular culture.

### **Reception of the John F. Kennedy National Historic Site as a Memorial**

The National Park Service expected that the site would be popular. Public interest in the project remained high before and after the birthplace was officially turned over to the National Park Service. Newspapers across the country as well as in Boston reported on the dedication ceremonies of May 29, 1969. From the outset, Hodson notes, “public reaction was unanimously positive.”<sup>317</sup>

In addition, there was inherent interest in memorializing John F. Kennedy, who, however he was considered in life, was revered in death. In the years after his assassination, countless entities were named after Kennedy, including buildings, art centers, schools, streets, parks, coins, and in 1967 a United States commemorative stamp. Americans created songs and poems in the president’s honor. “If there is any enduring monument on the ever-changing landscape of contemporary politics,” writes one historian, “it is the people’s affection and esteem for John F. Kennedy.”<sup>318</sup> People’s attitudes toward John Kennedy have had as much to do with cultural and personal attitudes as with his political record.

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<sup>317</sup> Hodson, “Report on Status,” 13.

<sup>318</sup> Thomas Brown, *History of an Image* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 1.

Contributing to his popularity, before and during Jack's political campaigns the Kennedys and their friends self-consciously publicized the candidate and cultivated friendly relationships with journalists. (Joseph Kennedy Sr. led these efforts, which followed after similar attempts to fashion his own political career.) In the wake of such promotional efforts, excited news and gossip reports in the media further fueled the public's interest in the Kennedys. Nonetheless, these feelings grew and took on a life of their own and persist to this day. Public fascination spread to other Kennedy family members, most especially his widow and children, and continued to grow. In the case of Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis in particular, the feelings became fixations. As just one example of the fixation, to advertise its lead story, the cover of the May 2004 issue of *Vanity Fair* magazine sported a portrait of Jackie Kennedy from 1961.

With such interest, it was reasonable to expect that many would flock to the Kennedy birthplace, although as it turned out, the number of visitors to the National Historic Site has been respectable, if not awesome. The site did not receive the number of expected visitors in its first few years: visitation in 1969 was about 31,000, less than half the 65,000 the National Park Service had estimated. Over the next few years annual visitation ranged from 29,500 in 1970 to a high of 33,000 in 1973, the tenth anniversary of the president's death. After the firebombing in September 1975 closed the house for more than a year, the number of visitors declined. At the outset the birthplace suffered disadvantages such as obscure location and lack of presidential memorabilia, but since 1979 the primary reason that visitation failed to meet expectations is probably competition from the Kennedy Library. In contrast to the Kennedy Library, the Kennedy site is open to the public only on a seasonal basis and can only accommodate a relatively small number of visitors in a day. Thus, the annual number of visitors to the lushly equipped library and museum is 200,000, a figure that dwarfs the number of guests at the Kennedy National Historic Site.

Nonetheless, the Kennedy National Historic Site has unique qualities that its luxurious rival lacks. Similar to the Franklin Delano Roosevelt home in Hyde Park, the Kennedy birthplace is a genuine part of history and provides an intimate space that imparts a sense of the lived experience of the site's subjects. For these reasons, the birthplace site receives a healthy visitation—it exceeded 12,000 in 2001 and was a little less than 10,000 the



following two years—which greatly exceeds the number of visitors to the average historic house museum.<sup>319</sup>

For many who have come to visit it, the Kennedy birthplace has served as a memorial, evolving from a symbol of John F. Kennedy to one that embraces his family members. After John was elected to the presidency, the public has come by the thousands to visit the house and reflect on his life. The people, Poubeau observes, have long treated the Kennedy birthplace as a shrine.<sup>320</sup> The John F. Kennedy Birthplace thus takes its place with other places of remembrance of John F. Kennedy, which include Arlington National Cemetery, where his relatives visit his grave, and more recently the Texas School Book Depository in Dallas, Texas, where he was killed.

There is not space to explore here the varied ways in which visitors respond to the house. Certainly the Kennedy mystique, over which many have pondered, is evident here. Poubeau notes that the house has become a locus of collective memory, a place where both those who lived during the Kennedy administration and those who were born afterwards can remember Kennedy directly or indirectly. “In a review of the sheets from 1995 to 1997, one grasps an overview of the memories linked to the place and the man. . . . For one woman, 83 Beals Street is ‘such an ordinary-extraordinary house, like the house next door, but visited by thousands.’”<sup>321</sup> Visitors to the birthplace often leave comments reflecting on their memories of the assassination, probably the most well known fact of Kennedy’s life, well ahead of his political career and Irish Catholicism.

After he died in 1963, the Kennedy mystique helped spread further the association of the house with Kennedy and his family. The public now used the site as a place of pilgrimage to express their feelings about significant events associated with the Kennedy family. After tragedies such as Robert Kennedy’s assassination in 1968 or the death of John F. Kennedy Jr. in 1999, people visited the house and expressed their grief. In 1975 the unknown parties who firebombed the house were apparently expressing anger at Senator

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<sup>319</sup> Visitation for the years 1969 through are in several documents; see the interpretive prospectus, unpaginated, in folder “History of the Site,” unmarked box, JOFI files. Visitation of 9,699 in 2002 is listed at: <http://www.nps.gov/jofi/pphtml/facts.html>

<sup>320</sup> Poubeau, “Historic Resource Study,” 21.

<sup>321</sup> Poubeau, “Historic Resource Study,” 19, 21.

Edward Kennedy for his support of school busing.<sup>322</sup> In general, however, people have gathered to pay tribute, to experience a feeling of community, and to share their thoughts about the Kennedy family. Yearly commemorations of Kennedy's birthday on May 29, publicized by the site's staff through flyers and invitations, also bring people to the house to celebrate. Like the descriptions of visitors to Wakefield, who found Washington's birthplace to be a "source of inspiration," or to the "shrine" that was Franklin Delano Roosevelt's home (and gravesite), visitors to the John F. Kennedy National Historic Site bring their own expectations to the site and leave with equally idiosyncratic reactions.

Thus, as in the beginning, the public, along with Rose Kennedy and the National Park Service, has helped define the meaning of the birthplace site. The public collectively has endowed the house with an aura that is more than the sum of its parts, creating something out of the John F. Kennedy birthplace that resembles a shrine not only for the late president but also for his other family members. If other sites used as Kennedy memorials are better known (such as Arlington National Cemetery) or attract larger numbers (such as the Kennedy Library), the John F. Kennedy National Historic Site holds its own particular place as a locus of public memory in relation to the thirty-fifth president of the United States and his family.

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<sup>322</sup> The words, "Bus Teddy," were painted on the sidewalk in front of 83 Beals Street. Hodson, "Report on Status," 10 (note 30).

APPENDIX A

**Occupational Categories**

Occupational categories are adapted from Stephan Thernstrom, *The Other Bostonians: Poverty and Progress in the American Metropolis, 1880-1970* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), appendix B.

White-Collar Occupations

I. High White-Collar

**Professionals**

Architect  
Chemist  
Clergyman  
Editor  
Engineer (except locomotive or stationary)  
Civil engineer  
Electrical engineer  
Lawyer  
Pharmacist  
Physician  
Scientist  
Social Worker  
Teacher  
Veterinarian

**Major Proprietors, Managers, and Officials**

Banker  
Broker  
Builder, Contractor (with sufficient property)  
Corporation official  
Government official (upper ranks only)  
Hotel keeper or manager  
Labor union officer  
Manufacturer  
Merchant (with sufficient property)

II. Low White-Collar

**Clerks and Salesmen**

Accountant  
Advertising man

Agent  
Auctioneer  
Auditor  
Baggage man  
Bank teller  
Bill collector  
Bookkeeper  
Canvasser  
Cashier  
Clerk  
Collector  
Credit man  
Dispatcher  
Insurance adjuster or salesman  
Messenger  
Office boy  
Salesman  
Secretary  
Typist

**Semiprofessionals**

Actor  
Airplane pilot  
Artist  
Athlete  
Chiropractor  
Dietician  
Draftsman  
Embalmer  
Entertainer  
Journalist  
Librarian  
Musician  
Newspaperman  
Nurse  
Optician, Optometrist  
Osteopath  
Photographer  
Surveyor

Technician – medical, dental, electrical, etc.  
Writer

**Petty Proprietors, Managers, and  
Officials**

Foreman  
Huckster, Peddler  
Minor government official  
Proprietor or manager of a small business  
Farmer  
Railroad conductor  
Self-employed artisan

**Blue-Collar Occupations**

**III. Skilled**

Baker  
Blacksmith  
Brass finisher  
Boilerman  
Bookbinder  
Bricklayer, Mason  
Carpenter, Cabinetmaker  
Caulker  
Cigarmaker  
Compositor, Printer  
Confectioner  
Coppersmith  
Craneman, Derrickman  
Electrician  
Engineer (locomotive or stationary, or other machine)  
Engraver  
Fireman (locomotive)  
Furrier  
Glazier  
Goldsmith  
Jeweler  
Laster  
Lithographer  
Locksmith  
Machinist  
Master mariner  
Mechanic  
Millwright  
Molder  
Painter

Paperhanger  
Patternmaker  
Plasterer  
Plumber  
Roofer  
Shoemaker (except in factory)  
Silversmith  
Slater  
Steamfitter  
Stonecutter  
Tailor  
Tinner  
Tool-and-die maker  
Upholsterer

**IV. Semiskilled and Service Workers**

Apprentice  
Barber  
Bartender  
Brakeman  
Bus, cab, or truck driver  
Chauffeur  
Cook  
Cooper  
Deliveryman  
Elevator operator  
Factory operative  
Fireman  
Fisherman  
Gas-station attendant  
Guard, Watchman  
Hospital Attendant  
Janitor  
Lineman  
Longshoreman  
Mail carrier  
Meatcutter  
Milkman  
Motorman  
Policeman  
Sailor  
Soldier (except officers)  
Stevedore  
Switchman  
Teamster  
Waiter  
Welder

## V. Unskilled Laborers and Menial Service

### Workers

Coachman  
Gardener  
Hostler, Liveryman  
Laborer  
Lumberman  
Porter



## APPENDIX B

### **Report on Status of Collections John F. Kennedy National Historic Site**

Janice Hodson, Supervisory Museum Curator  
February 2003

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the museum collections at John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic. The major frustration in discussing the history and provenance of the collection is the lack of primary documentation from its original creators – Rose Kennedy and Robert Luddington.

Attempts by the National Park Service to discuss the restoration process with Mrs. Kennedy and to access documentation compiled during the work go back to the years before the National Park Service (NPS) actually had custody of the property. Nan Rickey, a technical publications editor with the National Park Service who prepared the site's *Interpretive Prospectus* in 1969, appears to have been one of the few NPS employees with access to Mrs. Kennedy during the late 1960s. As Rickey put it in 1967, "Mrs. Kennedy is a somewhat difficult interview subject for a variety of reasons. In truth, it may not be possible to overcome these problems, all of which operate to reduce the level of human communication with her. Success in overcoming them will depend on a greater sense of ease and familiarity in Mrs. Kennedy -- something which we can achieve only if she is willing to work with us on a continuing basis."<sup>323</sup>

Apparently, this comfortable familiarity was never achieved. Both before and after the property was turned over to the NPS in May 1969, the Service's contact with Mrs. Kennedy occurred primarily through Robert Luddington, the interior decorator who assisted Mrs. Kennedy with the refurnishing. Although Mrs. Kennedy continued (again, through Luddington) to donate objects to the house after it was transferred to the NPS, there is no evidence that she continued to be significantly involved with the birthplace after the dedication day ceremonies. Attempts by Anna Coxe Toogood, historian with the NPS Eastern Service Office, to interview Mrs. Kennedy for the *Historic Furnishings Plan* in 1971 failed, although Toogood did interview Luddington about the furnishings. Sometimes the information on the objects contained in the *Historic Furnishings Plan* contradicts that provided by Luddington and Mrs. Kennedy in earlier documents. Papers generated by Luddington during the refurnishing project have not been made available to NPS staff for research.

Consequently, this latest attempt to document the provenance of the collection and the restoration methodology has relied heavily on the following sources:

- *Letter from Robert Luddington, Director, Interior Decorating, Jordan Marsh Company to Nan Rickey, Technical Publication Editor, National Park Service, November 15, 1967 (6 pgs.)*

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<sup>323</sup> Memorandum H22-HA, Technical Publications Editor to Chief, Interpretation and Visitor Services, Nov. 28, 1967, "K-18 Kennedy" folder, JOFI files, 2.

*JOFI files*

This letter contains a list of items used in the refurbishing that have “special significance as many...were used originally in the house and others are part of Mrs. Joseph P. Kennedy’s personal collection.” However, there are objects on the list – the children’s table and the copy of the book *Billy Whiskers* are two examples – that other sources clearly state have no site-specific or family association. Their inclusion on the list reflects their significance to the story Mrs. Kennedy was portraying.

- *Transcript of Rose Kennedy interview conducted by Nan Rickey. Edwin Small, Project Coordinator, National Park Service; Andrew M. Loveless, Chief, Interpretation and Resource Management, Minuteman NHP; and Robert Luddington also present. November 20, 1967 (54 pgs.)*

*JOFI files*

During the interview, which was conducted as part of preliminary research for preparation of an interpretive prospectus for the site, Mrs. Kennedy was encouraged to discuss specific objects of importance in each room.<sup>324</sup> This in no way means that every object mentioned by Mrs. Kennedy is original to the site. She often refers to reproductions when reminiscing about family activities (“I sat in that chair over there and Joe sat here” for instance). Some objects are clearly described as having been in the house, gifts, or connected to the family in specific ways, but generally the transcript is vague and difficult to follow in this regard. It should also be kept in mind that the primary point of the interview, as well as the reminiscent notes listed below, was to provide anecdotal material for interpretive use; its goal was not to obtain specific information on object provenance or the refurbishing work. Mrs. Kennedy’s interview should be used in conjunction with Luddington’s 1967 letter to sort out family provenance, keeping in mind that Mrs. Kennedy was hardly comprehensive in her interview – there are many items on Luddington’s list that are not mentioned by Mrs. Kennedy.

- *Reminiscent notes of Mrs. Kennedy, 1967, untitled xerox (20 pgs.)*

*JOFI files*

Written by Mrs. Kennedy in preparation for the creation of a printed handout to supplement her tape-recorded tour of the birthplace, the references to objects displayed in the house generally reiterate the taped tour.<sup>325</sup> Excerpts from this document are quoted by Anna Coxe Toogood in the site’s *Historic Furnishings Plan*, although Toogood was under the impression that these “reminiscent notes” were for a rough draft of Mrs. Kennedy’s autobiography.<sup>326</sup> Mrs. Kennedy’s research material for her memoir, now part of the Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy Papers on deposit at the John F. Kennedy Library, indicates that she used some of the interpretive material developed for the birthplace in her autobiography. Copies of some of the NPS material can be found in her “Times to Remember” files. The anecdotes she used in the NPS interview with Nan Rickey, the written notes for the interpretive handout, and *Times to Remember* are remarkably similar.

- *Beals Street House inventory, Robert Luddington, September 3, 1969 (12 pgs.)*

*JOFI files*

Inventory of objects in the house prior to its transfer to the National Park Service.

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<sup>324</sup> See memorandum H22-HA, Nov. 28, 1967, JOFI files.

<sup>325</sup> See memorandum, Acting Regional Director, NE Region to Director, National Park Service, Sept. 27, 1967 and memorandum H22-HA, Nov. 28, 1967, both in “K-18 Kennedy” folder, JOFI files.

<sup>326</sup> Anna Coxe Toogood, *John F. Kennedy National Historic Site Historic Furnishings Plan* (Washington, DC: Office of History and Historic Architecture, Eastern Service Center, National Park Service, 1971), 13, n.15.



- *John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site Historic Furnishings Plan, Anna Coxe Toogood, Washington, DC: Office of History and Historic Architecture, Eastern Service Center, National Park Service, July 31, 1971*

Toogood's report provides comparative research, background on the Kennedy and Fitzgerald families, and summarizes what little documentation exists for the collection. Toogood is blunt about the problems she encountered in trying to obtain documentation from Robert Luddington on the refurbishing and her inability to interview Mrs. Kennedy or any other family members. However, she did interview Luddington.<sup>327</sup> She also spoke to Charles Dorman, who cataloged the collection and had discussions with Luddington in 1970.

- *Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy Papers, John F. Kennedy Library*
- *Joseph P. Kennedy Papers, John F. Kennedy Library*

The National Park Service was fortunate in being able to obtain permission to access the papers of Rose Kennedy and her husband. The former are unprocessed and on deposit at the Kennedy Library. The latter have been donated to the Library but are only partially processed. Access to the papers was granted to the researchers contracted to create a historic resource study for the site; however, the site curator was also able to obtain access to the Rose Kennedy material. Unfortunately, letters, bills, receipts and other documentation for the period between 1914 and 1920 are virtually non-existent. Mrs. Kennedy does not appear to have retained any files on the birthplace restoration, although copies of two letters related to the project were found with the files she compiled while writing her autobiography *Times to Remember*.

While neither body of material yielded any significant amount of information related to the birthplace's restoration or the Kennedy's' early life there, enough bits and pieces are present that, if examined closely, can help in making educated surmises about Mrs. Kennedy's approach to the refurbishing. Of particular value is Mrs. Kennedy's wedding log, which lists by category the gifts she received upon her marriage. This may be the closest to an inventory of the contents of 83 Beals Street, circa 1914, that will ever be found. Mrs. Kennedy's files also include material on decorating work done on some of her residences in the 1950s, which could yield some interesting comparative information.

Other documents consulted include:

- John F. Kennedy National Historic Site administrative and resource management files
- National Park Service photographs and slides of the room interiors from 1969 to present
- John F. Kennedy National Historic Site museum collections accession ledger
- John F. Kennedy National Historic Site catalog records
- Accession folder 1, John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site museum collections
- John F. Kennedy National Historic Site interpretive room binders created by park ranger Laura DeSalvo, undated NPS administrative and resource management records for John F. Kennedy National Historic Site, undated (1980s).
- *John F. Kennedy National Historic Site Collections Management Plan, Boston, MA: Northeast Museum Services Center, National Park Service, 1999*

Individuals consulted:

- Kathleen Catalano, former museum curator, National Park Service Boston Group. Catalano was

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<sup>327</sup> Contact in 2000 with the Harper's Ferry library and Ms. Toogood, now a historian at Independence National Historical Park, did not turn up these notes. In 2003, Ms. Toogood forwarded one project file she found among her old work related files. In her handwritten notes, Toogood writes of Luddington "tells you diff. [sic] stories at diff. times."

a curator with the NPS Boston regional office in the early 1970s. In 1975, she became curator of the Longfellow National Historic Site, with which John F. Kennedy National Historic Site shared administrative resources. In a telephone conversation with Catalano in December 2002, she recalled that she did not have much direct interaction with the Kennedy site. She also confirmed that her attempts to solicit certain objects for the Kennedy collection in the early 1970s were driven by specific interpretive goals determined by Rose Kennedy's recorded tour.

- Nan Rickey, former technical publications editor, National Park Service. Rickey worked with Rose Kennedy on developing the interpretive taped house tour. As a result, she was the NPS staff member who had the most extensive personal contact with Mrs. Kennedy prior to the 1969. Rickey was interviewed by telephone in February 2003.<sup>328</sup>
- Anna Coxe Toogood, former historian, Eastern Service Center, National Park Service. In a 2002 telephone conversation with Toogood the frustration of trying to obtain primary documentation for the Kennedy *Historic Furnishings Plan* remained fresh in her mind. Indeed, it was her outstanding memory of the site. In January 2003, Toogood forwarded a recently-found file related to her work on the Furnishings Plan. The file contains notes, carbon copies of the letters she sent to various individuals requesting interviews, and addresses of contacts.

## II. The Kennedy/Luddington Restoration Methodology

Because the NPS has not gained access to Robert Luddington's papers, it has been impossible to determine with any certainty the methodology used by Mrs. Kennedy in planning the refurnishing or to document the house's actual appearance in the 1910s. The only sense we can gain of Mrs. Kennedy's intent must come from contemporary newspaper accounts, National Park Service memos on the restoration, and what little material can be found in her personal papers.

Once the Kennedy family purchased 83 Beals Street for the second time in 1966, Rose Kennedy enlisted the services of interior decorator Robert Luddington of Jordan Marsh to work with her on refurnishing the house. Mrs. Kennedy's papers indicate her connection with Robert Luddington dated back to at least 1961.<sup>329</sup> In writing to Secretary of the Interior Stewart Udall, Mrs. Kennedy said "I have realized that this house, because it was a birthplace of a President of The United States, is of historic value to the American people....I hope that the house can be preserved just as have the homes of so many other Presidents." At the same time, Mrs. Kennedy continues that "future

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<sup>328</sup> One previously unknown fact relayed by Ms. Rickey was that Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis reviewed Rose Kennedy's audio tour script for the birthplace. The degree of Mrs. Onassis' influence on the site's interpretation and how this may or may not have influenced Rose Kennedy's furnishing decisions is not known (current Supervisory Park Ranger Christine Arato has questioned whether the prominence given to *King Arthur and his Knights* in the nursery may have to do with Mrs. Onassis' promulgation of the Camelot myth). No records exist at Harpers Ferry Center on the editing history of the tour script. Jacqueline Onassis' personal papers at the John F. Kennedy Library, which could contain further information, are unfortunately closed to researchers. Future research should include pursuing special permission to access these papers.

<sup>329</sup> Two letters from this time period written by Mrs. Kennedy's secretary Diane Winter deal with payment to Luddington for appraising a drapery panel and provide instructions for Luddington for installing slip covers in one of Mrs. Kennedy's homes. See Diane Winter to Rose Kennedy, 16 May 1961 and Diane Winter to Robert Luddington, 13 July 1961, both in folder "1961," box 1, Rose Kennedy Papers, MS 77-29, John F. Kennedy Library. The July 13 letter to Luddington concludes "Everyone seems delighted with Ted's new home" a reference to Luddington's work on Edward Kennedy's apartment, from which came the gateleg table now in the JOFI living room.

generations will be able to visit it and see how people lived in 1917 and thus get a better appreciation of the history of this wonderful country.”<sup>330</sup> Although Mrs. Kennedy’s statements imply a desire to create an interior of historic authenticity, her choice to work with her interior decorator, rather than a curator or historian, demonstrates she saw no basic difference between refurnishing her first house as a public museum and redecorating her private homes.

NPS correspondence conveys some of the Service’s anxiety in not knowing the exact methods being used by Luddington and Mrs. Kennedy in the refurnishing. At the time legislation to establish the site was being introduced to Congress in 1967, NPS staff obtained access to the house. According to Edwin Small, “[a]part from installation of the burglar alarm system...very few signs of progress in redecorating and furnishing the house were apparent....The extent of any activity consisted of the arrival of a non-reclining easy chair...from Kittinger of Buffalo, New York...and some evidence of stripping in order to procure samples of earlier paint and wallpaper.” Later in the same memorandum Small states that on March 30 he received from Robert Luddington (presumably in verbal form only) “an encouraging report as to the methods and the content of the items that will be used in redecorating and furnishing the Beals Street House.”<sup>331</sup>

Interestingly, sometime during the winter of 1966, before embarking on the Kennedy project, Luddington spent two days at Springwood (Home of Franklin Delano Roosevelt National Historic Site) and Vanderbilt Mansion National Historic Site to observe how the National Park Service managed historic properties. He apparently looked at furnishings plans for these sites during his visit. Prior to consulting Mrs. Kennedy, he also stopped at the Park Service’s Washington office, although the specific purpose of this visit is not known.<sup>332</sup> The following spring the National Park Service northeast regional chief of interpretation sent furnishings plans for the Schuyler House (Saratoga National Battlefield) and Tenant House #1 (Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site) to Luddington “for the purpose of providing some understanding of the procedures and objectives of the Park Service.”<sup>333</sup>

Nan Rickey’s 1967 interview with Mrs. Kennedy implies that some general research into the period was conducted, in keeping with Mrs. Kennedy’s stated desire to show the visitors what life was like in 1917. This is further corroborated by a letter found among Rose Kennedy’s papers from the regional director of the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics to Robert Luddington in response to an informational request made by Mrs. Kennedy. Enclosed are copies of tables with estimates of retail food prices for the period between 1890 and 1966, as well as tables showing average family expenditures on food for the years 1917-1919.<sup>334</sup> However, the particular topics reflected in the letter and in the Rickey interview -- the price of milk in 1917, early twentieth century drinking habits among college-age youth, etc.-- seem determined not so much by the research needs

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<sup>330</sup> Mrs. Joseph P. Kennedy to Honorable Stewart L. Udall, 15 March 1967, in “Background Book,” JOFI files.

<sup>331</sup> Memorandum L58, Project Keyman to Regional Director, 5 April 1967, folder “L-58 Proposed Areas – JFK,” JOFI files.

<sup>332</sup> Memorandum L58, 5 April 1967, JOFI files. Anna Coxe Toogood, in her *Historic Furnishings Plan* file notes, writes that Mrs. Kennedy accompanied Luddington to Hyde Park, NY. See folder “John F. Kennedy B.,” JOFI files.

<sup>333</sup> Memorandum D6215, Project Coordinator to Regional Director, 19 May 1967, folder “L-58 Proposed Areas – JFK,” JOFI files.

<sup>334</sup> Herbert Bienstock to Robert Luddington, 30 Aug. 1967, folder “Misc. Correspondence 1968-1972,” box 2, Rose Kennedy Papers, MS 77-29, John F. Kennedy Library.

of the house refurnishing and its interpretation as by what piqued Mrs. Kennedy's interest or what she thought might be interesting trivia to the public.<sup>335</sup>

*Appendix A* contains lists of household items recorded in 1914 by Rose Kennedy in her wedding log. As expected, they are heavy on tableware, particularly silver serving pieces and vases. According to Mrs. Kennedy, the silver used in her refurnishing was received as wedding gifts. While it should not be assumed that everything recorded in the log was used by the Kennedys in their new house, the abundance of pictures, mirrors, lamps, marble busts, bronzes and figurines listed does suggest a visually busier interior than the 1960s installation shows. The display of numerous small decorative objects would have been in keeping with middle-class taste in the early 1910s, less so with the more minimalist aesthetic of the 1950s and 60s.

Of the items in the wedding log's furniture list, the Ivers & Pond piano is the only firmly identifiable piece now in the birthplace's museum collection. The only other large-scale furnishings recorded are two mahogany desks with chairs, a "Martha Washington" serving table, a mahogany chair, a tea wagon, an ice chest, and a victrola. Both the piano from her uncles James and Edward Fitzgerald and the victrola from her uncle Henry Fitzgerald were major gifts from close relatives. It is unlikely these objects were unwanted. But over 40 years later, Rose Kennedy's memories centered exclusively on the piano. Mrs. Kennedy's taped interview and tour vividly describe her love of playing and her children's indifference to the instrument. The inclusion of the piano and the omission of a victrola in the reinstallation illustrate the selectiveness of her memory. It could also reflect a desire by the President's mother to emphasize the cultural sophistication and respectability of her family.<sup>336</sup>

Considering Mrs. Kennedy's devout religious faith, another somewhat surprising installation omission is that of a crucifix – one is listed in the wedding log under "sundries." It is not known whether the giver, Julia Moynihan, was close to Rose Kennedy, but the display of a crucifix in private spaces within a Catholic household was certainly standard. The religious art that is displayed in the master bedroom can be interpreted in a secular way (and is by Mrs. Kennedy in her tour) as reproductions of images from Renaissance art reflecting refinement and education. Perhaps it never occurred to Mrs. Kennedy to include such an intimate symbol in a setting being created for the general public. The family's Irish roots, however, are readily evident, albeit subtly, in the shamrock-motifs of the lace baby cap, the framed pin, the gilded dinnerware and the embroidered bedcover. While Mrs. Kennedy herself never pointedly mentions her Irishness on the taped tour, this fact, like her family's Catholicism, would have been common knowledge to those visiting the birthplace.

Anna Coxe Toogood's research file for the furnishings plan contains a note, apparently from a discussion with Luddington, that some photographs had been used to help jog Mrs. Kennedy's memory during the restoration.<sup>337</sup> Other than this one note, no further evidence has presented itself to demonstrate the President's mother did more than rely solely on her memories to recreate the house interiors. An examination of the contents of Mrs. Kennedy's wedding log tends to corroborate the view that she did not consult it or any other documents she may have had when refurnishing. If

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<sup>335</sup> Rose Kennedy, interview by Nan Rickey, 21 Nov. 1967, transcript, JOFI files, 21.

<sup>336</sup> See Craig H. Roell's essay "The Piano in the American Home" in *The Arts and the American Home, 1890-1930*, ed. Jessica H. Foy and Karel Ann Marling (Knoxville, TN: The University of Tennessee Press, 1994) for a discussion of the piano as a symbol of women's moral role in the domestic sphere of the home.

<sup>337</sup> Toogood also notes that Luddington said these photographs would be turned over to the NPS, which never occurred (folder "John F. Kennedy B.," JOFI files).

Mrs. Kennedy did look at her wedding log, then what she chose to include in the recreated interiors versus what she chose to leave out would be quite telling in itself and suggest a very different process at work-- however, we have no way of knowing if this is the case.

## II. Collecting for Kennedy/Luddington Restoration: Accession 1

Early news clippings and memoranda in the Kennedy NHS files describe the goal of Mrs. Kennedy's refurbishing work as being to recreate the house "as it was at the time of the birth of the 35<sup>th</sup> President on May 29, 1917."<sup>338</sup> By 1969, it was recognized that "the furnishings presently in the house are reminiscent rather than historically accurate."<sup>339</sup>

Between 1966 and 1969, Rose Kennedy and Robert Luddington amassed a collection of 946 items with which to refurbish the rooms at 83 Beals Street prior to turning over the property to the National Park Service. This group of material (accession 1) constitutes the majority of objects in a museum collection that now totals 1195 items. The exact provenance of these items has not been, and may never be, completely sorted out. Generally, the furnishings selected by Mrs. Kennedy and Mr. Luddington can be divided into four broad categories:

- objects owned and used by the Kennedys during their residence (1914-1921) at 83 Beals Street;
- objects owned by members of the Kennedy family but never used at the birthplace;
- period pieces acquired in the 1960s specifically for the re-furnishing;
- modern pieces (sometimes reproductions made to Mrs. Kennedy's specifications) acquired for the re-furnishing.

Because Luddington's 1967 list often does not make specific distinctions regarding provenance and Rose Kennedy's interview often takes on a stream of consciousness quality, it is difficult to distinguish between site-specific and family pieces. *Appendix B* represents the latest attempt to determine what of the Kennedy/Luddington collection is original to the site versus what is from other family residences, based on the limited information currently available. A newspaper article on the dedication day ceremonies, in which Robert Luddington was interviewed, notes that half the furnishings were originally used in the Beals Street house.<sup>340</sup> In reality, the figure is closer to 19%. A little more than 14 % of the objects in accession 1 are pieces with a Kennedy family association, although it is possible there may be objects included in this group that have site-specific associations. In all, about 311 objects (about 33% of accession 1 or 26% of the entire museum collection) appear to be associated with the Kennedys, either having been used at Beals Street or at another of the family's homes.

These family-associated objects, particularly those believed to be site-specific, are by and large small decorative items, personal accessories and ephemera – Rose and Joseph Kennedy's toiletry sets, engraved silver eating utensils, ceramic dinnerware, vases, photographs. Only a handful of larger furnishings have family associations. Of the 172 site-specific pieces in the collection, 19 are pieces of furniture. Only 5 pieces of furniture are among the 139 family-associated objects.

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<sup>338</sup> Memorandum, Project Keyman to Regional Director, 5 April 1967, folder "L-58 Proposed Areas – JFK," JOFI files.

<sup>339</sup> Nan Rickey, *Interpretive Prospectus, John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site* (US Department of the Interior National Park Service, Office of Environmental Planning and Design, 1969), 3.

<sup>340</sup> "Dedicated to History," *Washington Post*, 30 May 1969, JOFI files.

Mrs. Kennedy had problems obtaining some of the furnishings she wanted for the house, compounded by the pressures of an unrealistic timeframe for the original public opening. A May 1967 newspaper article commented on the delays in opening the site to the public, explaining “Mrs. Rose Kennedy is attempting to obtain all the old furniture, furnishings and silverware that were in the 11-room dwelling...when the Kennedy family lived there. Mrs. Kennedy is checking for the articles in their Palm Beach, Fla., home.”<sup>341</sup> Nan Rickey’s interview indicates Mrs. Kennedy was unsuccessful in tracking down a few items intended for the refurnishing. Mrs. Kennedy specifically mentions dance cards, which she could not find among her personal belongings; 1910s newspapers with articles about her father or husband; and a chart of the period containing milk prices.<sup>342</sup> References are made to additional furnishings Mrs. Kennedy was still planning to obtain as of November 1967. For example, she discusses the bed coverings she remembered having in the Master Bedroom and Guest Room:

We did have Irish bedspreads which I tried to have reproduced with the harp and the shamrocks and the lighthouse and the Irish doe...so we had this one [reproduced in the Guest Room] and I’m in the process of getting some better ones if I can find them with more embroidery....They were quite interesting and quite beautiful the ones we had, but I gave them away at the time, after a few years.<sup>343</sup>

In 1971, Luddington reported to Anna Coxe Toogood that Mrs. Kennedy was still supervising the reproduction of the embroidered Irish bedspreads for the Master Bedroom, and that the existing reproduction bedspread in the Guest Room would also be replaced once the current reproduction work was completed to Mrs. Kennedy’s satisfaction.<sup>344</sup> The reproductions were never finished and the woven bedspreads used for the 1969 opening are still in the Master Bedroom. Today, if visitors listen to Mrs. Kennedy’s tape describing the bedroom, they hear her speak of the “the Irish linen bedspreads, which were hand embroidered with shamrocks, thistles and other Irish symbols, and were great treasures” while looking at the 1969 spreads.

According to Toogood, Mrs. Kennedy wanted the wicker wastebaskets in the bedrooms replaced “because she was sure that she never purchased anything so impractical.”<sup>345</sup> For whatever reason, the wastebaskets remain in the rooms.

Mrs. Kennedy sought out the period toys for the bedroom in New York: “a few steam engines and cars,...and banks....”<sup>346</sup> Mrs. Kennedy succeeded in obtaining the loan of a multi-piece Lionel train set, a puzzle, and a toy cannon from the Museum of the City of New York. Although Robert Luddington includes the copies of *Billy Whiskers* and *King Arthur and His Knights* on his list of significant objects in the house – those with family association – Mrs. Kennedy explicitly states in the 1967 interview that the books are period copies.<sup>347</sup> A list of children’s books found in her papers

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<sup>341</sup> “JFK Birthplace Public Opening Delayed to Fall,” *Boston Sunday Globe*, 14 May 1967, folder “L-58 Proposed Areas – JFK,” JOFI files. In her telephone interview, Nan Rickey confirms there was pressure to open the site by a certain deadline, although the source of the pressure is not clear. The site did not open until May 1969. See chapter 1 of the *John F. Kennedy National Historic Site Collections Management Plan* (Boston, MA: Northeast Museum Services Center, National Park Service, 1999) for a timeline of the opening process.

<sup>342</sup> Kennedy interview, 10, 34.

<sup>343</sup> Kennedy interview, 35.

<sup>344</sup> Toogood, *Historic Furnishings Plan*, 28, 31.

<sup>345</sup> Toogood, *Historic Furnishings Plan*, 29.

<sup>346</sup> Kennedy interview, 48.

<sup>347</sup> Kennedy interview, 44.

contains clear instructions to Robert Luddington to find pre-1925 editions, and recommends trying the Women's Exchange as a source.<sup>348</sup>

In 1967, treatment of the third floor was still being determined: "I haven't done anything up there it was suggested perhaps we duplicate some different things to put them here. But I don't know what we'll do, because we got a lot of things from the library you see, and then we have things down in Hyannis, and then, of course, Jackie has a lot of the things, the really interesting things that we accumulated while he was President, but I kept this really just while he was here and the background...."<sup>349</sup> The idea of exhibits on the third floor was eventually abandoned in favor of the practical need for office space, which was plainly wallpapered and the windows fitted with ruffled sheers matching those used throughout the second floor.

### III. Collecting After NPS Ownership

In its early years of operating the site, the National Park Service began purchasing objects for the collection on a small scale. Of the thirty-three accessions following accession 1, twenty-three occurred before 1980. Of these, five were purchases from Jordan Marsh (with Robert Luddington as the contact on the purchase orders), one was a donation from Luddington, and three were from Rose Kennedy. The Jordan Marsh purchases mostly were for window sheers, lace panels, a table cloth and six napkins to be used on exhibit in rotation with the Kennedy-Luddington acquisitions. Mrs. Kennedy's last donation to the site – a perfume bottle, child's silver bowl and underplate, and 2 napkin rings -- was in July 1976. With the exception of the Dedication Day plaque and the child's bowl and underplate thought to have belonged to Rosemary Kennedy, all the objects were incorporated into the exhibit rooms.

Post-1969 Rose Kennedy donations:

- accession 12 Asparagus tray with insert (JOFI 990)  
Framed quotation from Dedication Day ceremonies (JOFI 991)
- accession 17 Tea strainer (JOFI 1088)
- accession 19 Child's bowl and underplate (JOFI 1090)  
Toilet bottle (JOFI 1091)  
Napkin ring (JOFI 1092)  
Napkin ring (JOFI 1093)

Post-1969 Robert Luddington donations:

- accession 11 Soup tureen, Warwick China (JOFI 987)  
Platter, Warwick China (JOFI 988)  
Platter, Warwick China (JOFI 989)

Luddington told NPS Boston Group museum curator Kathleen Catalano these pieces had been his grandmother's.<sup>350</sup> They contain the same pattern as the following objects from accession 1: JOFI 443, 445, 446, 453, 455-459. Therefore, we can assume that the pieces in the original installation also came from Luddington's family.

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<sup>348</sup> Rose Kennedy to Robert Luddington, 2 August 1967, folder "John F. Kennedy: Early Years," box 2, Rose Kennedy Papers, MS 76-45, John F. Kennedy Library.

<sup>349</sup> Kennedy interview, 52.

<sup>350</sup> Kathleen Catalano, telephone conversation with author, 13 November 2002.

Were the objects subsequently donated by Mrs. Kennedy and Luddington originally intended for the birthplace, but could not be found during the restoration? Did Mrs. Kennedy and Luddington donate them because they realized they belonged to sets already at the site? Or did Mrs. Kennedy and Luddington continue to actively seek out objects for the rooms? Once the objects were donated, did Mrs. Kennedy or Luddington determine their placement within the rooms? Or were the objects simply donated and their exhibit left up to NPS staff? Since the pieces were few, had obvious functions clearly dictating where they should be placed, and matched existing sets already at the house, the question of who decided what went where is perhaps moot.

Kennedy NHS' Scope of Collections Statement, written as part of the 1969 Interpretive Prospectus, pointedly discouraged collecting by the NPS. However, correspondence from the early 1970s shows the park still considered the birthplace as a work in progress. Solicitations for objects refer to on-going restoration work. Collecting efforts were undertaken for the following reasons:

- *To implement suggestions and recommendations made by Charles Dorman, the Independence National Historical Park curator who assisted with cataloging the birthplace collection between 1970 and 1973 and Anna Coxe Toogood in the Historic Furnishings Plan.*

Comments on the catalog records and his furnishings recommendations make it obvious Dorman was highly critical of some of the furnishings choices made by Mrs. Kennedy and Luddington. Certain recommended changes, such as the replacement of the metal supports on the Nursery bathinette with painted wooden ones, had been carried out by Luddington prior to 1971. In February 1970, reproduction antique light bulbs were purchased by the Park Service for the "rehabilitation of JFK" birthplace.<sup>351</sup> A plastic container of Johnson & Johnson's baby powder acquired by Robert Luddington (and condemned by Dorman) was replaced with a tin container in 1973. The site files include some workplans with "Furnishings Report" as a category. As late as 1987, the workplan included the goal of replacing the solid color modern carpets in the second floor rooms with more historically appropriate floor coverings, which was one of Dorman's recommendations in 1970, but the rugs were never replaced. In 1982, a 1901 edition of *The Crisis* was donated by a Kennedy NHS ranger to replace the 1966 edition exhibited by Mrs. Kennedy and Luddington.

- *To acquire duplicate sets of textiles for exhibit rotation.*

Most of the objects the NPS acquired were sheers and lace panels to use in rotation with the window treatments installed by Robert Luddington. The series of purchases were made in the 1970s, when it was still possible to obtain almost exact duplicates from Jordan Marsh. An extra tablecloth and napkins were bought in 1971. Project proposals to replace deteriorating curtains and doilies in 1987 went unfunded. (In 2000, the badly soiled sheers were retired and replaced with less than exact copies as a stop-gap measure to improve the overall appearance of the site. In 2001, the similarly unsightly dotted Swiss curtains in the Kitchen and on the back door were reproduced. However, it is no longer the park's policy to accession such reproductions into the museum collection when acquired.) The park had the christening dress and slip reproduced in 1971.

- *In-kind replacement of objects destroyed during the 1975 firebombing of the site, stolen or deteriorated.*

A replacement icebox, a variety of plastic fruit, a 1917 cookbook, and additional reproduction curtains were acquired after the firebombing.<sup>352</sup> At least one stolen photograph was reproduced.

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<sup>351</sup> Folder "Requisition & Purchase Orders," JOFI files.

<sup>352</sup> In September 1975, the Kennedy site was firebombed. "Bus Teddy" was spray painted on the sidewalk in front of the house, a reference to Senator Edward Kennedy's support of the desegregation order that led to Boston's school busing program. The fire severely damaged the kitchen and rear hall, destroying the original 1969 ice chest, a milk bottle, some canning jars and at



- *To help illustrate certain anecdotes told by Mrs. Kennedy about activities that occurred in the rooms.*

No objects of this type were ever acquired, but they were actively sought in the early 1970s. Kathleen Catalano, curator for the NPS' Boston regional office at this time, made inquiries to different companies and individuals to seek out objects like 1914-1921 food cans with S.S. Pierce Company labels (the store Mrs. Kennedy remembers shopping at in her 1967 interview) and period baby bottles and nipples (Mrs. Kennedy's describes sterilizing baby bottles in the kitchen in her taped tour).

- *To "dress up" the interiors.*

Fortunately very few objects were acquired for this reason. A bar of period baby soap in the nursery was donated along with the sought-after tin container of baby powder in 1973. As noted in the accession records, the three dish towels given by a staff member in 1982 were accepted to give the kitchen a more "lived-in appearance."

With the exception of the duplicate window textiles and the firebombing replacements, none of these acquisition goals were pursued rigorously -- the recommendations made by Charles Dorman for improved historical accuracy (included as an appendix in the *Historic Furnishings Report*) never came near being fully implemented. The objects acquired as room embellishments were confined to the kitchen and nursery.

Evidence suggests that between 1969 and about 1971, the NPS was gathering objects based on goals set by Mrs. Kennedy and Robert Luddington although no one from this era has been able to provide corroboration. An April 22, 1970 news clipping in the site's files titled "Calendar Quest for JFK House" solicits the donation of a 1917 calendar for the kitchen. Apparently Mrs. Kennedy and/or Luddington were still trying to find certain objects before the May opening -- a 1914 tax bill hung in the kitchen instead of the elusive calendar on Dedication Day. Accession 4, acquired by the NPS in October 1969, was a 1917 calendar transferred from the collection of Saugus Iron Works National Historic Site. Toogood, however, erroneously reports that the calendar was one of the "many excellent period antiques" found by Robert Luddington.<sup>353</sup> Early NPS-era photographs taken of the interiors show objects -- most prominently a wicker chest of drawers in the nursery and framed shamrock pin in the boudoir -- that were not part of the installations in 1969 but may have been in place by about 1971. Despite this, the objects were cataloged as part of accession 1.<sup>354</sup> The pin, with its typed note as to origin, certainly came from Mrs. Kennedy's personal collection, and the chest matches the greatly criticized wicker bathinette Luddington obtained for the 1969 nursery

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least one period cookbook. Restoration work, which required complete reconstruction of the kitchen, replacement of the wallpapers and conservation treatment of much of the collection, took about two years.

<sup>353</sup> Toogood, *Historic Furnishings Plan*, 27. It was Nan Rickey's understanding that Luddington had a "warehouse full" of period reproductions available for use in his decorating projects (telephone conversation with author, 10 February 2003).

<sup>354</sup> Cataloging did not begin at JOFI until 1970 and was completed in 1973. In 1970, Curator Charles Dorman was asked to walk through the Kennedy site, accompanied by park staff person Muriel Storrie. Storrie tape recorded Dorman as he identified and remarked on the pieces in the rooms. Park staff then transcribed Dorman's comments onto catalog worksheets which were mailed to Dorman at Independence NHP for review. The worksheets were subsequently transferred to typed catalog records. In 1990, at the time of his retirement, Dorman sent his file with the original catalog worksheets to JOFI. The recordings of Dorman's comments are in the JOFI files. According to Kathleen Catalano, Dorman died around 2000.

furnishings. Whether the NPS solicited these donations or Mrs. Kennedy and Luddington considered the original installation incomplete and continued adding to the interiors is unknown.<sup>355</sup>

#### IV. Changes of Object Placement within Interiors

Robert Luddington's 1967 letter lists the objects by room location (see *Appendix C*). It is not known if the pieces were actually in place at that time, or whether the list reflects the planned location of items. An inventory was created by Luddington in September 1969, less than four months after the dedication day ceremonies in which the birthplace was transferred to the NPS (see *Appendix D*). Written to NPS employee Maurice Kowal, headed "Kennedy Restoration," the inventory is also organized by room location. Luddington's, 1967 list of objects of significance and his 1969 inventory do not always agree as to the location of particular objects. In addition, objects can be found on one list but not the other. Anna Coxe Toogood includes yet another list of objects organized by room location in the 1971 *Historic Furnishings Plan*. These lists, along with photographs taken by Cecil Stoughton prior to and during the May 29 ceremonies in 1969; Orville W. Carroll's interior photos taken in 1970 for the Historic American Buildings Survey; publicity photos taken by Richard Cheek in 1973; and miscellaneous NPS shots taken in 1982 and in the 1990s help trace changes in the placement of objects within the rooms.

All the rooms under went some level of change over the years. Generally, these changes were subtle, involving shifts in object placement that were sometimes dictated by preservation or security reasons – the changes in the objects arranged on top of the bureau in the master bedroom, for instance. Other changes were made to correct more embarrassing errors, as in the replacement in 1978 of baby photos of Edward Kennedy, misidentified as John by Mrs. Kennedy, with copies of the President's baby pictures. In 1970, the dresser set engraved "RMK" placed in the master bedroom in 1969 was moved to the guest room and replaced with the set bearing the more appropriate initials "REF." The arrangement of toys in the nursery has frequently shifted. Early photos of the dining room show fewer objects than are on exhibit today. The more substantial table setting is easily explained, since the majority of Mrs. Kennedy's subsequent donations to the collection were of tableware.

Object placement in two areas of the house was changed more than in others after the NPS assumed ownership. One is the kitchen. Placement of small objects inside the cupboard, on table and cabinet tops, has been altered. The present cluttered arrangement of multiple kitchen implements on the small table makes no interpretive sense. In 1969 the mason jars in the cupboard were filled with preserves; by 1982, some of the preserves were replaced with different food-stuffs while other jars had simply been emptied. Later all the jars were emptied. The number of plastic fruit and vegetables has multiplied since the 1969 installation. In the late 1990s, interpretive staff added plastic bread to the period toaster (since removed). All of these alterations create a look and feel in the space quite different from Mrs. Kennedy's (or Luddington's) original intent.

Perhaps NPS staff felt freer to muddle with this room than with others because Luddington later admitted Mrs. Kennedy's memory of the kitchen's appearance was sketchy. Following the 1975 firebombing, NPS Historical architects found material evidence contradicting Mrs. Kennedy's original refurnishing. Through Luddington, Mrs. Kennedy was consulted regarding how she wanted the NPS to proceed with restoration work in the kitchen. According to memoranda in the

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<sup>355</sup> Nan Rickey's impression is that Mrs. Kennedy felt the installation complete by Dedication Day, May 29, 1969 (Rickey, telephone conversation).

firebombing restoration files, Mrs. Kennedy gave the NPS permission to repair the interior based on its own documentation, rather than duplicating her 1969 instructions.

The other heavily altered area is the display of photographs in the second floor hallway. Comparing the arrangement today with Luddington's 1967 and 1969 lists and the 1970 Historic American Buildings Survey photos documenting the interiors, more and different photographs were displayed here in the early years. In addition, photographs that were originally in the boudoir were at some point moved into the hall and visa-versa. Interestingly, the original photo installation included more photographs of Joseph Kennedy, Jr. than of his younger brother John. This reflects the content of the photographs in the collection in general, as well as the photo arrangements in the master bedroom and boudoir. It may be that the family's images of John were being saved for the Kennedy Library. While it can be argued that if the exhibits are meant to reflect the home's appearance at the time of the President's birth, of course the pictures present would be of the older brother, not of John, other photos used prominently in the restoration (for instance, the family portrait with five children in the living room) do not reflect a 1917 time period. The pictures used in the hall in 1969 showed the boys as they appeared in the 1920s -- today, no photographs of Joe Jr., nor of John, remain in the hall. Park staff probably were uncomfortable with these photos, so obviously outside the 1917 date supposedly represented by the rooms, and removed the offending images. If Mrs. Kennedy, rather than Robert Luddington, determined which photos were displayed in the house (and since the photographs all came from Mrs. Kennedy's personal collection it was more than likely her decision), the original hall arrangement may reflect a very subtle memorializing of her oldest son, adding another layer of personal memory to the site.

## V. Conclusion

Public reaction to the site upon its opening was unanimously positive. Other family members were impressed. Joan Kennedy referred to the house as "comfortable and real," while Mrs. Charles Burke (Mrs. Kennedy's china-painting sister-in-law) said "It's just like it was then...I was here so many times. It's lovely."<sup>356</sup> What the Kennedy family and members of the public were responding to, a response visitors still have today, was the undeniable feeling of nostalgia conveyed by Mrs. Kennedy's refurbishing.

Nan Rickey writes in the John F. Kennedy National Historic Site *Interpretive Prospectus*

While this prospectus will not propose, and, indeed, would not recommend any revision of the refurbishing at the present time, or perhaps even in the foreseeable future, it is strongly felt that preliminary work should be commenced now with a view to providing authentic furnishing information for the future Service personnel who may, at sometime, believe that a more accurate presentation would better serve the needs and purpose of the area.<sup>357</sup>

In addition to Charles Dorman's recommended list of changes to the furnishings, NPS Historical Architect Orvill W. Carroll, in his 1969 report on the physical condition of the birthplace, offered recommendations to improve the quality of Luddington's restoration in such areas as interior finishes and hardware. "There are numerous errors in the restoration work which we can improve upon" writes Carroll. "We need to obtain more accurate information from the Kennedy family....No

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<sup>356</sup> Nancy L. Ross, "Dedicated to History," *Washington Post*, 30 May 1969, in newsclipping scrapbook, JOFI files.

<sup>357</sup> Rickey, *Interpretive Prospectus*, 13.

changes should be made to the interior furnishings at this time but there is no reason why we should not improve upon the quality of the restoration at some future date."

When Robert Luddington met with NPS Associate Regional Director Denis Galvin after the firebombing in 1975, the decorator, according to Galvin "belied the notion that no changes can be made in the house. At one point he suggested that Mrs. Kennedy's recollections were not complete and that he was given a considerable amount of latitude in the selection of furnishings. It was important to expedite the project at the time of the original restoration. Under this pressure Mr. Luddington made selections that were suitable to an early 20<sup>th</sup> century [interior] without detailed research on the accuracy of these furnishings and appointments."<sup>358</sup> This admission has helped foster the attitude that the Kennedy birthplace, as a historic site, is not deserving of serious, thoughtful study because its restoration did not reflect the rigorous research and documentation that has become standard in recreating historical interiors. Mrs. Kennedy herself, after being approached by Nan Rickey about creating a reminiscent booklet for the site, "seemed uncertain of the worthwhileness of such an effort for this house where, she felt, the family had lived for such a short time and where so little of importance had happened."<sup>359</sup>

The desire by historians, architects, curators and interpreters to improve upon the Kennedy-Luddington work has been hampered by lack of documentation on both the original 1969 refurnishing and the 1917 appearance of the house. Part of the discomfort with the interiors comes from their being based less on historical fact than on emotion. Although some of the alterations made by the NPS, such as the changes to the kitchen, have been based on real physical evidence, others have been driven by a desire to create more "accurate" interiors in a setting that is really about memory and memorialization. While not historically accurate, the installation does reflect the way the matriarch of America's most prominent political family chose to interpret their early years amid the atmosphere of intense national grief following President Kennedy's assassination – an atmosphere that led to the preservation of the birthplace. As Anna Coxe Toogood states in the site's *Historic Furnishings Plan*, however flawed Mrs. Kennedy's memory may have been when refurnishing the house, "[w]hatever the National Park Service could add to the historical accuracy would be minor in relation to Mrs. Kennedy's overall effort to recreate her memories of the birthplace of the 35<sup>th</sup> President."<sup>360</sup>

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<sup>358</sup> Memorandum, Associate Regional Director to files, 19 Feb. 1976, folder "H-30," JOFI files.

<sup>359</sup> Memorandum H22-HA, 28 Nov. 1967.

<sup>360</sup> Toogood, *Historic Furnishings Plan*, iii.

## List of Items Recorded in Rose Kennedy's Wedding Log

From the Rose Kennedy papers, John F. Kennedy Library  
MS 76-6, *The Wedding Log*, bound book w/ navy blue hard cover, unpaginated.

The book contains sections for listing gifts received at time of engagement and marriage. The marriage section is sub-divided by gift type, i.e., china, linens, etc. The sections are divided into 2 columns, one for recording the name of the donor, the other for a description of the gift.

Lists copied by Janice Hodson, 2002.

### Under "Engagement":

Mary Reardon	Pillow
May Clextion[? may be "Dexton"]	Tea Strainer in Silver
A. Shuman	Silver Picture Frame
Mrs. James Ryan	Electric flat iron
Mr. & Mrs. Harry P. Nowen	Silver bon bon dish
Mrs. Frederick Murphy	Fillet guest towels
Mrs. Howard Murphy	Table Doily
Sally Cotter	Riley's "Love Lyrics"
The Misses Fitzgerald	Silver Nut Set
Arthur Goldsmith	Silver Bread Tray
Hilda Garvin[?]	Gold Cup & Saucer
Marie Carey	Tea Napkins
Ruth Evans	Fillet Set & Linen Breakfast Set
Mrs. Francis Keany	Silver bottle for dresser
Mrs. William Ford	Silver Candlesticks
Marguerite Burns	Pillow
Marie Nell Green	Pillow
Aunt Emily	Embroidered towels & pin cushion
Mrs. George Evans	Black & white cup & saucer
May Collins	Towels

### Under "Wedding Gifts":

Mary Miller	Linen Napkins
Josephine Kiley	Luncheon set
Mrs. George Evans	Chinese luncheon set
Robert Fisher	Embroidered dinner cloth

### **Linen**

Sir Thomas Lipton	Ice Cream Platter
Mrs. William Ford	Steak Platter
William Barrows	Sandwich Plate
Robert Potter	Picture frame
Joseph O'Connell	Gravy boat
Jack & Geraldine Ryan	Berry spoon
Hilda Garvin	Cake basket
Mr. & Mrs. Frazier O'Leary	Vase

### **Silver**

Helen McIntosh  
 Mr. & Mrs. Edward O'Connell  
 Mr. & Mrs. William F. Murray  
 John O'Hare  
 Mr. & Mrs. W.N. Keane  
 Mr. & Mrs. Michael O'Riorden  
 Mr. & Mrs. Cornelius Fitzgerald  
 Beatrice Brine  
 Mr. & Mrs. J.J. Croak  
 Mr. & Mrs. Harry Nauer  
 Sumner Savings Bank  
 Hugh & Harry Nauer  
 Marguerite Burns  
 Bessie Dacey  
 Frank McGilly  
 Mr. & Mrs. George Sallaway  
 Sally Cotter  
 Michael Corliss  
 Miss Nolen & Miss Bellew  
 Mr. & Mrs. Richard McDonnell  
 Mr. & Mrs. Arthur Wilson  
 Charles Slattery  
 Mr. & Mrs. James Cotter  
 Mr. & Mrs. A.J. Meserve[?]  
 Mr. & Mrs. T.J. Falvey  
 Mr. & Mrs. J. Alfred Mitchell  
 John P. Manning  
 Mr. & Mrs. John Dever  
 Misses Green  
 Mr. & Mrs. Joseph Doherty  
 Mr. & Mrs. John W. McCormack  
 Thomas Lanuary[?]  
 Mrs. Garvey  
 Timothy Crawley  
 Mrs. Joseph Maloney  
 Tillie Horne  
 Mr. & Mrs. Joseph Hannon  
 Mr. & Mrs. James Kenney  
 Dr. & Mrs. Bottomley  
 Anna O'Neil  
 Mr. & Mrs. William Taylor  
 C.L. McKeeven

Grape fruit spoons  
 Pepper & salt  
 Salad set  
 Tea Spoons  
 Salt holders  
 Picture frame  
 Fruit dish  
 bon bon spoon  
 Salt, pepper  
 Sherbet glasses  
 Tray  
 Nut set  
 Bon bon dish  
 Candle sticks  
 Bouillon spoons  
 Vase  
 Individual salt holders  
 Ice Tongs & tub  
 Nut set  
 Napkin rings  
 Vase  
 Compote dish  
 Vase  
 Vase  
 Compote  
 Fruit knives & forks  
 Bon bon plate  
 Café parfait glasses  
 Bouillon spoon & salad forks  
 Coffee spoons  
 Card tray  
 Vase  
 Butter knife & sugar spoon  
 bon bon dish  
 bon bon dish  
 bon bon dish  
 butter plates  
 Candle vase  
 Cake plate  
 Platter  
 Roll Platter  
 Steak set

Mr. & Mrs. P.P. Cooney  
 Mary Downey  
 Wednesday Matinee Club  
 Mr. & Mrs. James Doyle  
 Robert Ruffin  
 Uncle Michael

**Cut Glass**  
 bon bon basket  
 Pitcher & glasses  
 Flower basket  
 celery dish  
 bob bon dish  
 dessert dish

Dr. & Mrs. Francis Keany  
Mr. & Mrs. John Keane  
Julia Williams  
Mr. & Mrs. Frederick Good  
Mrs. Mary A. Hurley  
John L. Kelly  
Mr. & Mrs. S.J. Rider  
John McClellan  
James Doherty  
Rev. John Crawe[?]  
Mr. & Mrs. C.H. Leary

lamp  
lamp  
Mayonnaise Set  
Clock  
Glasses in basket  
Vases  
Lamp  
Vase  
Pitcher in silver & glass  
Sherbet glasses in silver stands  
compote

## China

Margaret Kennedy  
Mrs. John H. Sullivan  
Mary Angley  
Charles Hickey  
Charlotte Lally[?]  
Governor David Walsh  
Mr. & Mrs. William Welch  
Mrs. Ella Fitzpatrick  
Mr. & Mrs. Edward Welch  
Marie Carey & the boys  
Mr. & Mrs. Eugene Sullivan  
Mrs. James Casey & family  
Richard Teeling  
Mr. & Mrs. Charles Logue  
Mr. & Mrs. J.P. O'Riorden  
Ruth Evans  
Katherine McGlynn  
Mr. & Mrs. Richard Walsh  
Miss Killian

Gold & White Dinner Set  
Punch Bowl  
Oyster Plates  
Ice Cream Set  
Tea Service  
Chocolate Service  
Fruit Dish  
Jam Bowl  
Chocolate Service  
Bouillon Cups & Saucers  
Chop[?] Set  
Tray  
Blue Box  
Breakfast Set  
Sandwich Set  
Ice Cream Set  
Gold Plates  
Breakfast Set  
Vase

## Books

William Leahy  
Agnes Purcell  
Mr. & Mrs. Robert K. Greaves  
The Misses Magh[?]

German & French fiction  
Tolstoi's Anna Karenina  
Book Ends  
Tennyson's Poems

### *Furniture*

Mr. & Mrs. P. Welch  
Dr. & Mrs. Finnigard[?] Miriam  
May McGaffe  
Mr. & Mrs. James L. Ryan  
Mr. & Mrs. William Quigley  
Dr. & The Misses Reardon  
Mr. & Mrs. J.W. McNamara  
Peter LaCourt  
Mr. & Mrs. William F. Hickey  
Mollie Stack

Mahogany desk and chair  
Martha Washington Serving Table  
Picture  
Picture  
Mahogany desk and chair  
Picture  
Marble head  
Figure and Stand  
Picture  
Picture

Margaret Linehau[?]	Picture
Mr. & Mrs. J.J. Crowley	Electric Bronze
Frank & Thomas O'Connor	Marble Statue of Napoleon
Mr. & Mrs. John Scully	Gold Ornament
John Lane & family	Electric Bronze
Mr. & Mrs. Charles Collins	Picture
Owen McGillen	French Mirror
Mr. & Mrs. Edward Leary	Lamp
Catherine Giblin	Bronze Ornaments
Republic Staff	Tea Wagon
Mr. & Mrs. Joseph Mahoney	Mahogany Candlesticks
Mr. & Mrs. H.C. Mahoney	Bronze Statue
Mr. & Mrs. D. Frank Doherty	Marble Bust
Mr. & Mrs. M.J. Connelly	Marble Bust
Nellie Williams	Picture Mirror
Alice Schmidt	Picture
Mr. & Mrs. Edward Moore	Crockery
Josephine Hartnett	Marble Head
Mary Lane	Madonna & Child
Mr. & Mrs. James Carney	Lamp
Mr. & Mrs. William McClellan	Marble Bust & Stand
Reverend Michael Scanlan[?]	Picture
Mr. & Mrs. Jeremiah O'Callaghan	Tray
Mr. & Mrs. James Morrison	Venetian Vase
Mr. & Mrs. Edward Sampson	Lamp
Mr. & Mrs. Frederick P. O'Brien	Lamp
Mr. & Mrs. Joseph Lannin	Bronze
Benjamin Kabatsnik[?]	Vase
Employees Columbia Trust	Lamp
Mr. & Mrs. John P. Leahy	Ice Chest
Mr. & Mrs. Lally	Picture
Mr. & Mrs. Daniel J. Sheehan	Banjo Clock
Mr. & Mrs. Arthur Quincy	Jardiniere
Thomas Campbell	Clock
Mr. & Mrs. Daniel Mahoney	Mahogany Mirror
Edward O'Brien	Electric Toaster – Percolator
May Clexton	Blue Vase
Mr. Forbes	Mahogany Chair
Uncles Jim & Ed	Piano
Uncle Henry	Victrola
<i>Sundries</i>	
May Collins	Gold Bonbon Basket
Mr. & Mrs. Jeremiah Sheehan	Gold
Mrs. Nellie Barron	Gold
Katherine Conway	Rose Pin
Sisters of Visitation, Washington	Alma Mater Book
Mr. & Mrs. John Kiley	Oriental Rug
Sisters of Notre Dame	Pillows
Dr. & Mrs. P.H. Mullawney[?]	Gilt Basket
Mrs. Perry Brown	Hose



Florence Weiler	Handkerchiefs
Mr. & Mrs. Henry Penn	Fern
Suzanne Cawley	Butterfly Claque[sic – “plaque”?]
Robert Jewett	Plaque
Julia Moynihan	Crucifix
Mr. & Mrs. Rollin B. Fisher	Fillet Sherbet Glasses
Mr. & Mrs. Frederick F. Coffin	Grape Juice Glasses
Bessie Murphy	Gray & Violet Vase
Eleanor Creedan	Gold & Bubble Glass Dresser Bottles
Reverend John Crowe	Sherbet Glasses
Mr. & Mrs. James Phelan	Ramekins
Peter Corr; Miss Core[?]	After dinner Coffee Service
Mr. & Mrs. Joseph Maynard	Tea Service
The Misses Fitzgerald	Candlesticks in Silver
Mrs. Margaret Lally	Silver table ornament
Mr. & Mrs. Daniel Donahue	Antique Brass Candlesticks
Aunt Emily	Gold
Uncle John & Aunt Lenora	Gold

The rest of the book contains newspaper clippings on the wedding; congratulatory telegrams; Rose Kennedy’s notes on her bouquet, where the wedding photos were taken, and her honeymoon travels to New York, Philadelphia, White Sulphur Springs, VA, Atlantic City. According to her notes, the couple left for New York after the wedding reception, Wed. Oct. 7, then left Friday for Philadelphia. Rose’s father joined her part of the time in New York and Philadelphia to attend the World Series (a World Series button and ticket stub are included in the book). Saturday evening left for White Sulphur Springs, arrived Sunday morning Oct. 11 (handmade menus from dinners with Mr. and Mrs. Watters are pasted into the book). Left Virginia Wed. Oct. 22. In Atlantic City Thurs. afternoon. In New York on Friday. “We returned home Sunday and went to live at Beals Street Wednesday October twenty-eighth.”



APPENDIX C

**Anna Coxe Toogood, Historic Furnishings Plan  
John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site  
Massachusetts, 1971**



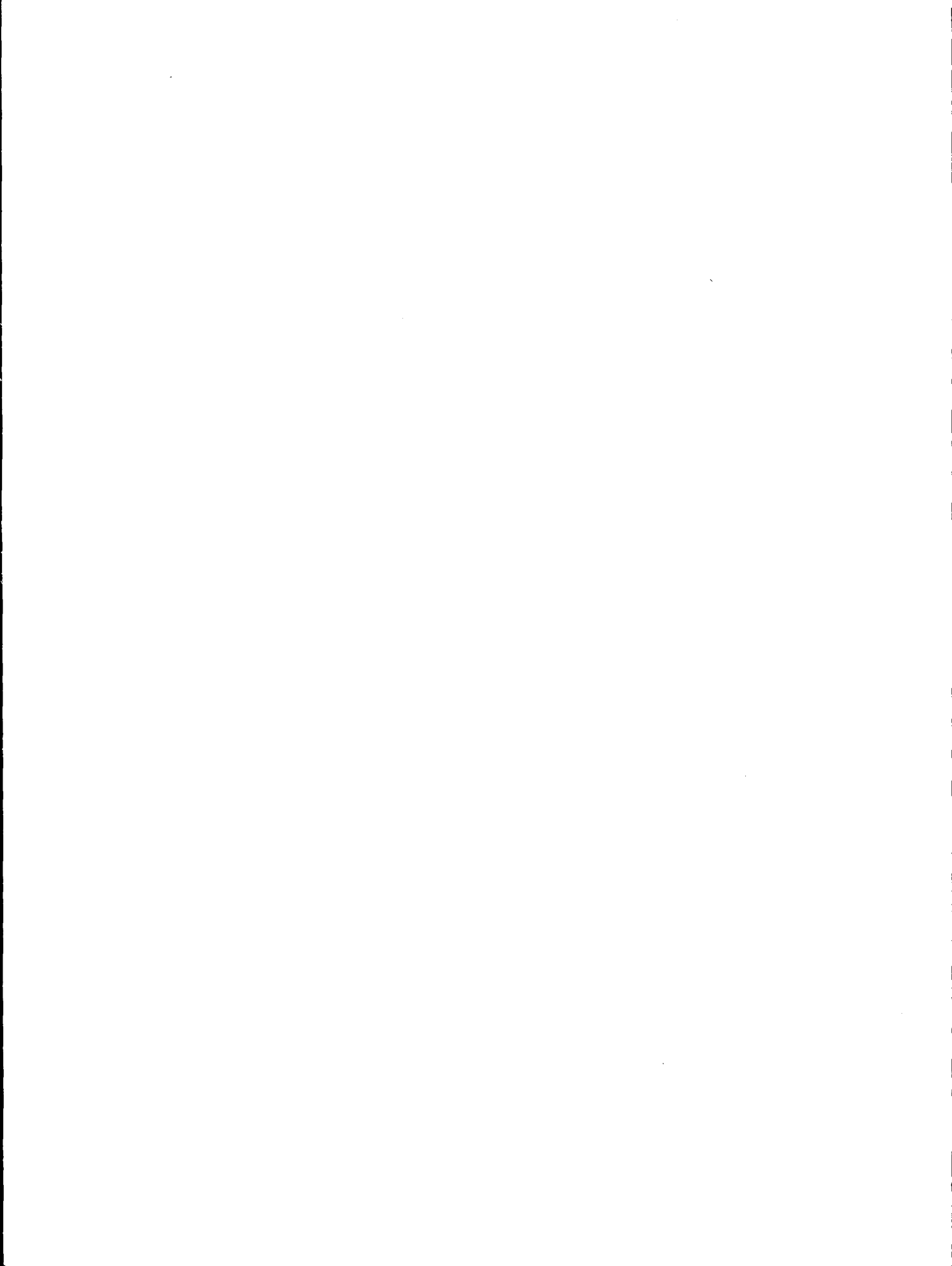
D-4  
IN  
STORAGE

# JOHN FITZGERALD KENNEDY NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

## HISTORIC FURNISHINGS PLAN



JULY 1971



**JOHN FITZGERALD KENNEDY  
NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE  
MASSACHUSETTS**

**HISTORIC FURNISHINGS PLAN**

**by**

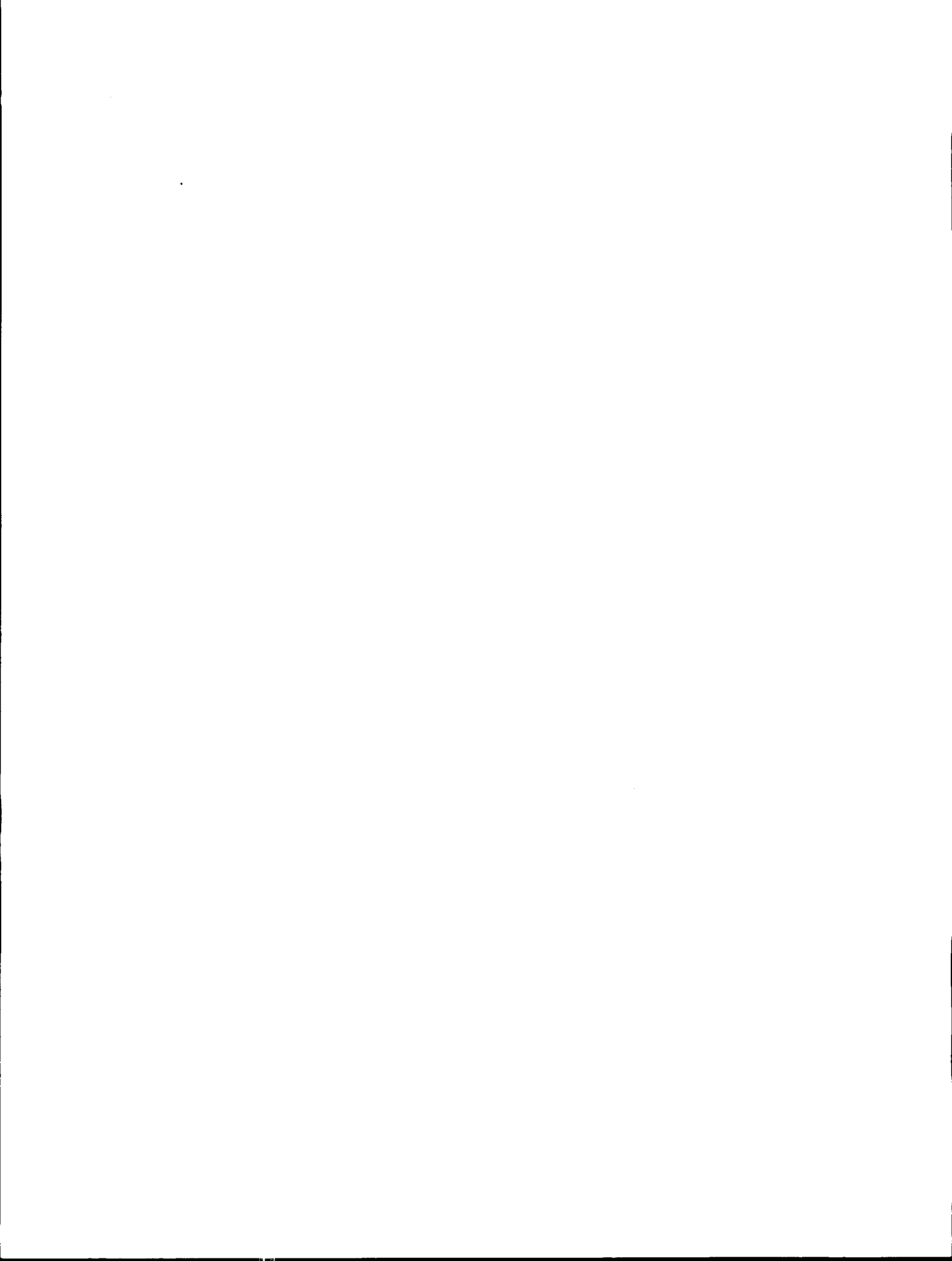
**ANNA COXE TOOGOOD**

**OFFICE OF HISTORY AND HISTORIC ARCHITECTURE  
EASTERN SERVICE CENTER  
WASHINGTON, D.C.  
JULY 31, 1971**



**UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE**







## ABSTRACT

As conceived, the furnishing study for the John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site (JFK-H-3) was to prepare a comprehensive plan to "identify, record, and provide for long range use and maintenance of the furnishings which were present in the 1917 birthplace of the late President." The existing furnishings were selected and arranged by Mrs. Joseph P. Kennedy with the assistance of Robert T. Luddington, a private decorator under contract to the Kennedy family.

Unfortunately, efforts by this historian to arrange interviews with Kennedy and Fitzgerald family members in Boston and to acquire the documentation for the refurnishing of the home failed, and so the information for this furnishing study has had to be based on Mrs. Kennedy's reminiscient notes (sent to Nan Ricky of Interpretation in 1967), an interview with Mr. Luddington, comparative research in period furnishings, and the museum catalogue descriptions. These sources together reveal the overall accuracy of the refurnishing, when and to what extent Mrs. Kennedy's recollections guided the selection and the arrangement of the furnishings, and, finally, which articles are original to the 1917 residency at the Beals Street home.

This report also sketches the background history of the Fitzgerald and Kennedy families in Boston to provide insight into the lives of John Fitzgerald Kennedy's parents, Joseph and Rose. Finally, a brief description of the Kennedy family's seven years at 83 Beals Street, including the very few recollections about John F. Kennedy at his birthplace home, have been incorporated into this furnishing study.

## PREFACE

On May 26, 1967, the National Park Service acquired by donation the birthplace of John Fitzgerald Kennedy, the 35th President. The modest, 3-story frame house at 83 Beals Street in Brookline, Massachusetts, was to be completely refurnished by Mrs. Joseph P. Kennedy with the assistance of Mr. Robert Luddington, the head of the Interior Decoration Department at Jordan Marsh, Inc., in Boston. The house furnishings accordingly were to represent those, or an approximation of those, that had been present when the President was born in May of 1917.

After the National Park Service received the house, permission was requested and received to interview Mrs. Kennedy in order to develop an interpretive tape of her recollections for the house tour. Nan Rickey of the Museum Lab met with Mrs. Kennedy and Mr. Luddington on two occasions. Mrs. Kennedy subsequently sent Nan Rickey various excerpts from what appeared to be her autobiography. She also promised Nan that she would go through a collection of photographs and memorabilia at Hyannisport to see if anything pertinent to the birthplace could be uncovered.

The official opening of the Kennedy birthplace did not occur until May of 1969. Mr. Luddington, having kept in contact with the National Park Service's key man for the Kennedy project, promised a complete report on the refurnishing, including any and all documentary materials involved. Although the key man received no written information, Mr. Luddington always remained cooperative and anxious to please.

Less than a year after the dedication of the birthplace, Charles Dorman, Museum Curator at Independence National Historical Park, arrived at the house to conduct a 3-week survey of the furnishings for the subsequent museum cataloguing. He too spoke with Mr. Luddington concerning the refurnishing and was promised, in addition, all Mr. Luddington's records, which, as far as Mr. Dorman understood amounted to "tons of notes, photographs, and bills."

Finally, in the winter of 1971 work began on the historic furnishing study of the house (JFK-H-3). Again interviews were requested of Mr. Luddington and Mrs. Kennedy. Letters also went out to members of Rose and Joseph Kennedy's immediate family requesting possible recollections of the home and families. No replies were received before the scheduled visit to the park site, but a phone call to Mr. Luddington revealed that Mrs. Kennedy was about to depart for a 3-week visit to Paris and that Mr. Luddington had been on a business trip and had not had the opportunity to respond. He did, however, make

himself available for an interview, and he did, moreover, promise "something" on paper concerning the refurnishing project. Again, nothing was forthcoming from this commitment.

During the historian's visit to Boston a letter arrived from Mrs. Kennedy's personal secretary explaining her trip to Paris and assuring that at her return Mrs. Kennedy intended to consider the records and memorabilia she had stored at Hyannis. As nothing was mentioned about a possible interview, another letter went out to Mrs. Kennedy's secretary requesting that if possible a meeting might be arranged at her return. No further correspondence, however, was ever received from either Mrs. Kennedy or Mr. Luddington.

The preceding brief on the research for the furnishing study was outlined to give some explanation for the lack of any documentary materials in this report. The obvious difficulties that have arisen concerning the interviews and the collection of any record of the refurnishing have their roots in the long period that has elapsed between the beginning of the project in 1967 and its documentation in 1971. Moreover, Mr. Luddington has never explained his apparent reluctance to turn over his personal records of the restoration to the National Park Service. Whatever the reasons, the consequent lack of documented information on the articles in the house left this report only partly effective. Essentially the report can provide little more data than what was discussed in the interview with Mr. Luddington and what Mrs. Kennedy contributed in her reminiscent notes.

As it now stands the house represents Mrs. Kennedy's recollection of the 1917 period to the best of her ability. Of course this reliance on Mrs. Kennedy's memory limits the historical accuracy but adds a dimension of historical proximity to the interpretation--her voice, her memories floating through the restored rooms brings much of the history to life for the visitor of the Kennedy birthplace. Whatever the National Park Service could add to the historical accuracy would be minor in relation to Mrs. Kennedy's overall effort to recreate her memories of the birthplace of the 35th President.

In my efforts to understand the politics behind this research and the furnishings of the 1917 period, I received helpful advise and encouragement from Nan Rickey, Maurice Kowal, and Charles Dorman to whom I wish to extend a hearty thanks. My appreciation is also extended to Miss Debra Mason for her fast and efficient typing of this report. Any errors or omissions in this report are my own.

## FORWORD

In the early 1840's a blight struck Ireland's main food and economic resource--the potato. By 1845 nearly half the country's crop was rotting in the fields. Starvation, typhus, and the Poor Laws goaded Irish peasants into wandering, homeless packs. By 1849 nearly one million had perished from their desperate plight. Several million more chose to migrate to Great Britain and North America. For those who chose the latter, there were risks and hardships ahead: they had to gather the \$20.00 boat fare, survive the "coffin ships" used to haul the Irish immigrant across the Atlantic, and arrive in America with no money, no housing, no skills, no friends, and no job. However grim the prospects, immigration at least allowed for fortuitous "unknowns"; whereas the choice to stay in Ireland meant a life at subsistence level, often at the mercy of absentee landlords in England. Such were the alternatives for Patrick Kennedy of New Ross in Wexford County, and for Thomas Fitzgerald of Wexford or Limerick County, both of whom elected to leave Ireland in the late 1840's to make the voyage to Boston.<sup>1</sup>

Boston around 1850 had turned into a cultural battleground. The old-stock Boston Yankees, with their traditions of Protestantism, aloofness, and rationality, withdrew with disdain and repudiation from the waves of Irish Catholic peasants. Seeing the slums cropping up in their city and the flourishing of smallpox, cholera, typhus, and T. B., the Yankees cut the Irish out of their social and economic worlds.<sup>2</sup> "Irish Need Not Apply" became a common addition to employment advertisements. In 1848 Boston's Yankee mayor, Theodore Lyman, Jr., summed up the Irish as "a race that will never be infused into our own but on the contrary will always remain distinct and hostile."<sup>3</sup>

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1. Richard J. Whalen, The Founding Father, The Story of Joseph P. Kennedy (New York, 1964), pp. 6-7; John H. Cutler, Honey Fitz (New York, 1962), p. 37; and Reverend John F. Brennan, The Evolution of Everyman (Dundalk, Ireland, 1968), p. 185.

2. Ibid., p. 10; James MacGregor Burns, John Kennedy, A Political Profile (New York, 1959), pp. 6-7.

3. Victor Lasky, John Fitzgerald Kennedy, The Man and the Myth (Boston, 1963), p. 31.

Distinct the Irish did remain, while struggling to survive through a decade of the most horrifying conditions known to American immigrants. In 1849 the Commissioner of the Internal Health Board, having taken a tour of the Irish section in Boston, reported his findings and impressions: "This whole district is a perfect hive of human beings, without comforts and mostly without necessaries; . . . Under such circumstances, self-respect, fore-thought, all high and noble virtues soon die out, and sullen indifference and despair, or disorder, intemperance and utter degradation reign supreme."<sup>4</sup> Historian Oscar Handlin aptly summarized the relationship of Boston Yankee to Irish in the mid-19th century: they constituted "two distinct cultures. . . with no more contact than if 3,000 miles of ocean rather than a wall of ideas stood between them."<sup>5</sup>

Isolated thus by Yankee discrimination and by the fierce competition and tension over employment that developed with other, earlier nationality groups in Boston, the Irish built their defenses around their solidarity as a community.<sup>6</sup> Within three decades the Irish were able to put their growing numbers and their solidarity to work in their own behalf, through the American democratic political system. The rise of the Irish from their oppressed immigrant status forms the backdrop of the life of the 35th President of the United States, John Fitzgerald Kennedy.

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4. As quoted from Oscar Handlin's Boston's Immigrants in Whalen, p. 10.

5. As quoted in Whalen, p. 11.

6. Burns, pp. 6-7. Burns notes that "The Irish were the lowest of the low."-- lower than the Germans, Scandinavians, Jews, and even the Negroes.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	i
PREFACE	ii
FORWORD	iv
CHAPTER I: The Kennedys and Fitzgeralds Make It in America	
Kennedy Background in America	1
Fitzgerald Background in America	5
CHAPTER II: The Joseph P. Kennedys	
Joseph P. Kennedy	9
Rose Elizabeth Fitzgerald	10
The Kennedys at 83 Beals Street	13
John Fitzgerald Kennedy at Beals Street	17
CHAPTER III: Furnishings of the John F. Kennedy Birthplace	
Evidence of Original Furnishings	19
Room Use	21
Comparative Research	22
Room Furnishings	
Living Room	23
Dining Room	25
Hallway	26
Kitchen	27
Master Bedroom	27
Boudoir	29
Guest Bedroom	31
Nursery	32
Bathroom	33
Hallway	35
Specific Recommendations	36
APPENDICES	
A: Chart of Kennedy Furnishings	38
B: Museum Catalogue Record of Furnishings	39
C: Museum Curator's Suggestions and Comments	69
BIBLIOGRAPHY	
General Bibliography	71
Bibliography of Comparative Research on Period Furnishings	72

ILLUSTRATIONS

Floor Plan of Kennedy Birthplace  
Floor Plan With Furnishings Added

## CHAPTER I

### The Kennedys and Fitzgeralds Make It in America

#### Kennedy Background in America

##### Patrick Joseph Kennedy

Patrick Joseph, or "Pat," or "P.J." as he became affectionately known among his political supporters and friends, was well on the way up the social and political ladder by the time his first child, Joseph Patrick Kennedy, was born in 1888.<sup>1</sup> Having won a large and loyal support in East Boston as a ward leader who had set up his own pocket welfare state for the ailing Irish immigrants, Patrick won landslide victories in his campaigns for the Massachusetts House of Representatives in 1886, 1887, 88, 89, and 90, and for the State Senate in 1892.<sup>2</sup> Socially he enhanced his status by marrying Mary Hickey in 1887, a woman who proved to have a quiet and yet strong influence on the upbringing of the three Kennedy children, Joseph Patrick, Loretta, and Margaret.<sup>3</sup>

Pat's father, Patrick Kennedy of Wexford County, Ireland, had migrated to America around 1850, settled at Noddle's Island in East Boston, and married Bridget Murphy, also an Irish immigrant. At 35, Patrick Kennedy, exhausted, succumbed to cholera, leaving his wife to care for the three young daughters and baby boy. Bridget Kennedy worked in various Boston shops, often having to leave Patrick home under the care of his sisters. But with money painfully scarce, Pat left grammar school in his early teens and went to work. Apparently Patrick quickly demonstrated qualities of a "born leader"--good natured, popular, generous, intelligent, and quick to put to good use every opportunity for money-making, he fast climbed the ladder of success.

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1. Joseph Francis Dinneen, The Kennedy Family (Boston, 1960), p. 3.

2. James MacGregor Burns, John Kennedy, A Political Profile (New York, 1959), p. 9; Richard J. Whalen, The Founding Father, The Story of Joseph P. Kennedy (New York, 1964), p. 15.

3. Whalen, p. 18; Interview with Loretta Kennedy Connelly by telephone, May 12, 1971

4. Whalen, pp. 6, 12, 18; Dinneen, pp. 3-4; Burns, pp. 5, 8.



Starting out as a longshoreman and dock roustabout, Patrick eventually saved enough to buy a saloon in the Haymarket Square section of East Boston. Saloons then served as meeting places for Irish social and religious clubs, political caucuses and rallies, lodges and brotherhoods, and fire and militia companies. Patrick, loyal and generous with his money; reserved, almost austere in his manners and with his opinions; and a rare indulger in alcoholic beverages, soon commanded the respect and vote of his community. Before long he had set up office in his saloon as the ward leader of East Boston.<sup>5</sup>

Patrick channeled his capital into investments in other saloons and into the retail and wholesale liquor trade. Extending out from this safe market for Irish immigrants, he bought into the Suffolk County Coal Company, and, in 1895-7, he helped finance and organize two neighborhood banks, the Columbia Trust Company and the Sumner Savings Bank. In addition, he made marginal investments in real estate. All the while Patrick continued to assist the many who streamed through his office and home requesting help.<sup>6</sup>

During this period of upward mobility, when all three children were still young, Patrick moved his family to 165 Webster Street on Jeffries Point--East Boston's equivalent of Back Bay--to a handsome, spacious, colonial house on a hill overlooking Boston Harbor.<sup>7</sup> From this new height Kennedy continued to win respect and support as a political leader in Boston, at a time when the Irish political leaders, having been in control of the city since the mayoral election of 1885, were becoming flagrantly corrupt. Keeping his reputation free of taint, Patrick received appointments to office from Irish and Yankee mayors alike, as Fire Commissioner. Wire Commissioner. Street Commissioner and Water and Election Commissioner. But Patrick preferred and was most successful at working behind the scenes, as he did as chairman of the unofficial but all-powerful "Board of Strategy," a group of five self-

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5. Whalen, p. 14; Dinneen, p. 4; Burns, p. 8. Burns pointed out that around 1850 Irish transient paupers outnumbered and were socioeconomically lower than any other nationality in Boston. According to John H. Cutler in his Honey Fitz (New York, 1962, p. 15), the Irish immigrants of Boston in 1850 numbered 35,000, and in 1860 50,000 out of 310,000 population.

6. Whalen, p. 20; Burns, p. 8; Dinneen, pp. 4, 8.

7. Whalen, p. 20; Dinneen, p. 4; Joe McCarthy, The Remarkable Kennedys (New York, 1960), p. 37.

constituted leaders who picked all Democratic candidates for city, county, and state offices, who dictated appointments, and who generally supervised patronage in Boston.<sup>8</sup>

In his personal life Patrick devoted himself to his family, friends, and religion. He was a good Catholic and active Elk. He had three Hickey brothers-in-law who had also established a good reputation in the Boston area--Charlie as mayor of Brockton, Mass, John as a doctor in Winthrop, and Jim as a local police captain in East Boston. Together the Kennedys and Hickeys stood out as pillars of the community and excellent examples for their children. Of his own children Patrick expected self-discipline and superior discretion. He instilled in them the spirit so evident in Joseph's lifestyle--that of competitiveness. To come in first was success; second place spelled a failure.<sup>9</sup>

Having gratified his own success drive, Patrick Joseph Kennedy moved his family to Winthrop, Mass., a pleasant, suburban town on the Atlantic Coast near East Boston, where he followed and backed up his son's progress through Harvard College and into the business whirl of the pre-World War I period.

#### Mary Hickey Kennedy

Although her marriage to Patrick J. Kennedy in 1887 represented a step down socially in the Irish immigrant community of Boston, Mary Hickey clearly had chosen an ambitious, attractive, and intelligent young man who had already been elected, at 28, to the State House of Representatives. Mary Hickey was a quiet, dignified, and very musical individual who filled the home with singing in the morning, weekend song sessions, and evening lullabies. Her influence was felt in the development of the children: in the decision to send Joe to Boston Latin School and to Harvard College, two schools frowned on by most Boston Irish on account of their Waspish nature; and in the education of her two daughters in music--the oldest, Loretta, taking piano lessons throughout her childhood at the New England Conservatory of Music, and the youngest, Margaret, taking singing lessons.<sup>10</sup>

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8. Whalen, pp. 17, 20; Cutler, pp. 24-25; Dinneen, pp. 4-6; Burns, p. 9; Ralph Martin and Ed Plaut, Front Runner, Dark Horse (Garden City, 1950), p. 116.

9. McCarthy, p. 37; Dinneen, p. 5; Whalen, p. 14.

10. Interview with Loretta Kennedy Connelly by telephone, May 12, 1971.

The musical nature of Mrs. Kennedy brought warmth and a strong sense of camaraderie to the family, an aspect clearly emphasized in Joseph's family in later years. Every Sunday the family gathered around the piano to sing together. Even after Joe went off to Harvard, he brought home several of his classmates on Sundays to share in this family gathering, and after he married, Joe drove his family the 10 miles to Winthrop for the Sunday get-together.<sup>11</sup>

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11. Ibid.

## Fitzgerald Background in America

### John F. Fitzgerald (1863-1950)

In many ways the life of John F. Fitzgerald parallels that of Patrick Joseph Kennedy. Indeed, in their adult lives the two met frequently politically, socially, and, finally, familiarly once Patrick's son, Joseph Patrick, married Rose Elizabeth, John's oldest daughter, in 1914.

John F. Fitzgerald was the son of immigrant parents from Wexford or Limerick County, Ireland--Thomas Fitzgerald and Roseanna Cox--who had left their native land in the 1840's and had met and married in Boston. Thomas started work in South Acton for a mere \$6.00 a month. Poor as they were, the Fitzgeralds began a family which included seven boys. Early in the game the family moved to the North End, to one of the most populated and most solidly Irish sections of Boston. Thomas, showing good business sense and a congenial nature, quickly became proprietor of a local grocery and liquor store.<sup>12</sup>

There in the North End in a 4-story red brick tenement with eight families on lower Hanover Street, Roseanna bore their third son, John F. Fitzgerald, in February 1863. In his childhood and upbringing John generally confronted fewer hardships than Patrick Kennedy did. As a boy relatively free of responsibilities, John became engrossed by the history of the numerous landmarks dotting the North End. By his late teens, he was conducting guided tours for visitors to his neighborhood. While at Elliot Grammar and Boston Latin Schools he excelled in sports. At the latter he not only served as sports editor for the Latin School Register and as captain of the football team, but he also formed and became president of the Interscholastic Athletic Association. In his home community he helped raise money for charities and churches, offering his manpower and his novel ideas. To his credit John was elected president of the Neptune Associates--the strongest social and religious club in the North End--when he was young enough to be the son of most of the members. Through all his contacts, John reportedly proved to be sociable, affable, cooperative, inquisitive, and efficient. Essentially, like Pat, John Fitzgerald showed in his youth signs of future leadership.<sup>13</sup>

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12. Cutler, p. 37; telephone conversation with Miss Helen Keyes, at John F. Kennedy Library, Inc., Boston.

13. Burns, p. 10; Cutler, pp. 39-41; Boston Post; (Oct. 3, 1950). p. 15. This and all other newspaper articles cited in this section come from a 16-reel microfilm collection in the Library of Congress entitled, "John Fitzgerald Kennedy, Thirty-fifth President of the United States, Nov. 7, 1892-Dec. 31, 1960," amassed by James J. Fahey.

In distinct contrast to Patrick Kennedy's experience, however, John Fitzgerald had the social and educational benefits as a teenager to attend and finish Boston Latin School. Already ahead of most second-generation Irish-American youth on account of this schooling, John F. pursued his education at Harvard Medical School. Again he showed initiative by joining social, religious, and athletic activities. But in 1885, when only in his first year at medical school, John's father died, leaving the seven brothers without parents (Roseanna died in 1878). In order to keep the family together, John dropped out of Harvard to seek employment. He found his first job as a clerk in the customhouse, where he worked from 1886-1891.<sup>14</sup>

With his gregarious, energetic, and ebullient nature, and with his plentiful neighborhood connections, John F. quite naturally moved into Boston's political circles, so increasingly monopolized by the Irish. John received excellent guidance from his political mentor Martin Lomansey, a ward leader (there were 25) in Boston during this period. John also acquired added social status when he married Mary Josephine Hannon from Lexington in 1889. Working his way up through the ranks of alderman, ward boss, and city councilman, John won the 1892 election as a Democratic candidate to the State Senate, thereby setting himself up for national politics.

And in 1894 John took the national political arena by storm. Defeating Jesse M. Glove in the ninth district, John distinguished himself as the only Democratic congressional candidate to be elected in Massachusetts.<sup>15</sup> For six years John represented his district in Washington, D. C., but returned as often as possible to join his friends Pat Kennedy and Martin Lomansey at the meetings of the "Board of Strategy."<sup>17</sup>

For John always preferred Boston's politics to state or national. When running for mayor in 1905, he displayed remarkable energy, rushing

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14. Burns, *ibid.*; Cutler, pp. 41-2; Sheila Golden, "Fact Sheet, John F. Kennedy," January 1971, at John F. Kennedy Birthplace. Herein cited, "Fact Sheet, JFKB"; Boston Daily Globe Jan. 12, 1910, p. 5.

15. Burns, pp. 10-11; Cutler, pp. 44-5, 50-51. According to Cutler Fitzgerald called Lomansey "my political godfather," and learned from him that the "great mass of people are interested in only three things: food, clothing, and shelter."

16. Boston Daily Globe Nov. 9, 1892, p. 1.

17. Dinneen, p. 10.

about in his automobile to attend ten rallies in ten wards in an evening, in what the Boston Daily Globe labled a "whirlwind." He was received by cheering multitudes, bands playing music, and red fire. John's fondness for his home town became memorialized in his slogan, "Bigger, Better, Busier Boston." And during these years his campaign theme song, "Sweet Adeline"--with which he serenaded anyone who would listen, both nationally and internationally--and his political nickname (as of 1907) of "Honey Fitz," both became part of his living legend in Boston.<sup>18</sup>

After serving as mayor from 1906-7, John took his family to Europe, leaving his two oldest daughters in convent schools on the Continent. In 1910 he ran for office again, winning the first four-year term for mayor in Boston, so climaxing his active political career.<sup>19</sup> At his death in 1950 John F. Fitzgerald had invested fifty-five years of his life to public service.<sup>20</sup>

When not in the capacity of public servant, John F. was a devout Catholic, loving father, and good provider for his family of eight. In 1898, having served on Boston's Common Council, as a state senator, and in the U. S. Congress for four years, John moved his family to the fashionable country suburb of Concord. But his congeniality and political accomplishments could not warm the hearts of the Concord socialites. In 1903 he moved back closer to the Irish districts, to Dorchester, in South Boston.<sup>21</sup>

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18. Boston Daily Globe Nov. 8, 1905, p. 13; Nov. 9, 1905 p. 1; Nov. 15, 1905, pp. 1, 4; Fact Sheet, JFKB; Burns, pp. 10-11; Martin and Plaut, p. 115; Dinneen, p. 7

19. Dinneen, p. 11; Burns, p. 12.

20. Boston Daily Globe Oct. 4, 1950, p. 18. John Fitzgerald ran for two other offices following his mayoralty of 1910-14. In 1915 he tried for a Senate seat, and in 1922 for the governorship, and both times lost. Boston Evening Globe Nov. 7, 1916, p. 1; Boston Globe Sept. 13, 1922, p. 1. But in 1921 the Boston Post gave tribute to Fitzgerald with the following commentary: "The best known man in Boston is undoubtedly John F. Fitzgerald. He is more sure of a rousing reception at any gathering than any other Bostonian. His undoubted talents, his good fellowship and very fetching oratory are sure hits. He is able to cultivate popular favor as few people are. . . . He can get cheers easier than he can get votes." As quoted in Cutler, p. 231.

21. Burns, pp. 11-12; Fact Sheet, JFKB. John and Mary Josephine's six children were Thomas Acton, Rose Elizabeth, Agnes, John F. Jr., Eunice, and Frederick.

Wherever he lived, however, John inevitably involved himself, and often his family as well, with political friends and activities. When they were only seven and five, John took Rose and Agnes, his oldest daughters, to see President McKinley in the White House. As she grew older and more beautiful, Rose increasingly won John's favor and attention, until she accompanied her proud father to parties, banquets, balls, and political rallies, as Mrs. Fitzgerald tended to eschew such social and political gatherings. Such a family team as John and Rose always helped to win political votes in the Irish districts of Boston.<sup>22</sup>

In 1914, just as John culminated his second term as mayor, he gave Rose's hand in marriage to Joseph Patrick Kennedy. The wedding of these two powerful and substantial Boston families seemed to assure a promising future. And indeed, the marriage of Joseph and Rose Kennedy spawned the 35th President--their second son, John Fitzgerald Kennedy.

Mary Josephine Hannon Fitzgerald

As one story goes, Mary Josephine Hannon, a slim country girl, first met her future husband when he brought his North End political club to South Acton for a berry-picking excursion.<sup>23</sup> Whether this romantic first encounter ever took place or not does not alter the implications made about the personalities involved: Mary Josephine's family lived in the suburbs, away from the dense Irish ghetto familiar to John Fitzgerald. Her family had the social status that went with the migration from Boston proper. Mary became a lifelong mate to the energetic, fun-loving, and ambitious John Fitzgerald, complementing his outgoing nature with a quiet, shy, and serene disposition.<sup>24</sup>

Mary Josephine's serenity permeated the home life of the Fitzgerald family, bringing to it stability, calm, and balance. According to Rose, her mother Mary was "a very sane woman, with a lot of common sense, who saw no use in getting excited about things. For her, it wasn't a right way to act; partly it's a New England quality."<sup>25</sup>

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22. Whalen, pp. 40-41; Dinneen, pp. 12, 14.

23. Whalen, pp. 39-40

24. Ibid.; Burns, p. 15.

25. Bergquist, "A Visit with the Indomitable Rose Kennedy," p. 34.

## CHAPTER II

### The Joseph P. Kennedys

On October 7, 1914, Joseph P. Kennedy and Rose E. Fitzgerald were married in the private chapel of the Archbishop's House in Boston by His Eminence William Cardinal O'Connell. Both Joseph and Rose brought to this marriage a wealth of family tradition and accumulated experiences which contributed to their success as parents of John F. Kennedy, 35th President.

#### Joseph P. Kennedy

As a boy Joseph Kennedy emulated the energy and drive that had given his father social, financial, and political prominence in Boston. He responded well to his father's encouragement to be competitive and to aim for first place. He worked as a paper boy, errand boy, candy butcher, and gas light and stove lighter in his adolescence not because his family needed the extra pennies, as was the case with most of his young friends, but because he wished to compete and excel.<sup>1</sup>

As Boston Latin School Joe held several positions of leadership as colonel of the school's cadet regiment, president of the senior class, and captain of the varsity baseball team. He also showed a special aptitude for mathematics, which served him well in his business transactions in later life.<sup>2</sup>

In and out of school he actively competed in sports. At 15 he organized a baseball team, the Assumptions, and sold tickets to the games. In his senior year he received the "Mayor John F. Fitzgerald cup" from his future father-in-law for the highest batting average in the league games. He was always a rigorous horseback rider and swimmer.<sup>3</sup>

With the encouragement of his mother, Joe attended Harvard where he proved to be a mediocre student but an active member of three social clubs including Hasty Pudding, and a member of the baseball team.

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1. Whalen, The Founding Father, p. 21; Dinneen, p. 9; Burns, p. 14.
  2. Fact Sheet, JFKB, Dinneen, pp. 8-9.
  3. Whalen, *ibid.*; Dinneen, p. 9; and Boston Globe, June 13, 1907, p. 6.



During his sophomore year he first met 17 year-old Rose Fitzgerald and, despite her father's disapproval, continued to see her for seven years before their marriage in 1914.<sup>4</sup>

Having vowed that he would make a million by his 25th birthday, Joseph graduated from college and went straight to work. In Boston Joe was still known as Patrick Kennedy's boy, which helped him to get the job he wanted as state bank examiner. While the pay was small and the work long and arduous, Joe was well aware of the advantage it gave him. Within two years he had studied the structure and securities of all the banks in eastern Massachusetts. Applying this information, he persuaded his father and relatives to raise \$45,000 to buy the Columbia Trust Company, setting his father in the position of bank president. At 25 he took over the job for his father, reportedly becoming the youngest bank president in the country and a man of note in his own right.<sup>5</sup>

Capitalizing on his newsmaking success, Joe finally asked for the hand of his long-time sweetheart, Rose, who by then was the popular, pretty, and accomplished favorite daughter of Boston's mayor. Despite her father's disappointment Rose did not hesitate to accept the brash, ambitious redhead with whom she had been going steady for years.<sup>6</sup> For his part, Joe never forgot his father-in-law's opinion of him as socially inferior, nor did he forget that Rose had grown up with every financial advantage. His desire to offer his wife the best of everything added fire to his already kindled ambitions. In the years to follow Rose F. Kennedy saw increasingly less of her driving business-tycoon husband, but increasingly more of the luxuries she had been accustomed to as a Fitzgerald.

#### Rose Elizabeth Fitzgerald

By the time of her marriage to Joe Kennedy at the age of 24 Rose Fitzgerald had already lived a very full and involved life. Always striving to emulate her father, Rose as a child plunged into

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4. Dinneen, p. 8; Burns, p. 14; Gail Cameron, "Rose," Ladies Home Journal July 1971, p. 139.

5. Burns, p. 14; Whalen, p. 22; Dinneen, p. 15.

6. Joe Kennedy has been quoted to say, "Rose and I went steady for seven years before we were married." Cameron, "Rose," p. 141.

7. As late as President Kennedy's inauguration Joe Kennedy carried bad feelings for his wife's family. Cameron, p. 138.

her scholastic and social activities with a strong desire to excel. She was organized, methodical, and precisely scheduled. She took her responsibilities to heart, lecturing her brothers and sisters on the benefits of learning. Rose did not just pontificate; she proved to be an honors student, graduating at 15 as the youngest student ever to receive her diploma from Dorchester High School, and the first to receive her diploma from the Mayor of Boston himself, who in 1906 was none other than Rose's father. The Boston Sunday Post covered the occasion with a photograph and article, only the first in many to feature the mayor and his eldest daughter together.<sup>8</sup>

To her delight Rose was accepted at Wellesley College for the fall of 1906, but her father at the last moment decided that Rose was too young for college and sent her instead to a Sacred Heart Convent in Boston. Rose's initial disappointment quickly dissipated in the wake of the attention and publicity she received while accompanying her father to many of his political rallies and meetings, parties and banquets. She even made headlines of her own when at 16 she smashed a champagne bottle across the hull of the Bunker Hill at its launching. To round off her education, she took dance and piano lessons, so that by her 17th birthday, when she met Joseph Kennedy for the first time, she already was an accomplished young lady.<sup>9</sup>

But John Fitzgerald did not think young Kennedy was good enough for his talented, beautiful young daughter, and favored instead Hugh Nawn, son of his close friend Harry Nawn, a wealthy building contractor. In part to avoid Joe, Fitzgerald arranged a family trip to Europe in July 1908, followed for Rose and Agnes by a year of study in a Sacred Heart Convent at Blumenthal, Prussia.

Rose's year at the convent cemented her religious training into an unquestioning belief in the Catholic Church, and into a daily observance of devotion and faith. So deeply did she feel her strengthened convictions that she applied for and was granted membership in the sodality of the Children of Mary of the Sacred Heart, the highest lifelong commitment possible for the Sacred Heart student.

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8. Cameron, p. 189. According to one of Rose's childhood friends, "Rose was like her father for all the world. . . She was always quoting her father--in fact we used to call her 'Father Says.'" Cameron, p. 189. Dineen, p. 12; Whalen, p. 40.

9. Cameron, *ibid.*; According to Marguerite Higgins, "Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy," McCalls, May 1961, p. 103, "Rose graduated at 15 with honors."

In addition to her religious learning, Rose received courses in the classics, music, home economics, and cooking. She also became fluent in German and French. She shared these experience with other privileged girls from Germany, Ireland, England, America, and France.<sup>10</sup>

After her year at Blumenthal, Rose spent a year at Manhattanville College in New York. At her return to Boston in 1910 she immediately put her travel and schooling experiences to good use. Bored by the usual sewing circles characteristic of most social clubs of the day, Rose organized an exclusive group of Catholic girls to meet for discussions on national and international affairs. The Ace of Clubs, so-called at "Honey Fitz's" suggestion, served as an excellent training ground in public speaking for Rose and the other 7 charter members.<sup>11</sup>

Besides organizing the Ace of Clubs, Rose also organized a travel club, joined a dramatic club, became the youngest member of the Investigating Committee of the Public Library (for selecting children's books), taught sewing to Irish children in the North End, taught Sunday school, took courses at the New England Conservatory, attended public current events lectures, swam and played tennis, and continued to accompany her father as official hostess during his second term as mayor.<sup>12</sup>

Rose's active social life concentrated in the "High Irish" circles of Boston, similar to, but strictly separate from the Yankee circles. In addition to joining the Cecillian Guild, the Irish counterpart of the exclusive Junior league, Rose attended the triannual Assemblies where she received lavish attentions from Joe Kennedy, who called her the "belle of the ball" with the prettiest dress in the dance room. In January 1911 the Fitzgeralds hosted Rose's coming-out party, with over 500 in attendance.<sup>13</sup>

Seeing that Rose and Joe were becoming more intimate, Honey Fitz increasingly discouraged their meetings, so that often in the years before their marriage the two were forced to meet secretly

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10. Cameron, pp. 139-40.

11. According to Cameron, this club has grown into one of great importance. Cameron, p. 140. Higgins, p. 103.

12. Cameron, *ibid.*; Dinneen, p. 14; Whalen, p. 41; Bergquist, "A Visit with the Indomitable Rose Kennedy," Look, Nov. 26, 1968, p. 34.

13. Cameron, *ibid.*; Whalen, *ibid.*

at various spots around Boston. Often, however, the issue did not arise, as Rose frequently was traveling with her father to Palm Beach, the Continent, or England. But when the proposal finally came from Joe in 1914 Rose welcomed it, freely exercising the individualism her disappointed father had gone to such pains to encourage.<sup>14</sup>

#### The Kennedys at 83 Beals Street

When Rose and Joe Kennedy returned in October 1914 from their two-week honeymoon at the Greenbrier Hotel in White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia, they moved into a modest 3-story frame house at 83 Beals Street in Brookline, Massachusetts. Even though he had had to borrow money to make the first downpayment on the \$6,500 house, Joe knew his financial straits were only temporary--a setback from the money needed for the purchase of the Columbia Trust stocks--and that a house was what he preferred to an apartment. The location of the house at the end of the street surrounded on three sides with open fields particularly appealed to Rose: "We had a feeling of space and air which was important to me as I had always lived in the country when I was a youngster," she reminisced. The aura of peace and tranquility, on the one hand, and a closeness to rapid transit to the center of Boston on the other, made a happy combination for Rose. The house at 83 Beals Street was also located near good public schools, playgrounds, and a Catholic Church. The house, as well, stood in an Anglo-Saxon Protestant community which while it represented to Joe his widening horizons, often reminded him uncomfortably of the discrimination felt by Irish Catholics in Boston. Nonetheless, the Kennedys had other newlywed friends nearby, and they found no trouble staying in their modest first home for seven years during which time they had four of their nine children: Joseph (1915), John Fitzgerald (1917), Rosemary (1919), and Kathleen (1920).<sup>15</sup>

During these first hard-working years of his career Joe was away from home most of the time, so that Rose assumed the lead in the care and guidance of the Kennedy clan. To assist her Rose

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14. Cameron, *ibid.*

15. Most of the above comes from reminiscent notes (p. 1.) sent to Nan Rickey by Mrs. Kennedy in 1967. Nan Rickey assumes these notes comprise a rough draft for Rose's autobiography. A copy is filed in the site file in the Division of History Library. See also Burns, p. 15, and Cameron, p. 141.

hired a live-in nursemaid, Katherine Conboy. "Kiko," as young Joe christened her, soon charmed the babies with her warm-hearted nature, her thick Irish brogue, and her stories of leprechauns and elves. Rose also employed a live-in maid for \$7.00 a week.<sup>16</sup>

Rose always found motherhood to be a beautiful if awe-inspiring responsibility: "Whenever I held my newborn baby in my arms, I used to think that what I said and did to him could have an influence not only on him but on all whom he met, not only for a day or a month or a year, but for all eternity--a very, very challenging and exciting thought for a mother." She felt that all children "should be stimulated by their parents to see, and touch, and know, and understand, and appreciate."<sup>17</sup>

But Rose did not just theorize about motherhood. "I looked upon the child rearing as a profession," she explained, "and decided it was just an interesting and just as challenging as anything else and that it did not have to keep a woman tied down and make her dull or out of touch. She did not have to become an emaciated, worn out old hag, nor did she have to be a fat, shapeless, jolly happy-go-lucky individual whose only subject for conversation was as the Germans used to say, 'Kinder, Kirche, Kuchen,' or 'Children, church and cooking.'<sup>18</sup>

Rose was not alone in her child-rearing experience, for most of her friends her age were also having children, and together they built their lives around the youngsters. At home Rose had the assistance of the nurse and maid to complete the many chores of a mother with several small babies. "In those days, there was no diaper service, no preparation for the infant feeding formula," Rose explained.

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16. Searls, The Lost Prince, p. 35; Dinneen, p. 35; Cameron, *ibid.* While living on Beals Street Joe Kennedy was proving to be aggressively successful in his business ventures. He overcame opposition to become a member of the board of the Yankee-controlled Massachusetts Electric Co. In 1915 he accepted the invitation of Charles M. Schwab, President of Bethlehem Shipbuilding Co., to become assistant general manager of the Fore River Shipyards in Quincy, Mass., where he first struck up his friendship with Franklin D. Roosevelt. After the war he found a position with the prominent brokerage firm of Hayden, Stone & Co. In addition, he involved himself with real estate speculation and became a director of the New England Fuel and Transportation Co. See Dinneen, pp. 18-33; Whalen, pp. 44-6.

17. As quoted in Cameron, p. 142.

18. Reminiscent Notes of Mrs. Kennedy, p. 8.

"The bottles for the babies had to be cleaned and sterilized at home on the kitchen stove and woe to the nursemaid if she put her bottles on the stove when the hired girl was preparing the lunch or cooking a cake. Words would fly and kettles would be pushed back and forth and the diapers would stop boiling, and there would be recriminations galore and a fight from the kitchen."<sup>19</sup>

While the laborious process of diaper washing and boiling was being carried out at home, Rose "would put one child in his kiddycar and with one or two others on each side, I would go forth on foot to do the morning shopping at the chain grocery store."<sup>20</sup>

As the children grew older, Rose concentrated her efforts on their schooling and discipline, keeping in mind at the same time that the important thing is "to gain your children's confidence in your judgment."<sup>21</sup> She set out "to tend to the roots as well as the stems, and slowly and carefully plant ideas and concepts of right and wrong, religion and social implications and applications."<sup>22</sup> Rose ate her meals with her children, led them on shopping and sightseeing excursions, told them bedtime stories or read to them at night, listened to their prayers each evening, and coached them with their catechism on Fridays.<sup>23</sup> She devoted special attention to Joe and John during the first years at Beals Street, for she firmly believed that "if the older children are brought up right, the younger ones will follow their lead."<sup>24</sup> But if any of the young children misbehaved, she practiced physical discipline: "I used to have a ruler around and paddled them occasionally, because when they're young, that's all they understand."<sup>25</sup>

Rose started her children's visits to St. Aiden's, the Catholic Church only 4 blocks from their home, at a very early age: "On pleasant days I took the children for walks. I wheeled one in a car-

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19. Ibid.

20. Ibid.

21. Higgins, "Rose F. Kennedy," McCalls, May 1961, p. 104.

22. As quoted in Dinneen, p. 36.

23. Whalen, p. 89. Rose planned trips to local historic sites, related stories of her own travels as a girl, and read aloud such historical novels as James Fenimore Cooper's, Book of Knowledge Higgins, p. 104.

24. As quoted in Dinneen, p. 37.

25. As quoted in Whalen, p. 57 and Cameron, *ibid.*

riage and two or three toddled along with me. I made it a point each day to take them into a church for a visit. I wanted them to form a habit of making God and religion a part of their daily lives, not something to be reserved only for Sundays."<sup>26</sup>

Besides the Catholic church, the Kennedys kept close associations with the Patrick Kennedys. Smiling Rose recalled, "We were happy to pile our growing family into a Model T Ford every Sunday and Joe would drive ten miles to Winthrop to visit his parents."<sup>27</sup>

In her husband's absences Rose continued with many of her social activities in Boston--appearing at the Ace of Clubs and other civic social groups, playing golf, attending luncheons and teas--but she never failed to be home at 5:00 p. m. each day. "That's the time that coughs start and the time the maids are apt to be tired," she explained.<sup>28</sup> Characteristic of her well-organized thinking, Rose kept careful record of her growing family's health: "I kept a card catalogue of my children, recording when each had measles, whooping cough, chicken pox or any of the children's diseases. I made a record of each physical examination and the result of each visit to the dentist."<sup>29</sup>

When Rose had her husband at home, usually on weekends, she invited another couple over to play bridge on Friday evenings, or perhaps for dinner on Sunday. After a very serious game of bridge Joe would order ice cream from Murray's on Boylston Street, and call a cab to deliver it. "It was simple living but full of happiness," Marie Greene, an old friend of the family, commented.<sup>30</sup>

On Saturday evenings the Kennedys attended the symphony in Boston. Joe had acquired a deep appreciation for music while at Harvard so that he and Rose remained devoted patrons of the orchestra during their years in Brookline.<sup>31</sup>

But Joe also enjoyed a quiet evening at home with his family. He always spent as much time as he could with his children. He loved

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26. As quoted in Dinneen, p. 35.

27. Ibid. According to Searls, the Model T aroused "quiet envy and some comment on Irish pushiness in a neighborhood of Anglo-Saxon Protestants." Searls, p. 35.

28. As quoted in Cameron, p. 142.

29. As quoted in Dinneen, p. 36.

30. As quoted in Cameron, p. 142.

31. Ibid.

to sing with them to Rose's piano playing in the living room. He walked the floor with his babies, pushed them in their carriages, or pulled them on sleds. He ate his meals with the children, the younger ones at a small table and the older ones with the parents. Meal-time was a special family discussion time, and even when the babies were too young for the quizzes which Rose devised on current events, history, or religion, the Kennedys made sure that "nothing trivial was ever discussed at the table."<sup>32</sup>

Besides encouraging them at an early age to learn and to think, the Kennedys taught their young ones to be rugged individualists while they were good brothers and sisters to each other. "From the beginning, "Rose observed," I tried to avoid the causes of friction among a large family of children. If they have their own bedrooms, their own toys to play with, and their own belongings, they are not likely to quarrel about them."<sup>33</sup> Thus by 1920 the Kennedys with four children found their first house at 83 Beals Street too small. But they liked the neighborhood they had chosen as it was near to a good school, a good playground, and a good Catholic Church; and so the family moved only a few blocks away to a larger house on the corner of Naples & Abbottsford Roads. Their new home reflected Joe Kennedy's growing prosperity from his earnings on the stock market of 1920-21.<sup>34</sup>

#### John Fitzgerald Kennedy at Beals Street

"Jack was born at home, as most children were then. He had trouble with his infant feeding, and when he was only four, he had scarlet fever. But otherwise he was a normal, happy baby, and even though he was not quite as robust as his older brother Joe, this never kept him from competing with Joe as hard as he could."<sup>35</sup>

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32. As quoted in Higgins, p. 192; Cameron, p. 141; Dinneen, p. 37. Biographer Richard Whalen felt that the only occupation that Joe Kennedy ever committed himself to was fatherhood. Whalen, p. 163.

33. As quoted in Dinneen, p. 36; p. 92

34. Joe Kennedy was then employed with the Boston office of Hayden Stone and Co., stockbrockers. Dinneen, pp. 32-3.

35. As quoted in "The Full Happy Life of John F. Kennedy," Ladies Home Journal 82, Nov. 1965, p. 100.



Mrs. Kennedy's recollections set down above summarize the specific information collected about John Fitzgerald Kennedy as a boy at 83 Beals Street.

Only Jack's own recollections of his childhood offer any additional insight. Looking back, Jack remembered no unhappy times but rather, childhood was an easy, prosperous life, supervised by maids and nurses with more and more younger sisters to boss and play with.<sup>36</sup> Jack's early impressions of childhood centered about his mother: "She was the glue," he once commented, "She's not as forceful as my father, but she was the glue. She was highly devout. She wasn't interested in politics so much. She was interested in things like the Pilgrims landing at Plymouth Rock. . . She was the one who did get me started and encouraged on books. She would talk about history too."<sup>37</sup> Thus at an early age John Kennedy showed a predilection to be more shy and introspective--more like his mother<sup>38</sup>--while his big brother Joe was encouraged to assume a role of leadership in the growing family, leadership which one day John had to assume in his place.

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36. Burns, p. 23.

37. Martin and Plaut, p. 122.

38. Whalen, pp. 90-91.

## CHAPTER III

### Furnishings of the John Fitzgerald Kennedy Birthplace

#### Evidence of Original Furnishings

Several factors complicate the writing of a furnishings study for the birthplace of the 35th President, John F. Kennedy. First, the historical proximity of the period in question--1914-1921--has negated in this case any documentary evidence to support the present furnishings in the home. Secondly, the only information about the historic furnishings comes from the recollections of Mrs. Joseph Kennedy some fifty years after the fact. And thirdly, no personal interviews could be arranged with Mrs. Kennedy to verify and expand on the general knowledge already received from her for the interpretational tapes now heard in the house tour.

When the Kennedys repurchased the Beals Street home in November 1966 for \$55,000,<sup>1</sup> they had already determined to set it up as a historical shrine. Mrs. Kennedy hired the services of the family's long-time friend and interior decorator, Robert Luddington of Jordan Marsh, Inc., to help her refurnish the home to its historic appearance in 1917. An interview with Mr. Luddington revealed that while Mrs. Kennedy worked very hard on this project, her memory often had to be jogged by Mr. Luddington's research into period furnishings. Indeed, Mr. Luddington freely admits that for several of the pieces he improvised, with Mrs. Kennedy's permission, with articles of furniture he remembered from his own childhood, as he is the same age as the deceased President.

Possibly more information someday could be gathered from Mrs. Kennedy's diaries or from a personal interview with her. The presumption arises, however, when pursuing this line, that Mrs. Kennedy and Mr. Luddington failed to exhaust every resource and every memory possible when refurnishing the house during the two long years they worked together on the project. On the other hand, if it is taken for granted that they were impeccable in using what information they had at their disposal for the restoration, the problem still arises that no record of their work has been turned over to the National Park Service. And so only through an interview with Mr. Luddington has any of the information for this study been collected, and that

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1. Memorandum, April 19, 1967, to Acting Chief Historian from Historian John Bond, History Division Files.

information hardly serves as historical documentation as required for a furnishing study. Essentially, then, this report merely documents what Mr. Luddington and Mrs. Kennedy produced in the way of furniture, paintings, curtains, carpets, china, silverware, glass, books and periodicals. (A full inventory can be found in the Appendices.)

Most of the articles collected for the Kennedy birthplace are not original to the house, but are either antiques, reproductions, Kennedy family pieces, or modern acquisitions. In the absence of any information from Mrs. Kennedy, Mr. Luddington purchased numerous antiques at auctions and house sales in the Boston area, antiques which he and Mrs. Kennedy agreed were of the type likely to have been in the home. In the dining room and the guest and master bedrooms, where part of the original sets had been retrieved by the Kennedy family, Mr. Luddington had reproductions of the missing pieces made up at Jordan Marsh Co. In the living room, for which none of the original pieces of furniture other than the piano had been located, Mrs. Kennedy carefully ordered reproductions according to her recollections, from Kittinger's of Buffalo, a furniture store well known for its historical reproductions. A few of the decorative articles--vases, pin cushions, chinaware, mantel pieces--Mrs. Kennedy donated from her family possessions. And, finally, several modern articles were purchased with little consideration for historical accuracy. A chart in the appendix breaks down the furnishings according to these categories.

When Mr. Luddington started the work on the house he had all the wallpaper stripped down to the original plaster, thereby making it difficult for subsequent architectural historians to investigate for signs of book shelves, wall hooks, or picture hangers that might have remained from the Kennedy occupancy. According to Mr. Luddington the wallpaper now reflects as close an approximation of Mrs. Kennedy's recollections as possible on the first two floors, and on the second and third floor hallways the wallpaper apparently copies the original pattern. Mr. Luddington, moreover, had all the woodwork refinished to the stain found at the base after stripping.

Mr. Luddington also noted that his electricians found much of the original wiring still intact which, he claims, was the basis for the addition of overhead hanging lamps in the master and guest bedrooms. All the other wall light fixtures apparently remain from the Kennedy occupancy, with new lamp shades supplied by Mr. Luddington from Blanch Fields shade shop in Boston.

## Room Use

According to Mrs. Kennedy's recollection,

The house was laid out as most of the houses were in those days with a livingroom [sic], kitchen, the laundry in the basement. The second floor had the master's bedroom which held easily a large bed or twin beds. Adjoining it was a small room which was used as by boudoir or writing room. We also had a guest room and a small study which was later converted into a nursery when the children began to arrive. On the top floor, there were the maids quarters.<sup>2</sup>

Only the first and second floors have been refurnished for interpretation. The basement has been set up as a kitchen and rest area for the National Park Service employees at the house, and the third floor supplies two offices for the staff. The floor plan has not changed since the construction of the house sometime between 1908 and 1909, with the exception of the bay window in the dining room which Joe had added.<sup>3</sup>

Mr. Luddington commented that he and Rose decided to refurnish the small room adjoining the master bedroom as a boudoir, even though this was where Rose had kept the crib of the newly born John Kennedy during his first weeks in the Beals Street home. When John was born in 1917, Joe Jr., aged two, presumably slept in the nursery. It has not yet been established when or if baby John shared the nursery with him. The guest bedroom eventually became another child's bedroom, perhaps at John's birth.

As Mrs. Kennedy specifically recalled, "I always used the veranda or porches on the different houses where I lived." The porch of 83 Beals Street, while not exactly a room, served as a frequent

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2. Reminiscent Notes of Mrs. Kennedy, p 1, History Division Files.

3. According to the researcher who completed the chain of title for 83 Beals Street, the property originally was part of a subdivision made on the Beal Estate in April of 1908. The first mention of any building on the lot was made in an insurance policy established in April of 1909, which narrows down the construction of the Kennedy birthplace to the year 1908-09.

gathering place for the family. Mrs. Kennedy liked to sit out on the porch in the morning and read the newspaper. Her babies were well entertained by the passing milkman, mailman, and policeman who made their routes down Beal Street each day. Presently the porch has been left free of any furniture or interpretation, and probably should remain so unless more specific information can be obtained as to the type of porch furniture, baby carriages, and play pens that might have been set on the porch.

### Comparative Research

With the absence of specific historical documentation on the furnishings of the John Fitzgerald Kennedy Birthplace, the author did comparative research on the furniture and interior decoration of the period 1905-1920, in order to assess the historical accuracy of the present refurnishing of the house. The 12 years before the President's birth were included in the study on the basic premise that most young marrieds reflect the trends familiar to them when growing up, and that they do not naturally select all their furnishings from the most modern concepts. In studying the list of articles used in the refurnishing, this premise proved useful.

Beginning around 1905 in America there was a growing interest in home decoration, prompted by a revival of arts and crafts led by Frank Alvah Parsons.<sup>4</sup> The passion of the day was antiques. Accordingly many of the furniture sets in parlors, dining rooms, living rooms, and bedrooms copied 18th century Chippendale, Sheraton, Hepplewhite, and Louis XV and XVI styles. Oriental artifacts, especially Japanese vases and vase lamps, and Persian rugs, monopolized much of their respective markets.

Along with the new interest in arts and crafts came many theories on the proper way to decorate the home. The majority of the writers influencing the current vogue between 1907-1917 stressed symmetry and balance, order and cleanliness, simplicity and comfort, convenience and usefulness, as essential considerations

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4. In 1913 the Furniture Trade Review 18 (December 1913), 100, featured an article by Parsons with the following subtitle: "A Quarter Century of Art in the Home! The Story of Its Progress Under the Leadership of Frank Alvah Parsons, the Pioneer of the Great Movement for the Elevation of Standard in American Homes."

when planning a home. Only on rare occasion did the refurnishing of the Kennedy home seem to fall outside of the period in question, and that only in the details of the furniture, and not in the overall philosophy of home decoration. The bibliography includes a separate list of the books and articles applied to this comparative research.

### Room Furnishings

In the following section all of Mrs. Kennedy's quotations come from her reminiscent notes sent to Nan Rickey in 1967. The general comments pertaining to the 1917 furnishings have been based on information from the comparative research sources and from the museum catalogue descriptions.

### The Living Room

The piano which Rose Kennedy used to play for her family at 83 Beals Street stands in its original place in the living room as the only historic piece of furniture in the room. This baby grand piano was given to the Kennedys as a wedding present by Rose's Fitzgerald uncles.

Among the other articles in the room that have been classified as original are the Persian rug (largest of three throw rugs), the gate-legged table, an initialed silver vase, some piano sheet music, several framed family portraits, and a brown Florentine leather cigar box. The Persian rug and gate-legged table both were extremely popular during the first two decades of the 20th century, while sterling silver wedding sets have remained an institution of marriage to this day. A special feature of the original sheet music is "Sweet Adeline," the song Rose often played for her father to his singing accompaniment in the living room of the Beals Street home, and the song that John Fitzgerald adopted as his personal trademark both nationally and internationally. The Kennedy and Fitzgerald family photographs and the leather cigar box add to the personal touches in the interpretation of the room. As one can readily see, however, the portrait on the piano of Rose and Joe Kennedy with five of their children postdates the Beals Street period.

In her reminiscent notes Mrs. Kennedy recalled, "In the big chair near the table, my husband sat every evening reading the papers, The Boston Transcript, in those days, and I sat opposite him, reading or sometimes darning stockings because the boys wore short pants in those days and often got holes in the knees of their hose which had to be darned by me or the nurse" (p.4). While this recol-

lection shows up inaccuracies--Mr. Kennedy hardly was home every evening--it explains the arrangement of the furniture at the north end of the room. The red lounge chair of Mr. Kennedy's liking was one of the three pieces made up to order from Mrs. Kennedy's recollection at Kittinger's of Buffalo, New York. Along with the matching beige corduroy armchair and sofa, these three reproductions stand out as a typical furnishings for 1917 or for ten years before or after that year. The style in circa 1917 favored armchairs with high backs and exposed cabriole legs, but Mrs. Kennedy insisted to Mr. Luddington that she recalled skirted, rather modern-looking armchairs and sofa. She also specified the fabric of the slipcovers, even though corduroy was not a material commonly used in the period under consideration. One cannot, however, dispute the testimony of the only available eyewitness.

According to Mr. Luddington, other reproductions made up for the living room to fit Mrs. Kennedy's recollections include the beige damask and white lace curtains, two small end tables, the wing back cane chair with a gold & blue tapestry seat (where Mrs. Kennedy did her sewing and reading), the music rack, the cream-colored lamp shades, and the pink and blue cushions on the sofa and armchairs. The two end tables Mr. Luddington had copied from some in his childhood home, with Mrs. Kennedy's consent. No cushions like the round pink and blue ones she remembered appeared in any of the illustrations of furnishings for the period; most of the decorative pillows were larger and square. The music rack is a copy of an English Canterbury one. Lamp shades similar to the ones chosen, while not common for the 1917 period, did appear in some of the decorator books for the more fashionable homes.

Mrs. Kennedy also contributed certain of her personal possessions for the living room furnishings. All the table tops--the piano scarf, the damask cover on the gate-legged table, and the brocade doilies--two Satuma type Japanese vases on the mantel, and the two smaller Persian rugs came from Kennedy family homes. To pick up where Mrs. Kennedy's possessions and/or memory left off, Mr. Luddington purchased or acquired suitable period furnishings: the clock on the mantel, the blue tapestry armchair, two oriental vase lamps, three oriental hand bowls (one china, two brass), a parian figure, a stand-up lamp, a round tilt-top table, and a selection of 1917 National Geographic magazines and Boston newspapers.

The prints selected for the living room Mrs. Kennedy specifically recalled: "On the walls in the living room, we see copies of famous paintings which I had seen while traveling abroad. We have a copy of Turner's painting of Venice, for instance, and another

one of Franz Hals and Rembrandt. I was very happy with the prints, as I had studied the originals in the European galleries, and it gave me pleasure to have the copies on the walls in my home" (p. 4). The prints are modern purchases, but, apparently, their selection was carefully supervised by Mrs. Kennedy. The frames for these prints and for the family portraits on the wall were also chosen by Mrs. Kennedy according to her specific recollections.

The fresh flowers around the living room give a nice finishing touch to the furnishings and copy as well a popular decorative motif used in the 1917-period home.

### The Dining Room

By good fortune the entire original dining room set minus the china cabinet was returned for the refurnishing by friends of the Kennedys. When they moved from Beals Street the Kennedys lent their dining room table with six chairs, a serving table, buffet, and china cabinet, all copies of a Sheraton set, to their good friends, the Robert Fishers, who kept them in excellent preservation during the 46-year interlude. Mr. Luddington had a china cabinet redesigned at Jordan Marsh Co. to replace the missing one. The china on the table, Mrs. Kennedy explained, "was a wedding present from my sister-in-law, Margaret Burke, who painted the gold border at Notre Dame Convent when she was a student" (p. 8).

Explaining other wedding gifts on display, Mrs. Kennedy continued, "The silver tea set, coffee, etc., were all wedding presents, but there were no cocktail shakers or cocktail glasses among [them]. Among them is a large, silver asparagus dish which was given to me by Sir Thomas Lipton, and there were also some small teacups in the China cabinet which he gave me. . . . On the side table is a hand-painted punch bowl, the punch to be ladled out on the fourth of July or other holidays" (p. 8). (According to Mr. Luddington the punch bowl was a gift from her mother.) Included in the list of original furnishings but not specifically mentioned in Mrs. Kennedy's reminiscent notes are the table silver for the dining room table and the children's table, the glass pitcher, and another set of porcelain china (in the china cabinet) from Onondaga Pottery Co. in New York.

Mrs. Kennedy supplemented the original dining room pieces she could collect with other articles that she had acquired since the Beals Street residency, such as the two ornamental Tole pieces on top of the china cabinet, and all the linens. Commenting on the original of the latter, Mrs. Kennedy observed, "We used white damask



knapkins, often monogrammed, as was our damask tablecloth. Often we girls prepared our hope chest by hemming our napkins. . ."(p.9).

Since the dining room always represented an important family gathering place for the Kennedys, Mrs. Kennedy had a clear recollection of several missing pieces which Mr. Luddington attempted to duplicate. To fit her recollection that "the children, when very small, sat at a small table and joined us at the big table as they grew older."(p.9), Mr. Luddington designed a child's table with two chairs like one he had known in his own home as a boy. Mrs. Kennedy found it to be suitable. Mr. Luddington purchased duplicates of the original Persian rug with dark blue pattern, the panel curtains of dark blue pattern, the lace curtains for the bay window, the flower arrangement on the table, the fern arrangement in the bay window, and the wall prints, especially of St. Peter's Square, all to Mrs. Kennedy's recollection. The antique silver candlesticks with shades and the drinking goblets on the table Mr. Luddington selected on his own to reproduce period fashion.<sup>5</sup>

#### The Hallway

The downstairs hall has been very simply furnished with a beige rug, a wall mirror, a small table, a print of Whistler's Mother, and a telephone donated by the phone company to duplicate the 1917 vintage. According to Mr. Luddington the table and mirror Mrs. Kennedy contributed from her belongings. They both have a dark wood stain and are rather nondescript in character. Whether they approximate the original furnishings has not been established, but it is rather doubtful.

The modern beige rug was laid more out of practicality, considering the heavy traffic through the house, than for its historical accuracy. The antique telephone, however, captures the mood of the 1917 period perfectly.

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5. The shaded candlesticks, rather a novelty even to the museum curator, were advocated in only one of the source books cited in the bibliography, in Kellogg's Home Furnishing, Practical and Artistic, published in 1904-5. In his opinion, "For the dining table candles should have pretty shades to harmonize with the flower decorations." To prevent fire he suggested the shades be made up over a non-combustible lining(p. 220).

## The Kitchen

Because she always had a maid to prepare the meals for the family, Mrs. Kennedy had few specific recollections of the kitchen. Mr. Luddington, therefore, produced many excellent period antiques -- the kitchen china, the sink, the Glenwood stove, the Baldwin icebox (in the back hallway), the kitchen table and chairs, the oilcloth cover for the table, the breadbox, the 1917 calendar, the clock, the cookbooks, the iron, the toaster, most of the kitchen utensils (except a modern stainless steel knife, kitchen towel, and potholder, all of which should be replaced), and the stove accessories (stove brush, coal shovel, coal hod, fire stoker, grate shaker)-- and several of these articles came from his own grandmother's kitchen. Mr. Luddington also arranged to have a large number of preserve jars filled with tomatoes, peaches, pears, plums, carrots, cucumbers, onions, beans, and relish, while the Underwood Co. produced a number of antique deviled ham cans, all of which add special interest to the display.

In the kitchens of the 1917 period the emphasis was placed on cleanliness. White or cream colored walls with linoleum floors and dotted swiss curtains were advocated by most interior decorators for the modern kitchen of the period. Mrs. Kennedy when questioned did not remember linoleum floors nor all-white walls, but did specifically recall having dotted swiss curtains, modern versions of which now don the kitchen windows.

### THE SECOND FLOOR:

#### The Master Bedroom

As might be expected, Mrs. Kennedy's memory of the master bedroom remained quite clear: "The master bedroom was over the living room and the same size. It had twin beds which had been fashionable then for about fifteen years [A French innovation]. Also, there was a matching bureau, dressing table and chiffonier, copies of Sheraton furniture. A silver toilet set was on the dressing table with silver candlesticks. Often it had been the gift of the husband to his wife before their marriage. On the man's dresser were his brushes, photographs, etc."(p.5). Of these original furnishing Mrs. Kennedy described, one of the mahogany beds and the chiffoniers survived to be used in the refurbishing. Mr. Luddington had copies of the other bed, the bureau, dressing table, and stool made up to match at Jordan Marsh Co. The silver monogrammed toilet set and Mr. Kennedy's personal toilet set (toilettries part of a traveling case) also have remained intact, with the exception of the silver candlesticks mentioned above.

The master bedroom evoked vivid recollections of early motherhood for Mrs. Kennedy because, as she recalled, "The four oldest children were born in this room, and the mother always occupied the bed nearest the window so the doctor would have proper light if the baby arrived in the day. The late President, the second son, was born in this room about three o'clock in the afternoon, May 29, 1917, and he was placed in the blue and white bassinette in the adjoining room "(p. 5).<sup>6</sup>

Among the details of the room she recalled were the small pictures over the beds, copies of Italian paintings of the Madonna and Child which she had seen and liked in Italy. Similar copies of these prints have been found and hung over the twin beds. Mrs. Kennedy also distinctly remembered that "the spreads on the beds were heavy linen bedspreads which my father and mother had bought in Ireland and then had given to me. They were hand-embroidered with shamrocks, thistles and other Irish symbols. I recall that one had a lighthouse and one, an Irish doe, and they were quite unique, as I never have seen any quite like them. We had three, two for the master bedroom and one for the guest room" (p. 6). According to Mr. Luddington, Mrs. Kennedy to this day is supervising the redesigning of these bedspreads, as she has not yet been satisfied by the work completed by nuns commissioned to embroider them by hand.

Other original furnishings in the room according to Mr. Luddington include the baby pictures--Joe, John, and Rosemary and Kathleen in a series of four shots each--the bedside table and the family Bible with it, and the pillow cover for the cushion on the armchair. All the family portraits framed on the bureau, vanity table, and dresser are appropriate for the 1917 period. (See inventory in Appendix.)

Other copies of original pieces include the chintz cover armchair with matching chintz curtains and valance, the organdy curtains and the telephone on the bedside table. Chintz patterns in 1917 were extremely popular for bedrooms, especially in the pastel colors that Mrs. Kennedy's blue, gold, and rose flowered pattern reflects. The matching sky blue rug which covers nearly the entire bedroom floor, however, does not typify the period, as most homeowners avoided having large rugs for fear of collecting dirt and dust. Moreover, plain

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6. Mrs. Kennedy made an error in memory here: her first son, Joe, was born in Hull, Mass., where the Kennedys had taken a summer house.

colored rugs without any pattern still had not come into fashion to any degree by 1917. And finally, the rug is a brand new, modern one which easily could be replaced with a more authentic looking reproduction or an antique rug in good condition.

Mrs. Kennedy clearly invested considerable interest in the re-furnishing of her bedroom, as she contributed large and small details alike, such as the antique sandwich glass lamp on the bedside table and the pin cushion for the dressing table--articles she felt fit the decor, even though not original to the room. She also asked Mr. Luddington to replace the wicker wastebasket because she was sure that she had never purchased anything so impractical. (As of April 1971 the wastebasket had not been removed) She found no objection to the lace tops on the vanity table, bureau, and dresser, even though they are modern Swiss-made covers. Nor did she seem to object to the hanging light over the dresser with the pale blue shade bordered with a fringe which Mr. Luddington claims is a period reproduction placed where the original wiring indicated a hanging light fixture. Despite his insistence that this light copies the period fashion, no illustrations could be found in the comparative research sources that showed such hanging lamps; rather, the room lighting for the day typified the wall fixtures that still remain in the bedroom. Since this hanging lamp did not warrant objection from Mrs. Kennedy, however, it is difficult to maintain any criticism of it.

### Boudoir

As mentioned earlier, the boudoir adjoining the master bedroom served as a makeshift nursery after the birth of John F. Kennedy, and probably, after those of Rosemary and Kathleen as well. But Mr. Luddington and Mrs. Kennedy decided to furnish the room to exhibit its other function--as a reading, sewing, and writing room for Mrs. Kennedy. The featured original articles in the boudoir are the desk, sewing table and family photographs and memorabilia. The small colonial revival desk originally belonged to Rose's father and dates to about 1895-1905. The sewing table, a colonial antique, was a wedding present. And on the walls Mrs. Kennedy hung her wedding invitation, the birth announcement of her husband, a poem by one of her children entitled "Mother," a picture of her own mother, and several other personal family photographs and memorabilia. (On occasion the location and selection of this wall display has been changed by the park employees.) One of the photographs, a family portrait with five children, obviously postdates the Beals Street period.

Mr. Luddington pointed out the numerous articles in the boudoir that he had acquired to fit Mrs. Kennedy's recollections, the period styles, and the functions of the room. Several of his purchases, he explained, were made in Canton, Massachusetts, at an auction of the furnishings of a house of the same period as the Kennedy birthplace. The sandwich glass antique lamp, the sewing bag, darning egg, and lady's reticule on the sewing table, the copy of the Louis XVI mirror on the wall, the cane-seated side chair by the desk, and the inkwell, pen, and pencil box (probably late 19th century Chinese) on the desk, all are appropriate additions to the room.

Mrs. Kennedy's recollections guided Mr. Luddington's acquisitions of the wooden index card box similar to the one in which Mrs. Kennedy kept her files on her children's health, and the replica white wicker chair with low-cut arms (Mrs. Kennedy liked elbow room when she sewed.) Mrs. Kennedy's choice of wicker furniture for the boudoir fits the period styles on several counts. Wicker was fast gaining popularity in 1917 because it so well suited the current preference for simple, practical, and durable furniture. Moreover, decorators of the period were also advocating white painted enamel or wood furniture for the bedroom or boudoir, as well as chintz material--such as covers the seat and back of the wicker chair and makes up the draperies in the boudoir--for a matching chair and curtain motif.

Two modern items purchased for the desk--a blotter and stationary--do not detract from the interpretation of the room, but the modern light blue rug does, in the line with the objection made about the rug in the master bedroom. It seems far more likely that the boudoir would have had a throw rug--Persian or English in style<sup>7</sup>--rather than a single-colored carpet. In addition, of the period books and magazines supplied for the boudoir, the book Pollyanna by Eleanor H. Porter is a 1937 edition, which, with a little trouble, could be replaced by an earlier publication.

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7. Nearly all the period books on interior decoration discuss a choice of rugs for the homes. The English rugs mentioned regularly include Axminsters, Wiltons, and body Brussels. For detailed descriptions of period rugs see Faraday, European and American Carpets and Rugs, as cited in the bibliography. An even larger body of research was published around 1917 concerning the wide variety of popular Persian rugs but no particular volume has been included in the bibliography as any of the general works on interior decoration of the 1917 period would give sufficient information for interpretive purposes.

## The Guest Bedroom

With the intention of providing separate bedrooms for all her children Mrs. Kennedy eventually converted what has been refurnished as the guest bedroom into a child's room. Presumably at John Kennedy's birth, however, this room still stood as the guest room with its bed, bedside table, vanity table, bureau, armchair, and side chair. As Mrs. Kennedy remembered it, the guest room "is furnished very much like my own bedroom with the silver toilet set, Irish linen spread, etc." (p.6). Like that in the master bedroom, the silver set on the vanity table bears a family monogram, and the bedspread will eventually be replaced when Mrs. Kennedy has been satisfied that it duplicates the expert handicraft that her original linens boasted.

No one piece of furniture in the guestroom is original, but the Hepplewhite style footboard of the bed apparently is, and has been used as the basis for the reproduction of the vanity table and bedside table. The Kennedys donated the chest of drawers for the guestroom, undoubtedly because it so well follows the flowered motifs of the bedroom set. Mrs. Kennedy also contributed all the linen table scarves for the room (as in all the rooms, every table surface has been covered with a scarf), reflecting again the large linen collection Mrs. Kennedy then held and has since accumulated. She also provided the decorative touches to the bureau--two Staffordshire pottery figurines of an Aesop fable motif, a framed cameo of the Virgin and Christ child and a Chinese porcelain bowl--the early American sandwich overlay lamp on the bedside table and the two prints hung on the north wall, none of which have any claims to being original to the Beals Street home, but do not clash with the possibilities for 1917 furnishings.

According to the museum curator, Charles Dorman, the Hepplewhite side chair is a mid-twentieth century reproduction which could be replaced by an earlier one that would better approximate the original bedroom set. Several other adjustments might be suggested for the room in accordance with the criticisms offered by Mrs. Kennedy and this author about the master bedroom. As Mrs. Kennedy noted, the wastebaskets in both bedrooms do not suit her recollections and should be replaced with ones more practical (not with crochet effect). Again the large modern light-colored rug covering the floor and the overhead hanging light over the dresser do not reflect typical period furnishings.

Finally, the magazines, wall prints, and the ceramic jewel box on the dresser all appear to be appropriate for the room. The magazines all date to 1917 or before, the prints, like in the master

bedroom, are copies of religious or European masterpieces, and the finely worked jewel box, c. 1890-1910, bears the mark Chateau des Tuilleries on the bottom.

### The Nursery

In accordance with the importance Mrs. Kennedy placed on child rearing, she preserved several items of sentimental value which she contributed for the furnishing of the nursery. As she explained, "Grandpa and Grandma Kennedy gave me a christening dress which was made by the Franciscan Nuns in East Boston whom her family had helped. It was white faille silk embroidered with tiny sprays of lilies of valley with bonnet to match. All our children were christened in it and later J.F.K. The President's son was christened in it, and it is now in the nursery at Beals Street"(p.2). Returning to the subject a few paragraphs later in her reminiscent notes, Mrs. Kennedy added, "There was also a little Irish lace bonnet there which someone gave me, profusely covered with shamrocks"(p.7). Besides this gown and cap, the collection also holds a matching embroidered linen cap and cape, and another gown. Both the christening gown and bonnet, in rather delicate condition, hang on cushioned hangers (from a department store, bought to protect the gowns, and not for display) on a child's coat rack in the nursery. It had been suggested by members of the museum lab and the JFKB staff that these articles be removed from the nursery to be protected in a glass exhibit case in the hallway.

Having served on the Investigating Committee for children's books at the Boston Public Library, Mrs. Kennedy had prepared herself well to select books for her own children. As she observed, "In the nursery are several books which the children read and which were chosen very carefully. Prominently displayed among the books in the nursery is Jack's favorite book, "Billy Whiskers," which, Mrs. Kennedy explained, "my mother brought at a department store one day"(p.7). Even though to her the illustrations seemed crude and the colors harsh, Mrs. Kennedy realized that "the boys adored the stories and delighted in the whole series, pictures and all"(p.7), and so the book remained in the nursery.

Only about 23 of the 38 books collected by Mr. Luddington and Mrs. Kennedy have been set out on the bookshelf in the nursery, the rest being stored in the closet. A few of the books, such as the edition of King Arthur and His Knights, have been personally inscribed by Mrs. Kennedy. According to Mr. Luddington, some of Mrs. Kennedy's personal friends sent children's books of the period to supplement the selection.

The only piece of original furniture in the nursery is the baby bassinett with its blue satin ribbon wound through the wicker basket crib. Modern accessories have been added to the bassinett-- the mattress, pillow and case, the coverlet, and blanket -- but they do not detract from the period effect. The rest of the furniture -- the bed, straight chair, rocker, book case, coat rack, dresser, bathinette-- is painted white, in accordance with a stylistic trend for bedroom furniture in the 1917 period. The overall effect of the furniture, then, is satisfactory.

Two of the pieces, however, have warranted criticism from the museum curator, Charles Dorman. The bed, he feels, is a 1935-65 Colonial low post reproduction which is not early enough for the period (this, however, is difficult to determine for the average observer). The modern version of a bathinette, or storage cabinet and dresser, has created the strongest objections, some of which Mr. Luddington has already taken steps to correct (he changed the metallic supports to wooden ones). This bathinette, for one, is covered by a white synthetic leatherlike fabric and its wicker baskets are "all fake," according to Mr. Dorman. In his opinion, the bathinette should be replaced by "a wooden stand with a padded platform to powder the baby, but on top of that, or better still on a shelf underneath, [there should be] a large, white, enamel oval, wash basin, doubling as a baby's bathtub." The comparative research into 1917 period furnishings did not give any useful information on baby's bathinettes to confirm or make additions to Mr. Dorman's suggestion.

Many of the accessories to the nursery have also raised objections: the new, store-bought diapers, Johnson's Baby Powder (plastic container), the teddy bear, toy blocks, and lamp all are and appear to be too modern for the room. Powder should be kept in a tin container, the modern French lamp should be replaced by a period antique or reproduction (wooden animal-shaped lamps, as a rule), the West German block set should be replaced by solid-wood, painted blocks of the period, and the teddy bear should, according to Mr. Dorman, be a brown plush.

On a more positive note, several of the newly purchased items in the nursery reproduce period styles satisfactorially. The rag rug, although square at Mrs. Kennedy's insistence (most were oval or round), was a very popular floor covering in the 1917 period as they were considered serviceable and appropriate. In addition, the rug nearly covers the entire floor, which in this particular case the 1917 decorator encouraged on account of the play or crawling activity of the children. The wooden rocker fits both the period fashion and Mrs. Kennedy's specific recollection that she kept an



armless rocker in the nursery for rocking the babies without any restriction to her arms. Finally, the organdy curtains reflect Mrs. Kennedy's definite recollection, even to the size of the ruffles.

Mr. Luddington successfully acquired an antique Lionel electric train set, complete with a station, three different cars, tracks, and a railroad crossing, all on indefinite loan from the New York Museum. A toy cannon and an antique picture puzzle (in a box), both good period display pieces for the nursery, complete the list of playthings acquired for the room.

Although not officially part of the room furnishings, the wall decoration in the nursery--a frieze of drummer boys and young girls with a puppy--deserves some mention, as considerable attention was paid in the 1917 period to this particular aspect of a child's room. As early as 1905 decorators started to encourage parents to provide friezes or stencils to the walls of the nurseries to give stimulation as well as a pleasing environment to the youngsters. Mr. Luddington conferred with Mrs. Kennedy on the matter and proceeded to purchase the present wall stencil after unsuccessfully trying to arrange to have the frieze hand-painted onto the walls. Unfortunately, the comparative research only turned up one illustration of a nursery wall stencil, which hardly assists in giving any specific recommendations for a more authentic model to replace the modern one now in the nursery.

### The Bathroom

Characteristic of the 1917 period, the bathroom furnishings are simple and practical, and the overall emphasis is placed on cleanliness. According to Mr. Luddington, the sink, black and white tiled floor, and the bathtub have survived from the circa 1909 construction of the house. The period toilet is custom made according to Mrs. Kennedy's recollections. Mr. Luddington explained that an appropriate period wooden seat and tank could not be found, and so a reproduction of the wood stained original had to be made.

The toilet accessories Mr. Luddington acquired were standard bathroom features for the 1917 period: a sponge and soap holder, a large, natural sponge, a toilet tissue holder, a glass holder and tumbler, a wastebasket (white painted grill wirework container), and a white wicker clothes hamper (the latter not always part of the standard equipment). Apparently Mr. Luddington purchased these antiques without any particular direction from Mrs. Kennedy, but, of course, with her approval.

Having specific recollections about the linen towels in the bathroom, Mrs. Kennedy arranged for a nun in East Boston to hand-embroider some white linen towels which represent, according to the interpretational tape, original hand towels. The monogrammed (REF) turkish hand and bath towels and bath mat are modern Fieldcrest versions that might appear more like the terrycloth variety popular in the 1917 period if they were washed a few times to look less conspicuously like recent purchases.

### The Hallway

The wall space between the nursery and the guest bedroom has been covered with family photographs which have proved to be of great interest to visitors. The collection of framed pictures covers a wide time-span and topic range: the Fitzgerald family, the Fitzgeralds with Sir Thomas Lipton, Joe Kennedy as a boy, and Joe Jr. on a football team at about 8 years old (an anachronism for the period). Again, as in the boudoir, the selection has been changed on occasion, which may help avoid a tedious dialogue for the park interpreter, but may on the other hand disturb the preferred location and selection made by Mrs. Kennedy, who, after all made the original choices for the hanging of pictures.

## Specific Recommendations

Considering the fact that no photographs, drawings, or written descriptions of the Beals Street home in 1917 have been located, and that Mrs. Kennedy, the only available witness to the historical scene directed the present refurnishing of the home, this author has no specific recommendations to make for changes at the John F. Kennedy birthplace. However, it would be recommended that future contact with Mrs. Kennedy and Mr. Luddington be pursued, with the utmost discretion, in hopes of some day acquiring the documentation for the present refurnishing, and a personal interview with Mrs. Kennedy. If an interview is granted, the following questions would be recommended:

1. Does she recall any book shelves in the Beals Street home considering all the reading carried on in the family?
2. Does she remember a clock on the bedside table in the master bedroom?
3. Does she remember what store the rugs came from? Were they purchased for the home or were they family gifts?
4. Does she recall what type of porch furniture she used?
5. Did she acquire most of the furniture at once when the house was purchased in 1914, or was there a gradual accumulation of furnishings?
6. Did she receive the dining room set as a wedding gift, or did she and Joseph buy it to fit their taste?
7. Did Kiko, the nurse, live in the guestroom when the babies were very young? Which room on the third floor did she occupy?
8. As a three-year-old, big enough to climb, walk, and probably talk, where did young John Kennedy spend most of his time? Did he have a favorite spot in the house where he liked to play or sit?
9. Did Joe Jr. and John share the nursery as a bedroom from 1917-21? If not, who moved into the guest bedroom and when? Where did the three children sleep after the birth of Rosemary in 1919 and that of Kathleen in 1920?

10. At what age, approximately, did the children join the parents at the big dining room table? Had John, only three at the time of the move to Abbottsford Road, graduated from the children's table?

Protection for the fragile lace christening gown and cap would also be recommended, even if it should be necessary to remove the articles from the nursery to place them in a display cabinet in the hall (in what is now a linen closet which could easily be converted to a display case).

APPENDIX A

JOHN FITZGERALD KENNEDY BIRTHPLACE  
83 Beals Street  
Brookline

Furnishings Study

	ORIGINAL	KENNEDY FAMILY PIECES	ANTIQUES	PERIOD REPRODUCTIONS	MODERN ACQUISITIONS
LIVING ROOM	Baby Grand Piano & bench Silver vase Gate-legged table Largest Persian rug Some sheet music Kennedy family photograph Fitzgerald family photo Brown Floren- tine leather cigar box	Japanese vases, mantel 2 smaller Persian rugs Piano scarf Damask table cover Brocade doilies	Clock, mantel Blue tapestry armchair 2 vase lamps 2 oriental bowls Parian figure Stand up lamp Round tilt-top table 1917 magazines & newspapers	Beige damask curtains Lace curtains 2 end tables Wing cane back chair Music rack Sofa 2 armchairs Lamp shades Pink and blue cush- ions Chinese Red Laquer Box	Prints by famous painters Picture frames
DINING ROOM	Table & chairs Serving table Buffet Punch bowl & ladle & stand Silverware- table, buffet children's table, pitcher	Tole pieces (2) Fruit dishes Linen China & glassware not listed under original	Candlesticks	Drinking goblets China cabinet Children's table & chairs Persian rug Panel curtains Lace curtains	Candlestick shades Wall prints & frames

	ORIGINAL	KENNEDY FAMILY PIECES	ANTIQUES	PERIOD REPRODUCTION	MODERN ACQUISITIONS
DINING ROOM	Limoges porce- lain with gold border Porcelain from Cnondaga Pottery Co. Sir Thomas Lipton's cups and saucers				
HALLWAY		Table Hall mirror		Telephone	Rug Print & frame
KITCHEN			Table & Chairs Sink Stove & parts Icebox Cooking acces- sories Kitchen ware Iron Clock Calender	Curtains	Towel Potholder Stainless steel knife
BATHROOM	1 linen hand towel		Wicker clothes hamper Soap & sponge dish	Toilet seat	Terrycloth towel

ORIGINAL KENNEDY FAMILY ANTIQUES PERIOD MODERN  
PIECES REPRODUCTIONS ACQUISITIONS

BATHROOM			Waste basket Toilet tissue holder Glass tumbler	Hand embroidered linen towels (Sister Petra)	
MASTER BEDROOM	1 Twin bed Dresser & Bedside table "JPK" travel set Silver vanity set Baby pictures Bible Pillow cover, armchair	Pin cushion Sandwich glass lamp	Telephone	1 Twin bed Tall bureau Vanity table & bench Chintz armchair Chintz curtains Lamp shades Lace curtains Bedspreads	Rug Lace table tops Waster basket
BOUDOIR	Sewing cabinet Desk Family pictures & memorabilia Silver bud vase		Darning egg Mirror, Louis XVI style Sandwich lamp Sewing bag Lady's reticule Pencil box Glass inkwell & pen Side chair, cane seat	Chintz wicker arm-chair Chintz curtains Lace curtains Wooden index card box	Rug Blotter Stationery

	ORIGINAL	KENNEDY FAMILY PIECES	ANTIQUES	PERIOD REPRODUCTIONS	MODERN ACQUISITIONS
GUEST BEDROOM	Silver vanity set Footboard, bed	Tall bureau Pin cushion Wall prints (2) Linen table scarves Figurines, bureau	Sandwich overlay lamp Cameo frame Jewel box	Bedspread Vanity table & bench Chintz armchair & curtains Bed Bedside table	Rug Lightbulbs Occasional chair (modern Hepple- white reprod- uction) Religious print Wastebasket
NURSERY	Bassinet Christening gowns & caps Children's books	Children's books	Train set (on loan from N.Y. Museum) Toy cannon Jigsaw Puzzle	Rag rug Rocker Straight back chair Bed Curtains Baby sweaters Coat rack Dresser	Bathinette Diapers Teddy bear Toy blocks Lamp & shade Bedspread Baby blankets, etc. Children's hangers Johnson's Baby Powder



APPENDIX B

John F. Kennedy National Historic Site  
83 Beals Street  
Brookline, Massachusetts 02146

Museum Catalogue Record

Living Room

- 1 Wing chair
- 2 Mahogany gateleg table
- 3 Red upholstered armchair
- 4 End table (next to #3 on left side)
- 5 Beige upholstered armchair
- 6 Mantel clock
- 7 Music stand
- 8 Piano
- 9 Piano bench
- 10 End table (right of blue armchair)
- 11 Blue armchair
- 12 Chinese turn brass bowl (1 of 2)
- 13 Chinese vase table lamp w/pleated shade (on tilt-top table)
- 14 Round tilt-top table
- 15 Sofa
- 16 Satuma type oriental vase (1 of 2 on mantel)
- 17 Satuma type oriental vase (1 of 2 on mantel)
- 18 Floor lamp w/pleated shade
- 19 Chinese turn brass bowl
- 20 Chinese dish (located on gateleg table)
- 21 Parian figure
- 22 Color print, "Infant St. John" by Bartolome' Murillo
- 23 Large sterling silver vase (on piano)
- 24 Kennedy family photograph (on piano)
- 25 Photograph-Mrs. Kennedy, Joe, Jack, Rosemary
- 26 Oriental bowl
- 27 Photograph-Fitzgerald family
- 28 Color print, "The White Horse" by John Constable
- 29 Brown Florentine leather cigar box
- 30 Chinese vase table lamp with shade (on gateleg table)
- 31 Chinese red-lacquer box w/top
- 32 "National Geographic Magazine," May, 1917; Vol. XXXI, No. 5
- 33 "The Boston American," April 6, 1917; Vol. 14, No. 17
- 34 "The Boston Herald," April 10, 1917; Vol. CXXI, No. 100
- 35 "The Boston Herald," May 11, 1917; Vol. CXXI, No. 131
- 36 "The Boston Herald," April 30, 1917; Vol. CXXI, No. 120

Living Room (cont'd)

- 37 "The Boston Herald," May 13, 1917; Vol. CXLI No. 133  
38 "The Boston Herald," June 28, 1917; Vol. CXLI No. 179  
39 Magazine, "The Saturday Evening Post," Nov. 3, 1917;  
Vol. 190, No. 18  
40 Print, "San Benedetto Looking Towards Fusina", by Joseph  
M. W. Turner  
41 Print of two boys in Charles I era  
42 "National Geographic Magazine," April, 1917, Vol. XXXI,  
No. 4  
43 "National Geographic Magazine," June, 1917, Vol. XXXI,  
No. 6  
44 "National Geographic Magazine," Jan., 1917, Vol. XXXI,  
No. 1  
45 "National Geographic Magazine," Feb., 1917, Vol. XXXI,  
No. 2  
46 "National Geographic Magazine," Mar., 1917, Vol. XXXI,  
No. 3  
47 Portrait, Mrs. Kennedy, Joseph, John, Rosemary  
48 Print, "Customhouse and San Giorgio Maggiore" by Joseph  
M. W. Turner  
49 Book, "The Crisis," by Winston Churchill (1966 printing)  
50 Sheet music, "That Old Gang of Mine," by Billy Rose &  
Mort Dixon (1923)  
51 Sheet music, "Sweet Adeline" (You're the Flower of My  
Heart) by Richard H. Gerand (1903)  
52 Sheet music, "Oh! Gee, Oh! Gosh, Oh! Golly I'm in Love,"  
by Olson & Johnson (1923)  
53 "Apple Blossoms," by L. Leslie Loth - Sheet music (1920)  
54 Sheet music, "Along the Navajo Trail," by Larry Marks,  
Dick Charles & Eddie DeLange (1945)  
55 Sheet music, "No. 4 Pierrette," by Mrs. H. H. A. Beach (1894)  
56 " " "Children's March and Merry Huntsman," by  
G. Merhel (1912)  
57 Sheet music, "They Go Wild Simply Wild Over Me," by Joe  
McCarthy (1917)  
58 Sheet music, "Margie," by Benny Davis (1920)  
59 " " "When My Dream Boat Comes Home," by Cliff  
Friend & Dave Franklin  
60 Sheet music, "A Perfect Day," by Carrie Jacobs-Bond  
61 " " "After You've Gone" by Creamer and Layton  
62 " " "Blue Danube Waltz," by Johann Strauss  
63 " " "Rock-a-Bye Your Baby With a Dixie Melody"  
by Sam Lewis & Joe Young  
64 Sheet music, "Ja-Da," by Bob Carleton  
65 " " "Maggie" (Yes! Ma'am! Come Right Up Stairs)  
by Leslie Moore

Living Room (cont'd)

66	Sheet music,	"Sonata" by Ch. Em. Bach
67	" "	"Sonata" by C. Philipp Emanuel Bach
68	" "	"Eight Miniatures" op. 113 by Edmund Parlow 1911
69	" "	"Lullaby Land," by Frank Davis
70	" "	"My Little Rose of Romany," by Robert Levenson
		Jack Mendelschn
71	Sheet music,	"Bubbling Over," by John William Kallette
72	" "	"Chiquita," by L. Wolfe Gilbert
73	" "	"Down Old Virginia Way," by Jack Yellen &
		Vernon Stevens
74	" "	"Ma" (He's Making Eyes at Me) by Sidney Clare
75	" "	"When Day is Done," by B. G. DeSylva (1 of
		2 copies)
76	Sheet music,	"Will You Remember," by Aida Johnson Young
77	" "	"Among My Souvenirs," by Edgar Leslie
78	" "	"Rose Room," by Harry Williams
79	" "	"Modern European Classics," by George Copeland
80	" "	Sonata Pathetique," by L. von Beethoven
81	" "	"The Twilight Hour," by L. Leslie Loth
82	" "	"Elected Works for the Piano," by P. Tschaiakowsky
83	" "	"Beautiful Dreamer," by Stephen C. Foster
84	" "	"Indiana," by Ballard MacDonald
85	" "	"Chinese Flower," by Francis DeWitt
86	" "	"Improvisation," by MacDowell
87	" "	"Erotik," by Edward Grieg
88	" "	"Elfentanz," by Edward Grieg
89	" "	"Album for the Young," by Robert Schumann n. d.
90	" "	"Rhapsodien," by Ernst von Dohnanyi
91	" "	"You Tell Her I S-t-u-t-t-e-r," by Billy Rose
92	" "	"When Day is Done," by G. G. DeSylva
93	" "	"Whispering," by Malvin Schonberger (1 of 2 copies)
94	" "	"Whispering," by Malvin Schonberger (1 of 2 copies)
95	" "	"For Me and My Gal," by Edgar Leslie & E. Ray Goetz
96	" "	"Roses of Picardy," by Fred E. Weatherby
97	" "	"Memory Lane," by B. G. DeSylva
98	" "	"Till We Meet Again," by Raymond G. Egan
99	" "	"Smiles," by J. Will Callahan
100	" "	"March National Emblem," by E. E. Bagley
101	" "	"The Trail of the Lonesome Pine," by Ballard
		Macdonald

Living Room (cont'd)

102	Sheet music, "In the Shade of the Old Apple Tree," by Harry Williams
103	Sheet music, "At the Village Church With Nell," by Franklyn Wallace
104	Book, "Heart Song," The Chapple Publishing Co., Ltd.
105	Book, "Holiday Songs," by Emilie Poulsson
228	Gold, damask drapery, left panel (north window)
229	Lace panel curtain, right panel "
230	Lace panel curtain, left panel "
231	Gold damask valence "
232	Gold damask drapery, right panel (right of fireplace)
227	Gold damask drapery, right panel (north window)
233	Lace panel curtain, right panel (right of fireplace)
234	Lace panel curtain, left panel "
235	Gold damask drapery, left panel "
236	Gold damask valence "
237	Gold damask drape, right panel (left of fireplace)
238	Gold damask drape, left panel (left of fireplace)
239	Lace panel curtain, right panel "
240	Lace panel curtain, left panel "
241	Gold damask valence "
242	Gold damask curtain, right panel (south window)
243	Gold damask curtain, left panel "
244	Lace panel curtain, right panel "
245	Lace panel curtain, left panel "
246	Gold damask valence "
247	Blue satin pillow w/gold stripe (1 of 2)
248	Blue satin pillow w/gold stripe (1 of 2)
249	Round rose pillow (1 of 2)
250	Round rose pillow (1 of 2)
251	Round light blue pillow (1 of 2)
253	Small oriental rug (in front of north window)
254	Large center oriental rug
255	Small oriental rug (in front of south window)
257	Brocade doily on end table (1 of 2)
258	Brocade doily on end table (1 of 2)
259	Brocade piano scarf
260	Round gold embroidered scarf (on tilt-top table)

## Dining Room

442	Dining table
106	Serving table
107	Dining chair
108	Dining chair
109	Dining chair
110	Dining chair
111	Silver ladle - Serving table
112	Punch bowl stand - Serving table
113	Punch bowl - Serving table
114	Silver pitcher - Serving table
115	Silver porringer - Child's table
116	Silver cup - Child's table
117	Silver napkin ring - Child's table
118	Silver (decorated) napkin ring - Child's table
119	Silver bowl - Child's table
120	Silver spoon - Child's table
121	Silver spoon - Child's table
122	Silver knife - Child's table
123	Silver fork - Child's table
124	Table knife - Dining table one of 5
126	Teaspoon " one of 6-138, 148, 158, 167, 172
127	Soup spoon "
128	Table fork "
129	Silver bread & butter plate - Dining table
130	Napkin ring - Dining table
131	Butter knife - "
132	Wine glass "
133	Water glass "
134	Butter knife "
135	Bread & Butter plate - Dining table
136	Table fork - Dining table
137	Table knife "
138	Teaspoon "
139	Soup spoon "
140	Wine glass "
142	Water glass "
143	Dinner plate "
144	Butter knife "
145	Bread & butter plate - Dining table
146	Fork - Dining table
147	Knife - Dining table
148	Teaspoon "
149	Soup spoon "
150	Wine glass "
151	Water glass "

Dining Room (cont'd)

152	Dinner plate	Dining table	
153	Butter knife	"	
154	Bread & Butter plate	- Dining table	
155	Silver napkin ring	"	
156	Fork	"	
157	Knife	"	
158	Teaspoon	"	
159	Soup spoon	"	
160	Wine glass	"	
161	Water glass	"	
162	Butter knife	"	
163	Bread & butter plate	"	
164	Fork	"	
165	Dinner plate	"	
166	Knife	"	
167	Teaspoon	"	
168	Soup spoon	"	
169	Dinner plate	"	
170	Fork	"	
171	Knife	"	
172	Teaspoon	"	
173	Soup spoon	"	
174	Butter knife	"	
175	Bread & butter plate	"	
176	Dinner plate	"	
177	Candle stick lamp	w/shade	"
178	Silver pepper	"	
179	Silver salt	"	
180	Pepper spoon	"	
181	Salt spoon	"	
182	Candle stick lamp	w/shade	"
183	Silver salt	"	
184	Silver pepper	"	
185	Salt spoon	"	
186	Pepper spoon	"	
187	Silver bowl	w/plastic liner - Dining table	
188	Arm chair		
189	Dining chair	(side)	
190	Wine glass	- Dining table	
191	Water glass	"	
192	Wine glass	"	
193	Water glass	"	
510	Side board		

Dining Room (cont'd)

194	Luncheon plate	
195	Luncheon plate - gold edge (1 of 16)	
196	Luncheon plate	"
197	Luncheon plate	"
198	Luncheon plate	"
199	Luncheon plate	"
200	Luncheon plate	"
201	Bread & butter plate - gold edge	
202	Bread & butter plate	"
203	Bread & butter plate	"
204	Bread & butter plate	"
205	Bread & butter plate	"
206	Ice cream - gold edge	
207	Ice cream	"
208	Demitasse (cup) - gold edge	
209	Bread & butter plate - gold edge & ring	
210	Silver Bon Bon dish - (pair)	
211	Silver Bon Bon dish - (pair)	
212	Silver vase, pair	
213	Silver vase, pair	
214	Silver bread & butter plate	
215	Silver bread & butter plate	
216	Silver bread & butter plate	
217	Silver bread & butter plate	
218	Silver bread & butter plate	
219	Small bowl, porcelain, Chinese, red	
220	Silver tea pot	
221	Silver sugar bowl w/lid	
223	Silver slop bowl	
224	Silver sugar tongs	
225	Silver tea tray	
226	Wine glass, (ruby red bowl) broken	
227-260	Textiles-window hangings, pillows, rugs, table scarves in living room	
261	Wine glass (ruby)	located on serving table
262	Wine glass (ruby)	"
263	Wine glass (ruby)	"
264	Wine glass (ruby)	"
265	Decanter (ruby)	"
266	Silver tray	"
277	Child's table	
278	Child's chair	
279	Child's chair	
280	China Cabinet	

Dining Room (cont'd)

281 Chestnut urn- located at top of china cabinet  
282 Chestnut urn "  
283 Top shelf china cabinet - Tea cup "S. Y. Erin"  
284 " Tea cup "S. Y. Erin"  
285 " Tea cup "S. Y. Erin"  
286 " Tea cup "S. Y. Erin"  
287 " Tea cup "S. Y. Erin"  
288 " Tea cup "S. Y. Erin"  
289 " Saucer "S. Y. Erin"  
290 " Saucer "S. Y. Erin"  
291 " Saucer "S. Y. Erin"  
292 " Saucer "S. Y. Erin"  
293 " Saucer "S. Y. Erin"  
294 " Saucer "S. Y. Erin"  
295 " Wine glass, clear  
296 " Wine glass, clear  
297 " Wine glass, clear  
298 " Wine glass, clear  
299 " Wine glass, clear  
300 " Wine glass, clear  
301 " Plate (fruit) 1 of 4 peaches  
302 " Plate (fruit) 1 or 4 apple  
303 Top sh. Silver salt  
304 " Silver salt  
305 " Silver salt  
306 " Silver candy dish  
307 Sideboard scarf  
308 Scarf for side board  
309 Linen doily  
310 Sm. napkin (child  
311 Sm. table cloth, child's table  
312 Sm. napkin (child)  
313 Sm. napking(child)  
314 Damask drape  
315 Lace curtain  
316 Lace curtain  
317 Damask drape  
318 Lace curtain  
319 Lace curtain  
320 Lace curtain  
321 Lace curtain  
322 Lace curtain  
323 Serving table scarf  
324 Oval table scarf, small



Dining Room (cont'd)

325	Table cloth, large (dining table)	
326	Lace curtain	
327	Tea napkin (liner)	
328	Dinner napkin	
329	Dinner napkin	
330	Dinner napkin	
331	Dinner napkin	
332	Dinner napkin	
333	Dinner napkin	
334	Dining room rug	
335	Second shelf china cabinet-	Plate (fruit) 1 of 4- plums
336	"	Plate (fruit) 1 of 4- figs
337	Cup (1 of 3) Haviland	Second shelf china cabinet
338	Cup (1 of 3) Haviland	"
339	Cup (1 of 3) Haviland	"
340	Cup (chip in handle)	"
341	Saucer (1 of 2)	"
342	Saucer (1 of 2)	"
343	Saucer (1 of 2)	"
344	Saucer (1 of 2)	"
345	Demitasse cup (1 of 2)	"
346	Demitasse cup (1 of 2)	"
347	Saucer, small (1 of 2)	"
348	Saucer, demitasse (1 of 2)	"
349	Saucer, demitasse small (in sideboard)	
350	Ice cream dish (1 of 6)	
351	Ice cream dish (1 of 6)	
352	Ice cream dish (1 of 6)	
353	Ice cream dish (1 of 6)	
354	Ice cream dish (1 of 6)	
355	Ice cream dish (1 of 6)	
356	Dinner plate (1 of 2)	
357	Dinner plate (1 of 2) (chipped)	
358	Dinner plate (1 of 4)	
359	Dinner plate (1 of 4)	
360	Dinner plate (1 of 4)	
361	Dinner plate (1 of 4)	
362	Luncheon plate (1 of 16)	
363	Luncheon plate (1 of 16)	
364	Luncheon plate (1 of 16)	
365	Luncheon plate (1 of 16)	
366	Luncheon plate (1 of 16)	
367	Luncheon plate (1 of 16)	
368	Luncheon plate (1 of 16)	

Dining Room (cont'd)

369	Luncheon plate (1 of 16)	
370	Luncheon plate (1 of 16)	
371	Located on lower shelf china cabinet-	Wine glass, ruby (1 of 6)
372	"	Wine glass, ruby (1 of 6)
373	"	Wine glass, ruby (1 of 6)
374	"	Wine glass, ruby (1 of 6)
375	"	Wine glass, ruby (1 of 6)
376	"	Wine glass, ruby (1 of 6)
377	"	Water glass, (1 of 5)
378	"	Water glass (1 of 5)
379	"	Water glass (1 of 5)
380	"	Water glass (1 of 5)
381	"	Water glass (1 of 5)
382	"	Silver compote
383	"	Silver candy basket
384	"	Cut glass pitcher, silver rim
385	"	Silver meat platter
386	Framed print "Maslow"	
387	Framed map	
388	Framed print "St. Peter's Square"	
389	"The Laughing Cavalier" - Framed print	
390	Brass jardiniere	

## Kitchen

- 391 Display can "Original Deviled Ham" (1 of 12) 2 3/4" diameter, 2" high
- 392 Display can "Original Deviled Ham" (1 of 12) 2 3/4" diameter, 2" high
- 393 Display can "Original Deviled Ham" (1 of 12) 2 3/4" diameter, 2" high
- 394 Display can "Original Deviled Ham" (1 of 12) 2 3/4" diameter, 2" high
- 395 Display can "Original Deviled Ham" (1 of 12) 2 3/4" diameter, 2" high
- 396 Display can "Original Deviled Ham" (1 of 12) 2 3/4" diameter, 2" high
- 397 Display can "Original Deviled Ham" (1 of 12) 2 3/4" diameter, 2" high
- 398 Display can "Original Deviled Ham" (1 of 12) 2 3/4" diameter, 2" high
- 399 Display can "Original Deviled Ham" (1 of 12) 2 3/4" diameter, 2" high
- 400 Display can "Original Deviled Ham" (1 of 12) 2 3/4" diameter, 2" high
- 401 Display can "Original Deviled Ham" (1 of 12) 2 3/4" diameter, 2" high
- 402 Display can "Original Deviled Ham" (1 of 12) 2 3/4" diameter, 2" high
- 403 Enameled tin measure
- 404 Glazed crock w/lid
- 405 Bread box
- 406 Knife tray or box
- 407 Clock
- 408 Iron frying pan
- 409 Meat grinder
- 410 Wooden spoon
- 412 Paring knife
- 413 Cabbage cutter
- 414 Wooden chopping bowl
- 415 Earthenware mixing bowl
- 416 Aluminum ladle
- 417 Rubber jar rings (1 of 3)
- 418 Rubber jar rings (1 of 3)
- 419 Rubber jar rings (1 of 3)
- 420 Rubber jar ring (w/"v" cut)
- 421 Rubber jar ring (1 of 2)
- 422 Rubber jar ring (1 of 2)
- 423 Rubber jar ring (1 of 2)
- 424 Rubber jar ring (1 of 2)
- 425 Bean pot w/lid
- 426 Slotted wooden spoon
- 427 Aluminum tea kettle w/lid
- 428 Stove brush
- 429 Coal shovel
- 430 Coal hod
- 431 Fire stoker
- 432 Fire stoker
- 433 Electric iron
- 434 Dotted Swiss curtain, left panel (south window)
- 435 Dotted Swiss curtain, right panel (south window)

Kitchen (cont'd)

436	Dotted Swiss curtain, left panel (east window)	
437	Dotted Swiss curtain, right panel (east window)	
438	Pot Holder	
439	Electric iron rest	
440	Electric toaster	
441	Aluminum percolator coffee pot	
442	Kitchen table	
443	Rolling pin	
444	Dinner plate (1 of 3)	
445	Steam pudding pan w/lid	
446	Dinner plate (1 of 3)	
447	Dinner plate (1 of 3)	
448	"Choice Recipes" paper back book	
449	"Slades Cooking School Recipes" cook book	
450	"Salad Leaves" cook book	
451	"The Boston Cook Book"	
452	"Mrs. Allen's Cook Book"	
453	Single sheet (recipes)	
454	Butter dish w/lid & insert drain	
455	1917 Calendar	
456	Large sugar bowl w/lid	
457	Large pitcher	
458	Platter, large	
459	Soup plate	
460	Platter, small	
461	Large earthenware mixing bowl (ribbing)	
462	Smaller earthenware mixing bowl	
463	Large earthenware mixing bowl (blue stripes)	
464	Qt. tomato preserves w/lids	
465	Qt. tomato preserves w/lids	
466	Pt. peaches w/lids - preserves	
467	Qt. peaches w/lids	"
468	Qt. peaches w/lids	"
469	Qt. pears w/lids	"
470	Pt. plums w/lids	"
471	Pt. tomato w/lids	"
472	Pt. peaches w/lids	"
473	Pt. pears w/lids	"
474	Pt. carrots (preserves)	w/lids
475	1/2 Pt. string beans (preserves)	"
476	Pt. plums (preserves)	"
477	Pt. tomatoes (preserves)	"
478	Pt. plums (preserves)	"
479	Pt. carrots (preserves)	"

Kitchen (cont'd)

480	Pt. pears (preserves)	
481	Pt. carrots (preserves)	w/lids
482	1/2 Pt. cucumber (preserves)	"
483	1/2 Pt. pears (preserves)	"
484	1/2 Pt. relish (preserves)	metal clamp broken, w/lids
485	1/2 Pt. relish (preserves)	w/lids
486	Qt. relish (preserves)	"
487	1/2 Pt. pickles (cucumbers) (preserves)	w/lids
488	Pt. string beans (preserves)	"
489	Pt. jar (empty)	
490	Glass lid to jar	
491	Pt. jar (empty)	
492	Glass lid to jar	
493	Pint jar w/lid	
494	Pt. jar w/lid	
495	Pastry board	
496	Side chair, kitchen (1 of 3)	
497	Side chair, kitchen (1 of 3)	
498	Side chair, kitchen (1 of 3)	
499	Table	
500	Enamel basin	
501	Tin match holder	
502	Dish towel	
503	Glass tumbler	
504	Ice box	
505	Hall table	
506	Hall telephone	
507	Doily, hall table	
508	Hall mirror	
509	Framed picture of Whistler's Mother	
510	Sideboard dining room	
511	Curtain on front door	
927	Curtain on outer front door	
512	Back door curtain, left panel	
513	Back door curtain, right panel	
753	Hand mitt pot holder	
754	Coal shovel	
755	Grate shaker	

Master Bedroom

514 High chest of drawers  
515 Bed (near door)  
516 Bed-birth (original near window)  
517 Bureau with mirror  
518 Vanity  
519 Bedside table  
520 Stool, dressing table  
521 Scarf-bureau, high chest of drawers  
522 Scarf-bureau, dressing table  
523 Sandwich glass lamp (lamp shade #621)  
524 Italian picture over bed near window  
525 Italian picture over bed near door  
526 Telephone  
527 "National Geographic" XXVII, No. 4  
528 "National Geographic" XXVII, No. 3  
529 "Saturday Evening Post"  
530 "Hearst's", 1917 Magazine  
531 "Of the Imitation of Christ"  
532 Small bureau scarf on bedside table  
533 Waste basket  
534 Series of pictures of Joe Kennedy  
535 Series of pictures of Jack Kennedy  
536 Series of pictures of Rosemary  
537 Series of pictures of Kathleen  
538 Framed photo of Joe. P. Kennedy, oval frame  
539 Bedspread, bed near door  
540 Bedspread, bed near window  
541 Framed miniature in ivory, lady (Mrs. K's mother on bureau)  
542 Small silver bowl "REF"  
543 Small glass jar w/silver lid "REF"  
544 Porcelain bowl  
545 Pin cushion  
546 Bureau scarf, bureau with mirror  
547 Framed picture on dressing table  
548 Comb on dressing table (part of set) see #622  
549 Hair brush on dressing table (RMK) "  
550 Hand mirror on dressing table (RMK) "  
551 Silver shoe horn on dressing table (RMK) (part of set)  
552 Nail buffer in silver case on dressing table (part of set)  
553 Vase, silver, small  
554 Small glass jar, silver cover  
555 Glass jar, silver cover  
556 Small clock

Master Bedroom (cont'd)

- 557 Framed picture initials "JPK" on back
- 558 Blue rug
- 559 Photograph, framed, Patrick Kennedy
- 560 Photograph, framed, Joe Kennedy's mother
- 561 Large photograph framed Rose Kennedy & Joseph, Jr.
- 562 Clothes brush (part of traveling case)
- 563 Hair brush (1 of 2) (part of traveling case)
- 564 Hair brush (1 of 2) (part of traveling case)
- 565 Silver talcum powder can w/cover (part of traveling case)
- 566 Silver cologne flask w/screw top (part of traveling case)
- 567 Small leather covered box for razor (part of traveling case)
- 568 Razor (part of traveling case)
- 569 Small silver bud vase
- 570 Chintz drapery, left panel (west window)
- 571 Chintz drapery, right panel (west window)
- 572 Chintz drapery, valence (west window)
- 573 Organdy curtain, left panel (west window)
- 574 Organdy curtain, right panel (west window)
- 575 Tie back, organdy (west window) left
- 576 Tie back, organdy (west window) right
- 577 Chintz drapery, left panel (north window)
- 578 Chintz drapery, right panel (north window)
- 579 Chintz valance (north window)
- 580 Organdy curtain, left panel (north window)
- 581 Organdy curtain, right panel (north window)
- 582 Tie back, organdy, left (north window)
- 583 Tie back, organdy, right (north window)
- 584 Lamp shade, blue, hanging
- 585 Chintz covered armchair with cushion (boudoir chair)
- 586 Small satin covered pillow
- 587 Small pillow slip
- 588 Bed pillow (near window) white polyester fiber 21"x27" - Jordan Marsh
- 589 Bed pillow cover (near window)
- 590 White wool blanket (near door)
- 591 Bed sheet, (near door)
- 592 Mattress pad (near door)
- 593 Mattress (near door)
- 594 Box springs (near door)
- 595 White woolen blanket (near window)
- 596 Bed sheet muslin (near window)
- 597 Mattress pad (near window)
- 598 Mattress (near window)
- 599 Box springs (near window)

Master Bedroom (cont'd)

- 600 Bed pillow (near door)
- 601 Pillow cover (near door)
- 602 Chintz tie back
- 603 Chintz tie back
- 604 Chintz tie back
- 605 Chintz tie back
- 606 Chintz tie back
- 607 Chintz tie back
- 608 Linen hand towel, monogramed "REF"
- 609 Linen hand towel, monogramed "REF"
- 610 Linen hand towel, monogramed "REF"
- 611 Turkish towel, blue monogram "REF"
- 612 Turkish towel, blue monogram "REF"
- 613 Leather covered case fitted for toiletries
- 614 Collapsible mirror, part of traveling case
- 615 Cylindrical silver case w/top, oval, part of traveling case
- 616 Tall slender, cylindrical case w/top, oval, part of traveling case
- 617 Cylindrical silver case, round, screw top, part of traveling case
- 618 Small, leather covered box, velvet lined, part of traveling case
- 619 Cylindrical case fitted with shaving brush (part of traveling case)
- 620 Colored photo on glass, young boy, framed, Joseph P. Kennedy, Sr.
- 621 Lamp shade, white, blue trim, to sandwich lamp
- 622 Hair brush, long, part of dressing table set



Boudoir

- 623 Sewing table  
624 Magazine, "Current History"  
625 Magazine, "The Literary Digest, 1917"  
626 Book, "Pollyanna," by Eleanor H. Porter  
627 Book, "Penrod," by Booth Tarkington  
628 Lamp on sewing table  
629 Lamp shade  
630 Table scarf  
631 Ladies reticule (hand bag) embroidered  
632 Side chair, cane seat  
633 Desk  
634 Wicker chair  
635 Silver bud vase  
636 Small picture of "Honey Fitz" holding Joseph Kennedy, Jr.  
637 Silver top inkwell  
638 Pencil box  
639 Two photographs in a double-hinged frame  
640 Index card box  
641 Inkwell pen  
642 Desk blotter  
643 Book, "Stephen Decatur," by Cyrus Townsend Brady  
644 Book, "Pilgrim's Progress," by John Bunyan  
645 Book, "Kidnapped," by Robert Louis Stevenson  
646 Book, "Lays of Ancient Rome," by Lord Macaulay  
647 Blue stationery, envelope  
648 Blue stationery, paper  
649 Chintz drapery, left panel (see master bedroom)  
650 Chintz drapery, right panel "  
651 Valance (chintz) "  
652 Organdy curtain, left panel "  
653 Organdy curtain, right panel "  
654 Tie back, organdy, left "  
655 Tie back, organdy, right "  
656 Photograph, framed, Mrs. Kennedy & five children  
657 Wedding photograph Mr. & Mrs. Kennedy  
658 Two photos, framed Mrs. Kennedy & child  
659 Photo, framed child at seashore  
660 Three photos framed together  
661 Framed poem "Mother"  
662 Oval photo Mrs. Kennedy's mother  
663 Framed birth announcement Joseph Kennedy, Sr.

Boudoir (cont'd)

664           Oval photo old lady & child  
665           Photo Mrs. Kennedy when graduated grammar school  
666           Wedding announcement framed Mr. & Mrs. Kennedy  
667           Photo, small boy  
668           Rectangle wall mirror  
669           Small blue rug  
670           Darning egg

Guest Room

671 Bedside table  
672 Lamp, table  
673 Lamp shade  
674 Porcelain bowl  
675' Table scarf (doily)  
676 "The National Geographic" June, 1915  
677 "Smith's Magazine" Jan., 1917  
678 "Ainslee's" magazine Jan., 1917  
679 "Pearson's" magazine, Sept., 1917  
680 "Metropolitan" magazine, 1917  
681 "The Ladies Home Journal" Dec., 1917  
682 Hepplewhite side chair  
683 Dresser drawers  
684 Staffordshire pottery figurine (1 of pair)  
685 Staffordshire pottery figurine (1 of pair)  
686 Framed cameo  
687 Boudoir chair, chintz  
688 Bench, vanity table  
689 Vanity table  
690 Small bud vase (1 of 2)  
691 Small bud vase (1 of 2)  
692 Glass jar, silver top (1 of 2)  
693 Glass jar, silver top (1 of 2) (has hole in top)  
694 Small glass jar w/silver top  
695 Glass jar w/heavy silver stopper  
696 Nail file  
697 Button hook  
698 Shoe horn  
699 Small hand mirror  
700 Clothes brush  
701 Nail buffer  
702 Porcelain jewel box (ceramic)  
703 Bed  
704 Picture "Madonna and Child with Angels" by Memling  
705 Bureau scarf, tall chest  
706 Picture "Miss Bowles" by Sir Joshua Reynolds  
707 Picture "Pierrot" by Jean-Honoré Fragonard  
708 Linen bedspread  
709 Left, chintz curtain, north window-front  
710 Right, chintz curtain, north window-front  
711 Left, organdy curtain, north window-front  
712 Right, organdy curtain, north window  
713 Left tie back, north window  
714 Right tie back, north window

Guest Room (cont'd)

715 Valance, north window  
716 White woolen blanket  
717 Bed sheet, muslin  
718 Vanity table scarf  
719 Mattress pad  
720 Mattress  
721 Box springs  
722 White rug  
724 Left curtain, east window  
725 Right curtain, east window  
726 Left organdy, east window  
727 Right organdy, east window  
728 Valance, chintz east window  
729 Left tie back, east window  
730 Right tie back, east window  
731 Pillow, bed  
732 Pillow cover  
733 Pin cushion  
734 Wastebasket  
735 Hanging lamp shade  
736 Picture, boy with dog  
737 Doily, oval - in drawer  
738 Doily, rectangular - in drawer  
739 Doily, oval - in drawer  
740 Photograph, framed, gathering on the beach (in closet)  
741 Photograph, framed, class of boys, Joe Kennedy Jr., (in closet)  
742 Photograph, framed, Assumption Parochial School, Joe Kennedy Sr.  
(in close)  
743 Photo, framed, man w/three children  
744 Photo framed, Woodrow Wilson & "Honey Fitz", etc. (in closet)  
745 "The National Geographic," Vol. 25, No. 1 Jan., 1917 (in closet)  
746 " " No. 5 May, 1914 "  
747 " " No. 6 June, 1917 "  
748 " Vol. 27 No. 1 Jan., 1915 "  
749 " " No. 2 Feb., 1915 "  
750 " Vol. 25 No. 3 Mar., 1914 "  
751 " " No. 4 Apr., 1914 "  
752 " Vol. 27 No. 5 May, 1915 "

## Nursery

756 Organdy curtain, left panel (east window)  
757 Organdy curtain, right panel (east window)  
758 Tie back, organdy, left (east window)  
759 Tie back, organdy, right (east window)  
760 Straight back chair  
761 White bed  
762 White rocking chair  
763 Bassinet  
764 Changing table (storage cabinet & dressing table)  
765 Christening gown  
766 Lace cap  
767 Robe  
768 Cape to robe  
769 Clothing rack  
770 Diaper (1 of 20)  
771 " "  
772 " "  
773 " "  
774 " "  
775 " "  
776 " "  
777 " "  
778 " "  
779 " "  
780 " "  
781 " "  
782 " "  
783 " "  
784 " "  
785 " "  
786 " "  
787 " "  
788 " "  
789 " "  
790 Diaper (1 of 3)  
791 " "  
792 " "  
793 Train station  
794 Train engine  
795 Train Pullman car  
796 Train observation car  
797 Train track, 2 sections, straight tracks  
798 Train track, 3 sections, curved tracks  
799 Railroad crossing sign

Nursery (cont'd)

800	Toy cannon, iron
801	Lamp
802	Lamp shade
803	Block, large (1 of 9)
804	Block, 2nd size (1 of 9)
805	Block, 3rd size (1 of 9)
806	Block, 4th size (1 of 9)
807	Block, 5th size (1 of 9)
808	Block, 6th size (1 of 9)
809	Block, 7th size (1 of 9)
810	Block, 8th size (1 of 9)
811	Block, 9th size (1 of 9)
812	Jig saw puzzle in box, 68 pieces
813	Book, paper bound, "The House That Jack Built"
814	Book, paper bound, "The Picture Alphabet"
815	Book, "Ivanhoe"
816	Book, "The Bay Settlers"
187	Book, "Wonder Tales From East & West"
818	Book, "Hans Brinker or the Silver Skates"
819	Book, "The Wing and Wing"
820	Book, "At the Back of the North Wind"
821	Book, "Mother Goose"
822	Book, "The Shining Ship"
823	Book, "Billy Whiskers at the Circus"
824	Book, "Old-Time Stories"
825	Book, "The Prince and the Pauper"
826	Book, "Black Beauty"
827	Book, "The Biography of a Grizzley"
828	Book, "The Cave Twins"
829	Book, "The Lance of Kanana"
830	Book, "The Sea Wolf"
831	Book, "The Cruise of the Dazzler"
832	Book, "The Story of A Bad Boy"
833	Book, "Christmas Books"
834	Book, "Tom Swift and His Great Searchlight"
835	Book, "The Black Arrow"
836	Book, "King Arthur and His Knights" (on chair)
837	Book, "Billy Whisker's Kids. . ." (on chair)
838	Book, "The Book of Inventions"
839	Book, "Their Island Home"
840	Book, "The Fat Camel of Bagdad"
841	Book, "The Adventures of Reddy Fox"
842	Book, "Uncle Tom's Cabin"
843	Book, "Two Years Before the Most"

Nursery (cont'd)

844 Book, "Jeremy at Crale"  
845 Book, "Bambi"  
846 Book, "David Goes to Greenland"  
847 Book, "Puck of Book's Hill"  
848 Book, "Nature's Secrets"  
849 Book, "Peter Pan in Kensington Garden"  
850 Book, "The Young Folks Book of Discovery"  
851 Plastic bottle Johnson's Baby Powder  
852 Teddy Bear  
853 Clothes hanger  
854 Clothes hanger  
855 Sweater, blue  
856 Sweater, pink  
857 Sweater, white  
858 Silk cap with embroidery  
859 Organdy curtain, left panel (south window)  
860 Organdy curtain right panel (south window)  
861 Tie back, organdy, left (south window)  
862 Tie back, organdy, right (south window)  
863 Pillow, baby  
864 Pillow case (baby pillow)  
865 White baby bedspread (bassinet)  
866 White baby blanket (bassinet)  
867 White sheet  
868 Baby mattress (bassinet)  
869 Bedspread  
870 Pillow, bed  
871 Pillow cover  
872 White woolen blanket  
873 Mattress  
874 Box springs  
875 Rug

Second Floor Hall

- 876 Left panel, organdy hall curtain
- 877 Right panel, organdy hall curtain
- 878 Left, organdy tie back
- 879 Right, organdy tie back
- 880 Framed photo, John Fitzgerald & Sir Thomas Lipton
- 881 Framed photo, Rose, her mother, and her two sisters
- 882 Framed photo, John Fitzgerald, Rose, Eunice
- 883 Framed photo, Rose receiving diploma from her father
- 884 Large framed photo, Joe Sr. & baseball team
- 885 Framed photo football team, Joe Jr.
- 886 Framed photo, Rose Kennedy on Lipton's yacht
- 887 Framed photo group w/Jack & Joe Jr.
- 888 Newspaper clipping, Boston Post, 1917
- 889 Framed picture, Interior, with woman and child



Bathroom

890 Toilet paper holder  
891 Clothes hamper  
892 Glass Tumbler  
893 Waste basket  
894 Sponge for bath  
895 Organdy curtain, left panel  
896 Organdy curtain, right panel  
897 Tie back, organdy, left  
898 Tie back, organdy, right  
899 Bath mat, blue monogram  
900 Sponge & soap holder  
901 Hand towel with crocheted band inserted "REF"  
902 Hand towel "REF" monogram  
903 Hand towel, w/crocheted band inserted-Greek design, "REF"  
904 Turkish towel, blue monogram (1 of 2)  
905 Turkish towel, blue monogram (1 of 2)  
906 Wash cloth, blue monogram (1 of 2)  
907 Wash cloth, blue monogram (1 of 2)

Third Floor

908 East office, organdy curtain, left panel (north window)  
909 " organdy curtain, right panel (north window)  
910 " tie back, organdy left (north window)  
911 " tie back, organdy right (north window)  
912 " organdy curtain, left panel (east window)  
913 " organdy curtain, right panel (east window)  
914 " tie back, organdy, left (east window)  
915 " tie back, organdy, right (east window)  
916 " framed photo Fitzgerald family  
917 " framed page "The Typical American"  
918 " printed document in Spanish, John Kennedy's  
life in form of John Kennedy's head  
919 West office, organdy curtain, left panel (north window)  
920 " organdy curtain, right panel (north window)  
921 " tie back, left (north window)  
922 " tie back, right (west window)  
923 " organdy curtain, left panel (west window)  
924 " organdy curtain, right panel (west window)  
925 " tie back, left (west window)  
926 " tie back, right (west window)  
928 East office, dresser, white

929 Linen table cloth  
 930 Linen napkin  
 931 " "  
 932 " "  
 933 " "  
 934 " "  
 935 " "  
 936 Asparagus server  
 937 Towel, "REF"  
 938 Hall-front door curtain (outer)  
 939 Hall-front door curtain (inner)  
 940 Dotted-Swiss, left panel, rear door  
 941 " " right panel, rear door  
 942 Dotted-Swiss, left panel, south window, kitchen  
 943 " " right panel, south window, kitchen  
 944 Dotted-Swiss, left panel, east window, kitchen  
 945 " " right panel, north window, dining-room  
 946 Lace curtain, left panel, north window, dining-room  
 947 " " right panel, north window, dining-room  
 948 Window box (bay window), dining-room  
 949 " " " " "  
 950 " " " " "  
 951 " " " " "  
 952 " " " " "  
 953 " " " " "  
 954 Lace curtain, left panel  
 955 " " right panel  
 956 " " left panel  
 957 " " right panel  
 958 " " left panel  
 959 " " right panel  
 960 " " left panel  
 961 " " right panel  
 962 Organdy curtain, left panel, hall upstairs  
 963 " " right panel " "  
 964 Tie back, left panel, hall upstairs  
 965 " " right panel, " "  
 966 Organdy curtain, left panel, bathroom  
 967 " " right panel "  
 968 Tie back, left panel, bathroom  
 969 " " right panel, "  
 970 Organdy curtain, left panel, Master bedroom  
 971 " " right panel " "  
 972 Tie back, left panel, Master bedroom  
 973 " " right panel " "  
 974 Organdy curtain, left panel, Master bedroom  
 975 " " right panel " "  
 976 Tie back, left panel, Master bedroom  
 977 " " right panel, " "

## APPENDIX C

### SUGGESTIONS AND COMMENTS MADE BY MR. DORMAN

1. All light bulbs should be clear glass with exposed filament and 30 to 60 watts. Frosted lights were unknown at that time. Norelco of N. Y. makes these bulbs.
2. Most of the lamps and all the lamp shades are wrong and should be replaced with ones of the period. The floor lamp in the parlor should have glass beaded fringe around bottom of shade and long pulls with tassels on the ends.
3. Sheet music has publishing dates of much later times so should be replaced by some with the right publishing date.
4. Most of the color prints should be replaced with pre-1917 European tour souvenirs of the same paintings in the right frames. (However the same paintings should be used since Mrs. Kennedy remembers these.)
5. Kitchen table is the best piece of furniture in the house and was probably not meant for the kitchen but looks so well there that it should stay.
6. Aluminum ladle in kitchen should be replaced by one of iron, brass, or copper.
7. Flexible spring rods should be used for the kitchen curtains.
8. There should be replacements for the solid color, shamelessly modern carpets in the second floor rooms. The Orientals and the modern version of a rag rug (in the nursery) are the only ones that look right.
9. In the guest room the modern version of Hepplewhite side chair should be replaced by one of the period.
10. The nursery needs a stand with a flat top, four legs, and a shelf - all painted white with a padded top and a circular white enamel basin on the shelf under the top for a real 1917 bathinette.
11. The modern French lamp in the nursery is inappropriate. At that time a wooden lamp in the shape of an animal (rabbit, elephant or such) was used.

12. The teddy bear is too modern. Should be a brown plush.
13. Wall paper in nursery modern. Also Johnsons Baby Powder (Plastic was not used in 1917 - tin can was used).
14. Furniture (bed, rocking chair, and side chair) in nursery should be replaced by something earlier (with the same cane seats but 1917 in style).
15. Blocks in nursery should be a set of pre-World War I of German make.
16. Christening gown, bonnets, and cape should be under cover.
17. In the bathroom put bath towels in back of bath tub where the face towels are now.
18. Most of the work has been done superbly and Mr. Luddington deserves credit.

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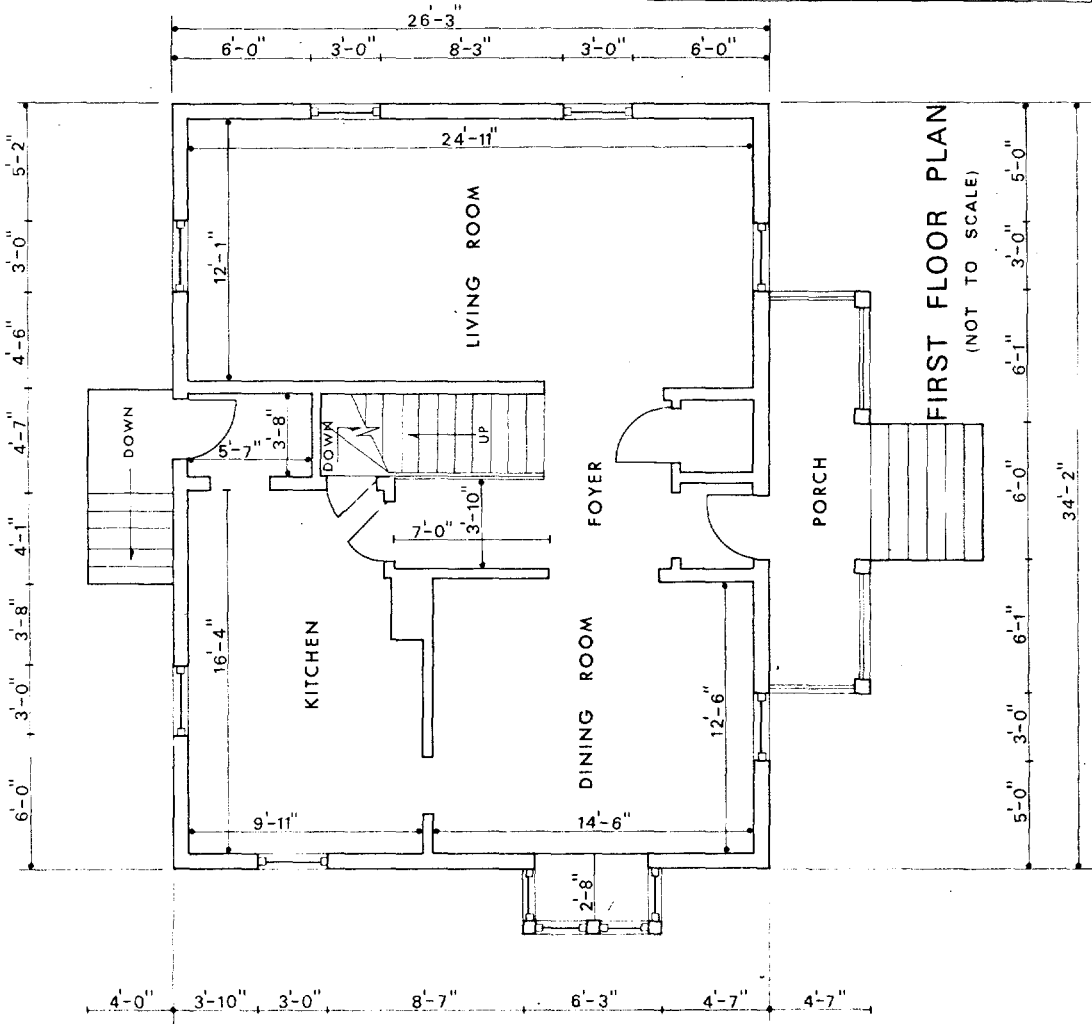
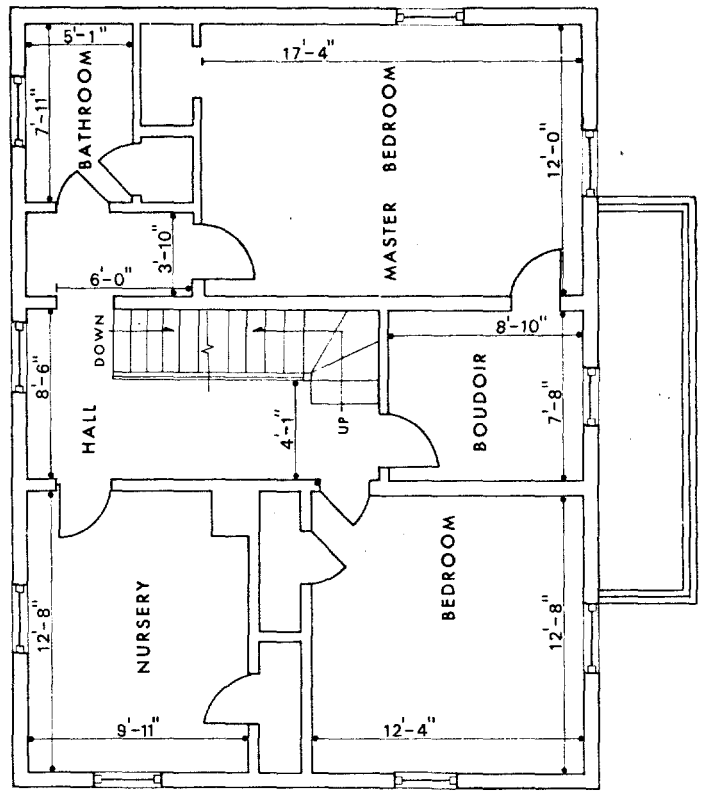
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## ILLUSTRATIONS\*

\*NOTE: Photographs of the furnishings in each room have not been included in this report because the cost would be too great. A representative collection of photographs, however, can be viewed either in the Photograph Department at the Interior Building or at the historic site itself.

83 BEAL STREET  
BROOKLINE

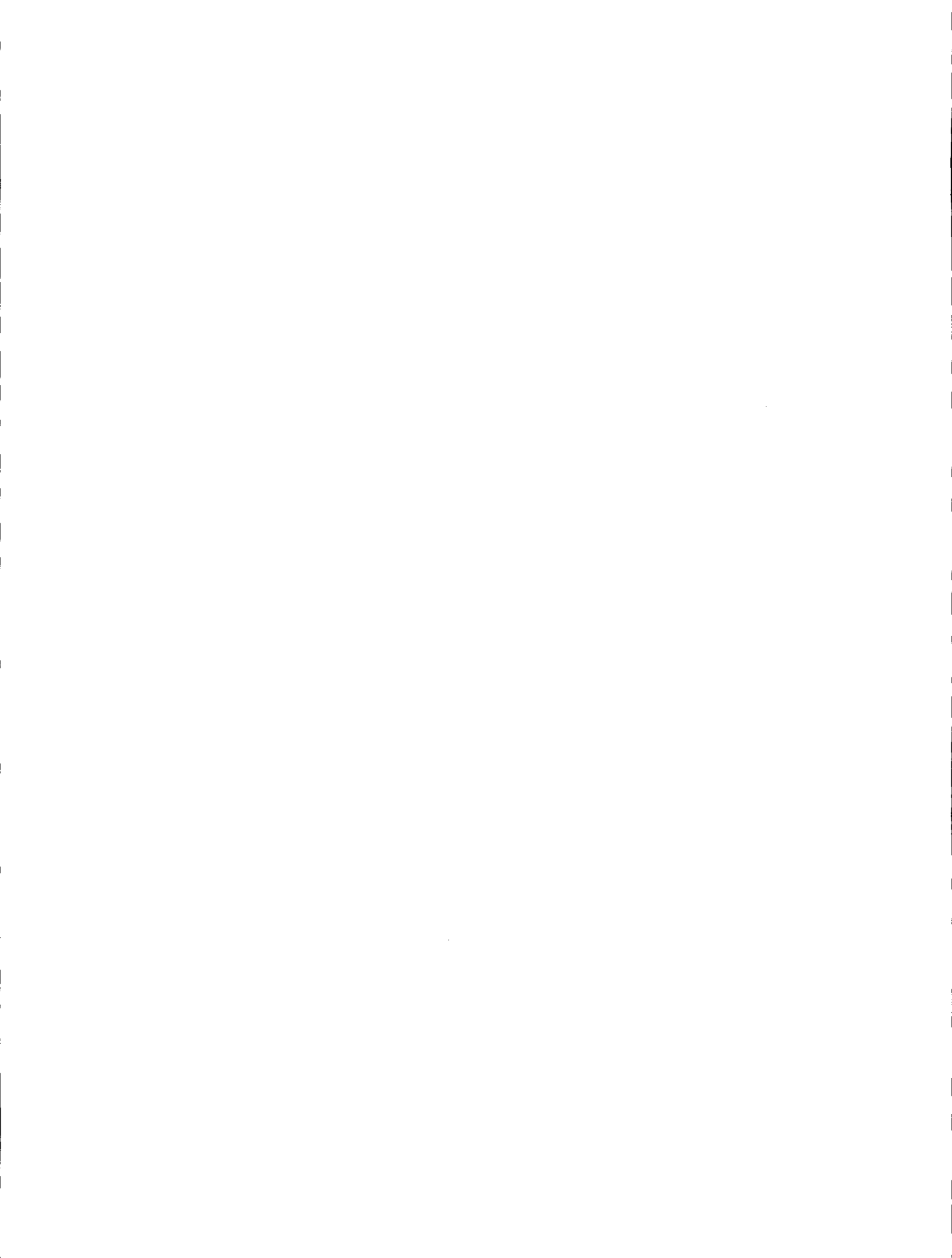
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FIRST FLOOR PLAN  
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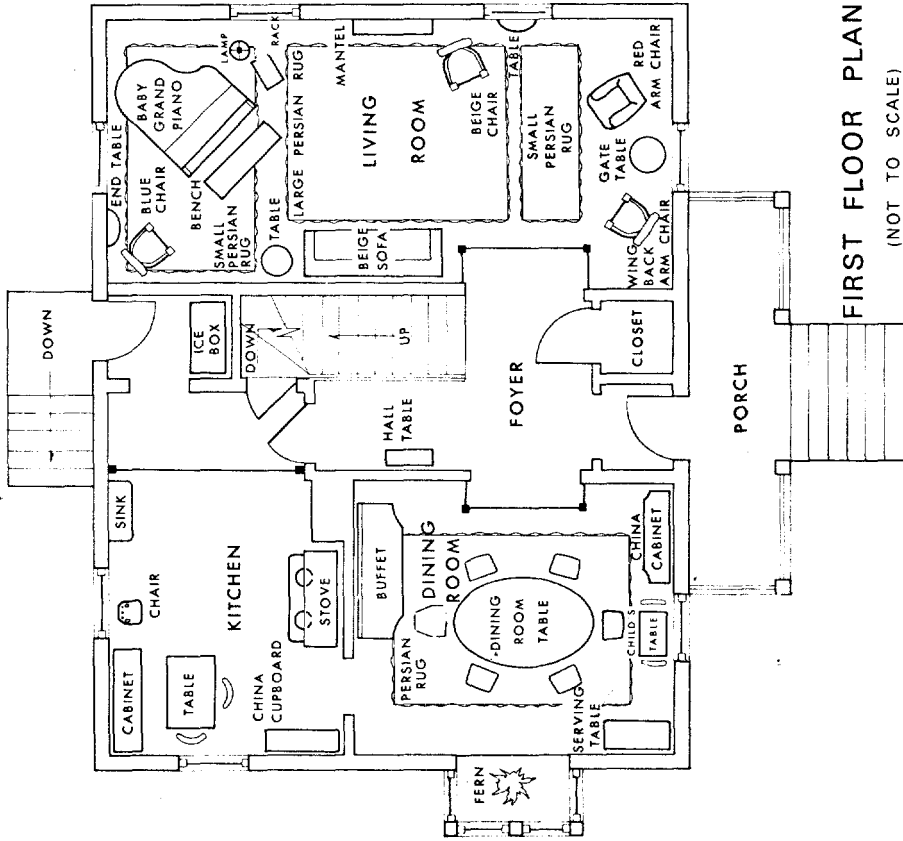
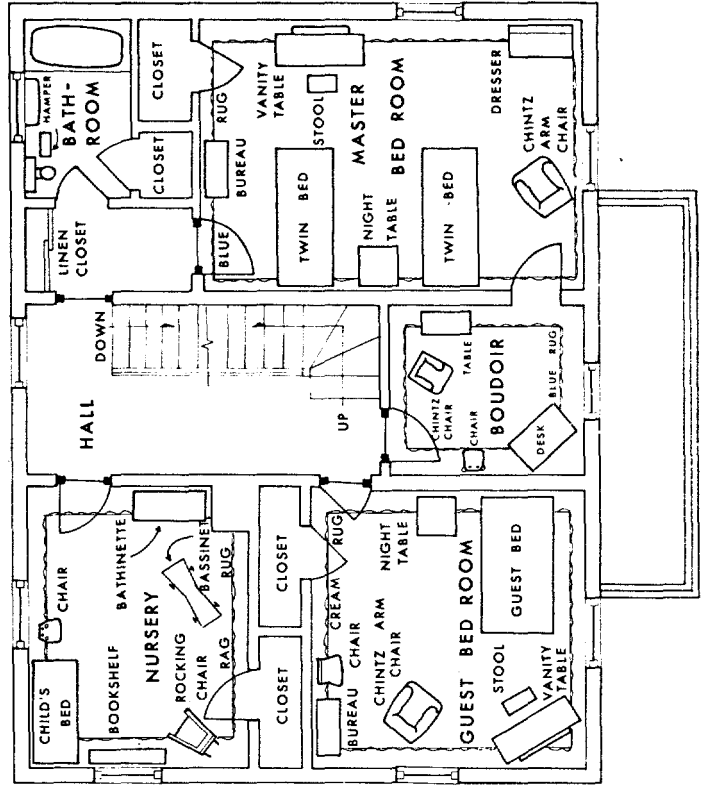
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JOHN FITZGERALD KENNEDY  
NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE  
MASSACHUSETTS

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
EASTERN SERVICE CENTER  
OFFICE OF HISTORY AND HISTORIC ARCHITECTURE



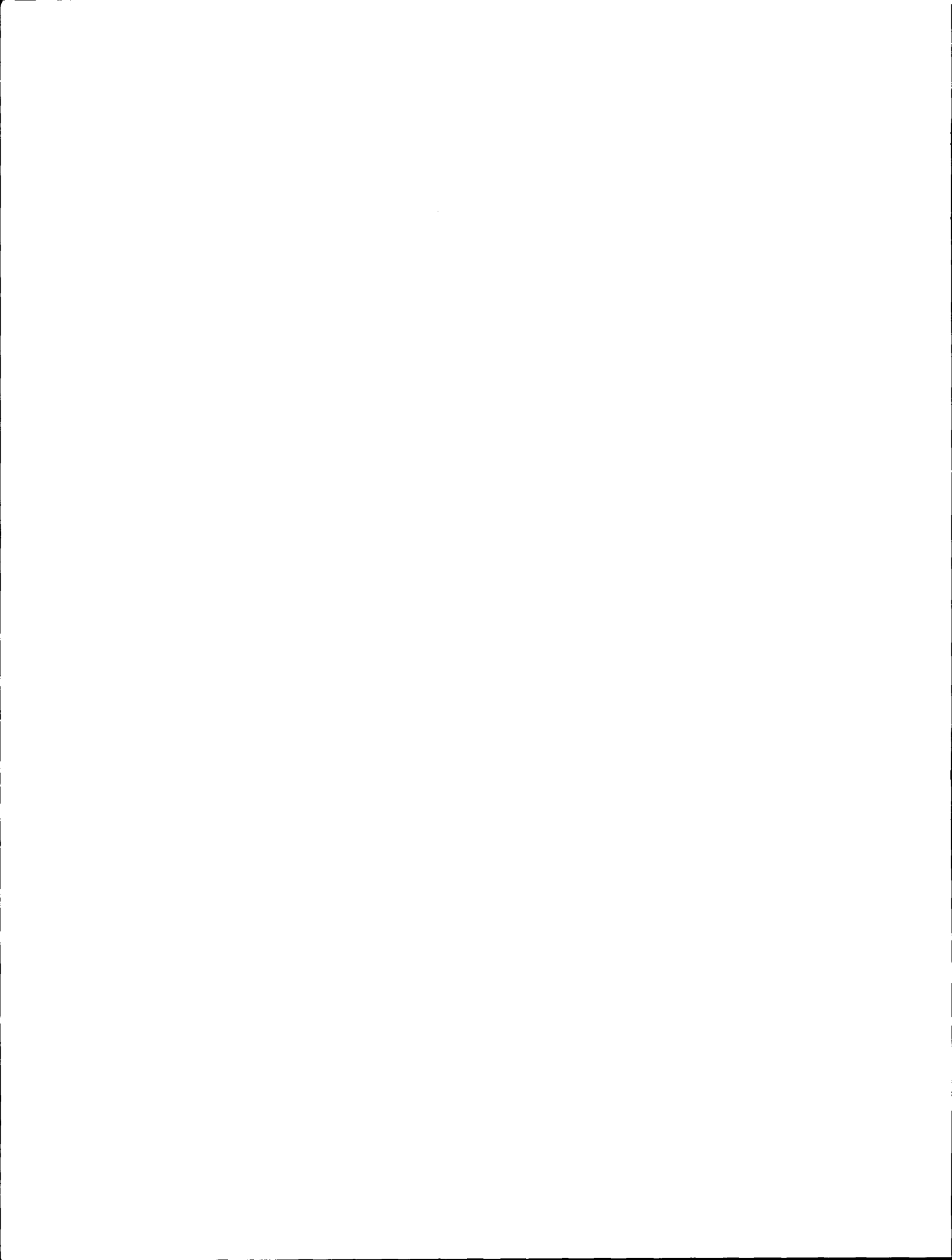
83 BEAL STREET  
BROOKLINE

SECOND FLOOR PLAN  
(NOT TO SCALE)



FIRST FLOOR PLAN  
(NOT TO SCALE)

FURNISHINGS PLAN  
JOHN FITZGERALD KENNEDY  
NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE  
MASSACHUSETTS  
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
EASTERN SERVICE CENTER  
OFFICE OF HISTORY AND HISTORIC ARCHITECTURE



## Repositories Consulted and Recommendations for Further Research

### John F. Kennedy Library Archives

#### Personal papers of Joseph P. Kennedy

Documents reviewed (listed in the box order in which they appear in the inventory, with their titles in bold as they appear in the inventory and a description of how they are arranged within the boxes):

Boxes 40-42: **Business and Personal Correspondence, 1915-1930**. Documents are in random order.

Boxes 72-74: **Business Correspondence, 1918-1935**. Correspondence and related business files, largely related to film industry. Arranged roughly chronologically.

Box 5: **Miscellaneous Joseph P. Kennedy/Edward E. Moore Correspondence, 1920-1922, 1926-1935**. Loose materials, arranged chronologically.

Boxes 43-44 and 37-38: **General and Personal Correspondence, 1920-1957 (specifically 1920, 1924, 1925, 1927, 1931-1937, 1939, 1942-1943, 1945-1946, 1957; some written on behalf of or by other family members)**. Mostly 1932-1936 and 1946. Arranged alphabetically by name of correspondent or subject.

Boxes 57-71: **Joseph P. Kennedy General and Personal Correspondence and Subject File, 1933-1938, 1940-1961 (some 1918 and 1963, some Rose Kennedy)**. Arranged alphabetically by name of correspondent or subject.

Also we reviewed some documents that were in the process of being transferred from accession number MS-79-2 in the Robert F. Kennedy collection and had not yet been assigned a final location in the Joseph P. Kennedy collection. These may currently reside in new permanent locations. Some papers from MS-79-2 can be found in the following JPK collection boxes: 57-71 (see above for description); boxes 45-47 (documents, mostly letters and cables, date from August 1934 to August 1935); and boxes 50-53 (personal and official correspondence, mostly 1937-1938 but some from 1933, 1942-1947, and 1949-1960).

This collection is large and is still in the process of being catalogued. The finding aid lists papers by box number. Often two or more boxes are catalogued and listed together on the finding aid, hence the hyphenated box numbers. We reviewed papers in this collection that had been catalogued as of July 2002.

The vast majority of documents catalogued to date in this collection are from Joseph Kennedy's life after 1930. Documents dating from the period of his early married life represent a small portion of the current collection. Most of the documents are business-related correspondence. Since Kennedy conducted both personal and professional

business from his office, however, there are a number of documents that dealt with his personal life or activities. All of the relevant documents found have been incorporated into our report.

### Personal Papers of Rose F. Kennedy

This collection is arranged by manuscript or accession, or by unboxed item. Some accessions contain numerous boxes, although not all boxes are numbered. Arrangement of materials within boxes is random, usually by folder, but spans a range of items and topics. It is a confusing collection to use, since there is currently no useful or consistent finding aid or inventory. One must work with an archivist who is familiar with the collection to determine what to review.

Accessions in the Rose F. Kennedy collection reviewed:

76-6, 1 box. This box contains Rose Kennedy's wedding log and log of invitations, and family scrapbooks.

76-44, 2 boxes. One box contains a scrapbook from 1939 with clippings from the family's activities in England. The other box contains the children's index card health records. The earliest date on the cards is 1924.

76-45, boxes 1, 2, 5, 7 (as labeled). Most of these boxes contains primarily portions of Rose Kennedy's *Times to Remember* manuscript, notes and reminiscences, and newspaper clippings. Also within this series is Rose Kennedy's 1923 diary, primarily of her trip that year to Europe, a folder containing John F. Kennedy-related notes, and items relating to other Kennedy children (Joseph Junior's confirmation in 1927, Eunice medical diet in 1923).

77-21; 77-40; 78-42. Documents from later in Rose F. Kennedy's life.

77-29. Miscellaneous boxes. One unlabelled large box in this series contained undated materials in folders that clearly pertained to Rose Kennedy's later years. They are primarily decorating notes and lists of suggestions and household needs for the home in Palm Beach. Also in this box were what appeared to be notes or early typescripts of portions of *Times to Remember*.

Box 2 (so labeled) in this series contains a folder marked as "Misc. Correspondence, 1908-1972," however no early correspondence was found in this folder.

77-32. In folded binder, photocopy of Rose F. Kennedy's Travel Diary "My Ocean Trip," 1911, 1913, various addresses of people in Boston, New York, and abroad.

77-37, 4 boxes. Box 2 of this series contains, among other things, folders of Kennedy family Christmas cards, Rose Kennedy's "At home" printing plate and cards, Rose Kennedy's marriage announcement, a souvenir menu from a dinner at the Copley Plaza in 1921, a small black binder with Rose Kennedy's notes from when she lived on Welles Avenue in Dorchester, itinerary and souvenirs of her trip to South American in 1913, her marriage engagement announcement, notes of congratulations on the couples' engagement (some



later apparently noted with wedding gifts received), birth announcements for Joseph Junior, Cecilian Guild 1922 dance program, a 1923 menu from the Poland Springs Mansion House, birth announcements for Jean in 1928; condolence letters upon death of Rose Kennedy's sister Eunice in 1923; and general correspondence. Box 3 contains primarily general correspondence and materials relating to the children, mostly from the period 1923-1928. Boxes 1 and 4 were nearly empty and did not yield any useful materials.

Like the papers of Joseph Kennedy, the major portion of Rose Kennedy's preserved papers are from the years after she left Brookline. Little remains of the years Rose Kennedy spent in Brookline, and much of these documents have been incorporated into her biographies. Other items, such as Rose Kennedy's wedding log and her "At Home" cards does provide some useful information not previously assessed.

### **Brookline Public Library, Coolidge Corner Branch**

While the main branch of the Brookline Public Library was being renovated, a number of resources were stored at the Coolidge Corner branch, where we did our research; some of these materials may have subsequently been returned to the main library. The Brookline Public library contains copies of directories of Brookline residents "for persons 17 of age and up" from 1875 through 1968 and 1891 through 2002 (although published by different companies, the library refers to these as "Brookline directories") and Spencer's Directory for 1894, 1895-96, and 1896-97. The library also holds a copy of the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary history of Brookline (no author listed) entitled *A History of Brookline, Massachusetts, From the First Settlement of Muddy River Until the Present Time, 1630-1906*, published in 1906. Other resources include microfilm copies of *The Brookline Chronicle* and *The Brookline Townsman*, including the period, 1914-1921, a copy of John Gould Curtis' *History of the Town of Brookline, Massachusetts*, a copy of Ronald Dale Karr's dissertation "The Evolution of an Elite Suburb: Community Structure and Control in Brookline, Massachusetts, 1770-1900," and copies of the proceedings of the Brookline Historical Society.

### **Brookline Preservation Commission**

The Brookline Preservation Commission has in its collection a number of clippings and preserved typescript manuscripts of early twentieth-century Brookline historians, as well as copies of some late nineteenth century Brookline directories. For this Historic Study Report, the materials at the Commission that proved most useful were Arthur Krim's survey report "Carriage Barn and Auto Garage Survey Project," on early ownership of automobiles and garages in Brookline, and the Commission's information about and report on future plans for St. Aidan's Church. Also helpful were the various brochures that the Preservation Commission has printed on the history of Beacon Street and Coolidge Corner.

### **Pusey Library, Harvard University**

The Pusey Library houses the atlases and maps that we used to trace the history of development in Coolidge Corner, and on Beals Street and Abbottsford Road. The atlases

used were Griffith Morgan Hopkins' *Atlas of the Town of Brookline, 1874* and George Washington Bromley's *Brookline Town Atlases, 1874 to 1927*.

### **Archives of the Archdiocese of Boston**

Most documents pertaining to the Kennedy and Fitzgerald families in the Archdiocese archives consisted of correspondence between family members and members of the clergy, including Cardinal O'Connell. This correspondence is listed alphabetically by correspondent. Some of the material reviewed was incorporated into our report; most of it has already been published elsewhere in biographies.

In the Archdiocesan Archives there are also pamphlets depicting the groundbreaking and construction of St. Aidan's Church in 1911 and 1912.

We had hoped to research St. Aidan's sacramental records to better understand the socio-economic makeup of Rose and Joseph Kennedy's fellow members, however those records remained inaccessible at St. Mary's Church during the research phase of this project.

### **St. Mary's Church**

The sacramental records of St. Aidan's Church are currently stored at St. Mary's Church in Brookline. We had hoped to scrutinize St. Aidan's sacramental records and by tabulating the occupations and perhaps the ethnicity of Rose and Joseph Kennedy's fellow parishioners to better understand the parish's socio-economic make-up. The pastor of St. Mary's Church, however, refused to make these records accessible to us during the research phase of this project. He stated that the parish lacked the staff to supervise researchers (many of whom are genealogists). He did not allude to the dispute over the archdiocese's plan to demolish the church and redevelop the site for housing—which the pastor supports and some at the NPS oppose. This dispute, however, at present does not help either NPS staff members or the representatives convince the pastor to make an exception to his policy.

### **Special Collections, State Library of Massachusetts, State House, Boston**

The holdings of the Special Collections library in the State House include Brookline directories from 1868-69, 1871, 1873-74, 1875, 1879-80, 1881, 1883-84, 1885-86, 1887, 1891-1920, 1922, 1924-1932, 1934, 1940, 1966, and 1968. We referred to several of these directories during our research.

### **Boston Public Library**

The Micro-Text Room of the Boston Public Library contains many valuable sources for the study of Boston-area history. The resource we relied on most was microfilm copies of

United States Census reports for Brookline, 1900, 1910, and 1920. Other resources are a complete set of microfilmed copies of newspapers and city directories in the Boston region. For this study, we primarily used the sources to obtain information about areas other than Brookline--for example, the June 1906 copies of *The Dorchester Beacon*, from which we gathered information about Rose Kennedy's high school graduation, and copies of *The Boston Globe* in 1918 and 1919, which yielded information and advertisements on men's ready-wear fashions of the period.

### **Recommendations for Further Research: A Note**

Because the post-Beals Street lives of the Kennedy family was beyond the scope of this project, family life in the Abbottsford Road home was not researched intensively, although many of Rose's reminiscences about life in Brookline was directly related to the years in this larger home. Rose's personal papers before the early 1920s are sparse; further research into family, daily and home life on Abbottsford Road might yield additional information about the family's connections to and within Coolidge Corner, as well as other topics such as Rose's and Joe's personal lives, their marriage, and their later biographies. (Note: the family's residence on Abbottsford Road did not coincide with either the 1920 or 1930 U.S. Census, so this information would not be forthcoming.)

The cataloguing of the papers of Joseph P. Kennedy is a long-term project that will continue for some time. The boxes of papers that we reviewed are summarized in our report on archives consulted. These consisted only of what had been catalogued to date. Although Joseph Kennedy's early papers may already been completely catalogued, it is possible that future papers will come to light that may be interesting or relevant to his professional and business life during the years he lived on Beals Street.

Although Rose Kennedy's personal papers were thoroughly researched, items such as the wedding log might be further mined for details about the couples' early furnishings. (Note: Janice Hodson has already begun to analyze the wedding log.)

Finally, the Robert Luddington papers were not accessible for our review. The inability to review those documents has dogged researchers since the inception of the house as a National Historic Site in the late 1960s. Mr. Luddington has repeatedly promised these papers but has never produced them, although the National Park Service has been in touch with Mr. Luddington periodically. Should the papers ever come to light, Mr. Luddington's close working relationship with Rose Kennedy may provide a wealth of information not available elsewhere.



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