



BROOKLINE HISTORICAL SOCIETY BROOKLINE, MASSACHUSETTS

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Brookline Village Coffee Shops and Their Pasts



Employees in the Brookline Village F.W. Woolworth store (now Starbucks) in 1914.

The Brookline Historical Society is dedicated to the documentation and interpretation of Brookline's diverse history, to collecting, preserving, and maintaining artifacts of Brookline's past, and to sharing the story of the town and its people with residents and visitors alike.

The Society's headquarters are located in the heart of Coolidge Corner at the Edward Devotion House, one of Brookline's oldest colonial period structures.

The Society also maintains the circa 1780 Widow Harris House as well as the Putterham School located in Larz Anderson Park.

The Society's extensive collection of historic information, photographs, postcards, and atlases can be viewed on our website BrooklineHistoricalSociety.org

Our membership program is active and volunteers are always welcome.

In one short block in Brookline Village, two international coffee shop chains compete for business in storefronts just three doors apart. The more established, Starbucks, is at 7 Harvard Street, and the newcomer, Caffé Nero, is at One Harvard Square. Those retail locations, of course, have a much longer history than either coffee chain and, remarkably, we are able to get a glimpse of what the interiors of both spots looked like more than a century ago.

Interior images from that far back are hard to come by. But for these two locations we have views via a newspaper sketch for one and two photographs for the other.

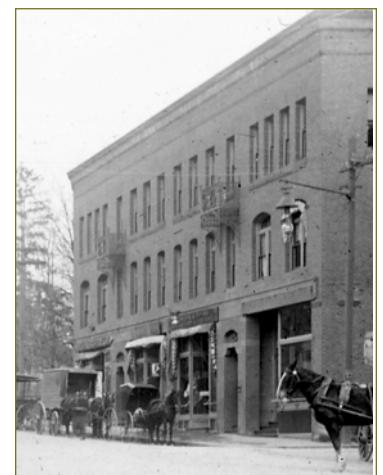
The older of the two buildings is the one that is now home to the first Brookline location of the London-based Caffé Nero.

Designed in 1892 by the firm Hartwell & Richardson, the building, originally known as the Lowe Building, had stores on the ground floor and apartments above. One of the first tenants was the Brookline National Bank and the building soon became known as the National Bank Building.

The bank purchased the building in 1902 and engaged architects Peabody & Stearns to expand and redesign it. They enlarged the third floor by raising the roof eight feet. (It became home to a hall

for the Beth-Horon Lodge of Freemasons.) Apartments on the second floor were turned into offices.

(continued next page)



National Bank Building in 1893.

Brookline Village Coffee Shops and Their Pasts (continued)

On January 1, 1903, the new Brookline Post Office opened on the ground floor, in the space that is now Caffé Nero. The *Boston Globe* previewed the new post office with the headline “Brookline’s New Year’s Gift from Uncle Sam” and a sketch showing the public space, as well as the redesigned exterior.



Caffé Nero women’s room door.

When shown the image, employees at Caffé Nero were intrigued. They also thought it solved a mystery: Why did the door to the women’s bathroom, shown above, have a mail slot in it? (It was probably an interior door reused in later renovations.)

This was to serve as the main Brookline post office, relocated from an inadequate space on Washington Street in the Village, until the construction of a new post office in Coolidge Corner (in space

now occupied by Zaftig’s deli, Jin’s restaurant, and Cool Edge salon) in 1923. The location that is now Caffé Nero remained the Brookline Village branch of the post office until some time after World War II.

The more modest two-story building housing the Brookline Village Starbucks was built in 1911 to house stores and offices. A year later it became home to Brookline’s first F.W. Woolworth five-and-dime store, which was to stay in business there for more than three quarters of a century.

Woolworth’s occupied half of the first floor, space now divided between Starbucks and Vizio Optic, until closing in 1989.

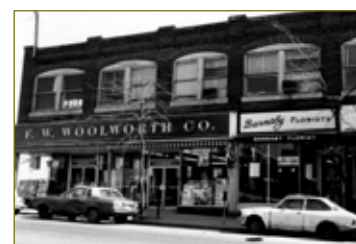
The Historical Society was lucky to obtain the two photographs below of the interior of that store from another historical society. Sales banners hanging from the ceiling in one of the photographs helped us to date the images to 1914. The banners advertise a Spring Sale, April 20th to April 25th.



Sketch of the interior of the new Brookline Post Office in Brookline Village, now Caffé Nero. Boston Globe, December 30, 1902.

Why six days, not seven? Because from Puritan times until 1983 Massachusetts Blue Laws banned Sunday store openings. (The 19th was a Sunday in 1914 and 1926, but the clothing appears a better match for the earlier date.)

One puzzle: there are skylights clearly visible in the photo. How can that be in a two-story building? Records in the town building department provide the answer: the building was originally only one-story at the back; the second story was added to that part of the building later.



7-15 Harvard Street in the early 1980s. Town of Brookline photo.

Next time you’re enjoying a coffee or tea or a pastry in either of these Brookline Village coffee shops, be sure to reflect on what had been there more than a century ago.



To explore these photos of the Brookline Village Woolworth’s in more detail, visit supersize versions on the Historical Society website <http://bit.ly/bk-woolworths1>, <http://bit.ly/bk-woolworths2>

Restoration of the Devotion House Windows



A Devotion House window.



Working on a window.



Waiting to be reinstalled.

The Devotion House window sashes were recently restored in a project undertaken by the Building Department and the Historical Society. Twenty-two windows were restored. The majority of these are twelve-over-twelve windows; in both the upper and lower sashes there are twelve panes each. Many are believed to be early, some dating to the eighteenth century.

The sashes were removed in batches from the house and taken to the workshop of Buttonwood Renovations in Norwell, Massachusetts. You may have noticed plywood blanks over some of the Devotion House window openings last summer when the front sashes were out for restoration. Buttonwood tuned up the sashes, re-glazing and repairing as needed. Original panes and woodwork were retained. When they

were returned to the house, the sashes were reconnected to their window weights and made operable, some for the first time in many years. When the sashes were out for restoration, the preservation carpenter was able to inspect the window frames. He could tell that weight pockets, which hold window weights and pulleys, had been added, probably sometime in the nineteenth or early twentieth century. This was particularly

evident in the windows in the museum's kitchen.

This restoration work makes the windows more stable, helping them to survive another couple of centuries. Retaining original windows is environmentally friendly, as continuing to use well-made originals, instead of replacing them with non-repairable vinyl units, keeps good material out of landfills. Tightening windows helps to conserve energy, reducing leaks. For a historic structure like the Devotion House, the original windows also help to preserve the historic appearance and character of the building.

Thanks to Charlie Simmons and Ray Maask of the Building Department for managing this project!

Welcome New Board Members

This Historical Society is pleased to welcome two new members, Shelley Barber and Ken Dumas, to our Board of Trustees.

Shelley, a Brookline resident since 1993, is Archives & Research Specialist at the John J. Burns Library, the home of Boston College's special collections and University Archives, where she has worked since 1985. She is the author of "The Lady of the Tower" a recent article in *Boston College Magazine* that delves into the story of the all-but-forgotten woman for whom one of Boston College's campus landmarks – Bapst Library's Ford Tower – was named. Shelley is also the editor of *The Prender-*

gast Letters: Correspondence from Famine-Era Ireland, 1840-1850. She is an avid nature photographer and recently earned a Certificate in Genealogical Research from Boston University.

Ken, who also moved to Brookline in 1993, has been a cartographer for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts for the past three decades. He has created most of the maps for the MBTA as well as the Mass Department of Transportation. (His most recognized map is the MBTA Rapid Transit "Spider" Map.) Ken is also a professional tour guide and leads walks on "Historic Beacon Street, Brookline," "Secret Stairways and Paths," "The Muddy River

(Boston's Hidden River)," and "The Alleyways of Boston." In his spare time he bicycles and teaches Adobe computer programs at Brookline Adult & Continuing Education.

The Board also bids fond farewell and many thanks to Maggie Hogan who has done great work as head of our Collections Committee these past few years.

Patriots' Day, April 17, 2017

The Edward Devotion House may be in the middle of a construction site, but that won't stop "William Dawes" from making his annual visit on his ride from Boston to Lexington. Join us on Monday, April 17, 2017, for an open house, period music, and other events to mark the day. See our website for final details.

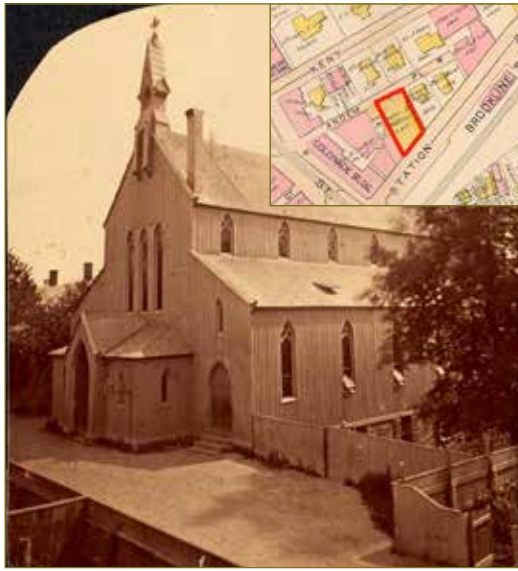


Spring Program of the Brookline Historical Society

Irish Brookline, 1845-1917

Sunday, March 26, 2017
at 2:00 pm
Hunneman Hall,
Brookline Public Library,
361 Washington Street

At the same time that Brookline first became a prosperous commuting suburb of Boston in the 1840s it acquired a sizable community of Irish Catholic refugees from the Irish famine. Historian Ronald Dale Karr traces the rise of Irish Brookline and explores its complicated relationship with the dominant Yankee culture of Boston's wealthiest suburb. Karr, a former Brookline resident, is the author of *Between City and Country: Brookline, Massachusetts, and the Origins of Suburbia*, forthcoming from the University of Massachusetts Press. Refreshments will be served.



St. Mary's Church, above and inset map, was built in the 1850s between Andem Place and Station Street to serve the growing Catholic, mostly Irish, population of Brookline.

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