



# “To Keep a Birthplace”

## An Administrative History of John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site



Hilary Iris Lowe

**“To Keep a Birthplace”**

**An Administrative History of  
John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site**

Hilary Iris Lowe

Presented to John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site  
Interior Region 1, North Atlantic—Appalachian

In Partnership with  
the Organization of American Historians/National Park Service

September 2023

*Cover Image:*

“Children outside of John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site.”

Publisher: U.S. National Park Service; John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site, Norfolk County, Massachusetts. <https://npgallery.nps.gov/AssetDetail/8BBCB79F-155D-451F-6729A48B42D80053>.

*Disclaimer:* The views and conclusions contained in this document are those of this author and should not be interpreted as representing the opinions or policies of the U.S. Government. Mention of trade names or commercial products does not constitute their endorsement by the U.S. Government.

# “To Keep a Birthplace”

## An Administrative History of John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site

HILARY IRIS LOWE

*Prepared for*  
the National Park Service  
*in cooperation with*  
the Organization of American Historians

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
SEPTEMBER 2023

# “To Keep a Birthplace”

## An Administrative History of John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site

Hilary Iris Lowe

Presented to John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site  
Interior Region 1, North Atlantic—Appalachian

In Partnership with  
the Organization of American Historians/National Park Service

September 2023

Recommended by:

**JONATHAN MEADE** Digitally signed by JONATHAN MEADE  
Date: 2024.01.29 13:34:27 -05'00'

---

Manager, Cultural Resources Division, Interior Region 1: North Atlantic—Appalachian Region

Date

Recommended by:

**JASON NEWMAN** Digitally signed by JASON NEWMAN  
Date: 2024.01.18 10:57:13 -05'00'

---

Superintendent, John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site

Date

# Contents

Acknowledgments .....	vii
-----------------------	-----

## CHAPTER ONE

Introduction .....	1
--------------------	---

## CHAPTER TWO

<b>Remembering the Childhood Homes of US Presidents</b> .....	5
<i>American Interest in Childhood and Childhood Homes</i> .....	7
<i>Washington as a Model</i> .....	9
<i>Women's Roles in Preserving and Recreating the Birthplaces of Presidents</i> .....	11
<i>The Rise of Childhood Homes and Birthplaces as Sites of National Memory</i> .....	13
<i>The Birthplaces of Assassinated Presidents</i> .....	20
<i>Abraham Lincoln's Birthplace</i> .....	20
<i>James A. Garfield's Birthplace</i> .....	22
<i>William McKinley's Birthplace</i> .....	24
<i>John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site</i> .....	26

## CHAPTER THREE

<b>Marking the Birthplace of Kennedy</b> .....	27
<i>The National Park Service Assesses the Site</i> .....	33
<i>"It Would be Nice...for Mother"</i> .....	37
<i>Legislation to Establish the Historic Site</i> .....	39
<i>The Boston Group Administration</i> .....	43
<i>"An Undeniable Sense of Nostalgia"</i> .....	45
<i>1969 Dedication and Opening</i> .....	53
<i>Changes Ahead</i> .....	55

## CHAPTER FOUR

<b>Early Management of the Birthplace, 1969–1987</b> .....	57
<i>Neighborhood Tensions as the Site Opens to the Public</i> .....	58
<i>Personal Connections</i> .....	59
<i>Kowal and Early Studies at the Site</i> .....	61
<i>Busing and Fire Bombing</i> .....	69
<i>The Carter and Reagan Years</i> .....	75
<i>Daily Work at the Kennedy Birthplace in the 1980s</i> .....	78

CHAPTER FIVE

**Managing Kennedy as a Modern Historical Site: The 1990s** ..... 83  
    *Reorganization under Diamant*..... 85  
    *Expansion of Educational Programming* ..... 87  
    *Rose Kennedy’s Interpretive Voice Silenced* ..... 88  
    *Structural and Maintenance Concerns* ..... 92  
    *1990s Politics and Anxiety for Trisites* ..... 93  
    *Kennedy Family at the Site*..... 94  
    *Changes in Administration at the Site* ..... 96

CHAPTER SIX

**The Politics of Memory, Gender, and the Presidency at the Birthplace, 1999–2017** . 103  
    *New Interpretation: Rose Kennedy as Architect of Memory* ..... 109  
    *Neighborhood Preservation: St. Aidan’s Catholic Church Threatened* ..... 114  
    *General Management Plan: “Only a Mirage”* ..... 117  
    *Staffing at the Kennedy Birthplace* ..... 123  
    *Paint, Perseverance, and the Presidency* ..... 125

CHAPTER SEVEN

**Conclusion**..... 131  
    *Considerations for Further Study* ..... 135  
    *The Political Legacy of the Kennedy Family* ..... 135  
    *The Boston Group*..... 135  
    *Urban Redevelopment, Federal Preservation, and Gentrification* ..... 136  
    *Multisites as Units of Study* ..... 136  
    *Robert T. Luddington Papers (JOFI 1510)*..... 137  
    *Email Access for Researchers* ..... 137

**Bibliography** ..... 139

**Index**..... 157

# Acknowledgments

I have been working on this project through some of the most trying years the National Park Service has been in operation. The last two saw the very sites I relied on for this study closed to the public due to COVID-19 but still open for much of the research required for this study. The John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site is still closed as staff oversee exciting renovations delayed by the pandemic proceed.<sup>1</sup> Working on the history of the site during such a moment in the history of the NPS has made me thoroughly aware of the dedication of NPS staff.

I especially owe a great deal to Christine Arato, Paul Zwirecki, Aidan J. Smith, Elena Rippel, Christine Wirth, and Lee Farrow Cook. Christine first cornered me at a conference to let me know there was a fascinating history of the John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site—I blame her entirely for my decision to sign on to find out more. Aidan J. Smith set me up with all the site’s key players and left us all entirely too soon. So many of us continue to miss his thoroughly kind and biting humor about all things NPS. I was lucky to have Paul Zwirecki’s and Derek Duquette’s patient attempts to wrangle this project to completion. Elena Rippel was the best intern I ever had the chance to work with, and I know the folks at the Kennedy site agree.

I was lucky to have already discovered the fantastic camaraderie among the staff at the Longfellow House-Washington’s Headquarters National Historic Site, where most of the records pertaining to the administration of Kennedy’s birthplace are held. Among them, Beth Law, David Daly, Garrett Cloer, Kate Hanson Plass, and especially Christine Wirth were essential both as conversationalists and as research partners on this project. Beth took the time to talk me through the administrative issues and internal grant bidding system for NPS projects—which is as fascinating as it is frustrating. David’s stories of alien autopsy birthday parties and collections care reminded me that all NPS employees have rich lives inside and outside the service. This was a lesson I learned all over again when I mined the staff logs and hints of historical inside jokes at the Kennedy site. Garrett’s humor, unflappability, and enthusiasm are still missed at Longfellow. Kate’s epic patience and detailed memory of all objects and records relating to the Longfellow and Kennedy sites are as impressive as her kindness. She helped immensely with responses to chapters behind the scenes, and she tracked down photos right to the end. Chris Wirth, archivist extraordinaire, helped me track down graves, worried over handwriting transcriptions

---

<sup>1</sup> While the site is physically closed to visitors, staff have continued to offer virtual programs.

## Acknowledgments

with me, and helped keep me on track when the research “black holes” were ever threatening. She was the best archivist and friend you could imagine going on a road trip with to tackle the ins and outs of far-flung NPS archives.

David J. Vecchioli and Steve Neth worked diligently with me as I tried to track down records about the elusive Boston Group in the papers at Boston National Historical Park and Minute Man National Historical Park. Caitlin Jones at the Massachusetts Archives, Shelley Barber at the Tip O’Neill Papers at Boston College, and Jim Hill at the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library were extremely helpful with both collections and advice. Jim Roberts and Jason Atsales were a fantastic team at the Kennedy site. Jim and Jason bent over backwards to provide everything they could to help the project. Superintendent Myra Harrison not only was a welcoming superintendent but also agreed to do a long call with me so I could complete her oral history after she had retired. Alan Banks, Christine Arato, Lee Farrow Cook, Rolf Diamant, Leslie Obleschuk, Jim Roberts, Jim Shea, Mark Swartz, and Anna Coxe Toogood were also gracious enough to sit down for an interview with Elena Rippel or with me to help me make the most of the recent history of the site.

At Temple University, my chairs, Jay Lockenour and Petra Goedde, helped me get this project set up within a complicated system that did not necessarily recognize its scholarly value and helped me keep it on track when the pandemic threatened to derail it and me. Dean Richard Deeg generously agreed to release me from teaching two courses to allow a semester of whirlwind archival research in Brookline, Boston, Concord, Waltham, and Cambridge, Massachusetts, for which I am deeply grateful.

Along the way, I met or had riveting conversations about the history of the Kennedy site and its partner sites with Paul Weinbaum, Dwight Pitchaithley, Susan Ferentinos, Sara Patton Zarrelli, Merrill Hassenfeld, and Michelle McClellan. Laura Miller was a lifesaver at crucial times, as an editorial wiz and as a sounding board for the complicated histories of National Park historic sites that too often get written in a vacuum.

I am most grateful to have Seth and Junie Bruggeman by my side as I completed this project. Both have survived my necessary obsession with presidents, mothers, and the shifting meanings of childhood homes in the United States.



## CHAPTER ONE

# Introduction

**T**hree-story, gray with white trim and dark green shutters, the house looks like many fine homes built in the streetcar suburbs in the first two decades of the twentieth century. Nonetheless, if you miss the visitor's orientation or merely beam into the Kennedy birthplace from elsewhere, you would know you were in a house museum. There are wooden interior gates that keep visitors in the halls of the house rather than in any of the rooms. It is a modern house with bathrooms, electric lamps, and running water, but a house old enough to have radiators, phone tables, and linens on the dining table. Nonetheless, there are no immediate signs on the ground floor of *whose* home you are in. It is a comfortable but affluent home—silver on the table, lace curtains, elegant drapes, and a grand piano. You would need to be a detective looking closely at the family baby photos upstairs and interpret the monogrammed bedspreads, bathmats, and children's porringers to see the family's prominent last initial: K.

Most visitors who make their way through the visitor's center, might not recognize that the house tells multiple Kennedy family histories, until they hear a recording of Rose Kennedy's voice in the kitchen. Then it sinks in: this was Rose Kennedy's house as much as it was John F. Kennedy's birthplace. President John Fitzgerald Kennedy's birthplace was also Rose Kennedy's first adult home, and she left her mark (Figure 1).

The National Park Service (NPS) opened the John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site (JOFI), in Brookline, Massachusetts in 1969 to commemorate the life of the 35th president, John F. Kennedy, at the home where he was born in 1917. The site was a gift from Rose Kennedy, and the Kennedy family, to the nation. It joined the Park Service initially as part of a unit managed by the Boston Service Group, a regional administrative unit that managed many parks and units that were in development and several small sites. None of the group's units were as small as the Kennedy birthplace. The site would be transferred over the years to a management structure that included two other small historic sites. One, the Longfellow National Historic Site (now the Longfellow House-Washington's Headquarters National Historic Site), was located in nearby Cambridge, Massachusetts. The other, the Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site, was also located in Brookline. Federal support for the Kennedy site was organized both quickly in the wake of President Kennedy's assassination and slowly with care by the president's mother. Congress approved the site with very little study.



**Figure 1.** Rose Kennedy outside her house.  
Cecil W. Stoughton, JOFI Dedication, JOFI 1504, Box 10, Folder 8, NPS, 1969.

The site's Interpretive Prospectus, put together by Nan Rickey in 1969, is a marvel for helping us understand the key issues at the site from the get-go, including this complicated interpretive one. Rickey was brought to the site as the technical publications editor from Harpers Ferry to work with Rose Kennedy on that room-by-room audio tour. She was also charged with helping the site develop its first interpretive plan. She reported that Rose Kennedy's tour was "interpretive perfection," while it was also "reminiscent" of the past rather than wholly historically accurate.<sup>2</sup> Rose Kennedy's voice was in nearly every room at the site, and she gave the site whole cloth to the National Park Service after restoring it to match her memories. In many ways, however, she was missing as a historical informant in the park's planning beyond the audio. And she was, to some extent, missing from the history that the site interpreted until the mid-2000s as well. Such delicate donor relationships are not uncommon at historic sites that are given to the National Park Service by family members of a president. Access and influence were primary issues in Rickey's report, as was the nation's emotional response to the tragedy of John F. Kennedy's murder. What Rickey recommended and anticipated, on nearly every front, has followed. She cautioned

---

<sup>2</sup> Nan Rickey, *Interpretive Prospectus: John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site, Massachusetts*, National Park Service, Department of the Interior (1969), 3.

that it would be many decades—she speculated 100 years—before the Park Service would want to attempt historically accurate reinterpretation at the site.<sup>3</sup> The National Park Service, instead, would subtly reinterpret things at the house. Someone swapped out an anachronistic older photo of the young president. After exterior paint research was completed, the house was painted an “accurate” dark, teal green rather than the gray that it had been painted under Rose Kennedy’s exacting eye. Books and toys that made up some of the house’s historic collections that came from after 1920 (the date when the Kennedys moved away from this early home) were moved into the background of the children’s bedroom. Site staff carefully rearranged the collections, without exactly censoring them, to match their understanding of the period of significance at the site—which was primarily defined as the early years of John Fitzgerald Kennedy’s childhood.

These founding documents are prescient both in shaping the future of the site and in laying out what the essential issues and concerns are that drove the site over the decades.<sup>4</sup> To understand what has been at stake at the site over the course of the last 50 years, you need only read Rickey’s report sympathetically and capaciously. Her report was more than a plan for interpretation at the site; it was a call for all of us to always remember that it was Rose Kennedy who was directly responsible for what we experience at the site today.

However, Rose Kennedy was not the “single author” at the site. She had great assistance at the house while she lived there as a young mother—in the form of staff from maids to nurses.<sup>5</sup> Likewise, she had great assistance in refurbishing the house. Her assistant was her longtime interior decorator Robert Luddington. Moreover, over the years there have been many people who have helped steward the site and make small changes that have altered some of what Rose Kennedy originally envisioned. Edwin Small and Maurice Kowal in the early years helped set up the site administratively, and more recently Christine Arato and Myra Harrison worked to elevate Rose Kennedy’s historic role as the creator of the site. Rose Kennedy’s work at the house and legacy has loomed large over all these stewards’ years at the Brookline house. The changes that they put in place almost always engaged Rose Kennedy’s work directly, and on occasion, they directly challenged it. However, before we learn about the administrative work at the site, we should look closely at how the United States, and especially the National Park Service, has approached historic sites associated with the nation’s presidential leaders and especially presidential childhood homes and birthplaces.

---

<sup>3</sup> Rickey, *Interpretive Prospectus*.

<sup>4</sup> Laura Miller, “*Things Kept and Cherished*”: *A History of Adams National Historical Park* (Washington, DC: National Park Service, US Department of the Interior, 2020), 1.

<sup>5</sup> Over the last five years, NPS staff at the site have started researching and interpreting the lives of cooks and maids at the house during the Kennedy era. At the 2017 100th birthday events, costumed interpreters were on site depicting staff during the Kennedy period. See the site’s page: *The Kennedy Family Maids of 83 Beals Street, Massachusetts*, <https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/the-kennedy-family-maids-at-83-beals-street-brookline-ma.htm>, accessed May 17, 2021.

The ways that Kennedy birthplace falls well outside the norm for preserved presidential childhood homes and birthplaces are outlined in Chapter 2. This chapter investigates how many such sites, even those within the National Park Service, are recreations rather than actual extant historical buildings. Some have been relocated several times; some have been torn down only to be “reconstructed” later in exacting (or less than exacting) detail. None have been fully restored by the president’s own mother. Even among the presidential birthplaces that the Park Service manages, the Kennedy site is unique. Today, as a result, the site recognizes two important periods of historical significance: the early childhood of President Kennedy and the “memorial period” during which Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy oversaw the refurnishing and decoration of the house.

The specific history of the Kennedy site under Park Service management begins in Chapter 3 with an investigation of early commemorative efforts at the house and an exploration of how the service attempted to develop the site alongside Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy. The early history of management after the house opened to the public is covered in Chapter 4. During this period, the site saw challenges, including arson and a new administrative home. Chapter 5 takes on the expansion to the unit that managed the Kennedy birthplace, a much-needed budget increase, and reorganization. Recognition of Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy’s work as a preservationist at the house and the staff’s quest to support the site with substantial reports comes to pass in Chapter 6. Chapter 7 leads into John Fitzgerald Kennedy’s centennial and to areas for further study.

## CHAPTER TWO

# Remembering the Childhood Homes of US Presidents

Every president is remembered somewhere. These commemorative efforts are marked in lavish marble monuments, memorials, historically accurate historic house museums, and presidential libraries. Each of these sites of presidential memory is unique. They are sometimes administered and founded by individuals in a president's hometown, committees of women preservationists, state and local governments, and of course the federal government—primarily through the National Park Service (NPS). A significant percentage of the National Park Service's administered historic sites is associated with and interpret presidential history in some capacity.

Currently the National Park Service and other departments of the federal government (including the National Archives and Records Administration) oversee at least 31 historic sites, memorials, and monuments associated with 19 former presidents, including George Washington, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, John Quincy Adams, Martin Van Buren, Abraham Lincoln, Andrew Johnson, Ulysses S. Grant, James Garfield, Herbert Hoover, Theodore Roosevelt, William Howard Taft, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Harry S. Truman, Dwight D. Eisenhower, John F. Kennedy, Lyndon B. Johnson, Jimmy Carter, and Bill Clinton. Some former presidents, like Washington, Jefferson, and Grant, have more than one NPS site. Theodore Roosevelt and Abraham Lincoln each have four (not counting Mount Rushmore). Twenty-five US presidents are not commemorated through a site directly administered by the NPS, though most have sites listed on the National Register of Historic Places. By the time of World War II, National Park Service Director Newton Bishop Drury was concerned that there was “a long list of presidents of the United States who have not yet been memorialized” by properties in federal ownership.<sup>1</sup> Today, all but one (Zachary Taylor) do have historic sites opened to the public; most of these are not owned and operated by the NPS, but by other state, local, or nonprofit organizations. As of 2022, the James K. Polk House in Columbia, Tennessee, and the George W. Bush Childhood

---

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in John H. Sprinkle, *Crafting Preservation Criteria : The National Register of Historic Places and American Historic Preservation* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 120.

Home in Midland, Texas, are being considered for inclusion in the National Park System.<sup>2</sup> Presidential sites associated with Presidents Barack Obama and Donald J. Trump are also on the minds of both private and federal preservationists.<sup>3</sup>

This chapter looks at the history of presidential historic sites, especially the history of the development of childhood homes and replica homes that are open to the public. Many sites “remember” presidents, but childhood homes have a specific place in the United States. Many of these sites have been developed by women, and many contribute to a belief that the events of a child’s life, and perhaps a mother’s efforts, significantly contribute to who that child becomes as an adult. In the United States, presidential childhoods have played roles in political campaigns. Some presidential campaigns used presidents’ childhood homes and “commoner” upbringings to help define the character of their candidate. As early as the 1840 campaign for William Henry Harrison, political parties (in this case, the Whigs) “appealed to the common man by portraying their candidate. . . as a national hero who had lived in a log cabin.”<sup>4</sup> Americans remain more interested in presidential biographies than the history of their policies, according to scholars. “With remarkable steadfastness, they remain preoccupied with the origins, moral character, and motives” of their presidents—so much that many modern presidents are expected to have narrated clear autobiographies that connect their childhood to their concerns for the nation, leadership skills, and qualifications for the presidency.<sup>5</sup> The public’s interest in presidential childhoods has also extended to a seemingly inexhaustible interest in their childhood homes. One director of a presidential childhood home noted that “people emotionally respond to birthplaces” and that, to visitors, childhood homes can be “pieces of the true cross, even in the cynical era in which we live.”<sup>6</sup>

The ways that these sites developed as museums are extraordinarily varied and have been shaped by changing ideas about childhood. This chapter looks broadly at the role that preservationists—often individual women and women’s organizations—and the National Park Service, especially through the National Landmarks Program and through the administration of historic sites, have played in the landscape of presidential childhood available

---

<sup>2</sup> Michael Collins, “James K. Polk’s Tennessee House Could Become Park of the National Park Service,” *The Tennessean*, April 17, 2018. Pete Kasperowicz, “George W. Bush’s Childhood Home Could Soon Be Part of the National Park System,” *Washington Examiner*, December 10, 2018.

<sup>3</sup> Conversations are wide ranging about both presidents. See for instance Bruce Handy, “Wrecking Ball,” *The New Yorker*, February 8, 2021, NP; and “Obama’s Childhood Home Might Become a Landmark,” *NPR Morning Edition*, April 7, 2009.

<sup>4</sup> National Park Service, “The Presidents: From the Inauguration of George Washington to the Inauguration of Gerald R. Ford: Historic Places Commemorating the Chief Executives of the United States” (Washington, DC: National Park Service, 1976), 8.

<sup>5</sup> Glenn and Eric Rauchway Altschuler, “Presidential Biography and the Great Commoner Complex,” *American Literary History* 16, no. 2 (2004): 364.

<sup>6</sup> Richard Norton Smith quoted in Patricia Leigh Brown, “Reliving Myth of the Presidential Log Cabin,” *New York Times*, May 25, 1997.

to the public today. It focuses on the stories of sites that have impacted the way that the NPS operates in relationship to childhood homes. In particular, the childhood homes of George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, and Lyndon B. Johnson, as well as comparisons to the birthplaces and childhood homes of other assassinated presidents, provide a valuable context for the development of the John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site and its place in the NPS and the American historical landscape more broadly.

## American Interest in Childhood and Childhood Homes

The commemoration of birthplaces and childhood homes is not a uniquely American phenomenon; nor has this commemorative practice been solely focused on governmental leaders. The first birthplaces to be celebrated were often those of religious figures at places like Mecca, Bethlehem, and Lumbini; philosophers like Petrarch; and literary luminaries like Shakespeare and Milton.<sup>7</sup> In the United States and North America, more generally, the first birthplaces that were marked and celebrated by White European settlers were not those of the elite or great leaders and statesmen, but the first White children born in many settlements.<sup>8</sup> Historians of commemoration, like Seth Bruggeman, have argued that Americans have “a preoccupation with birthplaces,” which has “figured in the American commemorative landscape . . . for nearly two hundred years.” In the United States, “birthplace monuments have enshrined nativity alongside patriotism and valor as key pillars of America’s historical imagination.”<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> Enormously popular, grave tourism predates and perhaps serves as the “flip side” of the formal celebration and commemoration of childhood homes in the United States and elsewhere for all but religious figures. One of the earliest sites of American historic tourism was to the graves of two fictional characters: Charlotte Temple from Susanna Rowson’s 1794 novel of the same name, and that of Elizabeth Whitman/Eliza Wharton the main character in Hannah Webster Foster’s 1797 novel *The Coquette*. Hilary Iris Lowe and Jennifer Harris, “Introduction,” in *From Page to Place: American Literary Tourism and the Afterlives of Authors* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2017), 9. Even Shakespeare’s grave was initially more popular than the site of his birth. Aaron Santesso, “The Birth of the Birthplace: Bread Street and Literary Tourism before Stratford,” *ELH* 71, no. 2 (2004).

<sup>8</sup> Virginia Dare, the first English child born at Roanoke, and her birth and birthplace, have been celebrated over the years through various means and for a number of different political purposes. For instance, the county in which the Virginia Roanoke settlement once resided is now called Dare County (now in present-day North Carolina). In the 1920s, Dare’s name was commemorated in an effort to exclude African American women from voting alongside White women, and in 1937, President Franklin D. Roosevelt authorized a postage stamp that commemorated the 350th anniversary of Dare’s birth. However, little is known about Dare other than the fact of her birth. Dare, Peregrine White (born on the Mayflower), and Snorri Thorfinnsson (first Old Norse/Icelandic child born in the Americas) are often celebrated and commemorated in statuary, and they have been used as symbols by White supremacists. See, for example, Gillian Brockell, “Virginia Dare’s Unwanted Legacy: A White Nationalist-Friendly Website Called Vdare,” *Washington Post*, August 22, 2018.

<sup>9</sup> Seth C. Bruggeman, “Locating the Birthplace in American Memory,” in *Born in the U.S.A.: Birth, Commemoration, and American Public Memory* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2012), 1.

The movement to celebrate and remember the births and childhoods of prominent Americans began in earnest in the 19th century and rose in popularity at the turn of the 20th century. At this same moment, there was a corresponding emphasis on the special role of children in culture, homes, and families in the United States. Some who study the history of childhood note that until the late 19th century, most parents, despite deep parental attachment, tended to find children essential to the economic role of the family. Children regularly contributed to the family income through work outside the home, in agriculture, industry, the trades, or contributed to the domestic labor of the household. Not until the 1890s, with the help of the progressive movement, did middle-class families begin to practice promoting a “sheltered childhood” that privileged education and a special protected legal status for young people.<sup>10</sup> In many ways, these simultaneous changes in society reflect broad and connected changing attitudes about the active roles of children, women, and the past in American life. The histories of the preservation and commemoration of the childhood homes of historical leaders reveal how these roles presented new ideas about the family, women’s roles in society, and competing political ideals. By the turn of the 20th century, the celebration of childhood homes of the founders, presidents, and other men might be understood as a nostalgic response to an increasingly child-focused culture and consumer life. On the other hand, because so many of these historic sites were developed by women, they may have focused on the special characteristics of childhoods as significant to historical characters. These women preservationists may have also sought to connect the increasingly child-focused world they were a part of with a model of historic leadership that included women as the primary role models and caregivers of great men.

The National Park Service first delved into the stewardship of presidential childhood homes as historic sites in the 1930s. These efforts included George Washington’s “replica” memorial house and the “traditional cabin” that had been advertised as Abraham Lincoln’s birthplace, but where he was almost certainly not born. These sites reveal the tensions at many presidential childhood homes, whether run by the National Park Service or others, between the competing strictures of commemoration and “authenticity,” each meant to inspire Americans.

---

<sup>10</sup> David I. Macleod, *The Age of the Child: Children in America, 1890-1920*, Twayne’s History of American Childhood Series (New York: Twayne, 1998), 31.



## Washington as a Model

The first president's childhood has long been the subject of considerable speculation and interest. Americans were and are interested in origin stories, despite the fact that it is often difficult to know much about the childhoods of political leaders. Of George Washington, so little was known that there has been a verifiable industry surrounding his biography—with more than 20 books just devoted to his childhood alone. The origin of this obsession with Washington's youth may well hinge on the myths developed by storyteller Parson Mason Locke Weems in his book *Life of Washington* (1806). Educational historians have argued that Weems's story of Washington, his hatchet, and the cherry tree's "persistent inclusion in school curricula highlights an American focus on a cultural identity and patriotism."<sup>11</sup> This patriotic emphasis comes through to readers and students if the story has been presented as truth, and even if the story has been carefully couched in the critical language of myth and folklore. Despite their perpetual debunking, many cling to these myths.

The Washington family house at Pope's Creek, Virginia, in which George Washington is believed to have been born, likely burned to the ground in 1779. However, George Washington's adopted grandson, George Washington Parke Custis, marked the site he believed was once the president's birthplace with an engraved stone in 1815. Eventually, the Commonwealth of Virginia began to organize to preserve the site as of 1858, but that project was set aside in the chaos of the Civil War.<sup>12</sup> By the end of the 19th century, there were complicated and competing claims as to how to best remember Washington at the site of his early childhood.<sup>13</sup> Later President Chester Arthur moved Congress to build a wharf and erect a physical monument and obelisk (quite similar to the Washington Monument in Washington, DC, in miniature) at the site. Finally, in 1930, President Herbert Hoover signed an executive order and Congress made appropriations for the birthplace monument

---

<sup>11</sup> Ann David, "Burying the Hatchet," *American Educational History Journal* 43, no. 1/2 (2016): 149–65. David analyzes more than 32 textbooks for children, mostly from the 19th century, to uncover how the story of Washington and the cherry tree changed over more than 100 years.

<sup>12</sup> It is worth noting that in the run up to the Civil War, Ann Pamela Cunningham and the organization that she and her mother founded, the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association, were also working to preserve the adult home of George Washington, Mount Vernon. In many ways, the women involved in the preservation saw both their initial work at the site and the work that followed the Civil War as an effort to heal the rifts that tore through the country by unifying around the revered figure of George Washington. While the women (and men) involved in the effort might not have agreed on Reconstruction, they could all agree on the rehabilitation of Mount Vernon. See Patricia West's excellent history of the political origins of Mount Vernon in "Inventing a House Undivided: Antebellum Cultural Politics and the Enshrinement of Mount Vernon," in her book. Patricia West, *Domesticating History: The Political Origins of America's House Museums* (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1999), 1–37.

<sup>13</sup> Seth C. Bruggeman, *Here, George Washington Was Born: Memory, Material Culture, and the Public History of a National Monument* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2008).

to be supervised under the administration of the National Park Service.<sup>14</sup> However, between 1926 and 1930, the Wakefield National Memorial Association, with the consent of the Congress and the president, received permission to build a “replica” on the site. The structure was meant to be similar to the home in which the nation’s first president would have been born and be an appropriate place to reflect upon the sacred origins of the founding president.<sup>15</sup>

Almost in the model of Weems’s invention of Washington’s youth, a group of Washington enthusiasts, a group of nearly all women led by Josephine Wheelwright Rust, founded the Wakefield National Memorial Association to preserve the site of Washington’s birth and early childhood home at Pope’s Creek. They “reconstructed” the house where he was born, despite the fact that nothing was known about what the house would have looked like. They developed their replica despite the then ongoing archaeological research sponsored by the NPS that was uncovering evidence of foundations of the very house that they sought to replicate. Thus, in the 1930s, a Washington birthplace home was created whole cloth from the minds of his fans, while they ignored evidence that might have made the home a more accurate representation of 1730s colonial Virginia. Today the Wakefield Association’s symbolic gardens, historic plantings, and the “memorial” (replica) house are centerpieces of a complex symbolic landscape that celebrates George Washington’s birth but represents very little of what the domestic landscape might have looked like during his first three years of his childhood at Wakefield.

Importantly for the National Park Service, the site that became George Washington’s Birthplace National Monument was one of the Service’s first forays into historic site development and historical archaeology. Well into the 1990s, the NPS struggled with what to do with the house on the site that was *meant* to be a replica, but that staff increasingly had to admit was not a replica at all. By the time the NPS commissioned an administrative history of the memorial, site administrators had dealt with interpreting competing buildings and foundations for more than 70 years. The archaeological evidence of the foundations from the house where Washington was born is now largely interpreted through a crushed oyster-shell-outlined floor plan of the foundations.<sup>16</sup> However, the memorial house attracts more attention than the outlined foundations. As a result, the site

---

<sup>14</sup> Senate Bill 1784, 71st Congress, approved January 23, 1930. See the timeline of administrative legislation relating to George Washington Birthplace National Monument in Bruggeman, “George Washington Birthplace National Monument Administrative History,” ed. National Park Service (Washington, DC, 2006), appendix 3, 254–55.

<sup>15</sup> HR 10131 and S 3513, 69th Congress, 1926, signed by President Coolidge on June 17, 1926.

<sup>16</sup> In the fall 2022, the foundations of “Building X” (as the archaeological remains of the foundations of what is believed to have been Washington’s birthplace is referred to) were being re-excavated for the first time since the 1930s. See George Washington Birthplace National Memorial, “In a recent post, we talked about brick recipes, and what they may reveal about the history of Building X.” Facebook, May 19, 2022, and “The excavation at George Washington Birthplace is well underway. So, what are we looking at?” Facebook, April 14, 2022, <https://www.facebook.com/GeorgeWashingtonBirthplaceNPS>.

tells us as much about the commemorative practices of the 1930s as about 1732, when Washington was born. This symbolic commemorative effort of the Wakefield Association has now been in place long enough to be considered an important historical structure itself. In 2006, the site's administrative history revealed that the replica birthplace was likely based on the designs from a Wakefield Association leader's childhood home.<sup>17</sup> These controversies at Washington's birthplace offered many lessons for the Park Service about the perils of commemoration, authenticity, and research at the childhood homes of American presidents just as the Service headed into the business of historical site administration more broadly.

## Women's Roles in Preserving and Recreating the Birthplaces of Presidents

By the 1910s and the 1930s, women's preservation organizations, like the Wakefield Association, were not at all unusual. In the 1890s, at the same time there was an explosion of house museums in the United States, the "woman's sphere" had expanded greatly, and a new generation of women embraced the "scientific and historical vision of the Gilded Age" by participating in a new kind of "public motherhood."<sup>18</sup> Through all kinds of civic organizations and clubs, women (even those who were not *technically* mothers) participated in public reform, historic preservation, and museum building. Their work was generally supported by local governments as "long as they stopped short of [supporting] suffrage."<sup>19</sup> Even before this period, women, like those who preserved Mount Vernon and formed the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association, had embraced their roles in creating a "shared ancestral home and sacred heritage" through the development of historic house museums for a "'rootless' populace."<sup>20</sup> Women's organizations like the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR), founded in 1890, and the more exclusive National Society of the Colonial Dames of America (Dames), founded in 1891, were just two such heritage organizations that made use of elite, White women's civic-minded political power to develop a series of historic sites dedicated primarily to celebrating the lives and childhoods of the male founders of the nation. Some of these organizations focused their civic engagement overtly on issues that were either inspired by White supremacy or by a vision of a romantic

---

<sup>17</sup> Bruggeman, "George Washington Birthplace National Monument Administrative History," 42.

<sup>18</sup> Paula Baker, "The Domestication of Politics: Women and American Political Society, 1780-1920," *American Historical Review* 84, no. 2 (1984): 632, 31.

<sup>19</sup> Cynthia Stavrianos, *The Political Uses of Motherhood in America*, Routledge Series on Identity Politics (New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2015), 14.

<sup>20</sup> West, *Domesticating History: The Political Origins of America's House Museums*, 3.

lost White past.<sup>21</sup> By the turn of the century, White middle-class women and middle-class women of color were also involved in the commemoration of great men like Frederick Douglass. The Frederick Douglass Memorial and National Association of Colored Women's Clubs banded together to preserve Douglass's adult home and final residence.<sup>22</sup> After the Civil War and before World War I, the United States saw a "proliferation of birthplace monuments," alongside a rise in the development of historical shrines, museums, monuments, and sites of all kinds.<sup>23</sup> By 1941, the DAR had acquired "more than 250" historic properties.<sup>24</sup> Many of these organizations still run historic sites all across the country, and they, and their chapter organizations, are the most prolific managers of historic sites outside of the National Park Service.

Even before the Wakefield Association, women were preserving the birthplaces of American Presidents. Lula Mackey, an attorney and resident of Niles, Ohio, personally funded the relocation and elaborate restoration of William McKinley's birthplace just a few years after his death in 1901. Likewise, not long after President Theodore Roosevelt's death in 1919, the Women's Roosevelt Memorial Association (WRMA) took up building a replica of Theodore Roosevelt's birthplace. Their replica house was designed by Theodate Pope Riddle, a self-taught colonial revivalist, who worked with the WRMA from 1920 until 1923 when the new birthplace opened to the public. Riddle seems to have also taken on much of the historic furnishing decisions at the site.<sup>25</sup> This site, like Washington's birthplace, eventually joined the National Park Service in 1963, despite its status as a replica. Sites devoted to the childhood of pivotal figures in American history from presidents to literary figures have most often been developed at least in part by women preservationists. However, early on, the National Park Service's work with presidential birthplaces was troubled, as its first forays at Washington's birthplace and Lincoln's birthplace were embroiled in questions of authenticity.

---

<sup>21</sup> See Karen Cox, *Dixie's Daughters: The United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Preservation of Confederate Culture* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2019).

<sup>22</sup> National Park Service, "Frederick Douglass National Historic Site Cultural Landscapes Inventory," (Washington, DC: National Park Service, 2013), 4.

<sup>23</sup> Bruggeman, "Locating the Birthplace in American Memory," 7–8.

<sup>24</sup> West, *Domesticating History: The Political Origins of America's House Museums*, 45.

<sup>25</sup> National Park Service, "Historic Structures Report: Theodore Roosevelt Birthplace National Historic Site," ed. National Park Service (Washington, DC, 2008), 8–12.

## The Rise of Childhood Homes and Birthplaces as Sites of National Memory

Even before the National Park Service took over Washington’s birthplace, Americans were fascinated by the childhoods of great men—and occasionally great women. Ohio Congressman Albert Clifton introduced a bill to purchase the birthplace of President Ulysses S. Grant in 1888, though it did not make it through Congress.<sup>26</sup> The house that was ultimately preserved as Grant’s birthplace by a private group rather than the federal government had a checkered history. The house had toured the United States and even spent time on the property of the Ohio State Fairgrounds. The structure is now considered, at best, a replica—if not a hoax.<sup>27</sup> In 1900, longtime Maine Senator Eugene Hale presented a petition for a monument in Hampden, Maine, to mark the birthplace of Dorothea Lynde Dix, a reformer who advocated for better care for the mentally ill.<sup>28</sup> Poet John Greenleaf Whittier’s birthplace was opened to the public in 1893, and Mark Twain’s (Samuel L. Clemens’s) in 1915.<sup>29</sup> Stratford Hall, Robert E. Lee’s birthplace was preserved and opened to the public by a chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy in 1929.<sup>30</sup> In addition, Congress has sought over the years to recognize all kinds of birthplaces, inside and outside the NPS: from the birthplaces of luminaries like Susan B. Anthony and Martin Luther King Jr., to the birthplaces of ideas and organizations like the “birthplace of jazz” (New Orleans) and the birthplace of “college basketball” (Geneva College in Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania).<sup>31</sup> More recently, despite the controversies over the replica “memorial house” at the site of Washington’s birth, a second Washington childhood home replica has been produced at Ferry Farm near Fredericksburg, Virginia.<sup>32</sup>

---

<sup>26</sup> Resolution on the Birthplace of General Grant, January 4, 1888, 50th Congress, Mis. Doc. No. 78.

<sup>27</sup> Bill Sloat, “Long Seen as Grant’s Birthplace, Home May Be a Historical Hoax,” *Austin American Statesman*, February 12, 2000.

<sup>28</sup> “Letter from the Superintendent of the Government Hospital for the Insane, Transmitting a memorial of the National Dorothea Dix Memorial Association,” December 17, 1900, 56th Congress, Senate Document No. 49.

<sup>29</sup> Hilary Iris Lowe, “Authenticity and Interpretation at Mark Twain’s Birthplace Cabins,” in *Born in the U.S.A.: Birth, Commemoration, and American Public Memory*, ed. Seth C. Bruggeman (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2012), 99.

<sup>30</sup> The site saw significant restoration and preservation in the 1930s, and the site seems to have been influenced by the 1930s controversies at George Washington’s birthplace over the replica house and the conflicting evidence provided by archaeology. See Paul Reber and Laura Lawfer Orr, “Stratford Hall: A Memorial to Robert E. Lee?,” in *Born in the U.S.A.: Birth, Commemoration, and American Public Memory*, ed. Seth C. Bruggeman (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2012), 113–29.

<sup>31</sup> Just a few of other such birthplaces after 1970 include the birthplace of “the wilderness concept,” “flight,” “the US Navy,” “the industrial revolution in the United States,” “southern gospel music,” and “the National Guard.” A detailed search of the *Congressional Record* would likely uncover many others.

<sup>32</sup> This replica house does seem to be based on archaeological evidence. Cathy Jett, “New Washington House Replica at Ferry Farm Opens Its Doors to Visitors,” *The Free Lance Star*, October 7, 2017.

Presidential sites have been a primary concern for Congress, the NPS and other organizations, and George Washington and Theodore Roosevelt are just two of *many* presidents who have birthplaces and childhood homes operated by federal, state, and local governments, or nonprofit organizations. There are 19 US presidents who have birthplace or childhood homes open to the public which are thought to be authentic, including those of John Adams, John Quincy Adams, Franklin Pierce, Andrew Johnson, Ulysses S. Grant, Grover Cleveland, William Howard Taft, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Harry Truman, John F. Kennedy, Lyndon B. Johnson, Richard Nixon, Jimmy Carter, Bill Clinton, and George W. Bush. Herbert Hoover, Dwight D. Eisenhower, and Ronald Reagan each have two such childhood homes, and Woodrow Wilson's childhood is particularly well remembered with three separate childhood home museums dedicated to his memory, in addition to his adult home in Washington, DC.

At least two birthplaces, that of Thomas Jefferson at Tuckahoe Plantation and William Henry Harrison's birthplace at Berkeley Plantation, are for-profit, privately owned sites that are open to the public as museums. Belle Grove Plantation, James Madison's birthplace, is a for-profit bed and breakfast, where you can rent a room for the night and take historic tours of the house and grounds. Several more birthplaces and childhood homes are noted with simple markers because the house is still held as a private residence, as is the case for houses that where James Madison, John Tyler, Zachary Taylor, Rutherford B. Hayes, and George H. W. Bush lived as children.

Occasionally, birthplace and childhood homes are marked in other ways, especially when the house has been lost, but the memory of the president is important to a community. Millard Fillmore's boyhood home no longer exists, but in its place, there is the Millard Fillmore Boyhood Home Site, which features not just a historic marker but also picnic tables, a pavilion, and a small garden. James Buchanan's niece Harriet Lane Johnson, who served as First Lady while he was in office, sought to purchase the place where he was born. She died before she was able to do so, and in 1907, an organization purchased the plot of land where he was born and built a pyramid-shaped memorial to Buchanan there from native stone. The monument and land came as a gift to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, which turned them into a state park in 1911.<sup>33</sup> The house where Gerald R. Ford was born in Omaha, Nebraska, burned to the ground in 1971, but its site was given to the state and developed into a memorial garden and nature conservation center. Other communities and individuals created replica childhood homes and birthplaces when a president's childhood home had been destroyed. Replicas were constructed not just for George Washington, but also for James K. Polk, Millard Fillmore, Abraham Lincoln, Andrew Johnson, Ulysses S. Grant, James A. Garfield, Chester Arthur, William McKinley, Theodore Roosevelt, and Lyndon B. Johnson.

---

<sup>33</sup> Jim Cheney, "Presidential History in Pa. Touring James Buchanan's Home and Birthplace," *PennLive*, November 2016.

Despite the National Park Service's "longstanding aversion to birth and burial places except in cases of historical figures of transcendent importance," 15 of the 31 presidential historic sites it administers are, or include, actual or replica childhood homes.<sup>34</sup> The National Park Service administers the "memorial house" at George Washington Birthplace National Monument (1930),<sup>35</sup> the John Adams and John Quincy Adams birthplaces at Adams National Historical Park (added to the Park in 1979),<sup>36</sup> Lincoln's "traditional [birthplace] cabin" at Abraham Lincoln Birthplace (1916),<sup>37</sup> Lincoln's "re-created 1820s homestead" at Lincoln Boyhood National Memorial (1962),<sup>38</sup> Andrew Johnson's boyhood home at Andrew Johnson National Historic Site (1906/1942),<sup>39</sup> Theodore Roosevelt's "recreated birthplace" at Theodore Roosevelt Birthplace (1962),<sup>40</sup> the birthplace and boyhood home of William Howard Taft at William Howard Taft National Historic Site (1969),<sup>41</sup> Herbert Hoover's birthplace at Herbert Hoover National Historic Site (1965),<sup>42</sup> Franklin D. Roosevelt's birthplace and family home at Home of Franklin D. Roosevelt National Historic Site (1945),<sup>43</sup> Franklin D. Roosevelt's childhood summer retreat at Roosevelt Campobello International Park (1964),<sup>44</sup> John F. Kennedy's birthplace

---

<sup>34</sup> This number (31 sites) excludes sites that recognize many presidents, like Mount Rushmore. Barry Mackintosh, "The Historic Sites Survey and National Historic Landmarks Program: A History," ed. National Park Service (Washington, DC: History Division, 1985), 69. Also in federal hands is the Eisenhower childhood home in Abilene, Kansas, which is administered along with Eisenhower's presidential library by the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), and the Richard M. Nixon birthplace is also part of Nixon's presidential library in Yorba Linda, California, administered by NARA.

<sup>35</sup> George Washington Birthplace National Monument (GEWA) was established January 23, 1930, with Public Law No. 34, 71st Congress (S. 1784).

<sup>36</sup> Adams Mansion National Historic Site was established in 1946; the John Adams and John Quincy Adams birthplaces were added to the Site in 1979. The historic site became Adams National Historical Park (ADAM) on November 2, 1998, with Public Law No. 105-342, 105th Congress.

<sup>37</sup> Abraham Lincoln Birthplace (ABLI) was established July 17, 1916, with Public Law 64-160, Stat. 385.

<sup>38</sup> Lincoln Boyhood National Memorial (LIBO) was established February 19, 1962, with Public Law 87-407, 76 Stat. 9.

<sup>39</sup> Andrew Johnson National Historic Site (ANJO) is authorized as a National Cemetery by the Secretary of War in 1906, and eventually is transferred to the NPS as a National Monument by Executive Order 2554 on April 27, 1942.

<sup>40</sup> Theodore Roosevelt Birthplace (THRB) was established on July 25, 1962, with Public Law 87-547, 76 Stat.

<sup>41</sup> William Howard Taft National Historic Site (WIHO) was established on December 2, 1969, with Public Law 91-132.

<sup>42</sup> Herbert Hoover National Historic Site (HEHO) was established on August 12, 1965, with Public Law 89-119 (79 Stat. 510).

<sup>43</sup> Home of Franklin D Roosevelt National Historic Site (HOFR) was established in 1945, but legislation to allow the federal government to accept the property was passed in 1939 during Roosevelt's time in office. See John F. Sears and John E. Auwaetere, "FDR and the Land: Roosevelt Estate Historic Landscape Study," ed. Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation (Boston: National Park Service, 2011), 10.

<sup>44</sup> Roosevelt Campobello International Park (ROCA) was established on July 7, 1964, with Public Law 88-363 (Stat. 78).

at John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site (1967),<sup>45</sup> Lyndon B. Johnson's boyhood home and his "reconstructed" birthplace at Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park (1969),<sup>46</sup> Jimmy Carter's childhood home at Jimmy Carter National Historical Park (1987),<sup>47</sup> and Bill Clinton's "birthplace home" at President William Jefferson Clinton Birthplace Home National Historic Site (2009).<sup>48</sup>

Of these many sites, only eight sites devoted to presidential childhood were established and part of the National Park Service's purview *prior* to the establishment of the John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site. These include George Washington's birthplace (1930), Lincoln's birthplace (1916), Andrew Johnson's boyhood home (1906/1942), Franklin D. Roosevelt's birthplace and family home at Hyde Park (1945), Theodore Roosevelt's "recreated birthplace" (1962), the Lincoln boyhood homestead (1962), Franklin D. Roosevelt's childhood summer retreat at Campobello Island (1964), and Herbert Hoover's birthplace (1965).<sup>49</sup>

Developed during nearly the same period as the John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site, but established in large part by President Johnson himself, the park devoted to Johnson is unique in its attempt to interpret the entire life of a past president. Lyndon B. Johnson worked diligently to have his historic site underway by the end of his presidency. "The potent imagery of the birthplace was well understood by Lyndon B. Johnson," according to a journalist, so much so that "while he was Vice President he had a replica built as a guest house."<sup>50</sup> Johnson went so far as to let his Secretary of the Interior, Stewart Udall, know that he wanted this structure to achieve National Historic Landmark status, while he was still president. However, NPS staff "feared adverse public reaction to what might be viewed as unseemly self-commemoration by the president."<sup>51</sup>

The then National Park Service Chief Historian, Robert Utley, who was personally opposed to historic landmarks dedicated to living people, nonetheless expertly expanded Johnson's efforts by suggesting that the Advisory Committee for National Landmarks also look at sites associated with Eisenhower and Truman and invited these former presidents

---

<sup>45</sup> John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site (JOFI) was established on May 26, 1967, with Public Law 90-20 (Stat. 81).

<sup>46</sup> Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park (LYJO) was established December 2, 1969, with Public Law 91-134 (Stat. 83).

<sup>47</sup> Jimmy Carter National Historical Park (JICA) was established on December 23, 1987, with Public Law 100-206 (101 Stat. 1434).

<sup>48</sup> President William Jefferson Clinton Birthplace Home National Historic Site (WICL) was established on March 30, 2009, with Public Law 111-11.

<sup>49</sup> The two 1962 sites had enabling legislation signed by John Fitzgerald Kennedy.

<sup>50</sup> Brown, "Reliving Myth of the Presidential Log Cabin."

<sup>51</sup> Mackintosh, "The Historic Sites Survey and National Historic Landmarks Program: A History," 85.



to suggest historic sites for nomination as well.<sup>52</sup> The final result of the internal struggle over whether living people ought to be commemorated came in 1965, when NPS Director George Hartzog and this Advisory Committee eventually concluded that “upon the election of any man as president of the United States, an appropriate site be identified and considered for classification as a National Landmark.”<sup>53</sup> Hartzog was concerned that the historical makeup of much of the NPS units were all “birthplaces and battlefields, but nothing in between about what the creative people who came to this country accomplished.” He was emphatic about expanding the inclusive history of the United States *beyond* the president.<sup>54</sup> Before Johnson, each presidential childhood home and birthplace had to be considered on its own merits. For example, Woodrow Wilson’s birthplace was denied landmark status in 1945 because Advisory Committee members believed “it was too contemporary with our own times.”<sup>55</sup> As late as 1964, the Committee declined the landmark status of both President Chester Arthur’s “reconstructed” birthplace and his boyhood home, which had been relocated.<sup>56</sup> Well into the 1960s NPS staff, and perhaps more importantly many of the American public, had come to believe that “the craze for preserving birthplaces” was incomprehensible, given that these sites were “usually the least significant structure in man’s life.”<sup>57</sup>

The consequence of this turn of events was that national landmarks associated with presidents came to be identified by the president himself or his family members, rather than by a community or a group of preservation professionals at a later date. As a result, sites chosen by presidents have often been associated with a nostalgic youth rather than the president’s policies or other political roles as an adult. Few NPS sites devoted to American presidents are as thorough as the Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park (1969). Not just President Johnson’s adult home, but his family ranch settlement, his grandparents’ home, his one-room schoolhouse, his boyhood home, and a replica birthplace are included at the park.

---

<sup>52</sup> Barry Mackintosh, *The Historic Sites Survey and National Historic Landmarks Program: A History*, History Division, National Park Service, 1985, 86.

<sup>53</sup> Advisory Board notes quoted in Mackintosh, 86.

<sup>54</sup> George B. Hartzog Jr., Oral History, conducted by Janet A. McDonnell, September 21, October 4, and November 3, 2005; Published 2007, 16.

<sup>55</sup> Quoted in John H. Sprinkle Jr., *Crafting Preservation Criteria: The National Register of Historic Places and American Historic Preservation* (New York: Routledge), 2014, note 38, 127.

<sup>56</sup> John H. Sprinkle Jr., *Crafting Preservation Criteria: The National Register of Historic Places and American Historic Preservation* (New York: Routledge, 2014), note 22, 191. It should be noted that this denial did not keep the State of Vermont from making the sites associated with him, including the birthplace that was reconstructed with state funds in 1953, into the Chester A. Arthur State Historic Site in Fairfield, Vermont. For more information on the site’s history, see <https://historicsites.vermont.gov/directory/arthur/history> (accessed May 12, 2019).

<sup>57</sup> John H. Sprinkle Jr., *Crafting Preservation Criteria: The National Register of Historic Places and American Historic Preservation* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 152.



**Figure 2.** LBJ’s boyhood home. NPS, Cynthia Dorminey.

As the park’s website puts it, “Lyndon Johnson’s birthplace has the distinction of being the only presidential birthplace reconstructed, refurbished, and interpreted by an incumbent president.”<sup>58</sup> Over the next few years after the change in policy, childhood homes, like John F. Kennedy’s, were quickly approved as landmarks (1964), and some were later turned into historic sites administered by the NPS. Herbert Hoover’s birthplace was promoted by Hoover’s son and became a landmark and then a national historic site in 1965. Meanwhile, the adult homes of presidents also became part of the National Register of Historic Places. Kennedy’s home at Hyannis Port, Massachusetts, was quietly made a historic landmark almost a decade later, and Hoover’s adult home in Palo Alto, California, became a landmark in 1984.<sup>59</sup> Some choices of where to develop historic sites, for instance in choosing between childhood homes and adult homes, may have also hinged around

---

<sup>58</sup> Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park, “Reconstructed Birthplace, Plan Your Visit,” National Park Service, <https://www.nps.gov/lyjo/planyourvisit/reconstructedbirthplace.htm>, accessed May 29, 2022.

<sup>59</sup> Mackintosh, “The Historic Sites Survey and National Historic Landmarks Program: A History,” 88.

political ideas. Tellingly, Richard Nixon suggested his birthplace in Yorba Linda for landmark status rather than his adult home. Nonetheless, in 1975 every president except then-president Gerald Ford had a historic site with a Landmark designation.

In the wake of these changes in policy about historic landmark status for sites associated with presidents and excitement over the Bicentennial, the National Park Service commissioned a theme study on the subject of presidential history, which was completed in 1977.<sup>60</sup> Its authors had been asked to provide support for “The [Landmark Advisory] board’s 1965 resolution that every president of the United States should be recognized.”<sup>61</sup> The study insisted that many “presidential residences, especially birthplaces, no longer survive.”<sup>62</sup> By the time President Carter was asked to consider the historic importance of his youth and the restoration of his childhood home (Carter was the first president to be born in a hospital), he noted, “I can see the interest people have in it.” He offered that only he could answer questions about the site, like, “What was your relationship with your father like?” and “Where was the privy?”<sup>63</sup> However, the National Park Service was not excited about welcoming another childhood home into the service. The Carter family complex was even more extensive than Lyndon B. Johnson’s and more remote as well. It included not just a childhood home and the Carters’ current residence, but also a school and a historic rail depot. The cost for the restoration was estimated at \$1.5 million. Shrinking from this additional responsibility, the NPS, according to Southeastern Region’s Regional Director Robert M. Baker, was considering a “new policy that would bar memorials for former Presidents until after their deaths.”<sup>64</sup> Despite this possibility, however, we can see that many birthplaces and childhood homes do thrive. At present, there are more than 40 authentic and replica birthplaces and childhood homes that are open to the public. Where originals did not survive, communities have often resurrected them as replicas and reconstructions.

---

<sup>60</sup> Eighteen individual theme studies were planned for the NPS by 1965, but none among them was specifically devoted to presidential history. It seems odd today, given the high number of NPS sites associated with presidents. This shift may show to some extent how the Park Service until 1965 was not specifically engaged in identifying landmarks for presidents. These theme studies were broad and inclusive and often concentrated on history of Native Americans, exploration, nation building, and artistic and scientific development, though they did not look specifically at African American history, the history of slavery, the history of women, or the presidents. The lack of attention to the presidency may have certainly been, in part, because much of the preservation of sites like Mount Vernon and Monticello were well under way through private organizations. For a full list of the planned studies, see “The Historic Sites Survey and National Historic Landmarks Program: A History,” 89–90.

<sup>61</sup> “The Historic Sites Survey and National Historic Landmarks Program: A History,” 92.

<sup>62</sup> “The Historic Sites Survey and National Historic Landmarks Program: A History,” 92.

<sup>63</sup> Brown, “Reliving Myth of the Presidential Log Cabin.”

<sup>64</sup> Scott Shepard, “Presidential Memorial Restriction Considered,” *Washington Post*, June 23, 1985. “Park Service Objects to Carter Historic Site,” *New York Times*, June 23, 1985.

## The Birthplaces of Assassinated Presidents

The preservation of John F. Kennedy's birthplace came about in the wake of his assassination. Like other childhood homes of assassinated presidents, the national grief and mourning brought commemoration and memorialization to the very places where they were born. However, the circumstances surrounding the development of the birthplaces of Presidents Lincoln, Garfield, and McKinley were all substantially different. These three presidents were all born in the middle of the country in very modest homes that were eventually lost to fire and demolition. Unlike Kennedy's birthplace, which was extant, each also included a monument and the construction of a replica birthplace or childhood home. It is possible that both the Kennedy family and the National Park Service took lessons from these efforts to commemorate the boyhood homes and birthplaces of murdered presidents.

### Abraham Lincoln's Birthplace

As early as 1865, those in search of Abraham Lincoln's birthplace found only stones that might have made up the foundation of the cabin's "chimney site."<sup>65</sup> Nonetheless, a cabin was identified in 1895 as Lincoln's birthplace by Alfred W. Dennett, "a New York-based entrepreneur. . . [who] purchased Thomas Lincoln's farm with plans to develop it into a tourist attraction complete with a large hotel."<sup>66</sup> Dennett and his local partners developed a replica cabin made from other local cabins. Eventually, those involved claimed that some of the logs that had been in the real Lincoln birthplace might have been repurposed into the source cabins they had used to build their replica. However, Dennett marketed their cabin as authentic. In addition, his group purchased a second cabin that they claimed was the birthplace of Jefferson Davis. Both Davis and Lincoln had been born in Kentucky within about 100 miles of each other. The circulation and coexhibit of the birthplaces of these two men who stood on opposite sides of the Civil War was too compelling a tourist trap for Dennett to pass up. These cabins went on display at the Tennessee Centennial in 1897 and at the 1901 Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, NY. Ultimately both cabins, dismantled with their logs, intermixed and came to rest in Long Island by 1906.

---

<sup>65</sup> Roy Hays, "Is the Lincoln Birthplace Authentic?" *Abraham Lincoln Quarterly* 5, no. 3 (1948): 127–63.

<sup>66</sup> Dwight Pitcaithley, "Abraham Lincoln's Birthplace Cabin: The Making of an American Icon," *Myth, Memory, and the Making of the American Landscape*, ed. Paul A. Shackel (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001), 240–54, 242.



Figure 3. The “birth cabin” of Abraham Lincoln. NPS.

That same year, the geographic site of Lincoln’s birth was purchased by publisher Robert Collier, who was sincerely interested in commemorating Lincoln at the physical location of his birth. Collier founded the Lincoln Farm Association (LFA) with the goal of turning the site and the cabin into a national park. The LFA collected evidence and local testimonies about the authenticity of Dennett’s cabin and, despite much conflicting evidence, chose to believe three affidavits that supported the authenticity of the Lincoln cabin that Dennett circulated. These testimonies were likely produced by the same local partners Dennett used in fabricating the cabin. With an elaborate fundraising effort that included celebrities like Ida Tarbell, Mark Twain, and Augustus Saint-Gaudens, the LFA raised funds to save the site and purchase the logs that made up both cabins (the connection to the Davis cabin now having been forgotten). These logs were moved to the Kentucky birthplace site.

In time for the 1911 opening of a colossal memorial building, a new cabin made from these various pieces was eventually reconstructed at the site inside the memorial building.<sup>67</sup> In 1933, the National Park Service acquired the site through President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s Executive Order No. 6166, which transferred nearly all the historic sites

---

<sup>67</sup> NPS historian Dwight Pitcaithley diligently and exhaustively traced the history of the various Lincoln birthplace cabins, the Davis cabin, and the cabin constructed at the memorial. His thorough account much more fully illuminates the characters involved in the schemes to develop the site and the national effort to commemorate the place of Lincoln’s birth. See Dwight Pitcaithley, “Abraham Lincoln’s Birthplace Cabin: The Making of an American Icon,” in *Myth, Memory, and the Making of the American Landscape*, ed. Paul A. Shackel (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001), 240–54.

managed by the War Department and other areas of the federal government to a revitalized National Park Service and became the Abraham Lincoln Birthplace National Historical Park. This newly organized service was dedicated not just to the large-scale nature parks in the west but increasingly to historic sites. National Park Service staff, having learned from the events at George Washington Birthplace National Monument, quietly questioned the Lincoln birthplace's authenticity for years before scholars openly began questioning it in 1948.<sup>68</sup> By 1950, the NPS's official opinion on the cabin's veracity noted that "there simply isn't any trustworthy recorded evidence for the authenticity of the cabin," and any actual logs or elements from the original birthplace cabin of Lincoln would likely have had to be totally "accidental."<sup>69</sup> As of 2020, despite the site's lack of authenticity, approximately 240,000 people visit the park each year.<sup>70</sup>

## James A. Garfield's Birthplace

Lincoln's birthplace replica might have been the first presidential childhood home replica, but it was far from the last. Perhaps because James A. Garfield was assassinated so early in his time as president, serving only four months before suffering the injuries that killed him, he was mourned greatly by the nation.<sup>71</sup> Memorials associated with Garfield are now common, but few historic sites associated with him exist. The James A. Garfield Monument in Cleveland, Ohio, was completed in 1890 with funds raised by the Garfield National Monument Association, led by Jephtha A. Wade. The monument serves as the tomb of the president and First Lady Lucretia Rudolph Garfield.<sup>72</sup> Meanwhile, the primary historic site associated with Garfield is his adult home, Lawnfield, which he purchased in 1876 and renovated, and where he lived with his family (his wife, mother, and children) until his 1881 presidency.<sup>73</sup> In 1980, Lawnfield became the James A. Garfield National Historic Site in

---

<sup>68</sup> Roy Hays, "Is the Lincoln Birthplace Authentic?," *Abraham Lincoln Quarterly* 5, no. 3 (1948): 127–63. On the NPS concern for authenticity, see Pitcaithley, "Abraham Lincoln's Birthplace Cabin: The Making of an American Icon," 239.

<sup>69</sup> NPS historian Charles Porter, quoted in "Abraham Lincoln's Birthplace Cabin: The Making of an American Icon," 250.

<sup>70</sup> Abraham Lincoln Birthplace National Historical Park, Press Release: "Tourism to the Abraham Lincoln National Historical Park Creates Over \$19 Million in Economic Benefit," National Park Service, Abraham Lincoln Birthplace National Historical Park, June 15, 2020.

<sup>71</sup> John M. Taylor, "Post-Assassination Gloom in the Gilded Age," *Manuscripts* 53, no. 3 (2001): 219–24.

<sup>72</sup> "Garfield Monument," in *Encyclopedia of Cleveland History* (Cleveland: Case Western University, 2019).

<sup>73</sup> James Garfield served as the president of Hiram College in Hiram, Ohio, and in 2013 Hiram College purchased the house that Garfield lived in while he worked at the college. In 2017, the college sponsored archaeological work at the house to uncover outbuildings. Carol Biliczky, "Hiram Purchases Historical House Once Owned by President Garfield," *Akron Beacon Journal*, November 12, 2018. Karen Farkas, "President James A. Garfield's Former Home to Be Studied by Archeologists," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, October 11, 2017.

Mentor, Ohio, administered by the National Park Service. After her husband's assassination, Lucretia Rudolph Garfield developed an addition to Lawnfield which served as one of the first presidential libraries.<sup>74</sup>

Not long after his assassination, numerous Garfield biographies were published; not the least among them was Horatio Alger's *From Canal Boy to President, or the Boyhood and Manhood of James A. Garfield* (1881).<sup>75</sup> Alger's story was for young readers, of course, and focused on how a boy of modest means came to be president. Alger believed that "our annals afford no such incentive to youth as does his life, and it will become one of the Republic's household stories."<sup>76</sup> Alger's tale, much like Parson Weems's, from its very first chapter mythologizes Garfield's birthplace as a "small and rudely-built log cabin," noting that Garfield's father had built the abode not long before his tragic death.<sup>77</sup> In this tale, the cabin became a "thing of the past," when Garfield and his older brother built his mother a new farmhouse when Garfield was 14.<sup>78</sup> Because Garfield's log-cabin origin was so crucial to his popular biography, descriptions of it are included in many of his early biographies. Another biographer Charles Carleton Coffin, for instance, describes it as "eighteen by twenty feet, containing one room. It had two doors and three windows," with a bark roof and crudely made fireplace. According to Coffin, Garfield's parents were "too far from civilization, and too poor in pocket, to obtain a sash or purchase glass."<sup>79</sup> As a result, Garfield is often described as the "last" of the log-cabin presidents.

---

<sup>74</sup> This site is perhaps worthy of comparison to the John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site because it includes a room where Garfield's mother lived after his assassination and her room, lined with photographs of her son, shows one way a grieving mother, who had been involved with her president son's political life, dealt with his loss.

<sup>75</sup> Horatio Alger (1832–99) was the author of *Ragged Dick* (1868) and many other novels for young people that featured the rise in status of a poor and earnest boy out of poverty to the middle class ("rags-to-riches"), often through a good deed performed for successful, older businessmen. Horatio Alger's stories were immensely popular during the 1870s and 1880s, and then saw a resurgence in popularity after his death (1900–20), when they appeared in inexpensive pulp editions. Complicating his popular narratives of poor, young, White men dependent upon the good graces of men in power is Alger's own history which includes his sexual abuse of young men while serving as a clergyman. On the America myth of the self-made-man and Alger's role in it, see John William Tebbel, *From Rags to Riches; Horatio Alger, Jr. and the American Dream* (New York, : Macmillan, 1963). For more on Alger's biography and writing, including his biographies of Presidents Garfield and Lincoln (and a debunking of the "rags-to-riches" myth), see Gary Scharnhorst and Jack Bales, *The Lost Life of Horatio Alger, Jr* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985).

<sup>76</sup> Alger quotes Chauncey M. Depew on this sentiment in Horatio Alger, John R. Anderson & Co., and Juvenile Collection (Library of Congress), *From Canal Boy to President, or, the Boyhood and Manhood of James A. Garfield* (New York: John R. Anderson & Company, no. 17 Murray Street, 1881), 5.

<sup>77</sup> *From Canal Boy to President, or, the Boyhood and Manhood of James A. Garfield*, 9.

<sup>78</sup> *From Canal Boy to President, or, the Boyhood and Manhood of James A. Garfield*, 19.

<sup>79</sup> Charles Carleton Coffin, *The Life of James A. Garfield* (Boston: J. H. Earle, 1880), 26.

Despite the proliferation of Garfield biographies in the late 19th century, some presidential scholars have noted that he is rarely remembered today. Little is known about the fate of the cabin where he was born.<sup>80</sup> Yet the Bicentennial prompted renewed local interest in the Garfield site. A kiosk was erected in 1976 to display information about Garfield's childhood and family, and in 1980 the Moreland Hills Historical Society was formed to "tell the story of Garfield's youth." By the 1980s, the Society set about recreating Garfield's birthplace cabin and completing archaeological studies of the site where it was located. Today, a "reconstructed" birthplace cabin sits inside the James A. Garfield Birth Site Park, and the park includes waysides that recount the stories of "Garfield's canal days, his preaching and teaching."<sup>81</sup>

## William McKinley's Birthplace

Of all the national efforts to commemorate presidents, the National McKinley Birthplace Memorial (completed and opened to the public in 1917) has perhaps the most complicated tale of any of the extant birthplaces of assassinated presidents. McKinley's birthplace was the subject of local interest even while he was governor of Ohio. However, by 1911 when the National McKinley Birthplace Association was founded, ten years after his assassination, the house was no longer in downtown Niles, Ohio. The house had been relocated not once but three times, and was then about two miles from its original location. Over the years since he resided there, the home had been expanded. In 1894, after relic hunters had "besieged" the site and when the house's original downtown location was desirable for a new bank, the house was divided into two halves.<sup>82</sup> One half, where McKinley was said to have been born, was moved to a nearby amusement park (Riverside Park) sometime while McKinley was governor. It became so associated with McKinley that by the 1900 presidential election his opponent, William Jennings Bryan, made a special effort to hold a campaign rally at the park.<sup>83</sup>

---

<sup>80</sup> Alan Peskin, "From Log Cabin to Oblivion," *American History Illustrated* 11, no. 19 (1967): 25–34.

<sup>81</sup> See the website for the Moreland Hills Historical Society, "About Us," <https://mhhsOhio.org/about-us> for a brief account of the site's history, accessed May 23, 2022.

<sup>82</sup> "McKinley Birthplace Torn Down," *Washington Post*, May 22, 1894. "McKinley's Birthplace: Old Homestead at Niles, Ohio, Now Site of Savings Bank," *Rosebud County News* June 8, 1905.

<sup>83</sup> "Mr. Bryan Speaks at Canton: Says One Term Is Enough for a President—Also Speaks at Mr. McKinley's Birthplace," *New York Times*, October 16, 1900. William McKinley launched his first gubernatorial campaign from Niles, Ohio, giving a speech from the ivy-covered balcony of his birthplace house. "The Work Begun: The Republican Campaign in Ohio Finally Opened," *Evening Bulletin*, August 24, 1891. During his first presidential election, McKinley enthusiasts made campaign mementos from relics from McKinley's home. "Political Notes," *Daily Inter Ocean*, September 11, 1896.



McKinley's assassination in 1901 at the same Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, New York, where the Lincoln birthplace cabin was on exhibit, brought images of his own birthplace to the front pages of newspapers across the country and focused attention on the town where he was born.<sup>84</sup> However, when the amusement park closed that same year, the house fell into disrepair. By 1909 a local attorney and McKinley enthusiast, Lulu E. Mackey, moved the house again to her estate Tibbetts Corners (just a few miles outside of downtown Niles).<sup>85</sup> There, she eventually rejoined the two halves of the house and restored it. She opened the house as a museum devoted to the 25th president's life and displayed her collection of McKinley memorabilia. It became a popular destination for tourists. Despite her efforts and the fact that the museum was the actual physical structure where the president was born, a McKinley childhood friend, Joseph C. Butler, organized a separate memorial organization for downtown Niles. After the construction of the large-scale "birthplace memorial" in 1917, supported in part by federal funds, attendance at Mackey's birthplace home museum lagged. Nonetheless, Mackey kept the birthplace house open until her death in 1934. The house was destroyed by fire three years later.<sup>86</sup>

The colossal neoclassical William McKinley Birthplace Memorial in downtown Niles did not include the actual birthplace structure, but it was an effort to both remember the president's time in Niles and to provide a substantial public library for the community, which could also display relics and mementos associated with McKinley's life and career.<sup>87</sup> However, in a strange twist of fate, in 2003, after the donation of the original lot where the house once stood, the McKinley Memorial Library constructed a \$700,000 replica of his birthplace, "furnished with antique pieces true to the era, but not original items."<sup>88</sup> The replica is called the McKinley Birthplace Home and Research Center and is part of a large campus of memorial sites in Niles, Ohio, that include the McKinley Memorial Library and the McKinley Memorial Museum.<sup>89</sup>

---

<sup>84</sup> See, for instance, images of the president, Mrs. McKinley, his birthplace, and their home in Canton, Ohio, in *The Chicago Tribune*, September 7, 1901, in the *Bismarck Daily Tribune* [North Dakota], September 16, 1901, and the *Bellefontaine Republican* (Bellefontaine, Ohio), September 17, 1901.

<sup>85</sup> "Buys McKinley Birthplace; Ohio Woman Lawyer Will Make House Long Used by Tramps, a Museum," *Washington Post*, November 29, 1909.

<sup>86</sup> The Niles Historical Society in Niles, Ohio, has pieced together a number of the details of the house's division and two moves and its eventual destruction on its website. Niles Historical Society, "The Story of Lot #20, President William McKinley's Birthplace," Niles Historical Society, <http://www.nileshistoricalsociety.org/lot20.htm>.

<sup>87</sup> For a full description of what was planned, see "To Perpetuate Memory of a President," *Sea Coast Echo*, November 23, 1912. Among the fundraising efforts for the site was the Congressionally sanctioned development of 1,000 McKinley Birthplaces Souvenir dollar coins, which were distributed by the McKinley Birthplace Association. "No Reason for Lack of 1-Cent Pieces," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, November 4, 1917.

<sup>88</sup> "Replica of McKinley Childhood Home Dedicated," *Associated Press State & Local Wire*, May 5, 2003.

<sup>89</sup> For more information on the replica and the memorial, see the website of the McKinley Memorial Library (<http://www.mcklib.org>).

## John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site

The birthplace of John F. Kennedy made its way to the National Park Service after more than a century and a half of presidential birthplace commemoration in the United States. NPS employees had learned much from its management of presidential sites, especially birthplaces, that did not meet their growing professional standards for authenticity. The Kennedy birthplace's preservation and restoration came in the wake of the tragedy of Kennedy's assassination, but also after other Americans and the agency had worked for years to commemorate three previously assassinated presidents. By 1963, the National Park Service had a controversial history with presidential birthplaces, and some staff had a general sense that birthplaces were less critical to preserve than other sites that might tell the public more about where and how great men and women did their work.<sup>90</sup> It was under these institutional and contextual conditions that in 1963 individuals in Brookline, Massachusetts, responded to the tragedy of President Kennedy's death, and the National Park Service began to tentatively and cautiously follow community and family activity at Kennedy's birthplace in Brookline.

---

<sup>90</sup> Barry Mackintosh, "Interpretation in the National Park Service," ed. National Park Service History Division (Washington, DC, 1986), 23.

## CHAPTER THREE

# Marking the Birthplace of Kennedy

**D**uring John F. Kennedy's presidential campaign, images of his birthplace in Brookline were featured in photographic essays about his life and biography. *The Boston Globe* ran a multiday series on Kennedy's "New England Heritage." The full-page spread from July 1960 not only ran a snapshot of an adorable eight-year-old Jack Kennedy but also images of the house at 83 Beals Street. Several showed the interior of the house, including the living room and the bedroom where he was born. Both, of course, were quite changed in the 40 years since he had lived there.<sup>1</sup> After he became president, the attention to Kennedy's birthplace intensified. By late February 1961, newspapers became interested in the maintenance and upkeep of the house, and an elderly resident and part-owner of the house, Martha Pollack, asked the Brookline Selectmen if they could help repaint her "weather-beaten" home. The selectmen found that the town could not legally do so directly, but eventually 25 members of a local chapter of the Paint and Decoration Contractors Association of America painted the house instead (Figure 4).<sup>2</sup>

The issue of maintenance put the home on the minds of both Brookline's selectmen and area schoolchildren, who began to see the house, its upkeep, and its commemoration as part of Brookline's responsibility. They organized to place a bronze plaque outside the birthplace.<sup>3</sup> Thus began a decade of local, state, familial, and federal interest in preserving Kennedy's birthplace, which would lead it to become the national historic site it is today.

Before the official marking of the birthplace site with the plaque, some questioned whether John F. Kennedy was born in the house on Beals Street. In March of 1962, as conversations about the plaque were escalating, one selectman, Eugene P. Carver Jr., who was part of a five-person Brookline committee appointed to develop "a plan for preserving the [birthplace] home," claimed that Joseph Kennedy had told him personally, sometime in the 1940s, that John Kennedy had been born at the Hotel Beaconsfield.<sup>4</sup> After Rose Kennedy publicly declared John Kennedy to have been born in the house, the committee

---

<sup>1</sup> "New England Heritage: A Picture Story of the Democratic Presidential Nominee from Birth through School Years," *Boston Globe*, July 15, 1960.

<sup>2</sup> "Brookline Can't Paint Birthplace of Kennedy," *Boston Globe*, February 28, 1961.

<sup>3</sup> "Brookline Pupils Urge Kennedy Birthplace Plaque," *Boston Globe*, November 18, 1962, "Painters Swarm in Brookline: Free Facial for Kennedy House," *Boston Globe*, September 12, 1961.

<sup>4</sup> "Uncertain on Kennedy Birthplace," *Boston Globe*, March 11, 1962.

placed the commemorative plaque in front of the house later that year.<sup>5</sup> Martha Pollack granted an easement of land to Brookline for the plaque's placement, and in return, the town agreed to maintain the front area of the yard.<sup>6</sup>



Figure 4. Painting House, circa 1961. JOFI 1504, Box 14, Folder 2.

Even with the plaque in place and the house freshly painted, there was still a lingering local interest in developing the house into a historic shrine. A newspaper article noted a year before, in late 1961, that there was a proposal to acquire “President Kennedy’s birthplace, and eight surrounding homes, as a shrine” dedicated to Kennedy. The local group, Brookline Barracks of the Veterans of World War I suggested that Brookline slowly acquire the homes surrounding the Kennedy Birthplace and raze these houses to make a park. This idea was soundly rejected by the neighbors whose homes would have been demolished in the plan. For instance, Natalie Broudy, who lived at 77 Beals Street, quickly identified neighborhood redevelopment in Brookline as part of her resistance to the idea of a shrine. “They tried to get urban redevelopment in the area and the government turned them down. Have they no feelings for the residents?” Another neighbor, Ruth Joffe at 103 Beals Street, brought up the specter of the Cold War: “Do they think we’re in Russia where they can take our homes and give us assessment value alone?”<sup>7</sup> Federal urban renewal projects

---

<sup>5</sup> Gary Kayakachioian, “Mrs. Kennedy Ends Confusion over President’s Birthplace,” *Boston Globe*, March 25 1962. “Tablet Finally Marks Kennedy Birthplace,” *Boston Globe*, September 12, 1962.

<sup>6</sup> “Kennedy Birthplace: A National Shrine?,” *Boston Globe*, November 5, 1963. “Brookline to Get Big Pay Hike,” *Boston Globe*, March 13, 1963.

<sup>7</sup> “Neighbors Kick Up Fuss: They Don’t Want a Shrine Made of Kennedy Home,” *Boston Globe*, December 15, 1961.

had been doing just that throughout the 1950s and 1960s in nearby Boston and in Brookline.<sup>8</sup> Another neighbor, Florence Palladino, put it even more bluntly and perhaps in response to NPS sites being developed in the greater Boston area: “They need a park in this area like they need a hole in the head.”<sup>9</sup> On another front, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts was interested in commemorating the president. In January of 1963, a petition was made to investigate where to place a state plaque at John F. Kennedy’s legal residence and campaign headquarters at his apartment at 122 Bowdoin Street in Boston. However, this proposal was eventually rejected in March of that same year.<sup>10</sup> Despite losing the state-level battle to mark Kennedy’s apartment and the vehement disinterest in a “shrine” by the neighbors, discussion of the development of a shrine at the birthplace stayed in newspapers like *The Boston Globe* until just weeks before the President’s assassination on November 22, 1963.<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> See Warren Boeschstein, “Design of Socially Mixed Housing,” *Journal of the American Planning Association* 3, no. 5 (1971): 311–18. There had been efforts of urban planners to redevelop the “Brookline Farm Area,” a neighborhood that had traditionally been where the non-live-in domestic staff who served Brookline’s elite had lived along with other low-income residents in Brookline. The Farm Urban Renewal Project removed more than 200 low-income families from the neighborhood. It was one of the few renewal efforts nationally where there was an attempt in the 1960s to develop and integrate “mixed-income” housing. After the “slum” area was cleared, one hundred public housing units, 116 middle-income houses, and 762 upper-income houses were created. However, only 45 percent of those displaced moved back to their neighborhood. Brookline instead took homes from the poor and developed, with public money, housing for elite residents which included swimming pools, three tennis courts, and a badminton-volleyball court. These amenities were only open to residents in the upper-income housing initially. Eventually, the Redevelopment Authority did succeed in badgering the upper-income residents into opening a pool to lower-income residents. At the time of the initial discussion of a Kennedy shrine at the house, the redevelopment was well underway, but wouldn’t be completed until the same year the birthplace opened to the public as an NPS site: 1969. For a general discussion of the substantial impact of urban renewal in the Boston area, see Thomas H. O’Connor, *Building a New Boston: Politics and Urban Renewal, 1950–1970* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1993); and Jim Vrabel, *A People’s History of the New Boston* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2014). For a study of how the NPS worked with and through urban renewal in the Boston area, see Seth Bruggeman, *Lost on the Freedom Trail: The National Park Service and Urban Renewal in Postwar Boston* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2022).

<sup>9</sup> “Neighbors Kick Up Fuss: They Don’t Want a Shrine Made of Kennedy Home.”

<sup>10</sup> See Massachusetts House of Representatives, *Journal of the House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts* (Boston: Wright & Potter Printing Co., 1963), 266, 956.

<sup>11</sup> “Kennedy Birthplace: A National Shrine?” Although the article mentions that the selectmen were to take up the discussion of a shrine again at their November 13, 1963, meeting, minutes from that meeting reveal nothing of what was discussed, and ten days later the discussion immediately took on a different tone after the President’s assassination.



**Figure 5.** National Day of Mourning at the birthplace, Getty Images, from Temple Kehillath Israel Archives.

After Kennedy's assassination, individuals and communities across the United States and the globe evaluated their connections with the former president as they grieved. Newspapers ran headlines that outlined what Kennedy meant to their communities, and many found their own ways to memorialize the fallen president. Across the United States, schools, civic centers, airports, roads, ships, and bridges were quickly named or renamed for President Kennedy, and swiftly a silver dollar was slated for minting in his memory. Across the globe, there were nearly immediate calls for postage stamps in Kennedy's honor (and 60 countries produced such stamps, 26 more countries than had memorialized

Franklin Delano Roosevelt).<sup>12</sup> In Boston, many headlines claimed sentiments like “In Boston—People Wept: Shock Is Greatest in Kennedy Home City” and “Brookline Was His Birthplace: Whole Boston Area His Home.”<sup>13</sup> Early reporting suggested that the president would be buried alongside his infant son in Brookline.<sup>14</sup> Federal commemorative efforts were concentrated on Kennedy’s burial at Arlington National Cemetery and on renaming and developing a new national performing arts center in his honor.<sup>15</sup>

In Brookline, memorial efforts centered around the birthplace. Initial discussions of a birthplace shrine in Brookline were met with resistance along Beals Street and, according to some reporting, “discord” among the interest parties. While Martha Pollack had fought off attempts to turn her house and the immediate neighborhood into a shrine in 1961, after the president’s death, it appeared as though she felt “differently.”<sup>16</sup> However, reporting indicated that some neighbors were still willing to “fight to keep our houses.” Mrs. Saul Vanderwoude, for instance, argued that “this Kennedy project is going too far. . . It would be more of a memorial to have nice people living there.” Nonetheless, local Brookline Massachusetts representative Beryl Cohen began working with the state legislature to encourage the state’s “taking of the dwelling and surrounding homes for a memorial park.”<sup>17</sup>

Nationally, conversations about the preservation and importance of the Kennedy birthplace site also changed after the president’s assassination. Almost immediately, the house became a focus of mourning for diverse groups of Americans. Many came from all over the country to pay tribute to Kennedy’s life at the Brookline house. Civil rights activists from Williamston, North Carolina, came to the birthplace to sing protest songs like “We Shall Overcome,” “Black and White,” and “The Lord Will Make Us Free,” to remember “our greatest champion.” Newspaper accounts noted that Beals Street “neighbors came out on the sidewalks and swayed with the singers.” Despite the brief moment of shared

---

<sup>12</sup> “From Schools to Silver Dollars...in Memory,” *Boston Globe*, November 29, 1963; Ernest A. Kerr, “Many Nations Rushing JFK Commemorative,” *Boston Globe*, December 8, 1963; Victor O. Jones, “Memorials,” *Boston Globe*, December 25, 1963. Michael J. Hogan, *The Afterlife of John Fitzgerald Kennedy: A Biography* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 129.

<sup>13</sup> “In Boston—People Wept: Shock Is Greatest in Kennedy Home City,” *Boston Globe*, November 23, 1963; “Brookline Was His Birthplace: Whole Boston Area His Home,” *Boston Globe*, November 23, 1963.

<sup>14</sup> “Hundreds Watch in Dark,” *Boston Globe*, November 23, 1963.

<sup>15</sup> Historian Michael Hogan uncovers the complicated funding and role of the Kennedy family (especially Jacqueline Kennedy) played in the development of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, and gives an account of the construction of the most “successful” and “popular” Kennedy site of memory—the Kennedy tomb at Arlington National Cemetery, in his book. See Hogan, *The Afterlife of John Fitzgerald Kennedy: A Biography*, 140–52. Congress appropriated \$15.5 million for the John F. Kennedy Center for Performing Arts in January of 1964 and broke ground on it, after raising the bulk of the cost for it from private foundations and more than 10,000 individual gifts, that same year. Public Law 88-260, January 23, 1964.

<sup>16</sup> “At JFK Birthplace—Discord; 3-Way Struggle in Brookline on Seizure for Kennedy Shrine,” *Boston Globe*, December 14, 1963.

<sup>17</sup> “At JFK Birthplace—Discord; 3-Way Struggle in Brookline on Seizure for Kennedy Shrine.” See also, “Bill Asks State Take Birthplace,” *Brookline Chronicle-Citizen*, December 5, 1963; “Selectmen Approve Article on JFK Birthplace,” *Brookline Chronicle-Citizen*, December 12, 1963.

grief, the visitors knew that Boston and Brookline both had “segregated neighborhoods and segregated schools,” and the mourning singers had to stay with Black families in Roxbury.<sup>18</sup> Closer to home, two days after the assassination, much of the congregation of the nearby Temple Kehillath Israel, led by Rabbi Manuel Saltzman, solemnly walked down Beals Street to place a wreath at the birthplace.<sup>19</sup> That day, Brookline schoolchildren and many others did the same, when the entire nation observed a national day of mourning (Figure 5).<sup>20</sup>

By December 25th, officials in Brookline were formally investigating the making of a shrine for the slain president and proposing that the birthplace might be purchased from Martha Pollack or taken through “eminent domain.” Picked to lead the Brookline Birthplace Memorial Committee were Thomas J. Noonan, a former selectman, as chair; George V. Brown Jr.; George D. McNeilly; Hamilton Coolidge; Eugene P. Carver; Sumner Chertok; Theresa Morse; Daniel Tyler Jr.; James A. Lowell; and Manuel Saltzman.<sup>21</sup> Among these were two Brookline selectmen, a representative of the Brookline Planning Board, at

---

<sup>18</sup> Gloria Negri, “Kennedy Tribute by N.C. Negroes: Sing at Brookline Birthplace,” *Boston Globe*, December 25 1963. “We don’t make believe to ourselves that discrimination and segregation don’t exist here in the North. You have stayed with families in Roxbury,” Dr. [William] Ryan told them. “You have seen with your own eyes that we have segregated neighborhoods and segregated schools.” Ryan was the Chairman of the Brookline Civil Rights Committee. Brookline neighborhoods, like many towns in the North and South, had in place racially discriminatory housing covenants throughout most of the 20th century. For a recent documentary about Brookline’s slow path toward racial inclusion, see R. Harvey Bravman’s 2019 film *Brookline: Facing Civil Rights*. See also “Town Reconciles with Black History,” *Brookline.com*, March 19, 2018. Even in recent years, Brookline continues to struggle with economic racial segregation; see the Town of Brookline’s Select Board meeting notes, which includes a significant bibliography about segregation in the town today. Brookline Select Board, “Warrant Article Explanations Filed by Petitioners for the November 19, 2019, Town Meeting” (Brookline, Massachusetts, 2019).

<sup>19</sup> Leo Shapiro, “Synagogues, Hebrew Schools Pay Tearful Tribute,” *Boston Globe*, November 25, 1963. See also the images in Jean Kramer, *Brookline, Massachusetts: A Pictorial History* (Boston: Historical Publishing Company, 1989), 144–45.

<sup>20</sup> “Boston: Thousands at Services, All Business Is Stilled,” *Boston Globe*, November 25, 1963.

<sup>21</sup> George V. Brown Jr. was the Chairman of the Brookline Selectmen and the son of Boston Marathon Founder, George V. Brown Sr. Sumner Chertok was intimately involved in the redevelopment of Brookline in the 1960s as the director of the Brookline Redevelopment Authority. Chertok was adamant that Brookline must eliminate “blight” “since we just don’t have any vacant land to develop further.” Chertok was in charge of the lengthy project to develop the Brookline Farm Area and was intimately acquainted with the power of eminent domain. See Anthony Yudis, “Old Buildings Must Be Replaced by Modern Construction, Brookline Problem: No Room to Expand,” *Boston Globe*, October 3, 1965. Theresa Morse was the Chairman of the Brookline Housing Authority, a long-time social worker in Brookline, and president of the Massachusetts League of Women Voters; her husband Alan Morse was also a Selectman for Brookline. See Edgar J. Driscoll, “Theresa Morse, Community Leader on Housing, Social Services,” *Boston Globe*, November 28, 1983. Daniel Tyler Jr. was a Brookline selectman for 15 years, an official with the MTA, and the Massachusetts Republican State Committee Chairman. See “Daniel Tyler Jr., 68, Ex-State GOP Head,” *Boston Globe*, May 22, 1967. James A. Lowell was a prominent educator in Brookline, serving as an English teacher and as the headmaster at the Park School; he was also president of the Brookline Historical Society. See “James Lowell, 84; Was Headmaster at Brookline School, Taught English,” *Boston Globe*, June 5, 1984. Manuel Saltzman was the Rabbi at the Congregation Kehillath Israel, which is located in the synagogue (built 1924) on Harvard Street that met the south end of Beals Street.



least one veteran of World War I, representatives of the Housing Authority, the Brookline Historical Society, the chairman of Brookline Redevelopment Authority, and a rabbi who was also involved in the nearby North Brookline Improvement Committee.<sup>22</sup>

On the state level, throughout 1964, the Massachusetts House was bogged down with petitions and commissions to name holidays after President Kennedy, to name an airport, expressway, turnpike, stadium, ice skating rink, swimming pool, dam, and many schools after him. There were a great number of requests to convene special commissions to establish a “suitable memorial to the memory of the late President,” other than the one designated for Brookline and suggested by Representative Cohen. There were requests for official state portraits, awards, and the erection of a Kennedy statue in Copley Park. One Thomas A. Sheehan, a Democratic representative from Dorchester, proposed creating a special commission that would look into the “advisability of changing the Seal of the Commonwealth in such a manner as to memorialize the former president.” Someone else proposed adding “Land of Kennedy” to the official language on car license plates.<sup>23</sup> The petition from Brookline for state appropriations for a “suitable memorial to commemorate the birthplace of John Fitzgerald Kennedy” was put forward formally by Fredya Koplow, Matthew Brown, “and other (selectmen)” on January 1, 1964.<sup>24</sup> Despite some movement on behalf of the state legislature, the birthplace was still in limbo at the end of 1964.

## The National Park Service Assesses the Site

In March of 1964, the then superintendent of Minute Man National Historical Park (Minute Man), Edwin Small, visited Brookline to assess the site and the community’s interest in it. Small started his career at the Park Service in 1935 when he was hired on as a historian for the New Deal effort to survey the state of historic architecture and preservation of the United States, during the Great Depression. The 1930s were the National Park Service’s first real forays into the preservation and administration of historic sites. Inspired both by an NPS director, Arno B. Cammerer, who was interested in historic sites, the reorganization of all branches of the federal government under Franklin Delano Roosevelt, and the National Historic Sites Act (1935), the Park Service began to catalog, document, and develop select historic sites for the first time. Small was there for the beginning. After

---

<sup>22</sup> “Brookline Picks Group to Study Kennedy Shrine,” *Boston Globe*, December 25, 1963.

<sup>23</sup> See the Massachusetts House of Representatives, *Journal of the House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts* (Boston: Wright & Potter Printing Co., 1964), 49, 54, 150, 62, 223, 28, 32–38, 91, 94, 302, 303, 306, 307, 319, 322–26, 602, 718, 963, 97, 1760.

<sup>24</sup> The original Brookline petition was put forward by Beryl Cohen (Dem) and taken up by Fredya Koplow (GOP); both were battling in March of 1964 for Brookline’s seat in the Massachusetts Senate. See “Primary Clinched by Cohen, Koplow,” *Boston Globe*, March 25, 1964. After the special election, Cohen won with Ted Kennedy’s endorsement, despite the Republican stronghold in Brookline. “Cohen Triumphs, GOP Claims Foul,” *Boston Globe*, April 15, 1964.

serving in Navy intelligence in World War II, he returned to NPS to serve as the superintendent of the Salem Maritime National Historic Site. He then took on the role of leading the Boston National Historic Sites Commission, which was tasked with identifying and developing Boston-area sites for the National Park Service. Small next served as both the first superintendent at Minute Man National Historical Park and the first general superintendent of the Boston Service Group, which functioned as an administrative unit for the development and support of Boston area historic sites. By the time Small reached Brookline, he had personally developed or had a hand in developing nearly every historic site in the northeastern United States.<sup>25</sup>

Small sent a trip report to the Regional Director to recount both his research into the time that John F. Kennedy had spent in the house and his recent visit to Brookline to uncover the local efforts to commemorate Kennedy. Citing the 1960 James MacGregor Burns biography of Kennedy, he quoted in the report: “Here Jack spent his early childhood—years that he hardly remembers today.”<sup>26</sup> By 1964, there was already an immense widespread interest in Kennedy, and the number of books published about him reveal a virtual industry in the immense popularity that would come to be called the “Kennedy phenomenon.”<sup>27</sup> It is telling that Small used the one serious biographical profile written *before* the 1960 election as his most useful source on Kennedy’s childhood. Its author James MacGregor Burns was a former Democratic candidate for Congress in Massachusetts, political scientist, university professor, and presidential historian, and he had personal access to Kennedy on the campaign trail. Commissioned by Harcourt Brace in 1958 to provide the profile, Burns was able to interview Kennedy many times and also interviewed his wife, parents, other members of his family, and his teachers, among others. The study was decidedly not a neutral one. Burns, then a Democratic Party mover and shaker, ultimately endorsed Kennedy as an earnest candidate, with “high presidential quality and promise.” Rather than including an “equal number of conclusions against” Kennedy to appear balanced in his portrayal, he decided “against that kind of neutrality” in his biography.<sup>28</sup>

---

<sup>25</sup> Edwin Small, interview by Herbert S. Evison, October 19, 1971, NPS Oral History Collection (HFCA 1817), NPS History Collection, Harpers Ferry Center for Media Development (Harpers Ferry, WV).

<sup>26</sup> Edwin Small, Memo: Superintendent Minute Man to Director Northeast Region, Memo: National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings—Information on the John Fitzgerald Kennedy Birthplace, Brookline, Massachusetts, March 24, 1964, John F. Kennedy National Historic Site Resource Management Records, 1963–2003 (JOFI 1504), Box 1, Folder 4. James MacGregor Burns, *John Kennedy: A Political Profile*, 1st ed. (New York, : Harcourt, 1960).

<sup>27</sup> Though hard to calculate the exact origin of the term the “Kennedy phenomenon,” it is in use during the 1960 campaign.

<sup>28</sup> Burns, *John Kennedy: A Political Profile*, vi, vii.

Importantly, Burns was one of the first scholars to provide a historical context for the Kennedy family for a serious reading audience. Burns begins his study with the Kennedys' family roots in Ireland, spending more than a few pages explaining the myth that what Kennedy's great-grandfather faced as an Irishman in Boston was worse than that which any previous groups had suffered in the United States. He argues that the Irish were "the lowest of the low, lower . . . even than the Negroes."<sup>29</sup> While no historian would make this argument today, Burns was among the first to describe the ethnic tensions in Boston that led John F. Kennedy's paternal grandfather into a political circle where he would meet Kennedy's maternal grandfather, John F. Fitzgerald ("Honey Fitz"), another Irish-American but Boston-born politician.<sup>30</sup> So despite revealing and emphasizing the incredible hardships that faced early Irish immigrants to the United States, Burns also explained the political privilege that ran through three generations of Kennedy's family by the time of his presidential campaign and the family's inexorable tie to the city of Boston. Small uncovered in Burns much of what the NPS and others would come to understand as John Fitzgerald Kennedy's essential family history. Burns and Small were both interested in the president's father Joseph Kennedy's business history and life milestones, especially his move to Brookline after marrying his wife, Rose.

Edwin Small ultimately ruled that "at best" Kennedy's association with Brookline "did not exceed much more than the first decade of his life." Small made the argument that the birthplace did "not hold much potential as a historic site to receive much visitation by the public without a good deal of expense." That expense, in Small's quick assessment, would come with the needed "removal of adjacent homes, to say nothing about needed space for parking, if any serious attempt were to be made to encourage public visitation."<sup>31</sup> A local group interested in making a memorial at the house, the Brookline Barracks of the Veterans of World War I, again suggested that at least eight homes near the birthplace be taken by eminent domain. Small noted that the neighborhood had changed since the

---

<sup>29</sup> *John Kennedy: A Political Profile*, 6. Irish immigrants were undoubtedly treated poorly and faced discrimination in employment, housing, politics, social settings, and education in the United States. However, their history has also been distorted over the years and used by some White Americans to argue that there were "Irish Slaves" in the United States who were treated as poorly as African and African American victims of chattel slavery and Jim Crow segregation. One of the first people who propagated this myth was Holocaust denier and conspiracy theorist Micheal A. Hoffman II in his self-published book *They Were White and They Were Slaves* (1993). This myth has been deployed by racist organizations since the 1990s and more recently used in response to the Black Lives Matter movement and even mainstream calls for reparations for slavery. While the Kennedy family was in no way responsible for these books and memes, their authors often play to popular interest in Kennedy and his family. For a detailed assessment of the myth and its circulation, see Alex Amend's "How the Myth of the 'Irish Slaves' Became a Favorite Meme of Racists Online," *Hate Watch, Southern Poverty Law Center*, April 19, 2016. <https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2016/04/19/how-myth-irish-slaves-became-favorite-meme-racists-online>.

<sup>30</sup> *John Kennedy: A Political Profile*, 10.

<sup>31</sup> Edwin Small, Memo: Superintendent Minute Man to Director Northeast Region, Memo: National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings—Information on the John Fitzgerald Kennedy Birthplace, Brookline, Massachusetts, March 24, 1964, John F. Kennedy National Historic Site Resource Management Records, 1963–2003 (JOFI 1504), Box 1, Folder 4.

Kennedy family lived there, it was now a Jewish neighborhood with a temple at the top of Beals Street, and that these neighbors, according to the local paper, “opposed strongly” such a plan.<sup>32</sup> The amount of money that would be needed to buy out the neighbors, Small estimated at between \$200,000 to \$250,000. Small also included a brief assessment of the Kennedy family’s Abbottsford house, which had been broken up into apartments but seemed to him to be mostly intact. “In giving any consideration to recognition, or treatment otherwise for with 83 Beals Street or 51 Abbottsford Road, we believe it is also essential to consider the plausible result of having the Memorial Library in such close proximity. Will the Memorial Library prove to be an incentive to visitors to come to the house or will they be satisfied with the splendor and scope of what they are expected to be able to see in the new library and institute? We do not have the answer to this question.”<sup>33</sup> The John F. Kennedy Presidential Library was already in development and was then planned to be developed nearby on Harvard’s campus. Though the museum and library would eventually move to Columbia Point in the Dorchester neighborhood of Boston, the institution was delayed in opening to the public until 1979. Led by the former first lady, Jaqueline Kennedy, the board of trustees began the process of organizing collections, finding an architect, and eventually a new location.<sup>34</sup>

Edwin Small was then superintendent of a relatively new historical park that he had helped create through years of controversial land acquisition. He was keenly aware of the possibility for conflict that exercising eminent domain would cause and the difficulty of acquiring land for a park piece-by-piece through careful negotiation. The NPS’s aggressive land policies in Concord and Lexington, Massachusetts, as it developed Minute Man National Historical Park, had initially led to great troubles with community relations, and became the “number one” problem for the park in the years after its founding.<sup>35</sup> Small, ultimately, saw the Kennedy birthplace as less historically significant and its development more difficult and expensive than the Park Service would want. He did not make an

---

<sup>32</sup> Small, Memo: Superintendent Minute Man to Director Northeast Region, Memo: National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings—Information on the John Fitzgerald Kennedy Birthplace, Brookline, Massachusetts, March 24, 1964, John F. Kennedy National Historic Site Resource Management Records, 1963–2003 (JOFI 1504), Box 1, Folder 4.

<sup>33</sup> Small, Memo: Superintendent Minute Man to Director Northeast Region, Memo: National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings—Information on the John Fitzgerald Kennedy Birthplace, Brookline, Massachusetts, March 24, 1964, John F. Kennedy National Historic Site Resource Management Records, 1963–2003 (JOFI 1504), Box 1, Folder 4.

<sup>34</sup> The library has a complicated history of its own, though it has no administrative history as of the time of this report. The library had an innovative oral history program that was inspired by Robert Kennedy’s wishes and an important museum attached to the archives. The site wasn’t opened to the public until 1979. See Chapter 4 for more information about the Kennedy Library and Museum.

<sup>35</sup> Benjamin Zerbey, interview by Joan Zenzen, April 13, 2005.

impassioned pitch to include the site on the roster of national historic sites. However, his research ultimately helped the site's nomination to become a national historic landmark in 1964, and his presence in the area promised to monitor local efforts at the site.<sup>36</sup>

## “It Would be Nice...for Mother”

Though the NPS did not pursue the house as a potential historic site, the city of Brookline sought the help of the Kennedy family in making the house a memorial. The Brookline selectmen wrote to Rose Kennedy directly about the house in 1964.<sup>37</sup> However, it seems unlikely that Rose Kennedy wrote back to the selectmen when they asked for her assistance in securing the house for future generations. This perhaps indicated she was disinterested in the site as a memorial.<sup>38</sup> Nonetheless, in November of that year, Rose Kennedy wrote to her son, Edward (Ted) Kennedy, making sure that he “not give away” the “bedroom set that I had when Jack was born,” that might have been in Jack Kennedy’s apartment on Bowdoin Street.<sup>39</sup> Rose Kennedy did not initially seem drawn to the idea of preserving the birthplace. Perhaps she was considering her own or posterity’s potential attachments to the bed in which the president was born. Though the selectmen of Brookline and the press were interested in a memorial at Kennedy’s birthplace, most of the Beals Street neighbors, the Kennedy family, and even the National Park Service (if we take into account Small’s careful assessment of the site’s significance, site limitations, and cost) were not.

However, in 1966, the Kennedy family’s interest in the site seems to have shifted. In a note from Ted Kennedy to Jacqueline Kennedy in May, Ted Kennedy laid out three ways to protect the birthplace and indicated his preference that the house go to the National Park Service as a gift from the family. Mentioning that he had already spoken with Democratic Congressman Thomas (Tip) O’Neill and Republican Senator Leverett Saltonstall, to ensure bipartisan support for the legislation, Kennedy endorsed a plan that the family or the family foundation buy the house from Martha Pollack for more than \$25,000 (the then-current price for homes in the Beals Street neighborhood). He noted that Pollack had given the town of Brookline an indication that she would willing to sell the

---

<sup>36</sup> “96 Historic Sites Approved by U.S.: Kennedy Birthplace among Places,” *New York Times*, July 19, 1964. For more information on the process that designated the Kennedy site outside of the traditional “50-Year-Rule,” see John H. Sprinkle, “‘Of Exceptional Importance’: The Origins of the ‘Fifty-Year Rule’ in Historic Preservation,” *The Public Historian* 29, no. 2 (2007): 92.

<sup>37</sup> “How to Save Birthplace? JFK Shrine a Worry,” *Boston Globe*, July 8, 1964. The site was designated a national historic landmark just a few days later on July 19, 1964.

<sup>38</sup> Christine Arato, “This House Holds Many Memories: Constructions of a Presidential Birthplace at the John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site,” in *Born in the U.S.A.: Birth, Commemoration, and American Public Memory*, ed. Seth C. Bruggeman (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2012), 27–48.

<sup>39</sup> Rose Kennedy to Edward Kennedy, Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy Papers, JFK Library, November 25, 1964; Kennedy.

house as long as she could live there for the rest of her life. Kennedy suggested that they acquire it as soon as possible, paying extra as an incentive to purchase it now. He had even imagined, that it “would be nice, for example, for Mother to be able to go in and furnish the home the way it was when the President was born there.”<sup>40</sup>

Though Ted Kennedy sought Jackie Kennedy’s approval, it is clear that the family did not move quickly enough to secure the title to the house on their terms. Later in 1966, Attorney Merrill Hassenfeld started the process of buying the house from the Pollack family. In a letter, this time from Hassenfeld to Robert Kennedy, Hassenfeld offered to sell the house to the Kennedy family. While the press at the time reported that Merrill Hassenfeld, a history enthusiast, represented a “group” of interested investors who purchased the home from Martha Pollack, Hassenfeld says he bought the house on behalf of a single client who wanted to turn the house into a popular tourist destination. Hassenfeld, or perhaps Joseph F. Gargan, Rose Kennedy’s nephew and an attorney associated with family affairs and Robert F. Kennedy’s presidential campaign, somehow convinced his client that the Kennedy family should have control of the house’s fate rather than the tourist market.<sup>41</sup> While Hassenfeld said and the press reported that Hassenfeld sold the house “for \$55,000 without profit” to Joseph F. Gargan, deeds indicate that there was actually a direct transfer of the house from Martha Pollack and her partner directly to Gargan.<sup>42</sup> Nonetheless, by the end of 1966, the Kennedy family was indeed in control of the house’s fate and had let the selectmen in Brookline know that they should step back from attempts to develop a memorial at the birthplace because the family intended “to preserve it as a historic shrine.”<sup>43</sup> They requested that the town “postpone any action at the local level until it was determined what disposition might be made of the property.”<sup>44</sup>

---

<sup>40</sup> Edward M. Kennedy to Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy, Note: “EMK to JBK, May 1966,” Written by Hand Atop the Typed Page, Robert Luddington (1925–) Papers, 1915–2006, JOFI, May, 1966.

<sup>41</sup> Phone Conversation with Merrill Hassenfeld, February 2, 2017. Hassenfeld himself was such a history enthusiast that he played the role of William Dawes in the 1979 reenactment of Paul Revere’s ride and the role of Revere in 1982. Thomas Sabulis, “Revere Rides Again,” *Boston Globe*, April 12 1979. “Other Patriots Weekend Re-Enactments and Parades,” *Boston Globe*, April 16, 1981. See also Merrill Hassenfeld to Robert F. Kennedy, September 4, 1966, Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy Papers, SCPF 1964–68, John F. Kennedy Library. See also the Norfolk County deed of transfer from Martha Pollack and Alvin Clark (Pollack’s son) to Joseph F. Gargan, from November 1, 1966.

<sup>42</sup> Gary Kayakachioian, “JFK Home to Be Open for the Public,” *Boston Globe*, May 18, 1969; “JFK Birthplace Returns to Kin,” *Boston Globe*, November 1, 1966.

<sup>43</sup> Town of Brookline, 1966 Town Report, 28, quoted in Timothy Layton, Adrine Arakelian, and Maggie Coffin Brown, “Cultural Landscape Report for John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site,” ed. National Park Service (Boston: Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation, 2012).

<sup>44</sup> Town of Brookline, 1966 Town Report, 28, quoted in “Cultural Landscape Report for John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site.”

## Legislation to Establish the Historic Site

Just two months after President Lyndon B. Johnson signed off on the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, the most critical preservation legislation of the 20th century, discussions between the Kennedy family and the federal government about the future of the birthplace took off. After the preservation act, the NPS was able to maintain a selective register of locally important historic sites as well as national landmarks. The NPS was poised to help ensure that historic sites were both protected from demolition and candidates for federal support.<sup>45</sup> Because the Kennedy birthplace was already a national historic landmark (since 1964), it was well poised to become a unit of the NPS. By December of 1966, Robert Turner Luddington, as Rose Kennedy's and Joseph Gargan's emissary was meeting with leaders within the Park Service, including Director George B. Hartzog about restoration, interpretation, and the transition of the house into NPS hands. Robert Luddington was Rose Kennedy's interior designer and the longtime Director of Interior Decorating at the Jordan Marsh Company in Boston (Figure 6).

---

<sup>45</sup> Barry Mackintosh, *The National Parks: Shaping the System* (Washington, DC: National Park Service, 1991), 65. Barry Mackintosh was the historian who authored the national historic landmark nomination of the Kennedy Compound in Hyannis Port.



**Figure 6.** Robert Luddington in front of the Kennedy Birthplace, circa 1966.  
JOFI 1510, Robert Luddington (1925-) Papers, 1915-2006. NPS.

He had already decorated Senator Ted Kennedy's apartment, with Rose Kennedy's oversight, and had worked on other projects for her as well. He was quickly put in charge of the restoration project at a meeting of the Kennedy family, upon Rose Kennedy's strong recommendation.<sup>46</sup> Jordan Marsh had long been Boston's premier department store, stocking goods from around the globe for Boston's most fashionable consumers, and Luddington's position at the department store meant he played a relatively public role in the decorating of stylish modern homes in the Boston area. At times he worked with more than twenty decorators under his direction.<sup>47</sup> In his meeting with Park Service officials, they reportedly stressed to Luddington the "importance of as much authenticity as possible." Hartzog and others urged Luddington to experience Eleanor Roosevelt's audio tour

---

<sup>46</sup> Robert Luddington, interview by Elena Rippel et al., June 26, 2016. See also Dee Hardy, "Decorator's Magic Worked for Rose Kennedy and Dee" (clippings file, circa 1969), John F. Kennedy National Historic Site Resource Management Records, 1963–2003 (JOFI 1504).

<sup>47</sup> Luddington, "Oral History."



at Hyde Park as an interpretive model for Rose Kennedy, and shortly after the December meeting, he set up a meeting with the Roosevelt Home's curator to learn about the process of creating an audio tour.<sup>48</sup>

Four months after the purchase, Rose Kennedy wrote to Secretary of the Interior, a John F. Kennedy appointee, Stewart Udall, saying that she had "refurnished" the birthplace "the way it was when my son was born" and that she would like to "make a gift of the home to the American people," so that they could "visit it and see how people lived in 1917 and thus get a better appreciation of the history of this wonderful country." She hoped that the site could be preserved "just as have been the homes of so many other Presidents."<sup>49</sup> Though it was not entirely true that the house was already refurnished, nor was it fully restored, it is clear that Rose Kennedy wanted to make sure that Congress was ready to receive the gift before she completed her work and perhaps before any change in presidential administration. Despite their interest in restoring the house, it seems unlikely that the Kennedy family had any interest in running a historic house museum on their own, even if it was dedicated to the late president. That same month, Secretary Udall wrote to Senator Henry M. Jackson (Washington), reporting on the bill to designate the John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site, assuring him and other senators that the Kennedy family has offered to refurnish the house "in the style of the period of their occupancy and to donate the property."<sup>50</sup> In addition, the Department of the Interior estimated that the cost of running the site would come to just \$32,500 a year, and indicated that there was no need to make a full study of the site before the designation. Udall concluded that such a study could come after the fact from his own department's authority, rather than through Congress's. Initial staffing at the site, it was estimated, would require one historian-curator, one permanent guide, and two seasonal guides.<sup>51</sup> Jackson and Senator John Sherman Cooper (Kentucky) sponsored the bill in the Senate.<sup>52</sup> Massachusetts Congressman Tip O'Neill sponsored the legislation in the House. For Secretary Udall, in his testimony before the Subcommittee on National Parks and Recreation, Interior and Insular Affairs in the House and the Senate, the historical significance of John Kennedy's birthplace was so obvious that he need barely remark

---

<sup>48</sup> Luddington to Gargan, December 30, 1966, Robert Luddington (1925–) Papers, 1915–2006, JOFI 1510.

<sup>49</sup> Mrs. Joseph P. Kennedy to Stewart Udall, March 15, 1967, in "Background Book" on 90th Congress, JOFI.

<sup>50</sup> Stewart Udall to Henry M. Jackson, March 17, 1967, copy in JOFI Background Book.

<sup>51</sup> John F. Kennedy Birthplace National Historic Site (Proposed) Personal Services and Supporting Costs, March, 1967, copy in JOFI Background Book.

<sup>52</sup> Cooper was also a close colleague of John F. Kennedy's in the Senate, despite being a Republican. He was also appointed by President Johnson to the Warren Commission to investigate Kennedy's assassination.

upon it. In fact, Udall waived any required justification for the site away by saying, “There is no need to comment further before this committee on the role which history has destined the late President to play in the annals of the United States.”<sup>53</sup>

In the Senate subcommittee meeting on March 20, 1967, Senators Cooper and Jackson were prepared with memos on current presidential homes and birthplaces managed by the Department of the Interior and budget estimates for the site. There was virtually no debate. Udall read his written testimony and added that “the country is most fortunate—and this is probably a singular thing in our history—that the President’s mother, who of course has a complete remembrance of the house, its interior, its decorations, its furniture, is presently restoring it to the original condition. And this is, of course, a very fine thing that this can be done, that there is someone who has a complete recall as to the details of the interior of the house.”<sup>54</sup> His emphasis on the role of Rose Kennedy in the project is remarkable. Udall also used the opportunity to articulate a larger set of standards that the Senate should consider when thinking about designating presidential sites. “I think when one looks at our Presidents and their place in history there are, one might say, four places that possibly could be of significance to history and to the future: a birthplace; a place that is normally the residence in later years, or is the main place where a person in his resided in his mature life; a burial place; and then more recently we have been establishing, of course, the libraries of the Presidents as important historic places. In President Kennedy’s case, because of his tragic and untimely death, there will never be a place of his later years.” Udall pointed out that Kennedy was buried at Arlington Cemetery and that his birthplace was “the only other place.”<sup>55</sup> Committee members did want Udall to clarify if there was a policy on accepting presidential historic sites from the families or other organizations, and they wanted to know if a fee would be charged at the site to help offset the cost of administration. Udall explained that there was no concrete policy associated with the acceptance of presidential historic sites, but that places that were logical and “opportune” like the Kennedy birthplace were ones that Congress brought into the National Parks. Such gifts were often selected and mediated by a former president’s family. Udall called in NPS Director Hartzog to elaborate on the positive potential for a fee at the site to cover the

---

<sup>53</sup> Udall’s statements were nearly identical for both committees. See Stewart Udall, “Statement of Witness for the Department of the Interior before the Subcommittee on National Parks and Recreation, House Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, on H.R. 6424, a Bill to Establish the John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts,” March 15, 1967. A copy of this statement is included in the JOFI background book.

<sup>54</sup> “Hearing before the Subcommittee on Parks and Recreation of the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, US Senate, 19th Congress, First Sessions on S. 1161, a Bill to Establish the John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, March 20, 1967” (US Government Printing Office, 1967), 4.

<sup>55</sup> “Hearing before the Subcommittee on Parks and Recreation of the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, US Senate, 19th Congress, First Sessions on S. 1161, a Bill to Establish the John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, March 20, 1967,” 5.

operating costs of the park.<sup>56</sup> Senator Lee Warren Metcalf (Montana) commended Cooper on presenting the bill and commented on the “unique opportunity to get a birthplace of a President, restored by the memory of people who are still alive. . . we should move quickly.”<sup>57</sup> There is no congressional argument against moving forward with the historic site documented in the record. The core leadership of both the Senate and House committees believed that Rose Kennedy’s hand in the project was an important factor in why they should accept the house.

In the material presented to Congress, there was no hesitation on the part of the Park Service nor any even minimally critical comments on the limitations of the site. Despite the NPS’s general hesitancy to consider birthplaces, the Kennedy birthplace was to be an exception. Despite Edwin Small’s and local assessments that more space for visitors was necessary, Udall assured Senator Jackson and his committee that “no additional property is proposed to be acquired for the Site.”<sup>58</sup> Moreover, the summary sheet for the bill and testimony highlighted that there were three municipal parking lots nearby that could handle parking.<sup>59</sup> All of Small’s initial concerns about the site, its historical significance in Kennedy’s life, its placement on an inaccessible quiet residential street, and the additional land acquisition needed for proper parking and visitor services were brushed aside with the Kennedy family’s gift, and the legislation was quickly approved.<sup>60</sup>

## The Boston Group Administration

Nearly all of the site’s development was initially administered through the National Park Service’s Boston Service Group, often called the Boston Group. The Boston Group was established when it became clear that the NPS would acquire both the Kennedy site (1967) and Saugus Iron Works National Historic Site (1968).<sup>61</sup> George Hartzog, NPS Director from 1964 through 1972, developed “a number of administrative groups” like the Boston Group during his tenure, where “common activities could be handled in through a

---

<sup>56</sup> “Hearing before the Subcommittee on Parks and Recreation of the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, US Senate, 19th Congress, First Sessions on S. 1161, a Bill to Establish the John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, March 20, 1967,” 6.

<sup>57</sup> “Hearing before the Subcommittee on Parks and Recreation of the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, US Senate, 19th Congress, First Sessions on S. 1161, a Bill to Establish the John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, March 20, 1967,” 7.

<sup>58</sup> Stewart Udall to Henry M. Jackson.

<sup>59</sup> “Summary Sheet, John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site, Massachusetts, 90th Congress, 1967,” Copy in JOFI Background Book.

<sup>60</sup> Public Law 90-20, May 26, 1967.

<sup>61</sup> Benjamin Zerbey was Superintendent at MIMA from 1965 to July 1968, then Superintendent of the Boston Service Group from July 1968 until May 1971. Zerbey, “Oral History.”

coordinated effort.”<sup>62</sup> The Boston Group operated as a powerful administrative unit in the Boston region until the Northeast Regional Office was split into the North Atlantic and Mid-Atlantic offices in 1974, and staff from the group was absorbed into other park and regional office units.<sup>63</sup> This administrative unit, and others like it, were meant to relieve the regional office from day-to-day management duties and the work of developing new NPS sites like Kennedy.

At times the Boston Group, which was overseen by a single “general superintendent,” managed Adams National Historical Park, Minute Man National Historical Park (this included the North Bridge Unit, Battle Road Unit, the Wayside, Information Center, and Park Headquarters), Salem Maritime National Historic Site, Saugus Iron Works National Historic Site, in addition to the Kennedy site.<sup>64</sup> Edwin Small, Project Keyman for the Kennedy site, was both the superintendent of the Boston Group and Minute Man National Historical Park (Minute Man) until Benjamin Zerbey replaced Small first as superintendent at Minute Man in 1965 and then took his place as general superintendent of the Boston Group in 1968. When Zerbey took over as general superintendent of the Boston Group, he moved its headquarters from downtown Boston to Minute Man, and then in 1970, he separated out the work of the group from Minute Man further by relocating it to the Buttrick Mansion, away from Minute Man’s daily activities.<sup>65</sup> Within the Boston Group, each site had its own “park manager,” and eventually, under Zerbey, the group even had its own active social network and newsletter, *The Group Scoop*. However, because Minute Man National Historical Park was still in a long development process, much of the administrative energies of the Boston Group were spent in Lexington and Concord.<sup>66</sup> Zerbey’s

---

<sup>62</sup> George Hartzog, “Notes from Telephone Interview with Charlene K. Roise and Bruce C. Fernald, January 21,” Minute Man National Historical Park Archives 1981.

<sup>63</sup> The Boston Service Group was a surprisingly strong cohort of individuals working to develop historical research, archaeological and architectural studies, programming, and public services at Adams National Historical Park, Salem Maritime National Historic Site, Saugus Iron Works National Historic Site, Minute Man, and Kennedy. The group eventually even had its own newsletter, *The Group Scoop*, and social functions, which likely helped cement a staff that was often geographically dispersed. Herbert Olsen, “Notes from Telephone Interview with Charlene K. Roise and Bruce C. Fernald, January 15,” Minute Man National Historical Park Archives, 1981. See also copies of *The Group Scoop* in Orville Carroll’s Research Records at the Minute Man National Historical Park Archives.

<sup>64</sup> See “Boston National Park Service Group,” N.D., Orville Carroll Research Records, MIMA 63772, Minute Man National Historical Park Archives, Box 2, Folder 12.

<sup>65</sup> Charlene Roise, Edward W. Gordon, and Bruce C. Fernald, “Minute Man National Historical Park: An Administrative History (Report Draft),” Minute Man National Historical Park Archives, 1989, 70–107. This report was formally approved but is on file at the Minute Man National Historical Park Archives. The official administrative history was completed more than 20 years later by Joan Zenzen.

<sup>66</sup> Joan Zenzen, *Bridging the Past: Minute Man National Historical Park Administrative History* (National Park Service, Northeast Region History Program, 2010).

role in the day-to-day management of the Kennedy site was key in the early years of development, but his broader role in the Boston Group and location at Minute Man meant he was rarely at the Kennedy site.<sup>67</sup>

## “An Undeniable Sense of Nostalgia”

Despite his poor initial assessment of the birthplace as a potential historic site, Edwin Small, then superintendent of the Boston Group, in 1967 was made “Project Keyman” for the development of the site.<sup>68</sup> Although the enabling legislation was in place, for the work to develop critical elements of the site, like interpretation, the Park Service had to wait until the Kennedy family was ready to turn over the restored and furnished house. The NPS hoped to have the transfer happen as soon as possible, but no official dates were put in stone. For Rose Kennedy, the two years that passed between the establishing legislation and the opening of the site were complicated by her son Robert Kennedy’s campaign for the presidency and his shocking assassination. The Park Service was understandably patient about the delays, and given the long timelines for the development of other Boston Group sites, its delays were likely seen as brief compared to Minute Man or Boston National Historical Park.

Over the period while the site was under development, first Small then Benjamin Zerbey watched over, as best they could, Rose Kennedy and Robert Luddington’s work at the site. This was a challenge. Small, responding to a 1967 proposal for the site produced by the Office of Resource Planning, Philadelphia Planning Services Center, indicated that the proposal was likely “no longer current, if not exactly obsolete,” based on what Rose Kennedy and Robert Luddington had already done at the site. Small, for example, found that Luddington had stripped every bit of wallpaper from the house when he re-wallpapered. While this was a best practice for an interior decorator, it was not best practice for historic preservationists. It made it nearly impossible to study what wallpaper might have been there during the Kennedy period. But the difficulties in getting the site “right” also fell to the Park Service. In assessing the interpretation that the site proposal put forward, that John Fitzgerald Kennedy grew up in a modest home, Small provided a useful correction. He pointed out that “to refer to ‘the modest beginning of the late President; is going a little too far and is not quite accurate.” For him, “a child born in a house that had a grand piano and a mahogany dining room set did not have a ‘modest beginning’ as we conventionally view the term.” However, he did concede that the Beals Street house was “modest”

---

<sup>67</sup> Benjamin Zerbey, “Notes from Telephone Interview with Charlene K. Roise, January 8,” Minute Man National Historical Park Archives, 1981.

<sup>68</sup> Small was also serving as Project Keyman in the development of Saugus Iron Works National Historic Site during this same period. Small, “Oral History,” 8. This title seems to be an official one, as he used it in official correspondence in investigations and in the development of new sites within the Boston Service Group’s area.

compared to how the Kennedys lived in 1967.<sup>69</sup> Small, as Project Keyman, recorded much of the activity at the house in monthly reports to the Northeast Regional Office. During the summer of 1967, work on the house continued, and Park Service personnel made periodic visits while Luddington completed his work.

As decoration continued at the house, a 1967 memo noted the delicate balance in place between the NPS and Rose Kennedy. The memo indicated Rose Kennedy's concern that some items, for example, the silver porringers engraved for Joe and Jack Kennedy, were too valuable to be left out in a house open to the public. She recommended that the NPS come up with a secure place for the silver to be stored after hours.<sup>70</sup> In July, after Congress had already approved the acquisition, members of the House Subcommittee of National Parks and Recreation and their spouses toured the house with NPS officials, including Regional Director Lemuel Garrison and Small, as they were making a larger tour of historic sites in the Boston area. Luddington had just installed the twin beds in the Kennedys' bedroom, and all were excited to see the bed where Kennedy was born at the house.<sup>71</sup> In late summer there was still hope for the transfer of the site to the National Park Service and a formal opening to the public that year. That did not happen. However, in September that year, CBS taped a program with Rose Kennedy that made use of the birthplace, which brought the house back into the public eye. Staff worried that the program raised "a great number of administrative problems for the Park Service," as "many people who will see the program will want to visit the Home without delay."<sup>72</sup>

It seems work went on at the house despite any disruption caused by curious tourists inspired by the television coverage. In November, then Technical Publications Editor, Division of Archeology, Nan Rickey, worked with Small, Wilbur Dutton, Carl Deegan, and Andrew M. Loveless to begin to tape interviews with Rose Kennedy about her

---

<sup>69</sup> Memo: John Fitzgerald Kennedy Birthplace National Historic Site Proposal—Comments on the Report Prepared in March 1967, Project Keyman Edwin Small to Regional Director, April 12, 1967. A PDF of scans of memos from 1967 were sent to the author in 2016 by research intern Elena Rippel on a thumb drive from JOFI's K-Drive. Rippel recreated that drive's then file-names and folder structure. Folder: "JOFI Admin history docs-some dups," File name: Memos 1967. This and the following memos (indicated below by "Memos 1967") come from this same scanned 22-page source.

<sup>70</sup> Memo: Visit to J. F. Kennedy Birthplace, George Palmer, Associate Regional Director to Regional Director, June 5, 1967. Memos 1967.

<sup>71</sup> Benjamin Zerby, Superintendent, and Maurice Kowal, Maintenance Supervisor, from Minute Man National Park were also a part of this group. Memo: Project Keyman Monthly Report, July 1967, for John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site, Edwin Small, Project Keyman, to Regional Director, August 3, 1967. Memos 1967.

<sup>72</sup> Memo: John F. Kennedy Birthplace, Assistant Chief, Office of Information, Edwin N. Winge to Deputy Director Harthon Bill, September 19, 1967, John F. Kennedy National Historic Site Resource Management Records, 1963–2003 (JOFI 1504), Box 3, Folder 3. See also "Mrs. Joseph Kennedy in Tape Interview at Brookline Home," *Boston Globe*, October 29 1967; "J.F.K.—The Childhood Years, a Memoir for Television by His Mother," in *Who, What, When, Where, Why*, interview with Rose Kennedy. Harry Reasoner (CBS News Special, aired October 31, 1967). The program aired on Halloween 1967, despite the fact that the site was not yet open to the public, and the piece would have served as an excellent public relations piece if the broadcast had been delayed.

time at the house. Rickey reported that working with Kennedy was difficult, “for a variety of reasons,” and noted that “it may not be possible to overcome these problems.” She saw that overcoming communication issues would “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>73</sup> Rickey also excitedly reported back on the furnishings that Luddington and Kennedy had provided for the historic site. “The refurnishings for the house have been done with elegance and attention to detail. They produce an undeniable sense of nostalgia, particularly for individuals of the Kennedy generation.” However, she also noted that the furnishings had “a number of obvious errors as well as contextual inconsistency.”<sup>74</sup>

But Rickey cautioned that “no effort to remedy this situation would be either possible or appropriate at this time,” and worried that the mistakes could “strongly influence interpretive planning now, and should also be of substantial current research concern.”<sup>75</sup> Unfortunately, NPS access to Rose Kennedy was extremely limited. In response to these concerns, Rickey recommended that the NPS develop a Master Plan for the site “as soon as possible.” Rickey astutely saw most of the interpretive challenges at the site as related to “the legislative limitation on the site’s area, together with the realities of the environment.” To delay a Master Plan would “almost certainly result in the creation of a real public relations problem, a failure to serve the public of the most basic kind, and the subjection of the house and its contents to unwarranted risk.”<sup>76</sup>

Her report echoed many of the same concerns that Small had in 1964. Beyond her assessment that she laid out in her trip report, Rickey noted that most of the work at the site was complete, “and of course it was also made clear to me...that any negative comments would not be welcome.” She tried to engage what work could be done but was “totally taken aback by what had happened to the house, the way it had been refurnished.” She seems to have been especially upset with pink carpeting that had been installed in all the rooms. “It very quickly seemed to me that the only thing I could possibly achieve would be to identify the real things, as opposed to the decorative things, but that wasn’t really

---

<sup>73</sup> Memo: Trip Report: John Fitzgerald National Historic Site, November 19–21, Nan Rickey to Chief, Division of Interpretation and Visitor Services, November 28, 1967, John F. Kennedy National Historic Site Resource Management Records, 1963–2003 (JOFI 1504), Box 1, Folder 4.

<sup>74</sup> Memo: Trip Report: John Fitzgerald National Historic Site, November 19–21, Nan Rickey to Chief, Division of Interpretation and Visitor Services, November 28, 1967, John F. Kennedy National Historic Site Resource Management Records, 1963–2003 (JOFI 1504), Box 1, Folder 4.

<sup>75</sup> Memo: Trip Report: John Fitzgerald National Historic Site, November 19–21, Nan Rickey to Chief, Division of Interpretation and Visitor Services, November 28, 1967, John F. Kennedy National Historic Site Resource Management Records, 1963–2003 (JOFI 1504), Box 1, Folder 4.

<sup>76</sup> Memo: Trip Report: John Fitzgerald National Historic Site, November 19–21, Nan Rickey to Chief, Division of Interpretation and Visitor Services, November 28, 1967, John F. Kennedy National Historic Site Resource Management Records, 1963–2003 (JOFI 1504), Box 1, Folder 4.

effective either.”<sup>77</sup> In an attempt to identify “real things,” she began the long discussion with Robert Luddington and the National Park Service over the documentation of the furnishings at the house.<sup>78</sup> Later that year, he sent her a preliminary six-page list of items that had an original or authentic association with the house or Rose Kennedy.<sup>79</sup>

Despite being the matriarch of a family that was very much in the public eye, Rose Kennedy was private about the work she did on the house.<sup>80</sup> After a long conversation about what she remembered having been in place in most areas of the house, she and Luddington worked together from her memory in fits and starts. She seems to have had little memory about some of the rooms, like the kitchen and maids’ quarters upstairs. However, when her memory struck on an object that should be in the house, Kennedy dictated a note to Luddington through her secretary, and he set off to research and acquire the item for the house. Sometimes Luddington placed advertisements for period pieces that Rose Kennedy remembered; other times, he contacted manufacturers directly to acquire historic stock they might have for Rose Kennedy’s use. When Kennedy’s memory failed her about an item, she helped Luddington make all decisions on items with an eye toward “historical good taste.” Their goal was not to create a “lived-in feeling” that some historic house museums sought in the 1960s, but rather to present “a more formal feeling” at the house.<sup>81</sup>

Despite these early efforts of the NPS to work with Rose Kennedy and others to open the site, the progress was decidedly slow. During the rest of 1967 and all of the spring of 1968, Project Keyman, Edwin Small’s monthly reports to NPS Director Hartzog, and the Chief of the Division of Interpretation, often indicated that “there was nothing which took place during the month to indicate when the Kennedy family intends either to turn over the actual custody of the birthplace property or decide on a date for a formal dedication or opening.”<sup>82</sup>

---

<sup>77</sup> Nan Rickey Interview with Sara Patton and Christine Arato, March 6, 2015. John F. Kennedy National Historic Site Resource Management Records, 1963–2003 (JOFI 1504), Oral Histories.

<sup>78</sup> The attempt to recover information about items at the site would last decades and would only come to an end in 2016 when Robert Luddington sat down for an oral history with site managers about the collections that he and Rose Kennedy had acquired 50 years earlier. See Luddington Oral History. For more information of the materials that Luddington eventually donated, see the Robert T. Luddington Papers (JOFI 1510), which include some documentation of his work furnishing the site and other early records of his work.

<sup>79</sup> Luddington to Rickey, November 15, 1967. John F. Kennedy National Historic Site Resource Management Records, 1963–2003 (JOFI 1504), Box 5, Folder 37.

<sup>80</sup> Luddington Oral History. William Davis, “Kennedyland: Hyannis Port Compound Still Same Old Tourist Mecca; Police Army on Job,” *Boston Globe*, June 24, 1969, 2.

<sup>81</sup> Luddington conceded that sometimes “people might upgrade their idea of what they had,” after so many years had passed, and that in some instances, when some compromises about the historical interior were discussed, he kept in mind that he was “dealing with a customer.” Luddington Oral History.

<sup>82</sup> Memo: New Area Monthly Report—February 1968 John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site, Edwin Small to Director, March 1, 1968. John F. Kennedy National Historic Site Resource Management Records, 1963–2003 (JOFI 1504), Box 1, Folder 4.



Meanwhile, Nan Rickey was hard at work on the interpretive prospectus for the site, which was in draft form by May of 1968 and approved sometime in 1969. The report was written before the audio for Rose Kennedy's tour had been finalized, but it was likely approved and printed after the audio tour was completed, but not yet installed. Rickey, in her study of the house, found "that little of importance" had happened while the family lived at the house, "save the birth of the future President." The report noted that it would be difficult to argue that the house had a strong environmental influence on the president's personality because he was only in the house until he was three-and-a-half years old. Thus, the sole ground for significance was "exquisitely limited to the one fact of birth." However, the prospectus she and her staff completed also laid out two unique characteristics of Jack Kennedy which could be remembered at the site, that he was the youngest person to serve as president and that he was the country's first Catholic president. Importantly, they warned that the site should "carefully avoid" the interpretation of any other elements of Kennedy's life "which might seem to further evaluate Kennedy as president." Such an evaluation was to be avoided because the NPS was "still too close, in time, to the Kennedy administration" and perhaps too close to what Rickey called the "Kennedy phenomenon" to be able to evaluate the presidency clearly. Further, she importantly noted that the national tragedy associated with Kennedy compounded "the difficulty of accurate and fair evaluation."<sup>83</sup> The report shows concern that those involved in acquiring the site were quite shortsighted because the enabling legislation did not allow for any additional land acquisition for a visitor's center which was then, in the wake of Mission 66, common best practice for new park sites.

The prospectus recommended that all site staff of course work hard to be extremely knowledgeable about Kennedy's biography. But recognizing the emotional labor of staff at the site, the prospectus also recommended that staff be trained to deal effectively with the "powerful, intricate and subtle emotional forces brought into being by his assassination."<sup>84</sup> The prospectus focused on the institutional need to present interpretation grounded in "dignity and taste," and maintained that visits to the site "should be neither encouraged nor allowed to become pilgrimages to a martyr's shrine."<sup>85</sup>

Recognizing that the most of furnishing at the house was "reminiscent rather than historically accurate," the prospectus also lauded the audio narration by Rose Kennedy, as the president's mother in his birthplace as "interpretive perfection."<sup>86</sup> The goal of the tour

---

<sup>83</sup> Interpretive Prospectus: John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site, Massachusetts, 1969, 1.

<sup>84</sup> Interpretive Prospectus: John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site, Massachusetts, 1969, 1. For a broader context on the emotional labor of interpretation and frontline work at historic sites, see Amy Tyson, *The Wages of History: Emotional Labor on Public History's Front Lines*, Public History in Historical Perspective (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2013).

<sup>85</sup> Interpretive Prospectus: John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site, Massachusetts, 1969, 3.

<sup>86</sup> Interpretive Prospectus: John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site, Massachusetts, 1969, 3.

was to make visitors feel that they were “being given a personal tour of her home by the President’s mother.”<sup>87</sup> The report envisioned the audio tour as “gentle, restrained emotion, rather than passion. It will be personal and intimate, rather than overtly memorial or heroic. It will have grace and dignity.”<sup>88</sup>

The document made many recommendations for interpretation, tours, and publications that are still in place at the site at the time of this administrative history. A 15-minute tour making use of Rose Kennedy’s narration and an option for a self-guided tour and a neighborhood walking tour were to be used in times of peak visitation.<sup>89</sup> The recommended neighborhood walking tour would allow for the introduction of information on the Kennedy family’s religious and financial background, information about which were missing from the audio tour and furnishings inside the house. In addition to these tours, Rickey’s report recommended two publications for visitors to take with them: one a folder with basic information and a second that would be the published reminiscences of the President’s mother.<sup>90</sup> Rose Kennedy’s reminiscences would be sold for a “minimum price.”<sup>91</sup> They hoped to develop a reading room/library on the upper floors of the house with an initial collection of 1,000 dollars worth of books, which would not be used by scholars but, instead, “satisfy the legitimate interests of the average visitor.” However, the report recommended against ranger-led tours because the onslaught of visitors and limited space would make them impractical. Costumed interpreters were rejected as a “tasteless” demonstration, and audiovisual programs (beyond the audio tour) were rejected because of space limitations.<sup>92</sup>

The site’s interpretive planners believed that any visitor would have to plan to come, given the residential location of the birthplace, and that staff should expect no drop-in visitation, and they worried that those visiting the site by car would be “mad” by the time they made it to the front door to start their tour because of the difficulty of the parking on Beals Street. Recommendations noted that such visitors should be met by park personnel with compassion. The Beals Street neighborhood was a “seven-day-a-week business community,” in part because the birthplace was located in an active Jewish neighborhood, where some businesses closed on Sundays, but many others were open on

---

<sup>87</sup> Interpretive Prospectus: John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site, Massachusetts, 1969, 6.

<sup>88</sup> Interpretive Prospectus: John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site, Massachusetts, 1969, 11.

<sup>89</sup> Interpretive Prospectus: John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site, Massachusetts, 1969, 3.

<sup>90</sup> The Franklin Delano Roosevelt Home National Historic Site not only developed a similar audio tour with Eleanor Roosevelt as the narrator in 1960 but also published a companion booklet of her reminiscences about her husband and Hyde Park.

<sup>91</sup> Interpretive Prospectus: John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site, Massachusetts, 1969, 4–5.

<sup>92</sup> Interpretive Prospectus: John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site, Massachusetts, 1969, 6–7.

Sundays after being closed on Saturdays. With a busy business community, on-street and off-street parking was available, but sometimes quite an unclear walk away for the visitor who wanted to drive directly to the site.<sup>93</sup>

In addition to planning interpretation options at the site, the prospectus sought to imagine who visitors to the site might be. Most personnel believed that the “Kennedy phenomenon” made this site quite a bit different from other historic sites within the Park Service. The report guessed that visitors would be “more young, than old; more middle to lower class, than upper class; embracing all possible variations in educational background and level” and it imagined that the site would see more visitors of Irish descent and of the Catholic faith.<sup>94</sup>

While the report did not shy away from calling some of the home’s furnishings inaccurate, it did highlight the unique historical situation of having a single person’s interpretation of a past place. Most importantly, the prospectus laid out the work ahead for staff at the site: meet the visitor where they are, present a dignified and welcoming environment (not a maudlin one), develop interpretive publications and a walking tour, research the historical environment of the site, research the historic structures at the site, and make a study of the site’s current collections. To study the collections would surely mean noticing the plastic bottle of talcum powder in the dressing area, noticing that the children’s books were in editions later than young Kennedy’s childhood, and noticing those pink and “modern carpets.”<sup>95</sup> One strong recommendation was to research and develop a historic furnishings plan, as “the National Park Service, one hundred years from now, may feel that the house should be presented in more historically accurate terms.”<sup>96</sup> The report smartly recommended no primary research into the Kennedy family, as Rose Kennedy was slated to write her autobiography, the Kennedy family was already the purview of other serious researchers and writers, and years from now the family’s papers and correspondence would be available as they were not in 1968. In the meantime, the “Kennedy phenomenon” would mean staff would have to keep up on published research rather than diving into the archives themselves.<sup>97</sup>

Superintendent Zerbey’s response to the prospectus was overwhelmingly positive, calling it “excellent and comprehensive.” Agreeing with Rickey, he believed that parking would “indeed present a critical problem.” He also agreed with her on key safety concerns

---

<sup>93</sup> Interpretive Prospectus: John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site, Massachusetts, 1969, 6–7

<sup>94</sup> Interpretive Prospectus: John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site, Massachusetts, 1969, 8.

<sup>95</sup> “Suggestions and Comments Made by Mr. Dorman,” circa 1970, John F. Kennedy National Historic Site Resource Management Records, 1963–2003 (JOFI 1504), Box 10, Folder 1.

<sup>96</sup> Interpretive Prospectus: John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site, Massachusetts, 1969, 26.

<sup>97</sup> Interpretive Prospectus: John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site, Massachusetts, 1969, 25–27.

as a reason for a security system from ADT, recalling Brookline's high burglary rates.<sup>98</sup> For staffing, Zerbey agreed that the site needed a permanent Historian and a permanent Park Guide (or second historian). In one important area, Zerbey disagreed with Rickey's recommended staffing. Because, as he put it, "furnishing of the house has largely been completed. . . and no particularly sensitive problems exist, we suggest that the proposed curator position be filled by an interpreter, who will be able to provide normal curatorial services as a regular duty."<sup>99</sup> Perhaps knowing that the furnishing and audio would complete the interpretive approach at the house, that there was no room for other exhibits, and that a high percentage of the furnishings were high-quality period pieces rather than well-used family heirlooms, Zerbey argued that the site did not need a curator because he believed that the new exhibits, wallpapers, drapes, carpets, and furnishings would not need attention from a curator or conservator for some time.<sup>100</sup>

Despite delays, Nan Rickey and especially Carl Deegan, Chief of the NPS Division of Audiovisual Arts, worked closely with Rose Kennedy, her secretary, Diane Winter, and even Jackie Kennedy, to both develop a script and tape-record Rose Kennedy's audio tour for the house.<sup>101</sup> Zerbey also played a role in developing the narration. When it was suggested that Rose Kennedy could read through a few Park Service operational details on tape, he felt strongly that "the impact of Mrs. Kennedy's personal memories of the house and its associations should not be diminished by using her as a vehicle for giving directions and issuing safety instructions."<sup>102</sup> The Park Service also hoped that the Kennedy family might pick up the costs of developing Rose Kennedy's audio tour.<sup>103</sup>

---

<sup>98</sup> Memo: Interpretive Prospectus, John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site, Superintendent Minute Man to Regional Director, NER, 6 May 1968, notes, 2, John F. Kennedy National Historic Site Resource Management Records, 1963–2003 (JOFI 1504), Box 3, Folder 3.

<sup>99</sup> Memo: Interpretive Prospectus, John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site, Superintendent Minute Man to Regional Director, NER, 6 May 1968, notes, 3, John F. Kennedy National Historic Site Resource Management Records, 1963–2003 (JOFI 1504), Box 3, Folder 3.

<sup>100</sup> It is unclear whether he considered the work that NPS Museum Technicians do today as part of their regular duties to be part of the workload for the site manager.

<sup>101</sup> Nan Rickey Interview with Sara Patton and Christine Arato, March 6, 2015. Rose Kennedy to Carl Deegan, June 4, 1969, Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy Papers, John F. Kennedy Library. (Elena Scan). Diane Winter to Carl Deegan [*sic*], May 16, 1969, Luddington Papers. Christine Arato has provided a detailed history of the efforts to develop and edit the many drafts of Rose Kennedy's audio tour. Her sophisticated analysis is well worth looking at closely to supplement the coverage here. See Christine Arato, "This House Holds Many Memories: Constructions of a Presidential Birthplace at the John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site," in *Born in the U.S.A.: Birth, Commemoration, and American Public Memory* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2012), 27–48.

<sup>102</sup> Memo: Interpretive Prospectus, John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site, Superintendent Minute Man to Regional Director, NER, May 6, 1968. John F. Kennedy National Historic Site Resource Management Records, 1963–2003 (JOFI 1504), Box 3, Folder 3.

<sup>103</sup> Memo: RE JFK Audio, Frank Barnes to Benjamin Zerbey, June 2, 1969. NARA, Waltham, Minute Man National Historical Park, Subject Files, 195601974, Box 3, Folder K18–17.

## 1969 Dedication and Opening

In 1969, when the dedication for the new historic site was still in the planning stages, Edwin Small reached out to the superintendent of the Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Site for copies of the invitation, program, and the addresses that President Truman and Eleanor Roosevelt made on April 12, 1946, at the dedication of that historic site.<sup>104</sup> From the beginning, Luddington, Kennedy, and the Park Service saw the Roosevelt Home as a model for interpretation, and it set an important precedent with NPS staff for working with important, and highly engaged, members of a president's family. From the audio tour, to the carpets in the public spaces, to the opening day, the Roosevelt home was the prototype.<sup>105</sup>

On the day of the event, May 29, 1969, Rose Kennedy, her family, and her guests attended a private mass at St. Aidan's Church before the ceremonies at the house. For Rose Kennedy, the event was one to be marked with religious care as well as a national and secular celebration. The ceremony began with a prayer, and coverage of the event showed Rose and Ted Kennedy, and Jean Kennedy Smith on the porch with their heads bowed. Though the coverage looked solemn, few reports dwelled on, or even mentioned, the president's assassination or early death. Luddington arranged catering at the site on the day of the dedication, so that the press, the family, and their special guests would feel both comfortable and well-received.<sup>106</sup> Nearly all the coverage mentioned Rose Kennedy's vibrant purple dress and white hat, her gracious gift to the country, and always how important her voice was in guiding visitors through the home.<sup>107</sup> More than 700 people observed as Rose Kennedy handed the deed to the property over to the Park Service (Figure 7).<sup>108</sup>

---

<sup>104</sup> Memo: Dedication Ceremonies, Acting Super, Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Site to Superintendent, Boston National Park Service Group, May 16, 1969 John F. Kennedy National Historic Site Resource Management Records, 1963–2003 (JOFI 1504), Box 1, Folder 13.

<sup>105</sup> Luddington Oral History.

<sup>106</sup> Luddington Oral History.

<sup>107</sup> Robert Reinhold, "Kennedy's Birthplace Made a National Shrine: Family Gathers in Brookline on Nostalgic Day," *New York Times*, May 30, 1969, 29.

<sup>108</sup> Robert Reinhold, "Kennedy's Birthplace Made a National Shrine: Family Gathers in Brookline on Nostalgic Day," *New York Times*, May 30, 1969, 29.



**Figure 7.** Rose Kennedy welcomes people to the site.  
Cecil W. Stoughton, JOFI Dedication, JOFI 1504, Box 10, Folder 8, NPS, 1969.

Even after the opening day had passed, in June 1969, the Park Service was unsure of who was paying for the audio tour to be permanently installed in the house. While the audio tour was complete, for the opening day there was a last-minute struggle to acquire the equipment to play the audio tour at the site. The equipment used in the dedication ceremonies had been borrowed from the NPS Division of Audiovisual Arts, but because the audio tour “was very well received” site staff suggested that “money be programmed for a permanent installation” with an estimated cost of \$3,500–\$4,000.<sup>109</sup> That the key interpretive element of the house was still in limbo after the opening shows some of the strain in communications between NPS departments and the Boston Group.

---

<sup>109</sup> Memo: RE JFK Audio, Frank Barnes to Benjamin Zerbey, June 2, 1969; MEMO: Audio Installation, John F. Kennedy National Historic Site, Chief, Branch of Audio and Equipment Services to Regional Director, NER; 9 June 1969; Memo: John F. Kennedy Birthplace, Chief Branch of Audio and Equipment Services (S. Blair Hubbard) to Regional Director NER, June 4, 1969: all Box 3: MIMA NHP, Subject Files, 1956–1974: F74–23 Rate Schedules, etc. –L 58 Proposed Areas Folder: K18–17 Interpretive Activities—Interpretive Planning, John F. Kennedy Birthplace, 1969, NARA Waltham.

## Changes Ahead

By 1969, Congress was beginning to balk at the cost of federal Kennedy memorials as the Kennedy Center for Performing Arts' construction cost estimates more than doubled from \$30 million to \$60 million. Some memorial efforts were approved by members of the Kennedy and Johnson Administration, rather than Congress, like Kennedy's tomb at Arlington, which came with a hefty \$677,000 price tag. They became the target of partisan debates. Many argued that such memorial efforts for every president would cost the nation too much and crowd Washington, DC, with memorials.<sup>110</sup> Interior Secretary Udall, Rose Kennedy, Tip O'Neill, and Ted Kennedy had been smart to push through the legislation for the birthplace in 1967 while the Johnson Administration was still in place; the changes that would happen within the Park Service under the Nixon Administration would affect the Boston Group as the site headed into the 1970s.

---

<sup>110</sup> Ernest Cuneo, "As Sad as It Is Painful: Kennedy Memorials Stir a Debate," *Boston Globe*, June 22, 1969, 123.





## CHAPTER FOUR

# Early Management of the Birthplace, 1969–1987

**A**fter the John F. Kennedy National Historic Site opened to the public, it faced changes in its administration. In the first two decades after its opening, the site had five different superintendents and at least 11 different acting superintendents.<sup>1</sup> It also had three different park administrative structures that managed the site: the Boston Service Group; the Longfellow National Historic Site, which was donated to the National Park Service in 1973 and opened to the public in 1974; and the Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site. Beyond these significant administrative changes, the decades also saw turmoil in the Greater Boston area as a result of the mandated busing of students to desegregate Boston’s public schools. The violent reaction to desegregation spilled over into Brookline in 1975 and resulted in a fire at the Kennedy birthplace, which caused the site to be closed for more than a year. Throughout much of the period, the site had consistent staffing that was closely connected to the former president. The site was the smallest in the Boston Group. As the site partnered with Longfellow and eventually, Olmsted, it remained the smallest of the eventual two partner sites, in terms of staff and budget but not in terms of visitation, operations at Kennedy held steady as they ramped up operations in the early 1990s at the Longfellow and Olmsted sites.<sup>2</sup> The site, like many small historic house sites both inside and outside of the National Park Service, did not have a board, community advisory committee, nor a friends group and, as a result, lacked the kind of advocacy that helped other sites attract a larger audience.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Benjamin Zerby, Herbert Olsen, Russell Berry, James L. Brown, and Stephen Whitesell were appointed as superintendents at the site, and David Moffit, Kathleen Catalano, Earl Harris, Maurice Kowal, Douglass Sabin, John Health, Franklin Montford, Shary Berg, Rhinelander Hernandez, Nancy Nelson, and Teri Savage all served as acting superintendents over the decade. Some of these acting superintendents served more than one appointment.

<sup>2</sup> See the administrative histories for the Longfellow House—George Washington’s Headquarters National Historic Site (2021) and for the Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site (2007).

<sup>3</sup> While there was no community advisory group set up at Kennedy, such efforts were being made for larger units of the National Park Service. Edwin Small and Benjamin Zerby oversaw a community advisory commission at Minute Man that met twice a year to discuss community issues and concerns. Zerby, “Oral History.”

## Neighborhood Tensions as the Site Opens to the Public

While some neighbors continued to be skeptical about the role the Park Service might play in Brookline, most began to accept the small role the house played in the broader commemorative landscape of the Kennedy family in Massachusetts. Not long after the Kennedy site officially opened to the public, newspaper coverage of the house and its events changed. *The Boston Globe*, which had long, and largely positively, covered nearly every effort to preserve the home, began to be more critical reporting on the events at the site. Just one year after the opening, the *Globe* published an article on the role of the NPS site in the Beals Street neighborhood. Diana Crawford, the author, noted that more than 37,500 people had toured the house, but that “countless others” had driven by “at all hours” and made themselves at home on the porch posing for photographs. Neighbors complained about buses idling in the street, fumes coming into their homes, the peering eyes of tourists, and all manner of parking issues. Beals Street residents also still seemed worried that their homes could be taken by eminent domain to solve the obvious parking problems.<sup>4</sup>

Benjamin Zerbey (July 1968–May 1971) and Herbert Olsen (June 1971–February 1974) served as the superintendents of the Kennedy site while they managed a number of the other NPS sites in the Boston area in their roles as “General Superintendents” of the Boston Service Group. Because the Boston Group was involved in the creation of new NPS sites and their management as they came into the service, often Zerbey and Olsen were preparing reports and requests for these sites and even testifying before Congress in support of their establishment.<sup>5</sup> Olsen had served as superintendent at Shiloh National Military Park before coming to the Boston Group and was a trained NPS historian, with a master’s degree from Columbia University. Still, his work at Minute Man, Salem Maritime National Historic Site, Adams National Historical Park, Saugus Iron Works National Historic Site, and eventually Longfellow National Historic Site, largely meant the Kennedy site rarely showed up in his administrative records of the Boston Group.<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> Diana Crawford, “‘The Shrine’ Is Hardly Mecca to Everyone on Beals Street,” *Boston Globe*, May 4, 1970.

<sup>5</sup> Both were involved in the creation of the Longfellow National Historic Site, and Olsen was required to provide support and testimony before Congress during the hearings that led to the establishment of the site. Subcommittee on Parks and Recreation of the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, US Senate, 90-Second Congress, Second Session, S. 3129, *Longfellow National Historic Site, Hearing before the Subcommittee on Parks and Recreation of the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, United States Senate, 90-Second Congress, Second Session, S. 3129*, February 15, 1972.

<sup>6</sup> Zenzen, *Bridging the Past: Minute Man National Historical Park Administrative History*, 128–58.

## Personal Connections

While Zerbey and Olsen served as superintendents and administered the Boston Service Group headquartered at Minute Man National Historical Park, on a daily basis the historic site was overseen by a provisional site manager, Maurice Kowal.<sup>7</sup> Maurice L. Kowal met John F. Kennedy when Kowal was only 19. He was assigned to Kennedy's Patrol Torpedo (PT) boat during World War II (Figure 8).

Sent to the Solomon Islands for duty after just six weeks of PT boat training, Kowal served under Kennedy as crew on both the PT-59 and PT-109 boats. Kowal was injured by a bomb dropped from a Japanese float plane just three days before Kennedy's encounter with the Japanese destroyer that led to the boat's now-famous destruction on August 1, 1943. As a result, Kowal missed the dramatic episode that defined the narrative of John F. Kennedy's war service.<sup>8</sup> He went on to serve in the Korean War. However, Kowal also served on the executive committee of the political organization Veterans for Kennedy and handed out posters and Kennedy campaign materials during JFK's presidential campaign.<sup>9</sup> By 1961, with Kennedy's assistance through a rare executive order, he started a career at the National Park Service.<sup>10</sup> He was appointed as a horticulturist at the Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Site and then "served in the same capacity at Minute Man National Historical Park until 1968." There he went on to become the Maintenance Superintendent for the Boston Service Group before being assigned as Management Assistant and Site Manager at Kennedy's birthplace.<sup>11</sup> Kowal's time at Minute Man and the Boston Group seems to have been marred at least somewhat by politics associated with Kennedy. A fellow employee proclaimed that Kowal was denied promotions because of his personal and

---

<sup>7</sup> National Park Service, "'Park Superintendents,' Historic Listing of National Park Service Officials," [https://www.nps.gov/parkhistory/online\\_books/tolson/histlist.htm](https://www.nps.gov/parkhistory/online_books/tolson/histlist.htm). On the day-to-day management, see Charlene Roise and Bruce Fernald, "Notes from Telephone Interview with Herbert Olsen" (Minute Man National Historical Park Archives, 1981).

<sup>8</sup> "Transcript: A Conversation with World War II PT Boat Veterans," [https://www.jfklibrary.org/sites/default/files/2018-04/2005\\_06\\_27\\_PT\\_Boat\\_Veterans.pdf](https://www.jfklibrary.org/sites/default/files/2018-04/2005_06_27_PT_Boat_Veterans.pdf). On June 27, 2015, the JFK Library hosted a conversation where PT Boat veterans Dick Kersey, Paul "Red" Fay, Bill "Bitter" Battle, and Maurice Kowal who shared their stories of serving on PT Boats in the Solomon Islands during World War II at the same time as John F. Kennedy. H. D. S. Greenway, former Editorial Page Editor of the *Boston Globe*, moderated.

<sup>9</sup> Memo: Steve Smith to Robert Kennedy, February 22, 1960, PT-109 Folder, *Papers of John F. Kennedy. Pre-Presidential Papers. Presidential Campaign Files, 1960*; Digital Identifier: JFKCAMP1960-1049-013-p0001, JFK Library.

<sup>10</sup> "Executive Order 10959, Authorizing the Appointment of Mr. Maurice L. Kowal to a Competitive Position without Regard to the Civil Service Rules and Regulations," Federal Register Page and Date: 26 FR 7753 (August 19, 1961).

<sup>11</sup> On Kennedy being responsible for his appointment, see Maurice Kowal to Mrs. Lincoln, February 7, 1962, Papers of John F. Kennedy. Presidential Papers. President's Office Files, 196: KA-KEN, JFK Library. On Kowal's career with the NPS before his appointment as "Management Assistant" at JOFI, see NPS, "Personal Resume, Maurice L. Kowal, Management Assistant, John F. Kennedy National Historic Site," news release, 1969. John F. Kennedy National Historic Site Resource Management Records, 1963–2003 (JOFI 1504). Box 1, Folder 9.

political connections to Kennedy and an “anti-Kennedy bias” within the Northeast Regional Office. In court, Kowal testified that though Edwin Small had formally requested a promotion for Kowal, he had learned from a colleague that Small had simultaneously privately recommended that his superiors not promote Kowal, for political reasons.<sup>12</sup>



**Figure 8.** Kowal (kneeling, left) and Kennedy (standing, far right), with PT-109, John F. Kennedy Library and Museum.

---

<sup>12</sup> See the transcript of the ruling in *Iannarelli v. Morton*, US District Court, Philadelphia, April 14, 1971 (327 F. Supp. 873, E.D. Pa. 1971). In a lawsuit that has come to set precedent in First Amendment rights for federal employees, Thomas Iannarelli was fired from his job in the personnel division of the Northeast Regional Office by Regional Director Lemuel Garrison, for attempting to persuade NPS employees to file false reports of racial and religious discrimination both within official channels and through work with the NAACP. Kowal testified in court that Iannarelli told him that, despite the fact that Edwin Small had formally requested a promotion for Kowal, Small had simultaneously privately recommended to his superiors that they not promote Kowal. Iannarelli warned in 1966 that, “because officials of the National Park Service were prejudiced against President Kennedy, Mr. Kowal should not expect a promotion.” It seems that at least some of Mr. Iannarelli’s accusations of prejudice against Kennedy was supported by evidence in the case. Kowal’s own comments on Small’s leadership of the Boston Group and Minute Man National Historical Park seem to indicate he did not appreciate Small’s leadership style. The fact that Kowal’s original appointment in the NPS came by way of an executive order may have contributed to the ill feelings between the two. Whether any of this “anti-Kennedy” sentiment eventually resulted in lack of NPS interest in the Kennedy site and its support has not been supported in the archival evidence uncovered in the research for this report. Web transcript of case: <https://casetext.com/case/iannarelli-v-morton-2#43002bab-1b84-484b-9785-28db65d5d381-fn18>. On Kowal’s opinions about Small, see Charlene Roise, “Notes from Telephone Interview with Maurice Kowal,” (1981), Box 1, MIMA Archives, 1989 Administrative History Records, MIMA 76679 (Minute Man National Historical Park Archives).

Kowal oversaw the site during its infancy. Though his title seems to have shifted from Unit Manager, Park Manager, Management Assistant, Park Technician, Acting Superintendent, and “Superintendent,” he had sole site management duties at Kennedy from 1968 until 1974.<sup>13</sup> At the beginning of his time there, the site was open from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., seven days a week, sometimes seeing as many as 300 visitors a day.<sup>14</sup> Despite the high visitation, Kowal began the essential work at the site with few of the necessary park management documents required for operations. He focused on education, accessibility, and maintenance and care for the historic structure; he was especially concerned with determining the structural load that the house could physically support. Kowal also began the project to document the collections at the site and to document the historic fabric of the site to NPS standards. Staff during this period developed promotional materials for distribution but seemed to simultaneously not have basic tourist memorabilia—like postcards—for sale at the site.<sup>15</sup> Because he spoke Polish, Kowal translated Rose Kennedy’s tour for visitors from Poland, and he worked with the Massachusetts Turnpike Authority to develop a JFK exhibit at a Turnpike stop to help promote the site. Kowal also began the site’s first oral history program by interviewing Miss Fiske who was the headmistress at the Dexter school while Kennedy attended, and he also worked to tape an interview with Mr. Meyerson, a former owner of the house, as well.<sup>16</sup>

## Kowal and Early Studies at the Site

Kowal worked with the Boston Group’s exacting and highly skilled historical architect Orville Carroll to identify that the 1914 paint color for the house, based on a sample taken from the window that the Kennedys added not long after they were married, was “dark green with the trim work painted cream.” He reached out to Rose Kennedy to consult her on the color. She recalled a “dark hue” but “not a specific color.” Through Kowal, Rose Kennedy agreed to review the paint chips they had uncovered in their investigations and to give approvals for a change in paint colors.<sup>17</sup> Kowal also oversaw the initial curatorial program’s work to catalog the site’s collections. Less than a year after the site opened to the

---

<sup>13</sup> See Appendix A, “Partial Listing of Site Administrators and Staff, 1962–1994,” in the Finding Aid for the John Fitzgerald National Historical Site Resource Management Records, 1963–2003.

<sup>14</sup> “JFK Birthplace Attracts Host of Visitors,” *Worcester Telegram*, July 27, 1969.

<sup>15</sup> Douglas Sabin to Mrs. J. Kostenly, September 23, 1974, John F. Kennedy National Historic Site Resource Management Records, 1963–2003 (JOFI 1504), Box 4, Folder 18

<sup>16</sup> *Group Scoop* 1, no. 17 (1971): 4. Orville Carroll Papers, MIMA.

<sup>17</sup> Orville Carroll Weekly Field Report, September 11, 1970, Orville Carroll Papers, MIMA; and Orville Carroll Weekly Field Report, September 23, 1970. Orville Carroll Papers, MIMA. See also “A House of a Different Color,” John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site, National Park Service, <https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/a-house-of-a-different-color.htm>, accessed May 29, 2022.

public, Charles Dorman, then the Museum Curator at Independence National Historical Park in Philadelphia, spent three weeks going through the collections at the house with the help of NPS employee Muriel Storrie. Dorman carefully recorded his thoughts on each item, and occasionally noted when he found items egregiously outside the time period meant to be represented at the site.<sup>18</sup> Storrie recorded Dorman's assessments of the objects and later typed up the resulting catalog records for the site.<sup>19</sup> Kowal also requested new equipment to create a slide show for educational purposes, and he sent letters to at least 33 area schools hoping to bring school children into the site. With Superintendent Zerbey, Kowal oversaw the addition of a bathroom in the basement (at a cost of \$158,700) for the use of visitors in 1970.<sup>20</sup> Despite all Kowal's work and excitement about early higher-than-expected attendance, by November 1969, less than six full months after opening, the NPS announced that the site would be closed on Mondays starting December 1st, because of low attendance.<sup>21</sup>

Kowal and Zerbey also worked with newly hired historian Anna Coxe Toogood, the first woman ever to be employed as a historian in the NPS's Washington, DC, Office of History and Historic Architecture, to complete a much-anticipated furnishing plan in 1971.<sup>22</sup> Kowal and Toogood had high hopes of working with Rose Kennedy and Robert Luddington to identify and acquire documentation about the furnishings they had purchased for the site during their restoration. Toogood wrote to Rose Kennedy asking for her help in May of 1971. She was aware that Kennedy might find her report "presumptuous [*sic*], considering the amount of time, energy, and interest" that Rose Kennedy had invested in the restoration. Despite her earnest request, in the letter, Toogood did not explain why the NPS required such studies or how they would be used in the future.<sup>23</sup> Unfortunately, Rose Kennedy did not participate in the study. Toogood was wholly dependent on the notes that Nan Rickey made during her interviews with Rose Kennedy while working on the audio tour before the site opened to the public.<sup>24</sup> As a result, the report is as much a record of the struggle to write a report without any documentary records to draw upon as it

---

<sup>18</sup> Anna Coxe Toogood, "John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site, Massachusetts, Historic Furnishings Plan," Eastern Service Center Office of History and Historic Architecture, National Park Service (Washington, DC, 1971), ii, 33.

<sup>19</sup> On Storrie's involvement, see "John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site, Massachusetts, Historic Furnishings Plan," 11, note 32.

<sup>20</sup> Memo: Rest Room Project—John F. Kennedy National Historic Site: Benjamin Zerbey to Lemuel Garrison, February 25, 1970. John F. Kennedy National Historic Site Resource Management Records, 1963–2003 (JOFI 1504), Box 2, Folder 6.

<sup>21</sup> "JFK Home Closed on Mondays," *Brookline Chronicle-Citizen*, November 20, 1969.

<sup>22</sup> Anna Coxe Toogood, interview by Hilary Iris Lowe, May 3, 2017.

<sup>23</sup> Anna Coxe Toogood to Mrs. Joseph P. Kennedy, May, 1971, John F. Kennedy National Historic Site Resource Management Records, 1963–2003 (JOFI 1504), Box 8, Folder 14.

<sup>24</sup> Toogood, "John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site, Massachusetts, Historic Furnishings Plan," i.

is an assessment of the furnishings at the house. Her report, like the early biographies of John F. Kennedy that the NPS relied on for information about the birthplace, began with a recounting of the suffering of the Irish in the 1840s, and the argument that by 1850, Boston had become a “cultural battleground” for Irish immigrants as the background for John Fitzgerald Kennedy’s birth in 1917.<sup>25</sup> The inclusion of a substantial family history in this document likely contributed to the interpretation of Joseph P. Kennedy and Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy as coming from humble beginnings, despite simultaneously presenting information on their private school educations, childhoods among the most privileged Irish Americans in Boston, who Toogood calls the “high Irish,” and access to political power in Boston.<sup>26</sup> Writing to Luddington as she completed her report she noted, “As I waded through my notes on furnishings from 1905–20, I realized the overall accuracy of the refurbishing of the Kennedy home. Even from our brief interview, I could grasp the extensive and conscientious planning behind the project.” Most importantly, she pleaded with Luddington, to donate his materials documenting the processes through which he purchased and acquired collections. She cautioned, “I cannot emphasize enough the importance of your cooperation on this matter, for at this moment, without any written materials, I cannot proceed with the report.”<sup>27</sup> Unfortunately, Robert Luddington was rarely, if ever, available, leading to decades of work on behalf of the Park Service to acquire his notes and papers about the birthplace project.<sup>28</sup>

However, Toogood did complete the report, making use of a creative set of sources. Looking at Rose Kennedy’s biographical notes that did not make their way into the audio tour, she was frank that Kennedy did not want 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 conversations was . . . children, church and cooking.”<sup>29</sup> Toogood clearly used Rose Kennedy’s reminiscences as a critical source to determine the kinds of objects that would be included in her active social world, which included her founding and leadership in the Ace of Clubs, her interest in golf, and her work beyond the home. Toogood matched these

---

<sup>25</sup> “John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site, Massachusetts, Historic Furnishings Plan,” v. The first chapter of her furnishing study is devoted to recounting the histories of JFK’s grandparents and great-grandparents, in Ireland and Boston. Though this might seem quite unusual for a furnishing report today, much of this information was not yet thoroughly researched, and she likely pieced together connections to bits of family history she expected to find in the furnishings belonging to Joseph P. and Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy.

<sup>26</sup> “John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site, Massachusetts, Historic Furnishings Plan,” 12.

<sup>27</sup> Anna Coxe Toogood to Robert Luddington, May 7, 1971, John F. Kennedy National Historic Site Resource Management Records, 1963–2003 (JOFI 1504), Box 8, Folder 14. Most of these papers came to the park much later, in Luddington’s 2016 gift.

<sup>28</sup> In 2016, more than 40 years later, Robert Luddington did donate his papers to the National Park Service and sat down for an interview with site staff about his work at the site. See the Robert T. Luddington Papers (JOFI 1510).

<sup>29</sup> Rose Kennedy, cited in Toogood, “John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site, Massachusetts, Historic Furnishings Plan,” 14.

with Rose Kennedy's memories of John Kennedy's early childhood, which Kennedy remembered as uneventful outside of scarlet fever when he was two-and-a-half years old. To expand and confirm this perspective, Toogood tracked down some of John F. Kennedy's memories of his childhood, which she noted was an "easy, prosperous life, supervised by maids and nurses." John Kennedy noted that his mother "was the glue [in their family]. . . highly devout," and very interested in history and books.<sup>30</sup> All the elements that Toogood outlined helped portray a more complete picture of the mother who lived at the house in 1917 but also of the woman who furnished it in the late 1960s.

Through a careful review of popular and fashionable home furnishings and decorations from the era represented at the house and about a dozen years prior, Toogood indicated that most of the furnishings, while not original, roughly fit the dates chosen for interpretation. She drew attention to some inconsistencies, like the corduroy slipcover for a living room chair. She noted details like that while the chair might fit the period, the corduroy covering was not readily available during the period of historical significance.<sup>31</sup> She also documented that some of the furnishings were copies of those from Robert Luddington's family homes, including "the stove accessories (stove brush, coal shovel, coal hood, fire stoker, grate shaker)" and that "several of these articles came from his own grandmother's kitchen."<sup>32</sup> The same age that President Kennedy would have been, Luddington, with Rose Kennedy's approval, sometimes used his childhood and home as a model for some items, like two end tables in the living room and the child's dining table. Such items could have been in many homes of the period.<sup>33</sup>

Toogood speculated that some items which were not historically accurate, could or should eventually be replaced with items from before 1917, like a 1937 book volume, a midcentury reproduction of an antique side chair, the plastic bottle of Johnson's baby powder, or the solid-colored rugs in several rooms. But ultimately, Toogood reasoned that even if these objects were inconsistent with the period, Rose Kennedy approved them, and thus it was "difficult to maintain any criticism" of them.<sup>34</sup>

---

<sup>30</sup> "John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site, Massachusetts, Historic Furnishings Plan," 14–18.

<sup>31</sup> "John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site, Massachusetts, Historic Furnishings Plan," 24.

<sup>32</sup> "John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site, Massachusetts, Historic Furnishings Plan," 27.

<sup>33</sup> "John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site, Massachusetts, Historic Furnishings Plan," 24–5.

<sup>34</sup> "John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site, Massachusetts, Historic Furnishings Plan," 29.



Not long before Toogood began work on this document, the National Park Service started to develop “separate administrative policies” for unit groups, which were determined by whether a site was classified as a natural, recreative, or historic site.<sup>35</sup> By 1968, the NPS had broadened its understanding of periods of significance to acknowledge that managers at sites might do “better to retain genuine old work of several periods. . . than to restore the whole. . . to a single period.”<sup>36</sup> Toogood’s response to Rose Kennedy’s sometimes uneven work at the site seems to indicate that staff within the service already understood Kennedy’s restoration work, though only a few years old, was likely to be itself of historical significance someday. While the Kennedy family involvement was likely a significant factor, structures within the service also allowed staff to understand the value of eschewing a single dominant vision of a period of significance. Between the furnishing plan, the interpretive prospectus, the catalog of items in the house, and the historical paint study, under Kowal, many of the important reports and studies that would guide the staff at the site over the next three decades were in place. Kowal didn’t believe that these were all the site needed. Yet they would become the managing documents that directed interpretation and cultural resource management for the site over the next three decades.

By 1972, NPS Director George B. Hartzog Jr. (NPS Director from 1964 to 1972) had not only reorganized many of the NPS sites into tight service-driven administrative units like the Boston Group, but he had created the Denver Service Center, the Harpers Ferry Center, and he had sought to completely rethink the organization of all the parks by how they functioned as a representation of the whole nation—its landscapes, natural features, and histories. In regard to the historical units of the NPS, in part one of his *National Park System Plan*, Hartzog attempted to locate all of the service’s historic parks within a single thematic system designed to not only serve all Americans but also *represent* them and their pasts. By establishing a coherent system of nine primary “themes” with subthemes, he was able to classify each historic site as contributing to one theme. Thus, the service was able to determine which themes were underrepresented or not represented at all. While his historical themes were limited in their own way, his was an attempt to include a much broader picture of American history by strategically expanding the story beyond just the “great men,” of the past to the history of significant groups, movements, collectives, and especially American industry and technology. Hartzog and his staff easily identified the John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site as firmly part of Theme 5: Political and Military Affairs, subtheme 5e: The American Presidency. By the time of the Plan, Hartzog believed that the NPS only needed five more historic sites devoted to this theme, explicitly

---

<sup>35</sup> Lary M. Dilsaver, *America’s National Park System: The Critical Documents*, ed. Lary M. Dilsaver (Lanham, MD: Rowan & Littlefield, 1994), 270. It is important to note that, two years later, under the Nixon administration, the NPS administration reemphasized the single “system” of which these three different unit types were all a part. *America’s National Park System: The Critical Documents* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), 333.

<sup>36</sup> *America’s National Park System: The Critical Documents*, 344.

noting that the NPS did not yet have sites dedicated to Millard Fillmore, William McKinley, or Richard Nixon. The plan stated that “for consistency, all [presidents] should be represented by at least one area.”<sup>37</sup> Hartzog made it an official NPS policy to remember each president with at least one site operated by the NPS.

Maurice Kowal, perhaps attentive to Hartzog’s strategic support of historic sites and the changing tides to come with a new presidential administration, pushed hard for a historic structures report for the Kennedy site. He believed there was “an imminent need” to “gain known facts” from both Rose Kennedy and former residents of the house. He worried that these facts would “not be available in future years.”<sup>38</sup> Superintendent Zerbey had requested this report in 1968 at the same time he had requested a historic furnishing plan that was funded, but his request was denied. Kowal convinced Superintendent Olsen to request a historic structures report again, because it might help to answer “questions about the historical accuracy of the refurnishing of the interior,” that reports like Toogood’s had outlined.<sup>39</sup> The paint color and furnishings at the house clearly troubled the NPS staff, like Rickey, Dorman, Toogood, Carroll, and Kowal, who were devoted to the service’s scientific process of providing research-based evidence for furnishings and other decorative elements at historic sites. Rose Kennedy and Robert Luddington’s restoration did not always meet those exacting standards, and the anomalies plagued Olsen, Carroll, and Kowal. Despite his background in maintenance, which likely helped him understand the site’s needs and the layers of change at the site over time, Kowal’s request for research into the historic structure was denied. It presented “insufficient or inadequate data necessary to prepare an estimate,” according to the Northeast Region’s administrators.<sup>40</sup> Beyond research into the structure, Carroll also strongly and repeatedly encouraged “the need to start the development of a more accurate furnishing plan of the birthplace while Mrs. Rose Kennedy is still living.” He cautioned that this work would “require the services of a museum curator,” a staff member that the site did not employ.<sup>41</sup> Meanwhile, under Olsen’s

---

<sup>37</sup> National Park Service, *The National Park Service Plan, Part I* (Washington, DC: Department of the Interior, 1972), 40.

<sup>38</sup> Memo: Historic Structure Report, Kowal to Director Northeast Regional Office, through General Superintendent, January 24, 1973, John F. Kennedy National Historic Site Resource Management Records, 1963–2003 (JOFI 1504), Box 2, Folder 5.

<sup>39</sup> Memo: Development Package Proposal No. 101, Historic Structure Report, John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site, to Director of the Northeast Region, from General Superintendent, Boston Group, Herbert Olsen, January 29, 1973, John F. Kennedy National Historic Site Resource Management Records, 1963–2003 (JOFI 1504), Box 2, Folder 5. On Kowal’s assessment of Olsen as a superintendent at the Boston Group, see Roise, “Notes from Telephone Interview with Maurice Kowal,” Box 1, MIMA Archives, 1989 Administrative History Records, MIMA 76679.

<sup>40</sup> Memo from Chief, Office of Programing and Budget, Northeast Region, Martin B. Christenson, to General Superintendent, Boston Group, January 15, 1973, John F. Kennedy National Historic Site Resource Management Records, 1963–2003 (JOFI 1504), Box 2, Folder 5.

<sup>41</sup> Orville Carroll Weekly Field Report, April 17, 1970, MIMA Archives Orville Carroll Research Records, MIMA 63772, Box 2, Folder 22.

superintendency, the large all-staff meetings of the site managers for the Boston Group seem to have been discontinued and the *Group Scoop*, the newsletter for the group, came to an end as well. The Kennedy site rarely flared up into the superintendents' list of issues that needed immediate attention.<sup>42</sup>

While Kowal was not able to get all the reports he knew would be necessary for the proper maintenance and resource conservation at the house, Kowal was otherwise quite successful. Kowal oversaw the visitation of a significant number of people to the site, set up the first neighborhood walking tours, and in 1973 on the tenth anniversary of his friend and former commander President Kennedy's assassination, he hosted documentary crews from across the globe, including British and Irish National Television.<sup>43</sup> It is still possible that despite the personal connection to Kennedy and all the innovations he made at the new site, Kowal was frustrated. According to his coworkers, by the end he "didn't like" working at the site.<sup>44</sup> By 1974, Kowal was no longer at the Kennedy site and had moved back to his position of head of maintenance at Minute Man National Historical Park.

The year 1974 brought other important changes to the historic site. In 1972, the Longfellow National Historic Site (Longfellow) was established in Cambridge, Massachusetts.<sup>45</sup> The 1970s were a decade of vast development for the National Park Service, and the Longfellow house, though long on the radar of the service, was part of a strategic expansion of sites across the country.<sup>46</sup> Though only 3 miles and a 20-minute drive away, Longfellow joined the Boston Group's administrative unit and would come to be the administrative lead unit for the Kennedy site in February of 1974.<sup>47</sup> With the Northeast Region's reorganization into the North Atlantic Region and the Mid-Atlantic Region, the Boston Group, with all its power to develop and support new and multiple park units, would be jettisoned. Instead of being connected to a large administrative structure with park units in the greater Boston area and a great deal of institutional expertise, like that of Orville Carroll and others, the Kennedy site now joined a brand new and much smaller unit with the Longfellow house. The Longfellow house, though relatively well maintained

---

<sup>42</sup> For instance, at Minute Man, constant concerns flared among nearby residents over the seizure of their lands by purchase and eminent domain. See John Mahoney, "History Closes in on Lincoln Families: Park Residents Resist Eviction," *Boston Globe*, July 10, 1972.

<sup>43</sup> Memo: Superintendent's Annual Report, Superintendent, Russell W. Berry Jr. to Regional Director, February 4, 1974, John F. Kennedy National Historic Site Resource Management Records, 1963–2003 (JOFI 1504), Box 5, Folder 6.

<sup>44</sup> Orville Carroll Interview with Joan Zenzen, October 22, 2004.

<sup>45</sup> Public Law 92-475, October 9, 1972.

<sup>46</sup> Dilsaver, *America's National Park System: The Critical Documents*. See also conversations among the LONG papers about NPS interest in the site starting in the 1950s. See Memo: Report on Craigie-Longfellow House to Director, from Chief Historian, March 19, 1953, "Transition Files," LONG Unprocessed Boxes and Files, Longfellow House-Washington's Headquarters National Historic Site, Box 53, Folder 3.

<sup>47</sup> Memo: Superintendent's Annual Report, Superintendent, Russell W. Berry Jr. To Regional Director, John F. Kennedy National Historic Site Resource Management Records, 1963–2003 (JOFI 1504), Box 5, Folder 6.

by Longfellow family descendants, needed a great deal of immediate attention. A curator, Kathleen Catalano, was hired to help process the vast collections at Longfellow and would occasionally be assigned to efforts and issues at the Kennedy birthplace.<sup>48</sup> However, the Kennedy site, to some degree, was left on its own.

Muriel Storrie, a long-time park ranger, was assigned to the Kennedy site during the transition between the Boston Group and the Longfellow administration, and she was left on her own in dealing with the public once Kowal returned to Minute Man. Storrie often used her personal experience to interpret Kennedy's legacy at the historic site. One 1980 newspaper article followed Storrie through the site, and she recounted where she was at the moment she learned of the president's assassination. Storrie's approach seemed to impress the new superintendent, and he believed everything at the Kennedy site ran smoothly.

Russell W. Berry was the first new two-unit superintendent, after serving briefly as the lead management at the sites before their reorganization. He served as superintendent for just three years, before leaving to go through the NPS's Departmental Management Program. When he came on board as superintendent, he believed that little needed attention at the Kennedy house and felt that the site was "constrained" as long as Rose Kennedy was still alive. Though he "nominally" reported to the superintendent at Minute Man, administrators there showed little interest in the two sites, and he worked on substantial restoration projects at both sites directly through the regional office.<sup>49</sup> Berry's three years at Kennedy were eventful ones. Despite extensive needs at Longfellow that took 95% of his attention, Berry again began requesting essential reports and plans for Kennedy. He argued to the regional director that "only basic data for the J. F. Kennedy National Historical [sic] Site at present is contained in the Master Plan and Interpretive Prospectus. There are several Historic Studies programmed which will give additional information."<sup>50</sup> Despite Nan Rickey's recommendation early on that a Master Plan be developed for the site, it was not until 1977 that the staff at the site, rather than a planning unit of the NPS, first developed a Statement for Management in lieu of a master plan.

---

<sup>48</sup> Catalano was a curator at Boston Group before the reorganization. She served at Longfellow from 1974 through 1986 and was the primary curatorial force for the Kennedy site during this same period. Sara Patton Zarrelli, *The Long Road to Restoration: An Administrative History of Longfellow House-Washington's Headquarters National Historic Site* (National Park Service: US Department of the Interior, 2021), 50, 70.

<sup>49</sup> After three years in the NPS Departmental Management Program, Berry moved on to a position as Assistant Superintendent at Big Bend, and then served as superintendent of Voyageurs. Russell Berry, interview by Sara Zarrelli, April 24, 2020.

<sup>50</sup> Memo: Resources Basic Inventory (RBI), Superintendent, Russell J. Berry Jr., to Regional Director, November 30, 1973. John F. Kennedy National Historic Site Resource Management Records, 1963–2003 (JOFI 1504), Box 2, Folder 5.

## Busing and Fire Bombing

At the Kennedy site, another concern would take center stage during Berry's time as superintendent. On Monday, September 8, 1975, an unknown person firebombed the Kennedy birthplace. It was the first day of school for children in Boston area public schools. The city was engulfed in protests, police strikes, and anxiety about the court-mandated decree to enforce busing to desegregate Boston's schools. Some of this concern spilled over into Brookline.

Senator Ted Kennedy faced a great deal of conflict over the issue. His stand was "pro-busing," despite consistent and often physical opposition from White Bostonians. Antibusing protestors blocked him from reaching his car at a public speech in Boston, slashed the tires on his car in broad daylight, "jabbed at him with American flags," hit him with their fists, and threw rocks at him. Already under scrutiny after his 1969 Chappaquiddick car accident that led to the death of Mary Jo Kopechne, Ted Kennedy became a particular target of anti-busing advocates. In one altercation, after voices in an antibusing crowd screamed at Senator Kennedy, "Why don't you put your one-legged son on a bus for Roxbury," "Let your daughter get bused there so she can get raped," and "Why don't you let them shoot you like they shot your two brothers?" members of the crowd threw tomatoes and eggs at him. He sought shelter in the John F. Kennedy Federal Building in downtown Boston. After he made it inside, the group "pounded on the plate glass windows" and broke at least one window in anger.<sup>51</sup>

But that Monday, sometime after the birthplace closed for the day and before the firebomb ignited the historic site, someone scrawled "Bus Teddy" on the sidewalk in front of the house.<sup>52</sup> Paradoxically, Ted "Teddy" Kennedy had never lived at 83 Beals Street; he was born after his family had moved away from Brookline. The national historic site was an unlucky symbol, pointing to the fact that the Kennedys, though Bostonians by reputation, had always raised their children outside the city and outside of the public school system of the City of Boston. Brookline itself had model schools in the 1960s, where residents spent near state-high levels per student to ensure and please a highly educated population. In addition, the largely White and well-off town of Brookline participated in the ground-

---

<sup>51</sup> Bob Sales, "Sen. Kennedy Jeered from Stage at Rally: Antibusing Crowd Throws Tomatoes, Eggs," *Boston Globe*, September 10, 1974. Jeremiah Murphy, "The Day the Crowd Booed a Kennedy in Boston," *Boston Globe*, September 10, 1974. See also Peter Anderson, "Bus Foes Shout Down Kennedy at Hub Hearing on Airline Fares," *Boston Globe*, February 15, 1975. Curtis Wilkie, "Busing Foes Again Heckle Kennedy in Boston," *Boston Globe*, March 8, 1975. Richard Martin and Robert Rosenthal, "Kennedy Jostled, Rushed by Crowd of Busing Foes in Quincy," *Boston Globe*, April 7, 1975. Ken Boatwright, "Roar Vows to Continue Confronting Se. Kennedy," *Boston Globe*, April 8, 1975. Editorial Statement, "Assaults of Sen. Kennedy," *Boston Globe*, April 8, 1975.

<sup>52</sup> Though archival photographs at the site, and those published in local newspapers, indicate that the firebombers painted "Bus Teddy," Russell Berry recalls the spray-painted message as "Fuck Kennedy." Berry, "Oral History."

breaking voluntary and sometimes controversial school desegregation program METCO, put in place in 1966, which brought students from troubled schools in nearby Boston to attend the stellar schools in Brookline.<sup>53</sup> While some called the busing that Brookline participated in “from slum to suburb,” busing the program was primarily organized by Black parents who wanted better educational opportunities for their children in the suburbs of Boston.<sup>54</sup>

Despite being perfect tinder for a fire, the wood-frame and wooden clapboard-sided house was not lost to flames, but it did sustain significant fire and smoke damage. Luckily a new smoke detector and alarm had been installed just inside the back door. The alarm was set up to immediately call the police and fire department if temperatures reached 190° Fahrenheit. It was through that very back door’s glass window the arsonists tossed the bomb. The fire started directly under the smoke detector and spread through the back entry hall wall and to the back of the house.<sup>55</sup>

By the time the fire department arrived at the house, a neighbor who had heard the commotion was already dousing the back of the house with a hose. Brookline Fire Department Deputy Chief, John E. McNerny found a strong odor of gasoline inside.<sup>56</sup> According to the FBI investigation into the fire, due to the detector’s location, “it seem[ed] reasonable to conclude that the presence of fire was known almost immediately to the Brookline Fire Department. The extent of damage to the house during the short period of time indicated use of some type of accelerant.”<sup>57</sup>

Though the damage was not catastrophic, it was extensive. Superintendent Berry was watching a football game on television when he received a call about the fire. When he got to the house, he found most of the extreme damage in the kitchen (Figure 9).<sup>58</sup>

---

<sup>53</sup> For more on METCO and programs like it, see Michael Savage’s “Beyond Boundaries: Envisioning Metropolitan School Desegregation in Boston, Detroit, and Philadelphia, 1963–1974,” *Journal of Urban History* 46, no. 1 (2020): 129–49.

<sup>54</sup> For an early account of the METCO program, see Geoffrey Zwirikunzeno Kapenzi’s “The Metropolitan Council for Educational Opportunity: An Evaluation,” *The Negro Educational Review* 25, no. 4 (1974): 203–7.

<sup>55</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation, *Kennedy Fire (9/8/1975) Investigation Report*, John F. Kennedy National Historic Site Resource Management Records, 1963–2003 (JOFI 1504), Box 4, Folder 14.

<sup>56</sup> *Kennedy Fire (9/8/1975) Investigation Report*, 11, 17.

<sup>57</sup> *Kennedy Fire (9/8/1975) Investigation Report*, 5.

<sup>58</sup> Manli Ho, “JFK Birthplace Gets a Facelift Following Fire,” *Boston Globe*, October 15, 1975.



**Figure 9.** 1975 fire damage in the kitchen and back hall. JOFI 1504, Box 10, Folder 12, NPS, 1975.

The interior of the kitchen, the back entry hall, stairs, and the hall to the basement had to be replaced entirely. All the plaster was removed from the walls and ceilings, and all woodwork was too damaged to be salvaged. Staff, however, were amazed that despite the fact the Brookline Fire Department had come through the front of the house and had run fire hoses through the dining room, where the table was set with Kennedy dinnerware, only one glass was broken during the work to put out the fire.<sup>59</sup> Much of the rest of the house was severely damaged by smoke. Costs for cleaning photographs, linens, curtains, and blinds, and costs for the replacement of wallpaper, floors, and carpets—all installed or reinstalled in the house for less than a decade—were extreme. Newspapers reported that it would cost between \$30,000 to \$100,000 to make the repairs.<sup>60</sup>

Witnesses confirmed seeing two men wearing “dark green plaid work-type coats and some type of hat” fleeing the scene with their faces covered. One witness thought they jumped into a 1969 or later green or brown Chevrolet Impala. The FBI looked at every Impala of that description in the state, and all the owners and potential drivers had alibis.

---

<sup>59</sup> Kathleen Catalano Milley, interview by Sara Zarrelli, May 28, 2020.

<sup>60</sup> Memo: From Regional Architect to Associate Regional Director, Park System Management, Subject: Fire at John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site, September 10, 1975, John F. Kennedy National Historic Site Resource Management Records, 1963–2003 (JOFI 1504), Box 4, Folder 14.

The FBI seems to have exhausted all leads less than a month later.<sup>61</sup> The case was one of dozens that were investigated by the US Department of Justice, through their Civil Rights Division over busing flare-ups in the city.<sup>62</sup> The case remains unsolved.

Public response quickly condemned the fire-bombing as an “affront to the nation.”<sup>63</sup> And though busing did not suddenly become popular among White Bostonians, physical attacks against Senator Kennedy seemed to stop. After the fire, he let his constituents know that, while he had a sentimental attachment to the house and an interest in its preservation, it was the *education*, “safety and well-being of the children of Boston,” that concerned him most.<sup>64</sup>

Recovering from the fire was a long process. Officials advertised that they needed to find beveled glass panes for the 2 exterior doors and 12 double-tube radiators.<sup>65</sup> Throughout the rest of 1975 and most of 1976, the restoration at the birthplace continued slowly. Occasional updates were posted in the *Globe*, with details about the cost and replacement of the kitchen cabinets or wallpaper. Details about the horsehair that had to be imported from New Hampshire to restore the kitchen walls and the search for a retired plasterer who could do the work also made the news. It was “painstaking work.”<sup>66</sup>

Years later, journalists, citing an unnamed source, would link gangster James “Whitey” Bulger to a series of antibusing attacks in Boston, including the firebombing of the Kennedy birthplace as a response to Ted Kennedy’s political support for busing.<sup>67</sup> Whoever caused the arson at the Kennedy birthplace, the lengthy repairs brought about a renewed connection between the site and Robert Luddington, who helped order replacement wallpapers, and answered a new series of questions about the work that he and Rose Kennedy had done at the site. The kitchen itself was an area of the house that Kennedy had little memory of, and many of the details for its furnishing came from Luddington. When Superintendent Berry and other NPS staff had to make restoration decisions about the site, they now had to actively choose between using NPS historical, architectural, and furnishings research or returning the house to Rose Kennedy’s restoration. Though few docu-

---

<sup>61</sup> Memo to NPS from Richard Bates, Special Agent in Charge, FBI, October 3, 1975, John F. Kennedy National Historic Site Resource Management Records, 1963–2003 (JOFI 1504 Folder 14, Box 4).

<sup>62</sup> Arthur Jones, “Grand Jury to Call Witnesses on Phase 2 Disruptions Probe,” *Boston Globe*, October 1, 1975.

<sup>63</sup> “JFK Site Firebombing Shocks Neighbors,” *Boston Herald American*, September 9, 1975; “‘An Outrage’ Viewpoint (Editorial),” *Boston Herald American*, September 9, 1975.

<sup>64</sup> “Response to Fire Becomes Busing Message: Pupil Safety Comes First, Kennedy Says,” *Boston Globe*, December 10, 1975.

<sup>65</sup> “JFK House,” *Boston Globe*, December 10, 1975.

<sup>66</sup> Robert Kenney, “Update: Restoration of JFK Birthplace Going Well,” *Boston Globe*, January 18, 1976. William Cash, “JFK Birthplace to Reopen in October,” *Boston Globe*, August 20, 1976.

<sup>67</sup> Shelley Murphy, “Bulger Linked to ’70s Antibusing Attacks,” *Boston Globe*, April 23, 2001, 1. Before his death, and after his imprisonment, and long after the statute of limitations had expired for the arson, I wrote to James Bulger in prison to see if he would confirm or deny his role in the fire. He did not respond.



ments detail these decisions, photographs of the fire damage document some of the details uncovered by the fire. Among them, the possibility of a different cabinet arrangement in the kitchen and clear evidence in ghosting on the wall of a built-in hutch, which was absent in Rose Kennedy’s and Luddington’s restoration.<sup>68</sup> However, the site brought in Blaine Cliver, a historical architect, to look closely at the kitchen. From his findings, “it was determined that the [original 1917] house was found to be contrary to the way the house was restored.” Staff “arranged with Mr. Robert Luddington, the consultant originally responsible for the 1969 restoration, and he in turn contacted Mrs. Rose Kennedy and permission was granted to make changes in the kitchen area.” These changes corrected the home to match the new architectural evidence that was uncovered by the fire.<sup>69</sup> Though the NPS was well within its authority to make changes to recreate a built-in structure and doorway to match the evidence staff had found, individuals at the site still deferred to Rose Kennedy for approvals to make those changes. Though there is not an official report on changes to the kitchen in the wake of the fire, a careful study of the correspondence between Cliver and the park may reveal the exact nature of any revisions to the kitchen’s appearance. Russell Berry’s annual report on the site reveals much about the tumultuous year, but any correspondence between Berry and Luddington or Berry and Rose Kennedy about the fire is not extant.<sup>70</sup>

In addition, many of the textiles in the house that came from Rose Kennedy were terribly damaged by smoke. Among the original items, most revered, was the bassinette. While the bassinette was able to be cleaned, the blue satin ribbon attached to it had to be replaced. Harvard’s Fogg Art Museum handled much of the restoration and cleaning work for original items.<sup>71</sup> Among the items that had to be replaced whole cloth were the icebox and stove. In each case, because documentation had noted the makes and models of these items, the NPS sought exact replacements for the Kennedy restoration and ran advertisements to replace them.<sup>72</sup> Disposing many of the damaged items took many years as the NPS had to justify the disposal of the ruined items because they had no specific historical association with the site in 1917. Staff tried to do so as privately as possible, perhaps

---

<sup>68</sup> Berry, “Oral History.”

<sup>69</sup> The changes to the kitchen revolved around a hutch/cabinet that was removed. Memo: Superintendent’s Annual Report, Superintendent, Russell W. Berry Jr., to Regional Director; “Annual Report John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site,” 1975, John F. Kennedy National Historic Site Resource Management Records, 1963–2003 (JOFI 1504), Box 8, Folder 16.

<sup>70</sup> Memo: Superintendent’s Annual Report, Superintendent, Russell W. Berry Jr., to Regional Director; “Annual Report John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site,” 1975, John F. Kennedy National Historic Site Resource Management Records, 1963–2003 (JOFI 1504), Box 8, Folder 16. The researcher looked through the current holdings of JOFI-related administrative files held at LONG and NARA files related to JOFI for evidence of any correspondence.

<sup>71</sup> Requisitions dated September 19, 1975, and January 1, 1976, John F. Kennedy National Historic Site Resource Management Records, 1963–2003 (JOFI 1504), Box 8, Folder 9.

<sup>72</sup> “JFK Birthplace to Get Replacement Ice Chest,” *Boston Evening Globe*, November 13, 1975.

because staff were worried that visitors might be interested in items that might have belonged to the Kennedys. One requisition noted, three months after the site had already reopened, that the “ice box was burned beyond repair & could not be re-used in the Kennedy House firebombing. Even though the box will have to be ‘disposed of,’ it is better for the Park Service to do this, in order to avoid any unauthorized appropriation.”<sup>73</sup> Even when disposing of damaged collections, staff at the house were concerned that the Kennedy association might cause interest from the public and other issues.

After the firebombing and well until October of 1976, the National Park Service assigned extra security from Boston to the Brookline site, as hired protection was needed both “because of the fire damage and potential for other acts of civil disobedience or violence as a spinoff of the busing.”<sup>74</sup> Despite being closed for the entire year, “visitor contacts” listed in the site’s Annual Report for 1976 counted at 18,776, about half of what visitation had been in 1969. This may have been the first year that staff at the site began to count all manner of interactions with the public as “visitor contacts.”<sup>75</sup>

Arson was not uncommon either in the Boston area generally during the mid-1970s, and it seems that a number of other historic sites in Massachusetts were targeted in the Bicentennial year. In June 1976, someone set fire to Boston’s Congress Street pier gift shop and ticket office. This happened not long after Plymouth Rock was bombed. In addition, vehicles at the National Guard Armory in Dorchester, a small Eastern Airlines jet at Logan Airport, and the Essex County Superior Courthouse were all bombed in a single week.<sup>76</sup> There were political firebombings throughout the 1970s, but the Boston area was particularly hard hit by arsonists. “Antibusing forces or radical groups” were suspected. As a result, many of Massachusetts’ historic sites saw an increase in security and security costs.<sup>77</sup>

But the costs at the birthplace were more than financial. Though initial reports estimated that the house would be closed for repairs for about a month, it was closed for more than a year for restoration. As a result, it was closed all but a few days of the Bicentennial year of 1976. During the Bicentennial, Bostonians largely put aside divisive issues like busing and organized a number of events to celebrate the 200th anniversary of

---

<sup>73</sup> Requisition dated March 18, 1977, John F. Kennedy National Historic Site Resource Management Records, 1963–2003 (JOFI 1504), Box 8, Folder 9.

<sup>74</sup> Memo: Subject: Law Enforcement Funding Report, from Associate Regional Director (Denis P. Gavin) to Associate Director, Administration, WASO, October 10, 1975, John F. Kennedy National Historic Site Resource Management Records, 1963–2003 (JOFI 1504), Box 8, Folder 8.

<sup>75</sup> “1976 Annual Report John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site,” 1977, John F. Kennedy National Historic Site Resource Management Records, 1963–2003 (JOFI 1504), Box 8, Folder 16.

<sup>76</sup> Richard Hudson, “Boston Area Bombing, Threats Will Continue, FBI Says,” *Boston Sunday Globe*, July 4, 1976.

<sup>77</sup> Robert Ward, “State Sites Get Tighter Security,” *Boston Globe*, June 4, 1976.

the American Revolution.<sup>78</sup> Visitation boomed at historic sites across the country. But no one came to the Kennedy house. It only reopened to the public in the last weeks of the year, on December 18, 1976.<sup>79</sup>

Superintendent Berry only led the park unit for these few years before he was ready to lead a larger park and headed off to the Service's Departmental Management Program.<sup>80</sup> Just two months before the site reopened, Berry left the unit. James L. Brown came from Sagamore Hill National Historic Site, where he had served as a Unit Manager and Superintendent, to join the Longfellow and Kennedy sites as Superintendent in 1976.<sup>81</sup>

## The Carter and Reagan Years

Joining the Kennedy and Longfellow sites in 1979 was the Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site in Brookline. First seriously proposed as an addition to the Park Service over the summer of 1976, while the Kennedy site was recovering from the firebombing, in October of 1979, Congress passed legislation to create the site. With that legislation came a complex set of management priorities for a new three-site unit which included not just the management of a new historic site and buildings, but acquisition, “management and permanent protection of the archival collections” related to the Olmsted landscape architectural firm.<sup>82</sup> Both the Longfellow site and the Olmsted site presented complex collections management concerns for the unit, whereas the Kennedy site increasingly seemed to run on its own, with little management.

However, interest in Kennedy and his family did not wane in the late 1970s. The local press was riveted in 1980 when Fitzgerald descendants toured the North End of Boston to learn more about the origins of the family. On the tour, the family spent time at Rose Kennedy's birthplace but did not visit the former president's.<sup>83</sup> Public interest in the birthplace was waning, and the press noticed. Visitation by 1980 was down nearly 50

---

<sup>78</sup> For a discussion of the history of the Bicentennial and its effect on public history and the public's consumption of history, see M. J. Rymysz-Pawłowska's and Tammy Stone-Gordon's work. Tammy Stone-Gordon, *The Spirit of 1976: Commerce, Community, and the Politics of Commemoration*, Public History in Historical Perspective (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2013); *The Spirit of 1976: Commerce, Community, and the Politics of Commemoration*; M. J. Rymysz-Pawłowska, *History Comes Alive: Public History and Popular Culture in the 1970s* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017).

<sup>79</sup> Mary Meier, “Kennedy Birthplace Open Today,” *Boston Globe*, December 18, 1976.

<sup>80</sup> Berry, “Oral History.”

<sup>81</sup> Historic Listing of National Park Service Officials, Superintendents of National Park System Areas. [https://www.nps.gov/parkhistory/online\\_books/tolson/histlist7s.htm](https://www.nps.gov/parkhistory/online_books/tolson/histlist7s.htm).

<sup>82</sup> Public Law 96-87, October 12, 1979.

<sup>83</sup> Chris Black, “North End Tour Is Path to Past for Fitzgeralds and Kennedys,” *Boston Globe*, June 30, 1980.

percent from its highpoint. Many speculated that the new John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum (JFK Library) was “siphoning potential visitors away from the suburban birthplace.”<sup>84</sup>

Despite the excitement over reopening the house to the public after the restoration, visitation decreased from its high point after opening in 1969, with 33,200 visitors to only 23,800 by 1977. That same year, five months after ground was broken for the JFK Library, Rose Kennedy wrote to Jack Stark, NPS Regional Director, asking that items she had donated to the site, including John F. Kennedy’s christening gown be made available to the library. She made sure to note that she was looking forward to seeing him at the library’s opening in 1979.<sup>85</sup> Between 1977 and 1980, *The Boston Globe* rarely ran articles that featured the birthplace, and instead, covered, in detail, progress on the new presidential library. The library’s planners had struggled for more than a decade to secure an appropriate site for the library, which held President Kennedy’s papers and those of his cabinet and staff and offered a museum that interpreted both his biography and influence.

More than 30 million people donated to help build the JFK Library, and organizers raised \$20 million to build it. Almost all the reviews of the library singingly praised I. M. Pei’s architectural design but also the scope of the museum’s exhibits. Even the *New York Times*’s sometimes harsh architectural critic, Ada Louise Huxtable, spelled it out clearly in her review: “The Museum Upstages the Library.” Choosing to use her review of the library as a commentary on the state of presidential libraries, Huxtable argued that each presidential library served as “an excuse” for the main attraction: a presidential museum. This type of museum had “turned into an enormously popular tourist attraction,” perhaps, she went on, such museums were now “the biggest draw since Disneyland.” According to her, the JFK Library was the best of the presidential library museums to date, and it served as a “remarkable synthesis” of the phenomena of the presidential library and the phenomena of “the Kennedy family.”<sup>86</sup>

The presidential library was not the only institution with the Kennedy name drawing attention from the public. The Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, which opened to the public in 1971, was a tourist attraction all its own. Nearly every issue of the National Park Service’s newsletter *The Courier*, marked among its pages NPS employee transfers of talented Park Service personnel to the Kennedy Center; VIPs who hobnobbed at events at this Washington, DC, arts hotspot; or special funds allocated to the center. However, throughout the 1970s and into the early 1980s, the John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site was rarely mentioned. One exception was in the site’s development of special programs. In 1979, despite the lower visitation at the site, staff were busy developing new

---

<sup>84</sup> Dick Braude, “Tourism Down at JFK Birthplace,” *Boston Globe (Associated Press)*, November 23, 1980.

<sup>85</sup> November 14, 1977, Box 6, Folder 19.

<sup>86</sup> Ada Louise Huxtable, “The Museum Upstages the Library,” *New York Times*, October 28, 1979.

programs for the “Year of the Visitor.” Among the programs developed at the Kennedy site was one aimed at “elderly visitors” that could reach them both at the site through specialized tours and in remote locations like nursing facilities and retirement homes.<sup>87</sup>

Similarly, in 1981, the NPS was part of the federal movement to make changes to accommodations to be more inclusive of Americans with disabilities. Anticipating the Americans with Disabilities Act, which wouldn’t go into effect until 1990, the birthplace experimented with services for visitors who were visually impaired. Ray Bloomer, a visually impaired ranger who visited a number of Boston area sites, ran a special evaluative program and went through the site with school children from Brookline’s Devotion School to consider what changes could be made to make the site more accessible for visitors who had limited mobility, vision, and hearing. There is no evidence in the park’s records of whether or when such changes were implemented.<sup>88</sup>

By the 1980s, despite the fire restoration, wear and tear from the site’s years open to the public were beginning to show at the site. Staff worried the ground beneath the cellar floor had begun to erode, leaving them concerned about the “hollow sound” they heard when they walked across it. By 1984, the Kennedy site would have yet another new and relatively short-lived superintendent, Stephen Whitesell. Whitesell came to the site with a background in planning and landscape architecture, which was a perfect match for heading up work at the new Olmsted site. He joined Kennedy and Longfellow for just two years before leaving to be a superintendent at a number of bigger parks, eventually becoming the Associate Director of all Park Planning, Facilities, and Lands and Regional Director for the National Capital Region.<sup>89</sup> During his short time at the unit, visitation trended up just a bit, he replaced the original security system at the house, and the site got its first Collections Preservation Guide thanks to Kathleen Catalano’s efforts.<sup>90</sup> Perhaps most importantly for the structural integrity of the site and for interpretation at the unit, he and the Associate Regional Director argued that the basement floor would need to be removed, new footings poured, new fill added and compacted, and a new concrete slab floor poured. He also recommended that a large dry well be dug in the yard to handle the

---

<sup>87</sup> Candace Garry, “Year of the Visitor: A Lot of Little Extras,” *Courier: The National Park Service Newsletter* 2, no. 12 (1979).

<sup>88</sup> Wendy Fox, “For Handicapped, Advice and Self-Help: 5-Year-Olds Assess JFK’s Birthplace,” *Boston Globe*, June 25, 1982.

<sup>89</sup> “Class of 2014,” *Arrowhead: The Newsletter of the Employees & Alumni Association of the National Park Service* 21, no. 4 (2014).

<sup>90</sup> Kathleen Catalano, “John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site Collections Preservation Guide” (1985).

house's significant runoff to help mediate future erosion under the house.<sup>91</sup> From 1984 through 1986, the site went through significant rehabilitation to the lowest level of the house. The site got a new basement floor, a new heating boiler, and new steel railings. This work seemed to stabilize the house. The site also had other issues to contend with, such as staff concerns and uncertain finances.

## Daily Work at the Kennedy Birthplace in the 1980s

Throughout the 1980s, staff became concerned with the physical structure and conditions at the site, not just the basement floor. Kevin Carroll, the Chief of Interpretation and site manager at the site in the early 1980s, argued that temperature and humidity fluctuated in extremes and were “serious concerns,” because there were “no climate controlled areas for exhibits or collections storage.” With 95-degree days at 95 percent humidity in the house in the summer, staff must have been uncomfortable. Temperatures in the hotter, third-floor staff offices no doubt were beyond uncomfortable.<sup>92</sup>

The new basement floor allowed staff to remodel the space using Operation of the National Park Service (ONPS) base monies for a visitor reception area, which they outfitted with a window air unit in the summer and a humidifier in the dry winter.<sup>93</sup> This visitor reception radically changed the arrangement of the house tour. Now visitors, instead of coming through the front door—simulating how they might have been received by a resident of the home—came into the house for tours from the basement stairs into the kitchen area. The new space allowed greater visitor services, an updated bathroom, a space for limited retail, and staff. Not everyone found the change welcoming, but the new space was important to the staff in 1987 who increasingly had little comfortable space with visitors.<sup>94</sup>

By the 1980s, staff mentioned Rose Kennedy in almost mystical terms. In an interview about declining visitation, one site employee recalled cryptically, “Mrs. Kennedy came back once. . . one night she just rang the bell and someone let her in. She wanted to take the

---

<sup>91</sup> Kevin Carroll, “1984 Annual Report: John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site,” John F. Kennedy National Historic Site Resource Management Records, 1963–2003 (JOFI 1504); Memo: From Associate Regional Director P&Rp, North Atlantic Regional Office to Chief, Historic Preservation, Trip Report: John Fitzgerald Kennedy Birthplace, April 2, 1984, John F. Kennedy National Historic Site Resource Management Records, 1963–2003 (JOFI 1504), Box 8, Folder 19. On the lawn, see Chief Interpreter Kevin Carroll, “Annual Statement for Interpretation and Visitor Services, John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site. 1980,” 1981, John F. Kennedy National Historic Site Resource Management Records, 1963–2003 (JOFI 1504), Box 6, Folder 5. Catalano, “John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site Collections Preservation Guide.”

<sup>92</sup> Kevin Carroll, “Resource Management Plan, John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site,” 1981 John F. Kennedy National Historic Site Resource Management Records, 1963–2003 (JOFI 1504), Box 6, Folder 11.

<sup>93</sup> Stephen Whitesell, “Resource Management Plan Update, John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site,” 1987, John F. Kennedy National Historic Site Resource Management Records, 1963–2003 (JOFI 1504), Box 6, Folder 11.

<sup>94</sup> Rolf Diamant, interview by Hilary Iris Lowe, November 11, 2019.

linen bedspreads to be mended in Ireland. We never heard from her again.” Despite the fact that the birthplace wasn’t open at night, and that it was unlikely for Rose Kennedy to be allowed to just take an item out of the house without approval and supervision from NPS staff, Rose Kennedy’s influence haunted the house. Perhaps because she was still very much alive.<sup>95</sup>

Despite continuing broad interest in the Kennedy family and President Kennedy, increasingly visitors and even staff were not able to call upon their own personal connection or memory of Kennedy. For instance, Christine Horn, a member of seasonal staff at the site in 1986 who was born the month after Kennedy was murdered, lamented that “I don’t remember President Kennedy. . . I’ve read a lot about that time and been to the library and museum.” However, she noted that her knowledge was “really from T.V.”<sup>96</sup> Her experience was increasingly the norm. In the early 1980s visitation at the site hovered between 17,000 and 18,000 annually with significant numbers of young people (between 24–40 percent of all visitors were under 18), and by 1982, 20 percent of visitors to the site did not speak English. Staff identified Spanish and Japanese as the primary languages for these non-English speakers. By 1985, the site responded to this trend and had acquired translations of Rose Kennedy’s audio tour in Japanese.<sup>97</sup>

By the end of the decade, staff were still advocating for a Historic Resource Study and were often left to handle problems on their own. Remarkably, in 1987, less than 20 years after the site opened its doors, superintendent Stephen Whitesell was requesting an administrative history, “without an Administrative History, much valuable data will be overlooked or forgotten. As time passes, opportunities are lost for oral history taping of key personnel.”<sup>98</sup> Arguing generally for understanding the site better, Whitesell requested a bevy of plans as “presently, reports, administrative records and management actions are difficult to track. As a result, time is needlessly wasted sorting through records to find what action occurred when, etc.” Most pressingly, though, Whitesell requested again for a much-needed historic resource study. “Despite the fact that John F. Kennedy National

---

<sup>95</sup> Braude, “Tourism Down at JFK Birthplace.” Though the specific details of this story are likely inaccurate, it picks up on the fact that Rose Kennedy was long interested in Irish bedspreads that she donated to the site. She sought for many years to find artisans in Ireland who could recreate them as she remembered them. One internal NPS newsletter noted that “Mrs. Joseph P. Kennedy visited the Birthplace Wednesday evening (June 10) before leaving for Ireland to have embroidered bedspreads reproduced for the master bedroom.” See *Group Scoop*, June 10, 1970, issue 21. MIMA Archives Orville Carroll Research Records, MIMA 63772, Box 2, Folder 14. Though Rose Kennedy hoped to reproduce the bedspreads, the modern ones that came with her restoration have been in place since the site opened. See catalogue collections records for JOFI 539 and JOFI 540.

<sup>96</sup> “At Work,” *The Boston Herald, Sunday Magazine*, August 31, 1986.

<sup>97</sup> Acting Site Supervisor Brian Doherty, “Semi-Annual Report, January–September 1985,” 1985, John F. Kennedy National Historic Site Resource Management Records, 1963–2003 (JOFI 1504), Box 6, Folder 16.

<sup>98</sup> Whitesell was in many ways right. This study could certainly have benefitted from interviews with Edwin Small, Maurice Kowal, Muriel Storrie, and many others about this would have added greatly to the early history of the site’s administration.

Historic Site has been in operation for over fifteen years, it still lacks this important study.”<sup>99</sup> Staff had, over the years, tried to piece together timelines for the site’s important dates creating a document they titled “history of the site,” both for the sake of information about the historical period but also to know what work had taken place on the house when it was in the hands of Rose Kennedy and the National Park Service. The document kept track of details like the 1969 frozen pipes, which required the acquisition of new (historically accurate) radiators in many of the rooms and new wallpaper where the wallpaper had been destroyed. Their history indicates repairs that were not necessarily documented elsewhere.<sup>100</sup> The document calls attention to the fact that the only planning documents for staff to work with were the Historic Furnishing Plan (1971), a Historic Resource Maintenance Plan (1976), and the Statement for Management (1977).<sup>101</sup>

The tone of this history, likely produced by Kevin Carroll, is dire. Clearly, in the 1980s, staff were keenly interested in planning for the future of the site and needed the NPS documents to help them do so. In the meantime, they made do with their own adaptations of goals taken from the three existing planning documents and tried to do their best to plan for events they knew would come to pass. For instance, Carroll strategized for how the site would memorialize Rose Kennedy at the birthplace on the event of her death. In 1984, he sketched out a plan that included draping “a black banner across the portal and [hanging] flower crepe. . . from the front door,” as well as placing a memorial register for visitors to sign next to a prominent photograph of Rose Kennedy.<sup>102</sup> In 1987, ranger Leslie Obleschuk likewise worked with interpretive staff to research biographical information about the Kennedy family, the Brookline neighborhood in 1917, the experience of Irish Americans in Boston, and the family’s connection to Boston politics, creating their own, make-shift historical resource study, in the hopes that staff might be able to provide interpretative materials in the new visitor area of the basement.<sup>103</sup>

In the 1980s, staff documented their shifts and work in a daily log, where they annotated important information at the site. Noting what day Joseph Kennedy might visit the site, for instance, let everyone know that the whole site should be cleaned and made

---

<sup>99</sup> Whitesell, “Resource Management Plan Update, John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site.”

<sup>100</sup> “History of the Site,” John F. Kennedy National Historic Site Resource Management Records, 1963–2003 (JOFI 1504), circa 1982, Box 6, Folder 13.

<sup>101</sup> “History of the Site.” Importantly this timeline also indicates that the Kennedy site is considered “a satellite of the Longfellow National Historic Site,” noting that the superintendent, chief of maintenance, curator, administrative technician are all located at Longfellow, while the site had a supervisory park ranger (GS-7), Park Ranger (GS-5), and two park aides (GS-3) and Museum Aid (GS-3).

<sup>102</sup> Memo: Memorialization, from Site Supervisor (Kevin Carroll) to Superintendent May 10, 1984, John F. Kennedy National Historic Site Resource Management Records, 1963–2003 (JOFI 1504), Box 6, Folder 14.

<sup>103</sup> Leslie Obleschuk, “Annual Statement for Interpretation and Visitor Services, FY 1987,” in *JFKNHS, Resource Management Records, 1963–2003*, Box 6, Folder 17 (1986).



ready.<sup>104</sup> The log also recorded how staff also saw their hours cut by increments, for example in 1981, the site changed its hours for visitors, opening at 10:00 rather than 9:00, “because no one comes at 9:00,” and more importantly, it was necessary in order “to absorb FY81 salary increase and other increased operating costs.” The site’s budget was seeing considerable strain given that the basic staff salary and operating costs (like the electric and water bills) continued to go up, while the budget for the site did not. By the early 1980s, 98 percent of the site’s annual budget went only to salaries. As salaries rose incrementally, the only way to “cut costs” was to limit hours at the site.<sup>105</sup> In 1981, the site even canceled its regular order of fresh flowers from a local florist which staff had placed on the dining table, and perhaps in other areas of the house, because there were no longer the funds to pay for flowers. “Life-like silk flowers” were purchased in “sufficient supply to change regularly,” as a cost-cutting measure.<sup>106</sup> While daily events at the house were rarely documented, the log allows us to understand many ways that the site’s administration was faltering in large and small ways that staff noted.

Staff morale sometimes wavered according to the Daily Log, which also noted political and national events, like Reagan winning the election in 1984 (its notation included a hand-drawn sad face) and when the site raised its flag at half-staff for the “Beirut Massacre,” when a truck bomb exploded at a Marine barracks in Beirut, Lebanon, killing 241 service personnel.<sup>107</sup> The log also noted the broadcast of a 1983 miniseries on the Kennedy family as well as the staff’s belief that the Cold War, nuclear disaster TV drama *The Day After*, would likely have more fans.<sup>108</sup> The log noted changes over the year, like new superintendents, staff transfers to western parks, new cars purchased, and when staff bought their first homes. Importantly when one employee left work to have her first child and returned to her position, months later, it was clear that the park unit supported her pregnancy and her return to work, long before the 1993 Family Medical Leave Act was in place.<sup>109</sup> In 1984, staff member Lisa Marie noted, “The budget figures are in and things don’t look very good. Kevin [Carroll] had to give me some bad news today. The money for

---

<sup>104</sup> “Daily Log,” JOFI Unprocessed Files. It’s unclear from the log which Joseph Kennedy was visiting. See entries for April 22 and April 27, 1983, for example. Begun in 1983, by Kevin Carroll, to document “all important and trivial events that occur at the house. In years hence the park staff can see how a snowy winter or how a busy summer it was.” See entry January 1, 1983. JOFI Unprocessed files, Longfellow House-Washington’s Headquarters National Historic Site Archives, entry for November 7, 1984.

<sup>105</sup> Memo: Hours of Visitation, from Supervisory Park Ranger John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site to Acting Superintendent, Longfellow National Historic Site, April 1, 1981, John F. Kennedy National Historic Site Resource Management Records, 1963–2003 (JOFI 1504), Box 3, Folder 3.

<sup>106</sup> “Handwritten Note,” 1981, John F. Kennedy National Historic Site Resource Management Records, 1963–2003 (JOFI 1504), Box 6, Folder 4.

<sup>107</sup> “Daily Log.” Entries for October 24, 1983

<sup>108</sup> “Daily Log.” Entry for November 21, 1983.

<sup>109</sup> “Daily Log.” Entries for December 31, 1983.

my position will run out Dec. 8. Kevin—I know you don’t like to handle such negative news—but you handled the situation very well. *Thanks!*”<sup>110</sup> Even while facing unemployment, the close staff tried to support one another. By 1986 the birthplace was only open during certain months, reopening for the season in March after closing to the public over the winter.<sup>111</sup> The log also documents the stress of dealing with the public on busy days and the stress of working at the site as it adjusted to being paired with the Longfellow site, which staff often referred to as “Shortfellow” in jest.<sup>112</sup> Morale wasn’t just an issue at Kennedy or at the trisites. Beginning with the appointment of Secretary of the Interior James Watt, the NPS’s “National Park Service management would be challenged, and politicization of the directorship and erosion of its power promoted.” Watt “spelled out administration policies that would curtail the system’s growth and return to the provision of visitor services and pleasures as a primary management goal.” This coupled with years of underfunding created a system-wide “erosion of employee morale.”<sup>113</sup>

In 1987, a new superintendent, Rolf Diamant, would come to the trisite unit and make big changes to their organizational structure, staffing, interpretation, and budget lines. His influence would in some important ways unify the three sites and allow staff at each site to fully develop their collections and nuanced interpretations of the American past.

---

<sup>110</sup> “Daily Log.” Entry for November 11, 1984.

<sup>111</sup> Caption, *Boston Globe*, March 6, 1986, 91.

<sup>112</sup> “Daily Log.” Entries for August 25, 1985, and January 1, 1985.

<sup>113</sup> Lary M. Dilsaver, *America’s National Park System: The Critical Documents*, 2nd ed. (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), 371.

## CHAPTER FIVE

# Managing Kennedy as a Modern Historical Site: The 1990s

In 1987, Rolf Diamant visited the trisites as one of several acting superintendents who followed Whitesell's time at the unit. He found not just that staff morale was perhaps at an all-time low, but that the sites needed immediate structural care. After a year away from his job at the National Park Service's planning office of the North Atlantic Regional Office in Boston on a fellowship at Harvard, he was able to see the sites with fresh eyes. Despite the obvious work ahead, the temporary stint as acting superintendent convinced him to apply for the superintendency. At the time, he noted that the Kennedy site "wasn't foremost in my mind. It came with the package." Diamant saw that Longfellow and Olmsted were in dire physical condition with structural issues and collections in imminent danger. The Kennedy site was "functioning," while the other sites were in distress. Longfellow had collections piled high, unexplored, in boxes in closets. Olmsted had a mountain of archival collections, park plans, landscape architectural drawings, photographs, correspondence collections in physical jeopardy, and landscape architects who clamored for regular access. In part because of his own training in landscape architecture, Diamant quickly recognized the historical significance of the collections at the Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site, and working at Olmsted appealed to him right away.<sup>1</sup>

Despite the immediate needs of the sites, the 1990s were a politically challenging time for all historic sites within the National Park Service. Base funding for units alternated between systemwide cuts and political earmarks that meant operations might thrive.<sup>2</sup> At the beginning of the decade, a governmental shutdown spanned the Columbus Day holiday weekend and upset activities at the birthplace. Tensions between President

---

<sup>1</sup> Rolf Diamant, interview by Hilary Iris Lowe, November 13, 2019.

<sup>2</sup> By the mid-1990s, much of the Department of the Interior's internal communication records, including those for the National Park Service and its units, were being conducted through electronic means. As a result, documentation for much of the Kennedy site's daily administration was conducted through email that has not been made available to researchers. While official memos exist for early periods of the site's history, at this point in the study, much of the documentation for the administrative history at the site relies on emails that were printed and filed by staff on site and oral histories of park personnel. It's also important to note that some of these printed sources come from unprocessed collections, held in the Supervisory Ranger's office at the John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site and in the Site Manager Lee Farrow Cook's working files still held at the Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.

George H. W. Bush and a Republican Congress led by Newt Gingrich over a proposed tax increase led to a three-day shutdown of all federal offices, which notably affected National Park Service sites and national museums most acutely. Federal sites across the region lost out on one of their busiest fall weekends. At the Kennedy birthplace, one ranger noted that a group of Japanese tourists were incredibly disappointed to find that the site was closed.<sup>3</sup> This shutdown was just a taste of how conflicts and opportunities in Washington, DC, would affect operations at all three sites. Just a few weeks later, Massachusetts's national historic sites saw a whopping 30-million-dollar boon in federal funds to a dozen national historic sites in the state. However, much of this money was slated to high-profile projects. \$8.7 million was for a new visitors center at Salem Maritime National Historic Site, \$9.1 million was also set aside for Lowell National Historical Park, and \$5.6 million for parts of the Freedom Trail at Boston National Historical Park. None was planned for any of the trisites.<sup>4</sup> The whiplash from such high-stakes discussions must have been stressful for administrators and staff alike.

Politically, taxes were on the minds of leaders at the national and local levels. At least once during this contentious time, the birthplace itself showed up in local conversations about taxation. A Brookline parent/teacher association, sponsored by a local teachers' union, sent home a flier with students at the nearby Devotion Elementary School. The flier included an image of Kennedy's birthplace on the front, and it encouraged families to, paraphrasing JFK, "Ask not what your town can do for you, but what you can do for your town," to support a local tax increase initiative.<sup>5</sup> By utilizing President Kennedy's iconic words, the proposed tax increase brought the site into a heated political conversation even though local taxes never supported the birthplace.

In addition to a complicated political scene, when Diamant reached the unit, many external stakeholders had pressing interests in developing Olmsted and its archival holdings for public access. Professional planners in cities with Olmsted-designed parks and the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) were particularly vocal in advocating for access. The ASLA lobbied Congress directly, reaching out to every Congressman and Senator who had an Olmsted park in their district. The organization pressed for Congressional hearings and a budget increase for Olmsted.<sup>6</sup> The organization was successful on both fronts, and between the fiscal years of 1987 and 1995, "Olmsted's total budget more than tripled, rising from approximately \$700,000 to about \$2.3 million."<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> Doreen E. Iudica, "Budget Stalemate Shuts Down Some Mass. Historical Sites," *Boston Globe*, October 8, 1990.

<sup>4</sup> Efrain Hernandez, "Mass. Parks in Line for \$30m in Federal Funds," *Boston Globe*, October 29, 1990.

<sup>5</sup> Janelle Lawrence, "Brookline: Flier Irks Taxation Coalition," *Boston Globe*, February 18, 1994.

<sup>6</sup> For a much more nuanced discussion of this process, see David Grayson Allen, *The Olmsted National Historic Site and the Growth of Historic Landscape Preservation* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2007), 154–57.

<sup>7</sup> Allen, *The Olmsted National Historic Site and the Growth of Historic Landscape Preservation*, 179.

Olmsted's new budget also meant a boon for the other two sites. As Superintendent Diamant put it, Olmsted "was picking up the tab" and "it enabled Kennedy to operate" with more resources.<sup>8</sup> When Diamant remembered this moment, "my challenge was to sail the boat and repair it at the same time."<sup>9</sup> Over the decade that Diamant ran the unit, the site's budget expanded, the unit was reorganized in a spirit of creative experimentation, and interpretation changed radically from Rose Kennedy's original interpretation to a new interpretation that incorporated John F. Kennedy's achievements as a president. The site also faced many unexpected challenges, from dealing with federal budget cuts to challenging personnel issues.

## Reorganization under Diamant

Olmsted's increased budget enabled Superintendent Diamant to hire new staff to support the sites, and he organized a new centralized maintenance staff that serviced all the sites. The centralized facilities crew were able to take on modest, yet important, projects on their own. They also took on "ambitious work" at the sites, which meant that the sites did not have to put in bids for rehab and construction monies with other regional and national parks for a limited pool of funds, and the trisites did not have to wait for regional maintenance crews to schedule work. Instead, they could handle, schedule, and oversee much of their own maintenance.<sup>10</sup> This crew was so successful that it could sometimes aid other park units in rehab or small construction projects.<sup>11</sup> Diamant also centralized all administrative functions, which allowed some cost savings. Curatorial staff had always been shared after the Longfellow site was opened to the public, and in 1988 curator Karie Diethorn filled the position that Catalano left nearly two years earlier and took on limited work at the Kennedy site.<sup>12</sup> Notably, during his tenure, he also focused the education program on serving all three sites wholistically. However, when Diamant tried to centralize interpretive staff across three sites with very different interpretive needs, he was less successful. This was, he said, "the one piece that didn't work well." Moving interpreters across the three

---

<sup>8</sup> Diamant, "Oral History."

<sup>9</sup> Conversation with Rolf Diamant, September 22, 2017.

<sup>10</sup> Carla Price, interview by Kate Hanson Plass, Elena Rippel, and Rufai Shardow, April 22, 2016, and Diamant, "Oral History." Official documentation on this effort to restructure staff roles was not found in archival records but was confirmed in interviews. Increasingly during this period and the period to follow in Chapter 6, much of such documentation that might be found in email correspondence was not part of the record supplied to the researcher. As a result, this study has had to rely on the occasional printed email and oral histories for most of the documentation from the 1990s to today.

<sup>11</sup> Diamant, "Oral History." Diamant did not mention what projects the facilities crew supported outside the trisites.

<sup>12</sup> Sara Patton Zarrelli, *The Long Road to Restoration: An Administrative History of Longfellow House-Washington's Headquarters National Historic Site* (National Park Service: US Department of the Interior 2021), 83.

sites caused consternation among interpretive staff. While the superintendent's reorganization at the site benefited most areas of the unit, interpretation "reverted back" quickly to the single-site expertise and focus for interpreters.<sup>13</sup>

Diamant wanted the Kennedy and Longfellow sites to have a better base budget as well. He worked directly with Congressman Barney Frank's office to develop an earmark to increase the Kennedy site's budget. He also made clear to the regional office that Kennedy had been operating at a deficit and would continue to if the site's base operating funds did not increase.<sup>14</sup> The Kennedy budget eventually doubled because of his efforts.<sup>15</sup> Diamant then went on to work on the base budget for Longfellow. Despite the increases, the superintendent took cost-saving seriously and looked for other ways to maximize the Kennedy and Longfellow sites' individual budgets. In 1994, he determined that the Kennedy site had such low visitation over the winter months that it did not make sense for it to be open to the public at all.<sup>16</sup> This meant ending the elaborate—and popular—holiday open house held at the Kennedy birthplace in the late 1980s and early 1990s, which featured food, music (including a hired pianist at Rose Kennedy's piano), and occasionally local children carolers from St. Aidan's Church.<sup>17</sup> Additionally, the Kennedy site was also closed to the public on Mondays and Tuesdays during the entire 1994 fiscal year, which meant that the site missed several high-visitation holidays that usually brought in sales. Staff were disappointed over the elimination of the Christmas program and seemed to sense a break with the local community that the event engaged. They noted this loss more than any other issue that came with winter closure of the site.<sup>18</sup>

---

<sup>13</sup> Diamant, "Oral History." For a fuller discussion of Diamant's short-lived administrative reorganization and centralization, see Allen, *The Olmsted National Historic Site and the Growth of Historic Landscape Preservation*, 179–80.

<sup>14</sup> Memo: FY92 Operating Shortfall for John F. Kennedy NHS, Superintendent Rolf Diamant to Regional Director, North Atlantic Region, May 13, 1991, John F. Kennedy National Historic Site Resource Management Records, 1963–2003 (JOFI 1504), Box 2, Folder 11.

<sup>15</sup> The appropriations for the Department of the Interior included a base increase of \$102,000 for the site in the 1992 fiscal year. House US Congress, Committee on Appropriations, "Department of the Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill, 1992, 102th Cong., 1991, H. Rep. 102–116," (1991).

<sup>16</sup> The site began closing over the winter months in 1994. Price, "Oral History."

<sup>17</sup> "Statement for Interpretation, John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site" (1990), Site Manager Lee Farrow Cook Documents, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site. Price, "Oral History."

<sup>18</sup> The site was closed for Memorial Day, the Fourth of July, Labor Day, and Columbus Day. John F. Kennedy National Historic Sites #4–52, "Eastern National Annual Report, November 1993–October 1994, Site Manager Lee Farrow Cook Documents, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site" (1994).

## Expansion of Educational Programming

One of the benefits of Superintendent Diamant's administrative restructuring was an increased focus on education at the Kennedy site. As the 1990s progressed, a growing education staff, including Liza Stearns and others, built on a program she first developed in 1987 that brought the Kennedy family back into events sponsored by the site. Stearns worked with Site Supervisory Park Ranger Leslie Obleschuk and partners at John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum to develop an essay contest for third graders arranged around the theme: "What John F. Kennedy Means to Me." Third graders from the Edward M. Devotion School in Brookline (the Florida Ruffin Ridley School today) visited the Kennedy birthplace and the JFK Library. Caroline Kennedy served as the presenter at the awards event. As the program developed, the site ceremonies that celebrated the winners of the essay contest were held in the backyard of the house. Eventually, the event grew so much that they shut down Beals Street and moved the award ceremony to the front of the site.<sup>19</sup>

The site began to develop other educational programs, which targeted teachers and their students. These were offered a few times a year and were focused on specific themes that would interest educators and correspond with academic units. The programs included "Family History: The Legacy Endures," which targeted kindergarteners through third graders, "A Nation of Immigrants: The Kennedy Story," and "1917: A Time to Remember," both of which targeted fourth through sixth graders, and "JFK: How We Know What We Know," which targeted middle school children in seventh and eighth grades. Each program lasted an hour and was limited to just 25 students. Ahead of the program at the site, teachers received pre- and postvisit materials that supplemented a class visit and prepared both students and teachers for a house tour. By 1990, park interpreters brought a 45–50-minute version of "The Nation of Immigrants" program into the Boston Public Schools because students there seldom had "the opportunity to do field trips." In 1990, educators at the site completed ten such programs in Boston, reaching 171 students.<sup>20</sup> Such coordinated educational outreach was new for the site.

The expanded educational and interpretive programming did not only serve children in the Boston metro area. Adults were also targeted for a new interpretive program, "The Kennedy Walk." The walking ranger-led tour allowed staff the "opportunity to be creative," to be outdoors in the summer months, and to overtly connect the site and the

---

<sup>19</sup> Diamant, "Oral History." And Site Manager Lee Farrow Cook, interview by Elena Rippel, April 26 and May 12, 2017. For a brief early history of the event at the site from 1987–1990, see "Statement for Interpretation, John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site."

<sup>20</sup> "Statement for Interpretation, John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site."

Kennedy story to other historic places with a Kennedy association in the neighborhood.<sup>21</sup> These walking tours were especially popular when they were marketed ahead of time and on days that the site was already bound to see many visitors, like Kennedy's birthday or holidays like Labor Day.<sup>22</sup>

## Rose Kennedy's Interpretive Voice Silenced

During Diamant's decade at the Kennedy site, the site radically changed its longstanding interpretative program. Reliant upon Rose Kennedy's words since the site's opening, by 1990, the site shifted to ranger-led interpretation alone. It seems that the staff, perhaps especially Site Supervisor Leslie Obleschuk, decided to stop using the tapes of Rose Kennedy's tour in the house in an effort to interpret the history at the house more accurately and to avoid the kinds of hagiography that are often a concern at historic sites that center on charismatic and famous personalities. Obleschuk was largely responsible for moving the site into the modern age, and she requested that the site get its first computer (so as not to share computers with the rest of the staff at Olmsted).<sup>23</sup> All of the interpretive staff were eager to move away from the recordings. Since the site opened, scholars and biographers had produced a colossal number of Kennedy family histories. These resources had undoubtedly led staff to a wealth of information about Kennedy and his parents that they wanted to relay to the public. Staff believed that, along with the addition of the visitor center and a small store area in the basement in 1986, the new ranger-led tours "changed the complexion of the site from one of a very low key and non-controversial nature, to a vibrant site filled with struggles to best present a difficult, complex and emotional story to visitors."<sup>24</sup> The new interpretation gave rangers and other interpretive staff an animated new role at the site.

---

<sup>21</sup> The ranger-led walking tour was an expansion on the long-running self-guided walking tour that was included in the brochure that the site published from 2002 and is included in the unigrid today.

<sup>22</sup> "Statement for Interpretation, John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site."

<sup>23</sup> Leslie Obleschuk, Phone Conversation with Elena Rippel, December 14, 2016. Leslie Obleschuk served at Kennedy and the tri-sites in many capacities between 1983 and 1996. She served as Educational Specialist, Chief of Visitor Services for the tri-sites, Site Supervisor at Kennedy, and acting superintendent, sometimes serving in more than one role.

<sup>24</sup> Memo: Comprehensive Interpretive Planning Process at Kennedy NHS, Information Package to Superintendent, OLMS/LONG/JOFI, from Lead Park Ranger, JOFI (James Phelps), January 20, 1994, Site Manager Lee Farrow Cook Documents, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.



Chief among the historical scholarship that influenced the change was Doris Kearns Goodwin's 1987 book, *The Fitzgeralds and the Kennedys*, which staff regarded as "the bible."<sup>25</sup> The impact of Goodwin's research on the staff at the site cannot be overemphasized. Her work specifically looked at each branch of John F. Kennedy's family history from 1863 until 1963. Although Kennedy's grandparents and some of his great-grandparents were born in the United States, Goodwin outlines the Irish heritage of both branches of his family. She does so in a way that connects this heritage to Boston machine politics. She carefully documents both families' Boston area political and social rise, focusing mainly on the male members of the family, from John Francis (Honey Fitz) Fitzgerald to Joseph Patrick Kennedy. Goodwin uncovers the roles that Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy and Joseph Patrick Kennedy played, not just continuing their fathers' significant political legacies, but in developing the political lives of their children.<sup>26</sup> Goodwin's book made a considerable impression on staff and continued to influence interpretation at the site for decades.<sup>27</sup> The volume helped provide considerable historical context for the early years of Rose and Joseph Kennedy's life together and included details that countered and expanded on what Rose Kennedy had provided in her 1974 autobiography and in her audio tour. Some of these details provided a more robust and slightly less glowingly positive portrayal of the family. They included information about Joseph Kennedy's decision to avoid military service in World War I, Rose Kennedy's social isolation at their Brookline home, and the couple's early separation, which Goodwin describes as a "serious, if temporary, break in their marriage."<sup>28</sup> The latter two of these details would work their way into interpretation at the birthplace, and for a brief period, a highly researched historical interpretation of Rose and Joseph Kennedy's lives at the house was the norm.

Superintendent Diamant had planned in the early 1990s to formally evaluate "the success of the experiment that replaced Mrs. Kennedy's audio-tapes with an interpretive tour by a Park Ranger on a daily basis."<sup>29</sup> By the middle of the 1990s, it is unclear if such an evaluation took place, but the ranger-led tours stayed.<sup>30</sup> Some staff saw no objections from

---

<sup>25</sup> Mark Swartz, interview by Elena Rippel, November 29, 2016. Doris Kearns Goodwin's book marked the beginning of her career as a serious biographer and presidential historian. Goodwin had served in the Johnson Administration and in 1975 had married Richard Goodwin, a friend and one of John F. Kennedy's speechwriters. Richard Goodwin grew up in Brookline. Despite a significant and substantiated plagiarism charge, the book is one of the most important histories of the family and is still relied upon by staff today. By this time, Rose Kennedy's autobiography, *Times to Remember*, had been out since 1974 and had seen multiple editions as well.

<sup>26</sup> Doris Kearns Goodwin, *The Fitzgeralds and the Kennedys* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987).

<sup>27</sup> Cook, "Oral History." Goodwin was even invited to participate in the 2017 JFK Centennial at the site. Jim Roberts to Richard and Doris Goodwin, December 15, 2016, found in Supervisory Ranger's Office, John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site, Brookline, Massachusetts.

<sup>28</sup> Goodwin, *The Fitzgeralds and the Kennedys*, 305.

<sup>29</sup> "Statement for Interpretation, John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site."

<sup>30</sup> I have not found any evidence of the assessment in the archival documents or staff files at the site.

visitors following the change in interpretation at the site.<sup>31</sup> However, others encountered visitors who brought family and friends to the house to introduce them to Rose Kennedy's voice only to find, to their great disappointment, that the tapes were no longer part of the tour.<sup>32</sup> Christine Arato traced the negative response to this change in her own research at the site, finding that survey responses were "unanimous" in their assessment that "something vital had been removed from the house" when rangers stopped using the audio-tour.<sup>33</sup> Some rangers eventually began to reinclude select recordings of Rose Kennedy to respond to this visitor disappointment. They often played the recordings in the bedroom where Kennedy was born or in the kitchen. The guides who did incorporate Rose's voice into their tours provided a hybrid approach. Their new interpretation balanced the new, more "accurate" history methods with the original interpretation at the site, and it had rangers deciding when Rose Kennedy's voice was part of the story that they wanted to relay. Eventually, in the late 1990s, the staff would occasionally offer special occasion "all-Rose" tours and used interpreters to present a more complex picture of Rose Kennedy as a memorial maker through her recordings.<sup>34</sup> The switch to ranger-led tours dramatically changed the site's interpretation, thematic focus, and historical message.

Part of the commitment to this change came because rangers at the site noticed and documented a new concern that required a more deliberate interpretive strategy: in 1993, most of the site's visitors (52 percent) now fell between the ages of 18 and 35. This meant that, "For the first time, the majority of those visiting the site had no personal recollections of John Kennedy or his life and times."<sup>35</sup> Staff discerned that "visitor attitudes [were] increasingly affected by the image of Kennedy in popular culture, films and sensationalized books and television," rather than their own memories of the president.<sup>36</sup> They struggled with the "lack" of visitor knowledge as they sought to provide visitors with experiences that were "both enjoyable and enlightening."<sup>37</sup> As a result, by 1994, site staff actively sought

---

<sup>31</sup> Obleschuk, Phone Conversation with Elena Rippel, December 14, 2016.

<sup>32</sup> Alan Banks, interview by Elena Rippel, July 7, 2016. See also "Visitor Center—Early Comments about Past Tours," "JOFI Resource Management, Interp, Event photos, 12-30-09," found in Supervisory Ranger's Office, John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site, Brookline, Massachusetts.

<sup>33</sup> Christine Arato, "This House Holds Many Memories: Constructions of a Presidential Birthplace at the John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site," in *Born in the U.S.A.: Birth, Commemoration, and American Public Memory*, ed. Seth C. Bruggeman (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2012), 68.

<sup>34</sup> Banks, "Oral History." See also Price, "Oral History."

<sup>35</sup> "Challenge Goals and Annual Work Plan, FY 94, 1–3 Year Goals and Objectives," n.d. (circa 1993), unprocessed files, found in Supervisory Ranger's Office, John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site, Brookline, Massachusetts.

<sup>36</sup> "Challenge Goals and Annual Work Plan, FY 94, 1–3 Year Goals and Objectives," n.d. (circa 1993), unprocessed files, found in Supervisory Ranger's Office, John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site, Brookline, Massachusetts.

<sup>37</sup> "Challenge Goals and Annual Work Plan, FY 94, 1–3 Year Goals and Objectives," n.d. (circa 1993), unprocessed files, found in Supervisory Ranger's Office, John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site, Brookline, Massachusetts.

support from the superintendent and others in the North Atlantic Region for a new comprehensive interpretive plan for the Kennedy site that would account for these demographic and generational changes. In particular, the lead ranger at the site, James Phelps, saw Nan Rickey's original 1968 Interpretive Prospectus as "flawed in several important ways." He argued that the "time has come to view the Kennedy Birthplace, and for that matter all of the birthplace sites within the National Park Service, as celebrations of a person's entire life, not simply the childhood home of a man."<sup>38</sup> This interpretation shift was substantial. This celebratory interpretive perspective encouraged interpreters to develop their tours based on themes they found in their readings of materials in the site's research library—and importantly did not limit them to the period when the family was in the house.<sup>39</sup> Phelps's movement away from interpreting the childhood of the future president and the lives of his parents, circa 1917–20, might seem like a natural progression after the site discontinued the regular use of Rose Kennedy's audio tour. However, this new interpretation was unlike the shift away from using Rose Kennedy's narration—which though it silenced Rose Kennedy's voice, actually allowed staff to take a more critical historical look at the residents of the house during its period of significance. In many ways, Phelps's emphasis ran counter to the spirit of Rose Kennedy's intention in her gift to the nation. In 1967, Rose Kennedy's hopes for the site were clearly spelled out in the letter she wrote to the Secretary of the Interior, which made it into the Congressional record. She hoped that visitors would come to the site to "see how people lived in 1917 and thus get a better appreciation of the history of this wonderful country."<sup>40</sup> Not long after this moment of change, Rose Kennedy died at the age of 104. Though she had been out of the public eye for the last decade of her life, and she had had very little to do with the site after it was opened to the public, her "presence" was still an important one at the birthplace. With her death in January 1995, the site's staff may have been both freed of any perception of interpretive constraints and freed to take her on as an important historical subject.<sup>41</sup>

By embracing John F. Kennedy's adult life and presidency as a critical focus of interpretation, the staff had an opportunity to engage with modern historical concerns. During this same period, and before the closure of the park over the early months, the site also began promoting Black History Month by playing a recording of President Kennedy's 1963 "Address to the Nation on Civil Rights" and putting together a temporary exhibit of newspaper clippings that highlighted the coverage of this speech. The site also started an occasional slide program called "The Kennedy Women: To Each Their Own" during

---

<sup>38</sup> Memo: Comprehensive Interpretive Planning Process at Kennedy NHS, Information Package to Superintendent, OLMS/LONG/JOFI, from Lead Park Ranger, JOFI (James Phelps), January 20, 1994, found in Site Manager Lee Farrow Cook Documents, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.

<sup>39</sup> Swartz, "Oral History."

<sup>40</sup> Mrs. Joseph P. Kennedy to Stewart Udall, March 15, 1967, in "Background Book" on 90th Congress, JOFI.

<sup>41</sup> Obleschuk, "Oral History."

Women's History Month. The slide program portrayed "the accomplishments of many Kennedy women and show[ed] Rose Kennedy as the family matriarch guiding all of her children and grandchildren (not just the males) toward public service with a firm hand."<sup>42</sup> Together with the educational programming expansion, these interpretive changes show a much broader understanding of the histories that the Kennedy Birthplace could present to the public.

## Structural and Maintenance Concerns

For years, staff had been concerned about the condition of the house. Cracks in the walls appeared to grow over time, and in 1991, the National Park Service's Building Conservation Branch was finally able to analyze the "live load" of the structural framing of the house. The Branch noted the problem, but instead of a structural fix, they first advised a "use management" measure for addressing the issues. The Branch's report indicated that the walls and framing in the house were bending rather than breaking under the load of office furniture on the third floor. Uncovering that the structural load placed on the third-floor joists were not actually supported by the load-bearing walls below, the report did not "recommend this space as suitable for office occupancy." It capitulated, however, that the third floor was the only place for offices in the building. Hence, its authors recommended that staff mitigate risk to themselves and the building by removing any safes, filing cabinets, bookcases above three tiers, and large desks. They recommended that no more than four staff members occupy the third floor at any time and that they use unloaded furniture—light, empty tables with no more than one drawer. The branch wanted to review the placement of any furniture and put in place an annual furniture review process.<sup>43</sup>

In addition to concerns about staff offices, Diamant and others began to make a case for expanding the base budget at the Kennedy birthplace. The site had not had an "operating increase for more than a decade." As a result, Diamant argued in a memo to the Regional Director, "the site is one of the most underfunded park units in the North Atlantic Region." He reported that funds from Olmsted had been used in 1991 to cover an operating deficit at the Kennedy site. Direly, he warned that this situation was "beginning to impair the Olmsted Site's capability to meet the timetable the Park Service presented to Congress" for the preservation of the Olmsted collections and archives. To drive his argument home, Diamant noted that the Kennedy site saw "approximately 16,000 visitors each

---

<sup>42</sup> John Engstrom, "Remembering JFK," *Boston Globe*, January 20, 1991. For details on the programs, see "Statement for Interpretation, John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site."

<sup>43</sup> Memo: Third Floor Loading Limits, JOFI NHS, Historical Architect, Building Conservation Branch, Cultural Resources Center (David Bitterman) to Chief of Maintenance, John Fitzgerald Kennedy Historic Site, November 22, 1991, John F. Kennedy National Historic Site Resource Management Records, 1963–2003 (JOFI 1504), Box 9, Folder 24.

year,” with an operating budget of \$102,000. At the same time, the “Theodore Roosevelt Birthplace, of comparable size,” had an “FY92 operating budget of approximately \$182,000.” He also noted that the Roosevelt birthplace had considerable administrative funding provided by Manhattan sites. He brought to the director’s attention a severe lack of funding for essential maintenance, including the cleaning and care of textiles that had not been serviced since the fire in 1975. He also noted that the site’s visitor services costs were covered by the Longfellow and Olmsted budgets.<sup>44</sup>

Ultimately, Diamant would not only secure funding for a base operating funds increase but also, the very next year, for significant work to stabilize the house. The work included the placement of a steel beam in the kitchen to help bear the load of the second and third floors of the house.<sup>45</sup> Though the site would be closed for structural repair throughout the early months of 1992, it would reopen as significantly more structurally sound.<sup>46</sup>

## 1990s Politics and Anxiety for Trisites

In June 1995, Roger G. Kennedy (no relation), the National Park Service Director under President Bill Clinton, held a press conference in nearby Lowell, Massachusetts. Kennedy warned that many nearby sites were targeted for closure due to the Republican House and Senate’s federal budget resolutions. These resolutions were in part a response to the controversial budget cuts and a federal reorganization process that cut the National Park Service’s funding just as Kennedy had hoped to expand the agency’s historical scope.<sup>47</sup> His list of sites included several Massachusetts sites: Saugus Iron Works National Historic Site, the Springfield Armory National Historic Site, Salem Maritime National Historic Site, Longfellow National Historic Site, Boston African-American National Historic Site, and John F. Kennedy National Historic Site. In 1995, the closure of the Kennedy and Longfellow sites would have saved the federal government \$225,000 and \$389,000, respectively. Though Roger Kennedy likely wanted to activate National Park Service advocates to action, Republicans countered, assuring their constituents that popular sites like Kennedy, Salem Maritime National Historic Site, and Saugus Iron Works National Historic Site

---

<sup>44</sup> Memo: FY92 Operating Shortfall for John F. Kennedy NHS, Superintendent Rolf Diamant to Regional Director, North Atlantic Region, John F. Kennedy National Historic Site Resource Management Records, 1963–2003 (JOFI 1504), Box 2, Folder 11.

<sup>45</sup> Richard Chilcoat, Completion Report: Structural Stabilization Kennedy House, John F. Kennedy National Historic Site, April 1992. John F. Kennedy National Historic Site Resource Management Records, 1963–2003 (JOFI 1504), Box 2, Folder 24, April, 1992.

<sup>46</sup> “JFK Birthplace to Be Restored,” *Brookline Tab*, January 7, 1992.

<sup>47</sup> Julie Cart, “Roger Kennedy Dies at 85; Former National Park Service Director,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 2, 2011.

would likely stay open, while sites like Olmsted, which had the “third highest” cost in the system with a budget that amounted to \$381.83 per visitor in 1994, would see cuts. The base budget increase that Diamant had procured for Olmsted with the help of the ASLA did not go unnoticed by political actors.<sup>48</sup> With cuts to regional offices already in effect, Director Roger Kennedy ultimately hoped that a system-wide increase in entrance fees might offset the \$100 million budget cut.<sup>49</sup> The Kennedy site felt these cost-saving measures and cuts severely. In 1994, the site closed for the first time for the entirety of the long winter season. Park administrators sent out letters to regular partners, neighbors, and interested members of the Kennedy family to warn them of the site’s closure from November 27, 1994, through May 9, 1995.<sup>50</sup> The National Park Service was in a challenging period of its history, where there was an increased “politicization of the directorship” and an attempt to “curtail the system’s growth,” according to NPS historian Lary Dilsaver.<sup>51</sup> Among many other attempts to limit expenses, the new Republican Congress (which came into power in January of 1995) attempted to create a panel that would review every unit of the system with the “possibility . . . that some should be decertified or sold.” Some Republican Representatives argued, like James Hanse (R-Utah), that “the question is not whether to close some parks, but how to accomplish this goal.”<sup>52</sup> Nearly all small parks had staff that worried their park would be put on the chopping block.

## Kennedy Family at the Site

Despite federal cutbacks, interest in the Kennedy family was stronger than ever. Ted Kennedy had long had a powerful place in the US Senate; by the mid-1990s, he was one of the most prominent voices of the Democratic Party and an important counterpoint to the powerful conservative Congress. As his senatorial role took center stage, so did his role in narrating JFK’s history and connection to Boston. In a popular trolley tour that made stops at both the birthplace and the presidential library, it was Ted Kennedy’s voice that tourists heard first as they headed out to learn more about the fallen president. In many ways, his

---

<sup>48</sup> It’s very possible that the visitor counts to Olmsted during this period did not recognize the use of the collections by individuals and communities from across the country and, instead, just counted visitors that came through the house itself.

<sup>49</sup> Scott Allen, “Park Service Chief, in Lowell, Says Cuts Imperil Smaller Sites,” *Boston Globe*, June 1, 1995.

<sup>50</sup> Lee Farrow Cook to Gerald Kaplan, November 21, 1994. John F. Kennedy National Historic Site Resource Management Records, 1963–2003 (JOFI 1504), Box 1, Folder 5. While most of the letters that went out were from Cook, Superintendent Rolf Diamant signed off on identical letters to the Kennedy family.

<sup>51</sup> Lary M. Dilsaver, *America’s National Park System: The Critical Documents*, 2nd ed. (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), 371.

<sup>52</sup> Howard Witt, “National Parks Face Survival of the Fittest: Budget Cutters Look to Closings as System Outgrows Its Funding,” *Chicago Tribune*, September 4, 1995.

own audio tours mirrored his mother's work at the birthplace to narrate the family's history. At the JFK Library, trolley riders spent at least 45 minutes at the museum and walked through some of the more than 20 exhibits. Though passengers on the trolley did not always go inside the Kennedy birthplace for a tour, they could stand in front of the house for a photo. Often rangers at the Kennedy site would let some visitors in for an "open house" while managing others on the trolley with a quick neighborhood tour. Open houses placed one ranger upstairs and one down, allowing visitors to come in without formal tour interpretation. The size of the site and inadequate parking proved challenging when managing large trolley tours or bus tours at the site.<sup>53</sup> The small house could only bear 12 to 15 visitors at a time.<sup>54</sup>

Staff at the site noted an obligation to the living Kennedy family as well as those who had passed, more so than staff did at the Olmsted or Longfellow sites, which also had family members engaged at various times over the years.<sup>55</sup> In 1994, when Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis died, the site hung a mourning wreath and saw many mourners visit the site.<sup>56</sup> The site also held special hours for the public to remember Rose Kennedy when she died the next year.<sup>57</sup> Many staff members noticed a renewed interest in the site by the Kennedy family in the late 1990s and early 2000s. They seemed to develop or redevelop a connection to the site after Rose Kennedy's death in 1995. Not long after his mother's death, Ted Kennedy visited the house. Staff recall him sitting down in a living room chair and breaking down in tears, after hearing his mother's voice on the audio recordings in the house. In 2002, the family held a reunion of sorts at the site. At the gathering, Kennedy family members listened to Rose Kennedy's voice and shared the site with her grandchildren.<sup>58</sup>

At the same time, staff, like Alan Banks, had to walk a fine line when "correcting" visitors who presented inaccurate or sensationalized information about the Kennedy family, like Joseph Kennedy's "bootlegging" or Rosemary Kennedy's controversial medical lobotomy. "You had to be gentle," because if staff were ever too direct in their corrections, they were seen as potentially a "shill for the Kennedy family" rather than accurate.<sup>59</sup> Ted Kennedy's continued powerful political presence in the Senate meant that the house was also associated with him and his politics, as much as it had been in 1975 when it was fire-bombed in response to his support for busing. A growing number of books and movies

---

<sup>53</sup> The tour seems to have been developed with the help of curators at the JFK Library and came with a steep \$20 ticket cost. "Kennedy Tour Highlights Boston as 'the Town That Jack Built,'" *Boston Irish Reporter*, June 1, 1995.

<sup>54</sup> Banks, "Oral History."

<sup>55</sup> Conversation with Rolf Diamant, September 22, 2017.

<sup>56</sup> "Hundreds Sign Book at Kennedy Library," *Telegram & Gazette*, May 24, 1994.

<sup>57</sup> Stephanie McLaughlin, "Funeral 2 Block from N. End Birthplace," *Boston Globe*, January 24, 1995.

<sup>58</sup> Price, "Oral History."

<sup>59</sup> Banks, "Oral History."

about the family filtered into visitors' ideas about their politics and family dynamics. Democratic politics writ large were increasingly seen as the Kennedy family's domain as much as any house.<sup>60</sup>

## Changes in Administration at the Site

Throughout the 1990s, the administrative focus of leadership at the trisites did not focus often on the Kennedy birthplace. While Superintendent Diamant experimented on a trisites-wide effort at streamlining and finding creative efficiencies, he was also interested in changing how things ran at the birthplace on a day-to-day basis. Kennedy staff members were also interested in change. They often felt like they “were on our own,” and others reported that they were “fine with that.”<sup>61</sup> The Kennedy site had been unofficially managed by C. Sue Rigney, Chief of Interpretation for the trisites for many years. Diamant remembered that when he came to his position, the rangers at all the sites were “dug in” and resistant to change and creativity. At Kennedy in particular, he noted that staff were devoted but “stationary.” In Diamant’s mind, the Kennedy site had assets, including the neighborhood and the Kennedy family relationships, but it also had “baggage.” Because it came as Rose Kennedy’s gift, interpretation was limited, and the critical tools that the NPS normally used in creating a new park had not been brought to the table in the creation of the site.<sup>62</sup> Diamant wanted to change not just interpretation at the site, but also its administrative influences. Meanwhile, he thought that the Kennedy and Longfellow sites should be managed by someone with strong cultural resources and curatorial background.<sup>63</sup>

The site did not have an official Site Manager and Curator until 1992 when Diamant hired Jim Shea to manage and run the curatorial side of things for both the Kennedy and Longfellow sites. Not all staff were sure that the new administrative structure was a positive move. As the structure also provided a new chain of command that placed longtime staff, like the supervisory ranger at Kennedy, under the supervision of a new, driven Site Manager.<sup>64</sup> Diamant recruited Shea from the New York Sites. His addition created a brief

---

<sup>60</sup> See Peter Collier and David Horowitz, *The Kennedys: An American Drama*, 1984, and John H. Davis, *The Kennedys: Dynasty and Disaster, 1848–1983* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1984), among others. Even in 1965, books about Kennedy were on the rise. See Jimmy Breslin, “JFK Books—A Major Industry: Market Seems Insatiable,” *Boston Globe*, July 8, 1965.

<sup>61</sup> Banks, “Oral History.”

<sup>62</sup> Conversation with Rolf Diamant, September 22, 2017.

<sup>63</sup> Jim Shea, interview by Elena Rippel, November 17, 2016.

<sup>64</sup> Jim Shea caused a stir at the sites when he was recruited especially for the Longfellow National Historic Site, in September of 1992. Brian Doherty, then Supervisory Park Ranger for the Kennedy and Longfellow sites, reportedly told Diamant when he hired Shea that “he had outlasted other superintendents” and would “outlast” Diamant. Diamant, “Oral History.”



swell of activity at the site. The Fiscal Year 1994 Annual Work Plan shows some of his ambitious hopes for the site. It included a thoughtful three-year plan with a wide range of projects, goals, and objectives for the site. Among them, staff planned to develop a new orientation film and, importantly, planned a rehab of the visitor center that would upgrade the exhibits. The existing exhibits had essentially been long-term temporary exhibits, and in the new plan exhibits called for “a new emphasis on the life and time[s] of John F. Kennedy and away from exclusively interpreting his early years.” Additionally, the plan recommended that “the immigration angle, which has caused the interpretation of the site to loose [*sic*] focus [*sic*] and power should be downplayed or eliminated completely.”<sup>65</sup> These changes were seen as long overdue at the site, but despite this emphasis, much of the administrative energy of the tri-sites was not focused on the Kennedy site.

In addition to the development of Olmsted and providing increased access to its collections, massive renovations, and changes in the physical systems at Longfellow, Rolf Diamant was also developing the new Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation. Building on the expertise that he brought together in support of the Olmsted site, the Center would become a new service-based unit of the National Park Service. It provided support for the management of cultural landscapes across the system, by providing assistance with landscape preservation and planning, research, maintenance, education, and training.<sup>66</sup> This effort consumed considerable administrative energy often to the detriment of the Kennedy site.<sup>67</sup>

Staff at the Kennedy site were so much on their own and overworked that they recalled often having difficulty getting a moment for lunch during the summer. Summer meant constant tours. In addition, the heat and the crowds in the summer wore on staff. The upper floors, and sometimes the site itself, had to close to the public because of high temperatures and a lack of air-conditioning throughout the building. Staff also began to note a lack of clear direction at the site and few written policies. On slow days, staff would sometimes watch TV (though it was often Kennedy-related). Isolation from the other sites became a concern. While some felt this was a good thing, others saw themselves as “poor stepchildren” because “management didn’t care about us.”<sup>68</sup> The smallness of the site sometimes also meant that the staff there felt a great comradery. They also occasionally struggled with interpersonal issues when they could not physically maintain distance from each other in the workplace. This was a particular problem when there were conflicts

---

<sup>65</sup> “John F. Kennedy National Historic Site, Challenge Goals, Annual Work Plan, FY 94 Goals and Objective, 1–3 Year Goals and Objectives,” 1993, 20. John F. Kennedy National Historic Site Resource Management Records, 1963–2003 (JOFI 1504), Box 1, Folder 6.

<sup>66</sup> Allen, *The Olmsted National Historic Site and the Growth of Historic Landscape Preservation*, 199–208.

<sup>67</sup> Rolf Diamant, interview by Joan Zenzen, June 2, 2014.

<sup>68</sup> Banks, “Oral History.”

between staff members.<sup>69</sup> At one point, the Supervisory Ranger Brian Doherty was out on emergency leave for an entire week, and “none of the supervisory staff called to check in” or visited the site to see if things were okay. Kennedy staff even noted that they were left out of the loop on things like staff meeting cancellations, showing up for all-staff meetings when no one had alerted them that the meeting had been canceled. Such things were “a shot against morale.”<sup>70</sup> There were attempts to help with problems of morale, and interpretive staff at the Kennedy site were encouraged to engage with collections. For instance, Jim Shea worked to get staff involved in research projects together, mending what had been a historical rift between curatorial staff (cultural resource management) and interpretive staff.<sup>71</sup>

General morale was not the only concern for staff at the Kennedy site. In 1994, Brian Doherty was arrested on federal, felony charges of child pornography.<sup>72</sup> FBI agents raided the Kennedy site and seized Doherty’s work computer and materials from his office. Doherty had been at the tri-sites for many years, and staff at the site were shocked and “traumatized” by these events.<sup>73</sup> Superintendent Diamant brought in counselors to help staff deal with the shock. Nonetheless, the other permanent ranger at the site left as a result, and other staff, including many of the long-time seasonal rangers, at the site reportedly “wanted to leave.” There was, as a result, a dramatic turnover at the site in the mid-1990s. It took time for the remaining and new staff to get up to speed.<sup>74</sup> During the crisis, then Site Manager and Curator at the Longfellow and Kennedy sites, Jim Shea, also took on Doherty’s role as supervisor of interpretation and rangers at both sites. The supervising ranger position at

---

<sup>69</sup> Banks, “Oral History.”; Diamant, “Oral History.”

<sup>70</sup> Lora DeSalvo, “Progress Report Worksheet for Lora DeSalvo, 2/16/94–2/20/94,” (Unprocessed JOFI Files, Longfellow House-George Washington’s Headquarters National Historic Site, Archives).

<sup>71</sup> Shea, “Oral History.”

<sup>72</sup> Associated Press, “Six Charged with Child Pornography: Boston Man Arrested,” *Boston Globe*, March 26, 1994.

<sup>73</sup> Shea, “Oral History.” An article in the *Boston Globe* mentioned that Brian Doherty worked “at a museum near Boston” and was “accused of transporting materials from Massachusetts to New Jersey. The name of the museum was not immediately available.” However, the name appeared only in the initial coverage of the arrest, and it seems that the NPS was able to keep out of the press. Coverage included the arrest of six men, not just for transporting child pornography but for producing it in Maryland with children. According to the article, it was an “interstate conspiracy” that included the seizure of “one of the largest child pornography collections ever found in the United States.” The Associated Press, “Six Charged with Child Pornography: Boston Man Arrested.” Doherty had been at the site since November 13, 1984, as staff marked his first day in their daily log. “Daily Log” (JOFI Unprocessed Files, Longfellow House-Washington’s Headquarters National Historic Site Archives). It is important to note that staff and former staff were hesitant to talk about Doherty’s arrest and its impact on the site. A number of those interviewed indicated that 1994/95 was a “confusing time” and that it was difficult to remember exactly who was in charge at the site. Jim Shea and Rolf Diamant were willing to go on the record about this brief but impactful moment in the site’s history. According to Shea, Doherty was convicted and went to prison. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts Sex Offenders Registry lists Doherty as being convicted of two counts of the “purchase or possession of child pornography” and lists the last date of conviction and/or adjudication as October 3, 2016, accessed May 30, 2022. See also Sara Patton Zarrelli’s section, “The Crisis,” in *The Long Road to Restoration: An Administrative History of Longfellow House-Washington’s Headquarters National Historic Site*, (2021), 104–6.

<sup>74</sup> Shea, “Oral History.”

Kennedy was not filled for more than a year, and then it was filled by a series of staff members temporarily assigned from different roles within the trisites. Superintendent Diamant recalled this particular moment as a traumatic crisis for the sites, but also saw the change in staff and the installation of Jim Shea as overall curatorial and interpretive manager of both Longfellow and Kennedy as the “beginning of a renaissance.”<sup>75</sup>



**Figure 10.** Curator and Site Manager for the Kennedy and Longfellow Site Manager Jim Shea, who also held the Curator position at both the Kennedy and Longfellow sites, shown here with First Lady Hillary Clinton, Senator Edward (Teddy) Kennedy, and House Speaker Thomas (Tip) O’Neill at the Longfellow House. NPS, 1998.

Jim Shea instituted a new series of Standard Operating Procedures at the site and focused on opening and closing procedures and security. His curatorial interests also likely brought a new interpretive focus on specific items in the house, among them, the reproduction index card file that Rose Kennedy kept on the health of all her children. He also noticed that rangers under Doherty had started treating the house’s third floor as a social space. He remembered, “There were always people up on the third floor. It was a fire hazard. I found clutter, you know, people eating up there, food. It was historic space, and I reminded them this is historic space; you can’t really put nails in the walls and it really was kind of a—not a very professional operation that I saw. The staff had been there so long,

---

<sup>75</sup> Diamant, “Oral History.”

they'd kind of gotten really comfortable.”<sup>76</sup> Nonetheless, Shea's primary concerns stayed with the significant changes happening at the Longfellow site, where he was building a Friends Group and cataloging an enormous number of curatorial items and vast archival collections. But by 1997/1998, the Kennedy site was seeing regular curatorial attention, working on interpreting the life of the president, rather than his childhood, and developing revamped educational programs.<sup>77</sup>

By the end of the 1990s, Superintendent Rolf Diamant moved from developing the Olmsted Center, which was up and running, to the development of Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park in Woodstock, Vermont. His background in park planning, careful politicking on behalf of parks, experience developing earmarks with lobbyist interest groups and politicians, and finding funds for the trisites during the Clinton administration all led him to play a critical planning role and eventually a leadership role as superintendent at the Marsh-Billings park. In part to help manage the complicated personnel issues and other reorganization happening at the trisites, he first mentored and then appointed Olmsted employee Lee Farrow Cook as Deputy Superintendent for the trisites in 1994. In 1997, after a shift in staff to accommodate staff family needs and staff commitments to the Marsh-Billing site, Cook became site manager at the Olmsted site. With Diamant's departure as superintendent later in 1997, Cook also took over as site manager for the Kennedy site, leaving Jim Shea to manage all aspects of increasingly complicated efforts at the Longfellow site.<sup>78</sup>

Lee Farrow Cook had been a part of the movement to get the Olmsted site up and running and a key figure at both the Olmsted Center and in the work to catalog the massive archival collections at the site in the 1990s.<sup>79</sup> Cook had a strong sense of how the sites worked together as a single administrative unit and understood how those units sometimes had to compete for a superintendent's support and attention. She would stay in this NPS unit for more than 30 years, until her retirement in 2020.<sup>80</sup> Cook provided new leadership at the site level and came to understand how much still needed to be done at the John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site—the site still had no general management plan, cultural landscape report, or historical resources study. Many of the founding documents produced at the beginning of a site's planning and development stages had never been

---

<sup>76</sup> Shea, “Oral History.”

<sup>77</sup> Shea, “Oral History.”

<sup>78</sup> Cook, “Oral History.”

<sup>79</sup> “Oral History.” Lee Farrow Cook was hired at the Olmsted site in 1987 and served her whole career at the trisites, first under Superintendent Whitesell and then, after mentoring from Diamant, took on ever-expanding administrative duties. Diamant, “Oral History.”

<sup>80</sup> Shea, “Oral History.” Allen, *The Olmsted National Historic Site and the Growth of Historic Landscape Preservation*, 180–81.

created for the Kennedy birthplace because Rose Kennedy had provided the site as a “turn key gift” to the National Park Service.<sup>81</sup> As the site transitioned to a new superintendent in 1998, it was time to finally consider a plan for the site’s future.

Superintendent Rolf Diamant undoubtedly left the John Fitzgerald Kennedy site in a much stronger place than he had found it. Physically the site was sounder; interpretation had become more flexible, diverse, and modern; and the site’s annual operating budget increased. One of Diamant’s most important contributions to all three sites was a decade of consistent attention to their development and financial needs. However, the site, by comparison to Olmsted and Longfellow, did not see the same level of attention over his tenure at the trisites, especially in the creation and nourishment of partnerships and advocates outside the agency. Olmsted and Longfellow both saw the development of robust friends groups, for example, and both sites had archival and collections projects that brought in both funds, new staff, and a growing interest from scholars and professionals. At the Kennedy site, the silencing of Rose Kennedy’s audio tour was perhaps the most remarkable change. After 20 years and her death, Rose Kennedy’s voice no longer dominated the visitors’ experience at the site. What stories and themes the site would focus on would be the work of a new superintendent’s administration.

---

<sup>81</sup> Conversation with Rolf Diamant, September 22, 2017.



## CHAPTER SIX

# The Politics of Memory, Gender, and the Presidency at the Birthplace, 1999–2017

**B**y the time Myra Harrison joined the trisites as superintendent, Rose Kennedy's interpretive voice had been all but silenced. Under Harrison, a new era of research would help reveal a more complicated and dynamic picture of Rose Kennedy and embrace the history of the site's development as part of its historical significance. Staff did this, in part, by both completing and commissioning new research that contextualized Rose Kennedy's role in the restoration of the house as a personal memorial act to mark the birth and death of her son, President John F. Kennedy, and hiring a new Supervisory Ranger. Much changed over Harrison's 20 years at the site. However, by the end of Harrison's time at the site, things had shifted yet again; in the run-up to the celebration of the Kennedy Centennial in 2017, interpretation changed once more, this time to a new era of interpreting Kennedy's work as president.

Myra Harrison came to the trisites as one of a handful of female superintendents who had been mentored by women in the 1990s, specifically for leadership positions within the National Park Service.<sup>1</sup> Harrison and Lee Farrow Cook became a powerful administrative team. In their nearly 20 years together at the trisites, they would achieve many of the goals that site administrators had been working toward since the site first opened. One of their most essential tasks was putting together the foundational documents, plans, and studies the site would need to transition to the 21st century. Along with an innovative Supervisory Park Ranger at the site, Christine Arato, they embraced new scholarship. They sought out scholars to help them research the site and resee its primary preservation criteria, interpretation, historical resources, and architectural history. Most of the reports, publications, and plans needed at a modern federal site were finally completed under their tenure. Among these were the Historic Furnishing Assessment, Historic Resource Study, an Archeological Overview and Assessment, Scope of Collections, Cultural Landscape Report, interpretation, facility studies on parking requirements, visitor studies, and a host of other publications, like the site's first unigrid brochure. These would bring

---

<sup>1</sup> Myra Harrison, "Oral History," interview by Hilary Iris Lowe, November 20, 2019. Though the number of women employees had increased in the National Park Service, women's roles in leadership were and are still rare.

the site up to national standards in most regards, and their creation was finally on the front burner at the site. As Cook put it, it was a new era of “resource reports” and other essential documents.<sup>2</sup> The Kennedy site’s partner sites, the Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site and Longfellow National Historic Site, had stable leadership and funded archival, conservation, and curatorial projects well underway. Coming out of these crises in structural and collections care that marked their first decades with the National Park Service, these sites were now both reasonably funded and were soon set to be open to scholars, researchers, and friends groups that continued to support their research and collections efforts.<sup>3</sup>



Figure 11. Lee Farrow Cook. Joel Veak. NPS, circa 2009.

Rolf Diamant’s superintendency had set these sites on much firmer footing. Longfellow and Olmsted were engaged in long-term projects that included significant infrastructure investments and a decided focus on preserving and making accessible

---

<sup>2</sup> Lee Farrow Cook, interview by Elena Rippel, April 26, and May 12, 2017.

<sup>3</sup> See chapter 6 in David Grayson Allen, *The Olmsted National Historic Site and the Growth of Historic Landscape Preservation* (Boston: Northeastern University Press; published by University Press of New England, 2007). See also chapter 5 in Sara Patton Zarrelli, *The Long Road to Restoration: An Administrative History of Longfellow House-Washington’s Headquarters National Historic Site* (National Park Service: US Department of the Interior 2021).



collections. The focus on collections, and the resulting research into them, put both sites on a vital path toward reinvigorating their interpretation and broadening the historical stories each site could engage. Meanwhile, the Kennedy site had a capable Site Manager in Lee Farrow Cook. Administrative considerations among the three sites shifted to allow Cook to turn some of her focus to the Kennedy site. After Harrison joined the trisites, “the Kennedy site got a lot of attention, more so than it had—at the management level.”<sup>4</sup> The resulting reports and publications had the added benefit of bringing several outside planners, experts, and stakeholders to the site and infusing the site with new energy focused on reviving its interpretation and defining a mission for a new century of stewardship.

Superintendent Myra Harrison came to the trisites from the Cultural Resources Center (CRC) based in Lowell, Massachusetts (Figure 12). There she worked with an interdisciplinary staff of architects, historians, conservators, and archaeologists to preserve and protect a wide variety of cultural resources. Before her time with the National Park Service, Harrison held a number of preservation positions, including ones at the Providence Preservation Society in Rhode Island and with the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service in Washington, DC, a separate branch of the Department of the Interior until it was absorbed into the National Park Service in 1986. While she was at the Lowell CRC, the Regional Director, Marie Rust, sought to match Harrison with a Boston-area leadership position.<sup>5</sup> Rust first zeroed in on Minute Man National Historical Park for Harrison, but the park was in the midst of community programming over the widening of a local highway for the park that included many evening meetings that would keep its superintendent in Concord. Harrison and her family had just settled in at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology after the move from Washington, DC.<sup>6</sup> Rust eventually focused on the trisites. According to Harrison, she was “plucked” out of her position at the Cultural Resources Center and placed in the job as superintendent for the Longfellow, Kennedy, and Olmsted sites.<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> Lee Farrow Cook, “Oral History,” interview by Elena Rippel, April 26 and May 12, 2017.

<sup>5</sup> Harrison, “Oral History.”

<sup>6</sup> Joan Zenzen, *Bridging the Past: Minute Man National Historical Park Administrative History* (National Park Service, Northeast Region History Program, 2010), 287. Harrison, “Oral History.”

<sup>7</sup> Harrison, “Oral History.”



**Figure 12.** Superintendent Myra Harrison in front of the John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site. Matt Teuten Photography. NPS, 2015.

When Harrison arrived at the trisites in early 1999, much of the change that Rolf Diamant had helped orchestrate for Longfellow and Olmsted was well in place. The Longfellow National Historic Site closed in the fall of 1998 to prepare for significant renovation work, funding for which Senator Ted Kennedy had helped secure in Congress. The renovation of the house and the carriage house included a new HVAC system and required all the house’s contents to move off-site.<sup>8</sup> Rehabilitation at the house would last the first three years of Harrison’s tenure as superintendent, and the site reopened in June of 2002.<sup>9</sup> Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site, the site that had seen the bulk of Diamant’s attentions, was also actively engaged in processing and making accessible many of the landscape plans and drawings held in the massive collection at the site.<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> “Congress Approves \$1.6 Million for Longfellow National Historic Site,” *Longfellow House Bulletin* 2, no. 2 (December 1998): 1.

<sup>9</sup> “Longfellow House Re-Opens Its Doors after Three-Year Rehabilitation,” *Longfellow House Bulletin* 6, no. 1 (June 2002): 1.

<sup>10</sup> Harrison, “Oral History.” Harrison made sure to mention that “of course, Sen. Kennedy was very careful never to advocate strongly for the Kennedy site itself. He had a real sense of decorum about that.... But Sen. Kennedy certainly helped enormously at Longfellow, and to some extent at Olmsted also.”

When asked how the Kennedy site seemed when she first took over management of the site, Harrison remarked, “Kennedy was like this little music box that was off to the side and had been wound up and was just playing its little music and going on. Mrs. Kennedy had assembled all the objects and made the tapes.”<sup>11</sup> Harrison noted that the site had few of the “understudies” that most new sites had, and importantly she could see that Longfellow and Olmsted were “behemoth. They’re the drivers in most situations.” Nonetheless, for Harrison, who had started her college career as a political science major and had lived through the “Kennedy era,” she found “above all, the Kennedy site is unique.” As a preservationist, Harrison was also immediately interested in the fact that much of the birthplace’s surrounding neighborhood was also remarkably “darn near unchanged” from when the Kennedys had lived there.<sup>12</sup>

Harrison supported the staff’s burgeoning interest in women’s history, especially as it related to interpreting the life of Rose Kennedy. In 1999, as the site explored options for developing and hiring a historian to complete a historic resources study, one historian was dismissed as a possibility. Correspondence from Harrison indicates that he did not have a “demonstrated interest or experience in/comfort with/or necessarily sensitivity to the layers of domestic/social/women’s history issues that might present themselves at JOFI.”<sup>13</sup> Lee Farrow Cook had been requesting funding to sponsor a Historic Resource Study since at least 1993, but she had the internal support she needed under Harrison’s tenure to make it happen. She hoped to see the historic resources at the house expand to include more clearly the lives of Rose and Joseph Kennedy Sr.<sup>14</sup> Though the site was dedicated to John F. Kennedy, it was clear that four years after the death of Rose Kennedy, the staff now embraced exploring the women’s history that could be uncovered in her story.

Harrison also saw both the emotional appeal and importance of the Kennedy birthplace; she also identified it as a “tiny intimate place” where visitors might have “a powerful emotional experience.” Almost immediately after her arrival, it was clear to all that the birthplace was deeply tied to Americans and their emotional response to the Kennedy family, when John Fitzgerald Kennedy Jr. was killed in a plane crash on July 16, 1999. His death alone increased visitation to the site that year; Park Ranger David Kratz noted about 5,000 visitors after his death. “It’s an obligation this site has. It’s what we’re here for, but having thousands of people coming through is just too much for this house.”<sup>15</sup> His remarks expose the longstanding tension at the site—how to serve as many people as

---

<sup>11</sup> Harrison, “Oral History.”

<sup>12</sup> Harrison, “Oral History.”

<sup>13</sup> Myra Harrison, March 21, 1999. Unprocessed files, found in Supervisory Ranger’s Office, John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site, Brookline, Massachusetts.

<sup>14</sup> “Request for Project Funding,” John F. Kennedy National Historic Site Resource Management Records, 1963–2003 (JOFI 1504), Box 2, folder 2.

<sup>15</sup> Kirk W. LeMessurier, “Birthplace Calmer, but not Quiet, after Tragedy,” *Brookline Tab*, September 9, 1999.

possible and still respect the limited physical capacity of the house. After JFK Jr.'s death, staff set up a guestbook, put out flowers, and the site was open 12 hours a day, 9:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. for several days because so many people came to the site, according to Alan Banks. "Why come here? It was really the only place where people could go," though he knew they also went to the JFK Library. "There's something about the house, everybody lives in a house, nobody lives in a library, that's part of the connection that people make." Banks saw the impulse to visit the birthplace akin to the practice of going to someone's house after a funeral "to pay respects to the family."<sup>16</sup> Harrison noted right away that the Kennedy Library tells a vast ongoing story of Kennedy's political influence. The library was an "elephant," in her mind, and the "Kennedy site was the little mouse, but a mouse with great potential." Harrison saw part of the site's possibilities included the neighborhood and the potential for a historic district that told the story of the Kennedy family in Brookline.<sup>17</sup>

Throughout the early period of Harrison's tenure, staff at the Kennedy site continued to advocate for change—and not just changes in interpretation. Among continued stressors were the hectic and understaffed summer months. At an all-staff retreat in 2000, attendees' notes indicate that the emotional responses generated by visitors at the site never worried them; they claimed that actually, "staff would like to have better exhibits that would encourage more emotion." A primary concern was "being short staffed is much more stressful than dealing with emotional visitors." They also noted that "not having a site superintendent is the most stressful. It helps to have a site supervisor who helps with tours."<sup>18</sup> Staff at the site clearly wanted to engage the moving story at the site more and needed help and support to be able to do so.

---

<sup>16</sup> Alan Banks, "Oral History," interview by Elena Rippel, July 7, 2016.

<sup>17</sup> There is no historic district dedicated in Brookline, either locally or nationally, that includes the Beals Street address or its immediate neighbors. However, the Kennedys' second house in Brookline, located at 51 Abbottsford Road, is included in the Graffam-McKay Local Historic District. See <https://www.brooklinema.gov/907/Local-Historic-Districts> (accessed January 18, 2022). The Graffam Development, which includes the Abbottsford Kennedy house, is also a National Historic District as of 1985. See the nomination report here: [https://catalog.archives.gov/OpaAPI/media/63792544/content/electronic-records/rg-079/NPS\\_MA/85003271.pdf](https://catalog.archives.gov/OpaAPI/media/63792544/content/electronic-records/rg-079/NPS_MA/85003271.pdf) (accessed January 18, 2022).

<sup>18</sup> "Staff Report," November 7, 2000. This document summarizes JOFI staff notes after the all-staff retreat. In a file folder marked "12.6.00 Mtg." Unprocessed files, found in Supervisory Ranger's Office, John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site, Brookline, Massachusetts.

## New Interpretation: Rose Kennedy as Architect of Memory

As part of their efforts to give new energy to the Kennedy site, in 2001, Lee Farrow Cook and Myra Harrison hired a new Supervisory Park Ranger for the park, Christine Arato. Arato came to the site from a contract position at the Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation. There she had written cultural landscape reports for the New Bedford Whaling Museum National Park and the Boston Harbor Islands National and State Park. Staff at the site remember her time at the park vividly; Mark Swartz, a longtime Park Ranger at Olmsted who worked closely with the site over his tenure, put it this way: “Christine was an agent of change.”<sup>19</sup> Arato had a background as an academic researcher and writer, and her skills as a historian were put to work immediately at the site. She arrived at the John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site in October 2001, not long after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. She spent nearly all of her first winter at the site alone while the site was closed for the winter months.<sup>20</sup>

When the site opened the following spring and she saw the seasonal staff go through their regular house tours, Arato realized that the interpretation that she saw there did not match with the interpretation she had imagined as she delved into the site’s history over the winter.<sup>21</sup> Though the staff no longer relied entirely on Rose Kennedy’s taped tour, they had come to rely a great deal on her autobiography.<sup>22</sup> One seasonal ranger, in particular, seemed personally devoted to Rose Kennedy’s rose-colored memories about her life and the hagiography concerned Arato. Though certainly influenced by the 9/11 attacks and the fact that much of the country was responding to a great national trauma, Arato also had started to see the house as a monument to a different national trauma. It was also a monument to the very personal trauma that Rose Kennedy experienced. Rose Kennedy had not only lost her son, President John Fitzgerald Kennedy, but as she worked to establish the birthplace, her son Robert Kennedy was assassinated on June 6, 1968. While the NPS and staff at the site certainly acknowledged the Kennedy family’s tragedies, they had not seen Rose Kennedy’s overwhelming loss as an essential founding element of the site itself until Arato began to lobby for its consideration at the site. Arato ultimately argued for a new interpretation that would engage the history of American commemoration, ideas about political and national memory, women’s history, and eventually trauma as a potential theme for the site.<sup>23</sup>

---

<sup>19</sup> Mark Swartz, “Oral History,” interview by Elena Rippel, November 29, 2016.

<sup>20</sup> Christine Arato, “Oral History,” interview by Hilary Iris Lowe, August 10, 2020.

<sup>21</sup> Christine Arato, “Oral History,” interview by Hilary Iris Lowe, August 10, 2020.

<sup>22</sup> Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy, *Times to Remember*, 1st ed. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1974).

<sup>23</sup> Arato, “Oral History.”

Arato knew that she wanted to convince Harrison and Cook that the interpretation at the house could expand beyond Kennedy's early childhood and basic information about Rose and Joseph Kennedy's early marriage. Initially, not all of Arato's ideas found traction. This was partly because changing the interpretation at any historical site is not an easy process. Themes for interpretation at National Park Service historic sites are usually based on either a site's founding legislation or a site's argument for historical significance as put forward in its National Landmark nomination. But because she was new to an interpretive arm of the NPS and had served only as a contract researcher, Arato was not sure how to proceed. Regional Historian Paul Weinbaum helped her find her footing, and he explained the process. He also suggested ways to bring new scholarship in memory studies, women's history, the history of commemoration, Irish American life in greater Boston, Catholicism in America, and the Kennedy family itself to the site staff. Weinbaum suggested that the site prioritize updating the site's nomination to the National Register of Historic Landmarks as part of this process.<sup>24</sup> In the meantime, however, Rose Kennedy's work developing the commemorative landscape at the site could also be recognized in other ways.

One of these ways was through the research and work of Alexander von Hoffman. His historic resource study, *John F. Kennedy's Birthplace: A Presidential Home in History and Memory*, was an essential step in helping the site establish a broader history at the historic site. Its goals were, according to Harrison, to "first situate Joe and Rose Kennedy within Brookline's Beals Street neighborhood to provide a better understanding on 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."<sup>25</sup> The study delved deeply into the secondary research on Rose and Joseph Kennedy Sr. and looked closely at the conditions of the Brookline neighborhood in which they lived and the kind of home they hoped to establish there. Von Hoffman traced the basic history of Rose Kennedy's efforts at the house and, in some ways, reinforced staff lore that Kennedy's "memory sometimes had to be 'jogged' by Luddington." His later oral history would contradict this to some degree.<sup>26</sup> The study also spent one chapter looking into how Rose Kennedy's efforts fit within the larger preservation movement in the United States and the complications of "history and memorialization."<sup>27</sup> The historic resource study was ground-breaking work for the site. Von Hoffman's efforts reinvigorated staff as

---

<sup>24</sup> Arato, "Oral History." Conversation with Paul Weinbaum, June 1, 2017.

<sup>25</sup> Myra Harrison, "Foreword," in Alexander Von Hoffman, *John F. Kennedy's Birthplace: A Presidential Home in History and Memory (A Historic Resource Study)* (John F. Kennedy National Historic Site, Brookline, Massachusetts: National Park Service, Department of the Interior, 2004), ix.

<sup>26</sup> Robert Luddington, "Oral History," interview by Elena Rippel et al., June 26, 2016.

<sup>27</sup> Hoffman, *John F. Kennedy's Birthplace*, 157.

he completed his study between 2002 and 2007.<sup>28</sup> Importantly, his analysis was one of the first places where the house’s commemorative or “memorial period” was officially documented as a historic resource that the National Park Service and staff at the Kennedy site might interpret.

Among the changes that might come from recognizing the “memorial period” was the unification of the inside of the house with its exterior. Early Boston Group staff, including architectural historian Orville Carroll who completed the architectural study of the house in 1970, advocated changing the house’s color from the gray and white that Rose Kennedy had it painted to green with cream shutters that the NPS’s paint study had revealed.<sup>29</sup> They did repaint the house in the early 1970s, but they left the interior primarily as she had decorated it.<sup>30</sup> There was a pressing question at the site in its early years: could or would the NPS correct what Rose Kennedy got wrong about 1917–20? For years this question lingered, and ahistorical elements of her and Robert Luddington’s restoration of the house bothered staff. Many wondered if the NPS would correct these issues after Rose Kennedy and Robert Luddington died? Would they after all the Kennedy siblings had passed? As the curatorial staff grew at Longfellow over the years, new professional standards were also more present at the Kennedy house.<sup>31</sup> For instance, the house included children’s books in the nursery, published long after Kennedys lived at the house and baby photos of children born after the family moved from Beals Street. Staff was concerned that the nursery interpreted a childhood connection between John F. Kennedy to King Arthur and Camelot that in reality only happened in the wake of the president’s assassination.<sup>32</sup>

---

<sup>28</sup> “John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site Chronology, 1990–2016,” bulleted timeline drafted by Elena Rippel in conversation with Lee Farrow Cook, 2016.

<sup>29</sup> Orville Carroll Weekly Field Report, September 11, 1970, Orville Carroll Papers, MIMA; Carroll. Orville Carroll Weekly Field Report, September 23, 1970. Orville Carroll Papers, MIMA.

<sup>30</sup> See Chapter 4 for a discussion of NPS staff concern about the lack of authenticity about the objects. The NPS had little documentation about the house’s interior because Rose Kennedy had had all the interior paint stripped and refinished in her refurbishment. The NPS did not technically have the evidence to make such changes inside the house, even when they knew that some of Rose Kennedy’s and Robert Luddington’s choices were likely wrong (like the pink interior carpeting). However, the exterior paint did have enough extant layers that change could be justified with evidence from the paint samples. It’s worth noting that Janice Hodson’s Historic Furnishings Assessment does not mention pink carpeting. It’s possible that Nan Rickey’s recollection is incomplete and that she’s misremembering the modern solid color carpeting that was not appropriate for the 1910s period of restoration. See Janice Hodson, “Historic Furnishing Assessment: John F. Kennedy National Historic Site,” Northeast Museum Services Center, National Park Service, 2005.

<sup>31</sup> The trisites hired Liz Banks, creating a librarian position at Longfellow in 1977, and after the Olmsted site was added, she became Supervisory Curator there. Longfellow eventually created a museum tech and collections manager positions creating a true curatorial division; David Daly, now Curator at Longfellow, filled the position of Collections Manager in 2001. But Daly noted in correspondence that many of the curatorial positions were either unfilled or filled with details between 2003 and 2013. See also Sara Patton Zarrelli, *The Long Road to Restoration: An Administrative History of Longfellow House-Washington’s Headquarters National Historic Site* (National Park Service: US Department of the Interior 2021), 70, 107, 108.

<sup>32</sup> Hoffman, *John F. Kennedy’s Birthplace*, 131.

Nearly as soon as the house opened, Nan Rickey had noted that “politically speaking, we can’t change the house for a number of years at the least,” despite the hints about the “validity of such a refurnishing in historical terms.”<sup>33</sup>

When Supervisory Park Ranger Christine Arato got there, she argued, “No, that’s wrong.”<sup>34</sup> She, Janice Hodson, Supervisory Museum Curator, and Carole Perrault, a staff member with the regional Historic Architecture Program, were all engaged in independent and overlapping research on the site. Hodson was completing a revelatory study of the furnishing of the house that documented inconsistencies in the furnishings provided by Rose Kennedy and Robert Luddington, which had been part of the paper trail of curatorial research since the first collections notes put together by Charles Dorman, Anna Coxe Toogood’s original stunted attempt at a historic furnishing plan, and Kathleen Catalano’s collections guide.<sup>35</sup> Carole Perrault similarly was working on a historic structures report that took seriously the site’s most important and biggest collection item: the house itself.<sup>36</sup> Together they believed that the period of historical significance for the park should also critically include the “memorial period” and sought to recognize two distinct periods of significance (1917–20 and 1963–69). Rose Kennedy had developed a complicated interpretive narrative at the home, according to Arato, that made sense of “layers of tragedy, you know the deaths of her children but also the deaths of her dreams and her ideals as a mother.” The president’s mother, in Arato’s research and understanding, had to figure out “how she would anchor her place and that of her children and her family in a narrative about success and about democracy and about family and legacy that really changed over the . . . years of her life.”<sup>37</sup>

Part of claiming that space for Rose Kennedy’s interpretive vision to Arato, Perrault, and Hodson, and eventually to others at the site meant championing the change of the exterior paint back to the colors that Rose Kennedy had intended for the house during the 1960s. Arato even found a local hardware store willing to donate the paint. She hoped to make the painting of the house a community engagement project. It would have been one that mirrored, in many ways, the way that the local chapter of the Paint and Decoration Contractors Association of America had come together to paint the house

---

<sup>33</sup> Nan Rickey, *Interpretive Prospectus: John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site, Massachusetts, 1969*, 13.

<sup>34</sup> Arato, “Oral History.”

<sup>35</sup> Anna Coxe Toogood, “John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site, Massachusetts, Historic Furnishings Plan, Eastern Service Center Office of History and Historic Architecture, National Park Service (Washington, DC, 1971). Kathleen Catalano, “John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site Collections Preservation Guide” (1985), Site Manager Lee Farrow Cook Documents, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.

<sup>36</sup> Conversation with Carole Perrault March 4, 2016.

<sup>37</sup> Arato, “Oral History.”



when Martha Pollack still owned it in 1961.<sup>38</sup> However, as a new supervisory ranger, Arato did not yet know how to manage such a donation within the structure of the trisites unit. Painting had to be managed by a bidding process and through official channels.<sup>39</sup> She could not convince her site manager or her superintendent to prioritize the painting of the house as an essential interpretive need. But the house's paint color was indicative of a more considerable need to focus on women's history, Rose Kennedy, and individual and national trauma associated with the president's assassination.

The idea of a scholars' roundtable for the site inspired Arato. Program Manager for the Northeast Region Paul Weinbaum worked with Cook and Harrison to find scholars for the historic resource study over many years. He wanted to include historians engaged in the history of American memory.<sup>40</sup> In 1998 and 1999, Weinbaum, Cook, and Harrison were desperately looking for a historian focused on women's history to take on the site's Historic Resource Study. They knew they wanted to provide context for interpreting and understanding Rose Kennedy's contributions to the house—both in 1917 when John F. Kennedy was born and in 1966 when she started working on refurbishing the house for the National Park Service. Even before Arato arrived, there was already a tension at the house that staff recognized between “the birth period and early childhood” and the “commemorative period.”<sup>41</sup> At the same time, the administration at the site was already wary whether “this interest in memory/memorialization would end up driving the research, rather than the research being allowed to yield what it will.”<sup>42</sup> Despite wariness, staff at the house researched and interrogated the tensions that came up when investigating the NPS's own history with Rose Kennedy's interpretation at the site. Some documents from the period indicate that staff in the late 1990s was well aware that NPS staff in the late 1960s and early 1970s (and perhaps at other times) recognized and planned to correct Rose Kennedy's “mistakes.” At the same time, the same early staff at the site marveled at the value of the site as a memorial of her creation. Staff in the 2000s saw themselves as having enough distance from the memorial period to begin to research its significance at the site.

---

<sup>38</sup> “Painters Swarm in Brookline: Free Facial for Kennedy House,” *Boston Globe*, September 12 1961. Arato, “Oral History.”

<sup>39</sup> Arato, “Oral History.”

<sup>40</sup> Paul Weinbaum, June 26, 1998. Unprocessed files, printed email, found in Supervisory Ranger's Office, John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site, Brookline, Massachusetts. Paul Weinbaum was Regional Historian for the North Atlantic Region from 1990 to 1995, then Lead Historian for the Boston Support Office from 1995 to 2003, and from 2003 to 2010 he was the Program Manager for the Northeast Region of the National Park Service.

<sup>41</sup> Lee Farrow Cook, March 27, 1999. Unprocessed files, printed email, found in Supervisory Ranger's Office, John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site, Brookline, Massachusetts.

<sup>42</sup> Harrison. Unprocessed files, printed email, found in Supervisory Ranger's Office, John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site, Brookline, Massachusetts.

One bullet point in a long list of questions and concerns that Arato had filed away in her notes about the site indicated: “In its management and interpretation of the site, the National Park Service often has not made sound distinctions between the memorial value and the factual accuracy of Mrs. Kennedy’s testimony.”<sup>43</sup> However, by 2006, Alexander von Hoffman had nearly completed the Historic Resource Study for the site, and it helped identify new areas of concentration for interpretation—including the commemorative period. Von Hoffman, in many ways, made official what staff had long felt and had begun to uncover in their own research—that Rose Kennedy’s efforts were historic, in and of themselves. Her commemoration of her son was itself historically significant and part of what made such a strong impact on visitors at the site. Staff began to meet in workshops and started sketching out new interpretive themes for the site based on this study.

In July of 2006, Arato and Weinbaum and other site staff helped organize a scholars’ roundtable. They brought in Thomas Carty, a presidential and international relations scholar from Springfield College, who had written a recent book on Kennedy’s presidential campaign and Catholicism.<sup>44</sup> Michael Kammen, an eminent scholar of the history of American memory from Cornell University, found that the site was an important site of commemoration. Phyllis Palmer from George Washington University joined the round table to tap into the history of domesticity and the histories of the domestic servants uncovered at the site. James O’Toole from Boston College, as a scholar of Boston area Catholic and Irish and Irish-American history, rounded out the group. Each scholar responded to a set of questions from the site. Their responses to these questions were meant to guide the staff as they developed new interpretive themes and rationale.<sup>45</sup>

## Neighborhood Preservation: St. Aidan’s Catholic Church Threatened

By 2000, a neighborhood preservation issue became a concern that would resonate with staff at the Kennedy site. As part of an effort to raise funds in a location that had a decreasing interest in Catholic services, St. Aidan’s Church, the church that the Kennedy family had been parishioners of during their time in Brookline, was threatened with demolition.

---

<sup>43</sup> “John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site, Work Session, Memorial Period ‘The Issues,’” n.d. Unprocessed files, printed document, found in a red folder containing information on the Comprehensive Interpretation & Education Planning in Supervisory Ranger’s Office, John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site, Brookline, Massachusetts.

<sup>44</sup> Thomas Carty, *A Catholic in the White House? Religion, Politics, and John Kennedy’s Presidential Campaign*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004, paperback 2008).

<sup>45</sup> John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site, *Revisiting-and Re-Visioning-John Fitzgerald Kennedy NHS: A Scholars’ Roundtable Co-Sponsored by the National Park Service and the Organization for American Historians, July 2006* (John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site, Lee Farrow Cook files, unprocessed, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site, Brookline, Massachusetts).

The main church building at St. Aidan's was built in 1911, not long before the Kennedys moved to Brookline, and the church was part of what drew the Kennedys to the Beals Street neighborhood. The Kennedy children who were born in Brookline were baptized at the church.<sup>46</sup> St. Aidan's had played a role in interpreting the Kennedy family life in Brookline from the beginning. Staff had initially worried that the Kennedy family's "religion and wealth" might not come out in interpretation at the house. According to Nan Rickey, these were facts of "great importance in the family's history," and she believed that both concerns could be brought to light through a "Walking Tour" that emphasized "St. Aidan's Catholic Church and the house on Abbottsford Road."<sup>47</sup> Not long after Robert Kennedy's assassination, regional NPS staff were worried about whether and how to include information about his life at the site. They opted to leave it up to the neighborhood: "We have not made any further provisions for including Robert F. Kennedy in our interpretation of the house or the walking tour, inasmuch as we felt his association with the Abbottsford Road House and St. Aidan's Church was sufficiently covered by the basic historical data provided, and that it would be difficult to go further in interpreting the life of a younger brother at this Site [*sic*], which is important, essentially, because it is a Presidential birthplace."<sup>48</sup>

St. Aidan's church did the heavy lifting in this regard. Though stretched for space, staff from this period could not imagine how the neighborhood might have suffered if, as early local planners had imagined, eight nearby homes had been leveled to create space for parking and a visitor center for the site.<sup>49</sup> The intact neighborhood was a crucial argument in the effort to save St. Aidan's. The church itself has a significant history in Brookline and was among the historic sites targeted by vandals in the 1970s.<sup>50</sup> During the 1980s, Christmas open houses that were so popular with staff and neighbors, children from St. Aidan's performed Christmas Carols in the living room.<sup>51</sup>

---

<sup>46</sup> Von Hoffman, *John F. Kennedy's Birthplace: A Presidential Home in History and Memory (A Historic Resource Study)*, 23. See Von Hoffman's study for architectural details and the history of the church site, 52–53.

<sup>47</sup> Nan Rickey, "MEMO to Alan Kent, Planning and Interpretive Services, Subject: Mini Folder, John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site, January 9, 1968, John F. Kennedy National Historic Site Resource Management Records, 1963–2003 (JOFI 1504), Box 4, Folder 2."

<sup>48</sup> Division of Planning and Interpretive Services (Alan E. Kent) Acting Chief to Regional Director, "MEMO: Interpretive Prospectus, John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site," July 1, 1969, John F. Kennedy National Historic Site Resource Management Records, 1963–2003 (JOFI 1504), Box 3, Folder 11.

<sup>49</sup> "Neighbors Kick Up Fuss: They Don't Want a Shrine Made of Kennedy Home," *Boston Globe*, December 15, 1961. Harrison, "Oral History."

<sup>50</sup> The Dexter School was also a target of vandals. "Serious Vandalism at Historic Sites," *Brookline Chronicle* (Brookline, Massachusetts), February 4, 1971.

<sup>51</sup> *Statement for Interpretation*, John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site (1990), Lee Farrow Cook files, unprocessed, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site, Brookline, Massachusetts.

Although the church was closed in 1999, the church, the chapel, and the parish house had been listed with the Massachusetts Historical Commission and on the National Register of Historic Places in 1985. Many had assumed that these historical associations would protect the church, as the Kennedy family's association only makes up part of the church's historical significance statement.<sup>52</sup> Just as Harrison came to the unit, St. Aidan's Parish merged with St. Mary's Parish. Less than a year later, "Monsignor Michael Groden, Director of the Archdiocese's Planning Office for Urban Affairs, contacted Brookline Town officials about demolishing the church and using the St. Aidan's site for mixed income housing." The Archdiocese's initial plan included developing 140 rental units divided evenly among low-, middle-, and upper-market renters. These units' rental income would provide the parish with funds to support St. Mary's School.<sup>53</sup>

Myra Harrison was deeply involved in the campaign to save St. Aidan's from demolition, as was C. Sue Rigney, who was the Kennedy site's Chief of Interpretation and Visitors' Services. Harrison and others quickly formed a nonprofit, the Campaign to Preserve St. Aidan's, which advocated for the preservation of the church and for an alternative use for the site itself as a potential community arts and culture center. The campaign was wide-ranging and included partners from area preservation and green space groups; much of it was managed by Harrison.<sup>54</sup> "I would say it took a couple of years of my life and every drop of energy that I had to attend all the meetings and represent the Park Service's interest."<sup>55</sup>

Ultimately the structure was saved. "So, the good thing is that we did keep the church from being demolished. The bad thing is that we were unable to convince the Catholic Church to maintain the interior and it was renovated into apartments." While their efforts saved the structure and kept the exterior of the historic building primarily intact, the church itself has been developed into nine "luxuriously appointed condominium homes" that have now been named by a property management company the Freeman Street Condominium. Elsewhere on property that was owned by the church, Peabody Properties rents 20 "affordable" apartments and has offered 16 condominiums for sale at an apartment building that they have named The St. Aidan.<sup>56</sup>

---

<sup>52</sup> "Form B—St. Aidan's Church and Rectory," submitted to the Massachusetts Historical Commission in the Fall of 1978 and the Spring of 1985, by Carla Benka and Flora Greenan, unprocessed files, found in Supervisory Ranger's Office, John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site, Brookline, Massachusetts.

<sup>53</sup> "Brookline Landmark Threatened," *Newsletter of the Brookline GreenSpace Alliance* (Brookline, Massachusetts), 2002, Winter.

<sup>54</sup> See a variety of printed files and faxes on the Campaign to Preserve Saint Aidan's in Open Files, Unprocessed files, found in Supervisory Ranger's Office, John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site, Brookline, Massachusetts.

<sup>55</sup> Harrison, "Oral History."

<sup>56</sup> Information about the units can be found on the Peabody Properties website. <https://www.peabodyproperties.com/communities/component/jea/130-the-st-aidan-pleasant-st.html> (accessed December 21, 2021).

## General Management Plan: “Only a Mirage”

General Management Plans (GMPs) were used by parks to argue for resources, staffing, services, and growth, both interpretive and physical, within the NPS and are used as governing documents with the communities in which NPS units reside. General Management Plans were not only internal planning documents, but as of 1978, they were required by law for all new units of the National Park Service. The John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site has never, in its whole history, had a General Management Plan or a Master Plan that could strategically spell out its strengths, needs, and priorities.<sup>57</sup> GMPs provided a legal vehicle to analyze how the NPS preserved resources at a site; it required that a site’s administrators take a hard look at the “intensities of development (including visitor circulation and transportation patterns, systems and modes) associated with public enjoyment and use of the area, including general locations, timing of implementation, and anticipated costs.” A GMP necessitated that administrators look carefully at visitor capacity and to think ahead about any future “potential modifications to the external boundaries of the unit” and explain possible reasons for any expansion.<sup>58</sup> Once in place, GMPs became a unit’s guiding document. The process of creating a GMP by the time Harrison was in place was exhaustive and exhausting for a small unit like the Kennedy birthplace. The GMP required several in-depth studies the site had been seeking since it was founded; it required the site to put together and marshal new research about the Kennedy family that might be used for interpretation. A GMP by the 2000s was also a community-engaged process that required administrators to work through possible futures for the site in partnership with its community stakeholders. Most important for the birthplace, it required that the trisites administration think critically and holistically about and plan for the site’s future as an individual and integral unit of the NPS, maybe for the first time.

Before Arato arrived at the site, Harrison and Cook knew that the site needed foundational studies and documents to support a GMP process. Cook had overseen the site’s first unigrid development (1999–2002). It was the first time the Kennedy site had any official publication that matched the NPS style and content guidelines. The site’s pamphlet that had been distributed for nearly 30 years had barely changed. The unigrid brochure brought the unit, with full-color printing, into the 21st century (Figures 13 and 14).

---

<sup>57</sup> Public Law 95-625, November 10, 1978.

<sup>58</sup> Public Law 95-625, November 10, 1978.



Figure 13. An early JOFI brochure. NPS JOFI 1504, Box 9, Folder 8, 1973.



Figure 14. The first JOFI ungrid, interior. NPS, 2003.

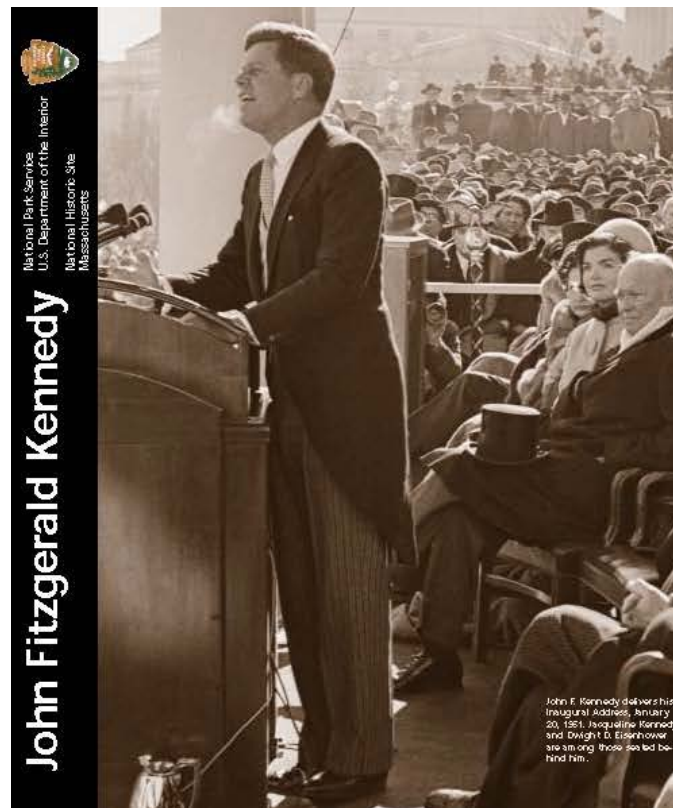


Figure 14 (continued). The first JOFI unigrid, front. NPS, 2003.

Staff believed that the new brochure was only the beginning. It is hard to overestimate the time and consideration that park staff put into developing elements and drafts of the GMP over the 2000s. The early 2000s were dedicated to working on “comprehensive” interpretation and education planning, which was in part later connected to the GMP and Foundation Document processes.<sup>59</sup> Between 2007 and 2011, staff worked on the GMP internally and in public meetings.<sup>60</sup>

By 2005, the GMP process seemed to stumble, but the slowdown was not coming from the park unit but rather the regional office. According to Harrison, in her annual state of the park report, the site needed a budget increase as “an infusion to move ahead.” But more importantly, it needed to complete the GMP process. “Having a site in the system for over 35 years without any basic park planning documents is at best very difficult, at worst

---

<sup>59</sup> Foundation Documents are also vital planning documents that each unit of the National Park Service must create. They address mission-related issues and are meant to answer these essential questions: “What is the purpose of this park? Why was it included in the national park system? What makes it significant? What are its fundamental resources and values? What legal and policy requirements, special mandates, and administrative commitments apply to the park? What are the park’s key planning and data needs?” See “Foundation Documents for National Park Units,” Park Planning, National Park Service, Department of the Interior: <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/foundationDocuments.cfm>, accessed February 20, 2022.

<sup>60</sup> “John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site Chronology, 1990–2016,” bulleted timeline drafted by Elena Rippel in conversation with Lee Farrow Cook, 2016.

disgraceful: the GMP needs to be mounted in the very near future.”<sup>61</sup> With only one full-time site-specific employee, the site had, as Superintendent Harrison summarized it, a “shockingly *diminished visitor season* (down from 12 months, 7 days (in 1994) to 5 months, 5 days (in 2005).”<sup>62</sup> However, in her summary, Harrison also emphasized that the site management in Lee Cook, though only part-time, was powerful. She also pointed out that the one full-time employee was “ranger leadership on-site. . . was intelligent, committed, creative.” Arato had made significant improvements in the interpretive program and in leading an “important exploration and evolution in interpretive themes.” What concerned the administration most in 2005 was that the General Management Plan effort seemed stalled. The site finally had committed leadership at the administrative and site level, had put in place many of the foundational studies, and had community connections from Harrison’s work on the St. Aidan’s preservation efforts. She saw all of this momentum stalling out and wrote: “The site’s *first-ever GMP* is on the horizon. . . though ever-receding [*sic*]. . . is it a mirage?”<sup>63</sup>

Work on the GMP did proceed. While these planning processes went on, daily life at the site was also a struggle for resources. In December of 2006, Robert Allen, Brookline’s Chair of the Board of Selectmen, wrote to Congressman Barney Frank to bring to his attention “maintenance needs at the John F. Kennedy Birthplace on Beals Street.” He asserted that he had “no doubt that you [Frank] would want to make sure that all federal authorities with responsibilities for providing resources to meet these needs are doing everything possible within their power to provide appropriate funding for these purposes.”<sup>64</sup> Brookline’s community officials were becoming concerned about the backlog of maintenance needs at the site. These, too, would be taken up in the GMP.

Specifically, during the planning process, regional planners, including Chief of Planning and Special Studies, Terry Moore and Jim O’Connell, Project Manager from the Northeast Regional Office, helped staff think through goals for the unit’s future. They emphasized the need to provide multiple feasible “alternative ways” to achieve these goals.<sup>65</sup>

---

<sup>61</sup> “State of the Park: 2005; John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site,” unprocessed files, found in Superintendent’s Office, folder name: “Myra—2005 State of the Park,” Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic, Brookline, Massachusetts.

<sup>62</sup> Bold in original. “State of the Park: 2005; John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site,” unprocessed files, found in Superintendent’s Office, folder name: “Myra—2005 State of the Park,” Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic, Brookline, Massachusetts.

<sup>63</sup> Bold and ellipse in the original. “State of the Park: 2005; John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site,” unprocessed files, found in Superintendent’s Office, folder name: “Myra—2005 State of the Park,” Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic, Brookline, Massachusetts.

<sup>64</sup> Robert L. Allen to Congressman Barney Frank, December 11, 2006. Unprocessed files, found in Superintendent’s Office, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic, Brookline, Massachusetts.

<sup>65</sup> Christine Arato, “GMP Notes Cook Ads,” from GMP Internal Scoping Meeting, December 11, 2007. Arato’s notes seem to have been vetted by Lee Farrow Cook as the official account of the meeting internally. Central Drive, Folder: Internal Scoping Meeting. This document was provided to the researcher on a thumb drive, so the current file structure/path is unknown.



In imagining a goal to create a more robust visitor experience, the site administrators started thinking through several options that would help mitigate the size limitations that the site had faced since its founding. O’Connell noted some of the issues visitors face at the site included an “awkward arrival to site,” which left visitors “confused.” He noticed that the stairs to the basement visitors area were not ADA compliant. In addition, he pointed out a lack of contemplative space for orientation and to deal with the “emotionally charged” site, along with no exhibit space to “tell [the] story of JFK’s boyhood and his path to the presidency.” Visitors also faced a limited season and hours, a lack of parking, and the potential for a long wait given the 12-visitors-at-a-time policy because of the structural load limit for the house’s upper floors.<sup>66</sup>

In thinking about addressing these issues *feasibly*, Harrison and Cook proposed several options. Because they worked on careful community engagement with the Beals Street neighborhood around preservation concerns, they had cultivated a strong working relationship with the owners of the nearby former Kennedy House on Abbottsford Road. With the owners, they had made tentative plans for one option: acquiring the second Kennedy house, perhaps through a gift or purchase, to serve as an interpretive space, staff headquarters, and visitors center. The staff was nervous about putting forward the possibility of expanding the site. Knowing that this first option would likely require funds and staffing that the federal government might balk at during meetings and workshops, staff also saw other opportunities. One possibility was developing an orientation center for the site somewhere on Harvard Street near its intersection with Beals Street. There, visitors seeking the site could watch an orientation video and access bathrooms. Such a location might also draw in foot traffic or traffic from the MBTA bus route on Harvard Street and trolley line that regularly runs on Beacon Street. A third option was to find a way to orient visitors at the Kennedy birthplace itself by reorganizing the basement space in a way that would be more welcoming to visitors.<sup>67</sup>

The GMP process kicked into gear between 2007 and 2009. Events included formal internal scoping meetings, an open house to introduce the neighbors to the process on May 3, 2009, to which “approximately 100 people” came, and a public scoping meeting with 40

---

<sup>66</sup> Jim O’Connell’s notes as saved by Christine Arato, “JOFI Scoping notes—Jim,” internally labeled, “Notes from John F. Kennedy National Historic Site General Management Plan Scoping Meeting, Longfellow NHS, December 11, 2007,” Central Drive, Folder: Internal Scoping Meeting. This document was provided to the researcher on a thumb drive, so the current file structure/path is unknown.

<sup>67</sup> This researcher never had access to the complete draft of the GMP that Harrison and Cook worked on; instead, these proposed options come from conversations with both as well as paper notes found in Cook’s unprocessed files at Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site and digital files culled from Christine Arato’s notes in the site’s central drive by Elena Rippel and Archivist Christine Wirth. The complete draft of the GMP certainly warrants study for future researchers. See Arato, “Oral History”; Harrison, “Oral History”; and Cook, “Oral History.” As well as Jim O’Connell’s notes as saved by Christine Arato, “JOFI Scoping notes—Jim,” Internally labeled: “Notes from John F. Kennedy National Historic Site General Management Plan Scoping Meeting, Longfellow NHS, December 11, 2007,” Central Drive, Folder: Internal Scoping Meeting. Some of these documents were provided to the researcher on a thumb drive, so their current file structure/path is unknown.

people on May 6, 2009, held at the Edward Devotion School.<sup>68</sup> Public comments presented great ideas for the GMP planners. Visitors and community members suggested: making the house more accessible to the disabled, timed tickets, so there was less confusion about the twelve-person-at-a-time limit, an orientation film, and creating a meeting space for community events and history. They also pointed to developing digital resources that could be accessed by iPods or phones, putting kiosks at nearby trolley stops to raise awareness and interest, and a resounding call for more days open with at least occasional later hours. Others suggested the development of a larger historic district for the neighborhood. Ten people mentioned a need to reach out more to local schools, and at least five people suggested a need for a “Friends of the JFK Birthplace” group. Harrison, Cook, and others took these suggestions to heart; they drafted and circulated a plan in 2009 to their internal partners in the region. The General Management Plan draft included all possible options for any boundary expansion and the accompanying reasoning, as GMP plans required. The GMP draft also addressed other concerns like educational and programming goals, office space and maintenance needs, ways to expand interpretive themes, a new orientation film, and collections management.

Devastatingly, presenting the GMP plan to the regional office did not go well. Staff was forced to present their ideas via video call rather than in person. Harrison was not able to be there. Reports back to her said that the regional director, to whom they presented the plan, “practically threw up” at the notion that the site might expand to the Abbottsford house or another site. There was some sense that the region’s position might have been at least partially political. As Harrison put it, the plan “made his Republican blood run cold.” Harrison’s reflection on events came after she retired from the National Park Service in 2017. She noted that “today, with the enormously vituperative political environment that we’re in right now, I can imagine that that might be a problem if the Kennedy site [expansion] issue came before the House of Representatives.”<sup>69</sup> Nonetheless, in the middle of taking in particularly negative feedback from the regional director on their draft and drafting a new version of their plan that would remove, at his request, any possible expansion of the park, the planning process took a strange turn.

The region stopped participating in the GMP process shortly after staff presented a revised version of the GMP draft on January 28, 2011. Myra Harrison, Terry Moore, and Longfellow House-Washington’s Headquarters National Historic Site Site Manager Beth Law presented their scaled-down and more “fiscally friendly” plan to the Directorate of the Northeast Regional Office. It does not seem that this version appealed to the region. The

---

<sup>68</sup> “Comprehensive JOFI GMP Issues,” August 5, 2009. There is no clear author of these notes. K Drive, Folder: Internal Scoping Meeting. Some of these documents were provided to the researcher on a thumb drive, so their current file structure/path is unknown. “New Strategic Plan to be Developed for John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site,” John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site, General Management Plan, *Newsletter* 1, Spring 2009, 1.

<sup>69</sup> Harrison, “Oral History.”

Regional Director Dennis Reidenbach pointed out that all options still presented costs and staffing increases. Still, he seemed amenable to continued exploration of the alternative to partner with the town of Brookline. But other than this immediate feedback in the meeting, they had little response, and it took weeks for staff at the trisites to understand why.<sup>70</sup> The GMP planning process for most existing sites came to a complete halt within the NPS. As Harrison put it, “the whole planning function was obliterated at the same time. No more General Management Plans were to be done.” The policy change *seemed* to leave no room for units in the middle of the process to finish their work. The Kennedy site was not the only site affected. Harrison was also working on a new GMP for the Olmsted site with the hope of expanding its boundaries to include an adjacent Olmsted-designed property. But the Kennedy GMP process, despite its difficult reception, was halted right at the moment it was “ready to be born.”<sup>71</sup> So despite years of getting ready for the process, at least five years preparing the plan, and community input, the Kennedy site was left without a General Management Plan. The community leaders and members of the public who had worked on the GMP process would not get to respond to a draft of the plan like the staff had promised. Explaining this institutional default would be difficult for site staff, and it would undoubtedly put developing a friends group on hold for years.

On its way through the GMP planning process, the site did an enormous amount of work and had compiled and processed a decade of critical studies and reports. These were reports that superintendents had been seeking for decades. Nonetheless, as Harrison put it bluntly, these reports “don’t make a plan. They . . . list the resources, they list issues, and they make no plan.”<sup>72</sup>

## Staffing at the Kennedy Birthplace

When Myra Harrison came to the trisites in 1999, about 45 employees were spread out among the three units. By the time she left, there were only 30 staff remaining.<sup>73</sup> The loss of one-third of the staff over her tenure was not the direct result of cost-cutting or poor management at the sites, but rather the slow erosion of the unit’s base operating funds because the units saw little change in their federal operating budgets over this period. During the early 1990s, Diamant’s time at the unit, many parks across the country saw increased funding, but that was not the case during the end of the Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, Barack Obama, or Donald Trump administrations. Over these years, inflation and costs like heating

---

<sup>70</sup> Conversation with Lee Farrow Cook, April 12, 2019.

<sup>71</sup> Harrison, “Oral History.”

<sup>72</sup> Harrison, “Oral History.”

<sup>73</sup> Harrison, “Oral History.”

and electricity went up, but the operating budgets did not. Likewise, the cost of staffing, in part the result of mandatory pay raises for federal employees, also went up. When a staff member left a position, it was often financially impossible to replace them. In a significant shift from the Diamant era, the trisite no longer had its own robust maintenance crew.<sup>74</sup> As crew members retired, Harrison could not “back-fill” to replace them.<sup>75</sup> This meant some maintenance delays and added time and cost of bidding for work done outside the unit. The lack of funds for staffing has also meant that many important positions were filled on a temporary or “detail” basis. During this decade some of the positions at the trisites did shift, for instance the Longfellow site added a Museum Technician position that shared a percentage of time at the Kennedy birthplace, while other curatorial positions remained unfilled. However, across the board, permanent employees in the National Park Service decreased nationally between 2010 and 2020 by nearly 1,000 employees.<sup>76</sup>

Carla Price, a long-time member of the maintenance team and perhaps the only full-time Black employee at the trisites from its opening until the end of Harrison’s time as superintendent, pointed out that in the 2000s, the unit had to “struggle for every little bit.” She found that she could no longer get overtime, and she observed that most new employees were only seasonal or temporary, with no job security. Price was an active recruiter for the NPS, and she pointed out that there were no longer any job fairs. She thought this might be one reason “why the Park Service is so lily-white.”<sup>77</sup> But the Kennedy birthplace was not the only site with a lack of diversity among staff members. President John F. Kennedy’s administration was the first, under NPS Director Conrad Wirth (1951–64), to attempt to diversify the National Park Service. His successor, Director George Hartzog’s (1964–75), prioritized diversifying employees. As a result, in 1975, 12.6 percent of the full-time employees of the park service were Black, almost reaching parity with the U.S. Black population percentage. But despite the total number of full-time service employees doubling between 1975 and 2020, by 2020 the percentage of Black employees had dropped nearly in half to 6.7 percent.<sup>78</sup> “Lily” whiteness was a system-wide hiring issue.

---

<sup>74</sup> The site did and does still have maintenance staff, but not the well-staffed crew that it had in the 1990s.

<sup>75</sup> Carla Price, “Oral History,” interview by Kate Hanson Plass, Elena Rippel, and Rufai Shardow, April 22, 2016.

<sup>76</sup> “By the Numbers,” National Park Service, Department of the Interior, updated May 4, 2021, <https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/by-the-numbers.htm>.

<sup>77</sup> Price, “Oral History.” While Price may have been the only fulltime Black staff member that she could recall, there were certainly other Black employees who were employed as seasonal workers, details, and in other positions at the trisites over the years.

<sup>78</sup> The numbers for 1975 dates may be somewhat unreliable. In 1975 and the surrounding years, the NPS hired high numbers of new employees to help cover bicentennial celebrations. Still, even allowing for some margin of error, total percentages of Black employees certainly decreased over the 45 years between 1975 and 2020. “By the Numbers.”

## Paint, Perseverance, and the Presidency

Ultimately, despite not having a GMP plan in place, Harrison continued to make small changes at the site. Harrison and Cook agreed with Arato, Hodson, and Perrault about the paint color on the house's exterior, but it took years of research and budget requests to make it happen. The birthplace was repainted gray in 2012, three years after Arato had moved on to a new position elsewhere within the NPS (Figure 15).



**Figure 15.** House repainted. JOFI uncatalogued collections. NPS, 2012.

According to Harrison, park staff in the early years did not have the opportunity to think through the “site clearly from the start and having the studies done and the thought processes to truly undergird what you’ve got on your hands.” While NPS’s arguments about historical authenticity usually won the day, the house, as Arato and others had come to see it, actually presented two different historical eras until 2012. The house exterior matched the green that researchers thought was accurate for the period of historical significance during President Kennedy’s three-year residence. At the same time, the interior was full of the 1960s refurbishments of Mrs. Kennedy and Robert Luddington. During the shift to thinking about the whole house as a historic site that told Americans as much about the memorial moment of the 1960s as the childhood of a three-year-old, staff began to rethink the house’s color. Arato’s was “an important point,” Harrison noted later, “to have the outside of the house and the inside of the house match.”<sup>79</sup> The decision to change the house color back to the gray that Rose Kennedy had chosen unified the house to a single, if complicated, historical moment. The house could now tell a unified story of how Rose Kennedy remembered her son’s early life. The Park Service and the staff have come to embrace that Rose Kennedy was indeed the best source for information about John F. Kennedy’s childhood, even if she reconstructed it 50 years later under extraordinarily tragic circumstances.

A new Supervisory Ranger, James Roberts, was hired a year and a half after Arato’s departure and took charge of interpretation, educational programming, and events at the now century-old home. During the time between supervisors, the site was led by several details and primarily run by returning and experienced seasonal guides in the summer. The brief period between Supervisory Rangers led to a lack of consistency and a sense that the temporary staff was, once again, left to its own devices to decide work order, schedules, and interpretation. When Roberts joined the site, moving to the Kennedy site from a ranger position at Lowell National Historical Park, he noted, “My priority was always customer service is number one.”<sup>80</sup> Roberts streamlined scheduling, developed an employee handbook, and worked hard with seasonal staff to make tours consistent. He also advocated for and received a new full-time lead ranger position, which significantly moved the site from one full-time employee to two. For the first time in the site’s history, two staff members were tasked with the care and interpretation of the house on a full-time basis. The site found incredibly qualified lead rangers first in Sara Patton Zarrelli and then in Jason Atsales.

Roberts was less concerned with the memorial moment than Arato. He saw the recent work on Rose Kennedy and thought, “Her role became more emphasized [at the site] and the legacy, the presidential legacy of JFK was kind of left off.”<sup>81</sup> Roberts saw that

---

<sup>79</sup> Harrison, “Oral History.”

<sup>80</sup> James Roberts, “Oral History,” interview by Elena Rippel, November 16, 2016.

<sup>81</sup> Roberts, “Oral History.”

most visitors had little firsthand knowledge of the president's life and brief term in office. For him, it was Kennedy's "rhetoric, his speeches, his inspiration for a generation," and the "idea of public service that was engendered at a very early age in the family" that needed emphasis at the site.<sup>82</sup> His work picked up where earlier programs interested in civil rights left off—he wanted to make sure that the policy decisions that either Kennedy made while in office or that came about because of his legacy were part of the larger story interpreted at the site. These interests matched well with commemorative milestones the site would see during his tenure. The year 2010 marked the 50th anniversary of JFK's election; in 2013, the site recognized the 50th anniversary of Kennedy's assassination; in 2016, the National Park Service itself celebrated a Centennial; and in 2017, the site celebrated "JFK Centennial," its biggest anniversary yet for the centennial of President Kennedy's birth. For the NPS centennial, Jim Roberts and temporary Lead Park Ranger Victor Medina put together a small exhibit in the basement visitor's center that focused on the units that entered the NPS during President Kennedy's too brief time in office.<sup>83</sup>

One of the projects that the site had started to develop as a part of the GMP planning projects was the idea of a new orientation video. Each year following, the staff submitted a proposal for the film for funding, and in 2015 the project was funded with the hopes that it could be in place in 2017 to coincide with JFK Centennial.<sup>84</sup> Jim Roberts took the lead organizing both the film and the celebration. Harrison hoped that the film would "tie in. . . [Kennedy's] larger, later achievements. . . rooting them in his family. A lot of presidential birthplaces, they tell you about the man in the period of his presidency. We felt there were other places that told that story better already and that it wasn't necessarily our story. That. . . we needed to understand its roots. Especially with, perhaps, the world's most intentional parents. . . so, to understand that intentionality and that role and how to make the site a valuable present-day experience for people, for young parents."<sup>85</sup>

Another essential document came, in part, out of the planning efforts, workshops, research, and scoping that happened in the run-up to the failed GMP: the JOFI Foundation Document. In 2015, after many edits and a fundamental revision in interpretive purpose under the leadership of Jim Roberts, the site had the most concrete articulation of its mission, purpose, resources, and future path.<sup>86</sup> On the cover of the document was the birthplace with its new gray paint job, and three photos that symbolized the coming together of the interpretation trends of the 1960s, 2000s, and the 2010s: a photo of JFK as a toddler, Rose

---

<sup>82</sup> Roberts, "Oral History."

<sup>83</sup> Jason Atsales, "Timeline of Key Events," shared with researcher on April 4, 2019.

<sup>84</sup> The film was completed in 2017 and is available in seven languages.

<sup>85</sup> Harrison, "Oral History."

<sup>86</sup> While many of the reports that were in the works in the years leading up to and during the GMP planning process were integral to that process, they were also simultaneously used to draft a Foundation Document.

Kennedy at the opening of the site, and an image of John F. Kennedy as a president. The 24-page document is a monument in its own way, tracing the NPS's interpretive trends and careful stewardship at the site over the 46 years. In its carefully wrought articulation of the site's historical significance, we can see what Nan Rickey, Maurice Kowal, Rolf Diamant, Lee Cook, Christine Arato, Myra Harrison, Jim Roberts, and others had imagined at the site. Most substantially, though, shining through the document is Rose Kennedy: scientific mother, the matriarch of the Kennedy family, park-builder, and political matriarch. Two of the four statements of significance are tied clearly to her biography rather than the president's. The objects featured in the document also seem perfectly pitched to bring Rose Kennedy's audio tour to mind. For instance, there's a close-up of the stove with the Boston baked beans. She remarked, in perhaps her most poignant moment in her tour: "We always ate Boston baked beans on Saturday night. Warmed over for Sunday morning breakfast, they were perfectly delicious. We were very happy here. And although we did not know about the days ahead, we were enthusiastic and optimistic about the future."<sup>87</sup>

A photo of her handwritten notecard is also featured that details John Fitzgerald Kennedy's childhood illnesses: whooping cough, measles, chickenpox, and scarlet fever. Five photos feature JFK as a child or adult, and four feature Rose Kennedy in her splendor. One, from 1969, shows her standing proudly with Robert Luddington next to the bed where she gave birth to a president, emphasizing that she later gave the country a monument to his childhood and her legacy.

---

<sup>87</sup> Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy, "Audiotaped Interview by National Park Service, May 22, 1969. John F. Kennedy National Historic Site Resource Management Records, 1963–2003" (JOFI 1504).





**Figure 16.** Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy and Robert Luddington, near the bed where President Kennedy was born. Cecil W. Stoughton, JOFI Dedication, JOFI 1504, Box 10, Folder 8, NPS, 1969.



**Figure 17.** Myra Harrison with Robert Luddington, 2016. NPS.



**Figure 18.** NPS Staff with Robert Luddington in front of the JFK Birthplace, 2016.  
(*Top*) L-R Jim Roberts, Lee Farrow Cook, Myra Harrison.  
(*Bottom*) L-R Carole Perrault, David Daly, Elena Rippel, Robert Luddington, and Jason Atsales. NPS.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

# Conclusion

Throughout 2017, the John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site was abuzz. Celebrating the 100th anniversary of the President’s birth at the birthplace was no small effort. Site Manager Lee Farrow Cook, Supervisory Ranger Jim Roberts, Lead Ranger Jason Atsales, and a whole slate of trisites-wide help were called in to develop a series of events that culminated in a weekend of highly attended events and a birthday celebration with an open house that shut down Beals Street (Figure 19). The celebration included speakers like former Massachusetts Governor Michael Dukakis and then Massachusetts Congressman from the 4th district, Joseph P. Kennedy, III under a giant tent. The events brought back employees from the 1990s to celebrate and lend a hand in the festivities. More than 800 people went through the house on the day of the celebration. Visitors were met with staff from the trisites and Student Conservation Association interns who presented a living history performance of their research on household staff at the house during the Kennedy residence (Figure 20).<sup>1</sup>

The event resonated throughout Brookline. The Brookline High School published a special edition of its student newspaper, *The Sagamore*, which just covered the events of the JFK 100 celebration, commemorated John F. Kennedy’s connection to Brookline, and reflected on his time in office. The issue even collected accounts from locals who remembered his time in the public eye.<sup>2</sup> Current and former staff marched in Brookline’s annual Memorial Day parade dedicated to John F. Kennedy. The yearly “What JFK Means to Me” essay contest for local elementary students held its awards program over the long birthday weekend and was timed perfectly to coincide with the celebration. Attendees came from all over the world, but Brookline residents were out in numbers. Local officials from the NPS regional office were on hand as well, as was the Boston Postmaster, who, with Congressman Kennedy and NPS Northeast Region Deputy Director Rose Fennell, unveiled a new commemorative stamp dedicated to JFK.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Most of these details are from my own recollection of the event, but for further information, see “John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site Celebrates Semi-Centennial and President Kennedy’s 100th Birthday,” John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site, National Park Service, <https://www.nps.gov/articles/john-fitzgerald-kennedy-national-historic-site-celebrates-semi-centennial-and-president-kennedy-s-100th-birthday.htm>, accessed May 29, 2022.

<sup>2</sup> Susanna Kemp, “Annual Project at Devotion Honors Kennedy,” and Iman Khan, “Remembering Kennedy: Residents’ Stories,” *The Sagamore, JFK Issue*, May 2017.

<sup>3</sup> “John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site Celebrates Semi-Centennial and President Kennedy’s 100th Birthday,” John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site, National Park Service, <https://www.nps.gov/articles/john-fitzgerald-kennedy-national-historic-site-celebrates-semi-centennial-and-president-kennedy-s-100th-birthday.htm>, accessed May 29, 2022.

## Conclusion



**Figure 19.** Jim Roberts, Supervisory Ranger, speaking during the Kennedy Centennial Celebration. Matt Teuten Photography. NPS, 2017.



**Figure 20.** Student Conservation Associate Interns Elena Rippel and Kathleen O'Leary at the Kennedy Centennial Celebration. Matt Teuten Photography. NPS, 2017.

Even a little rain did not dampen the goodwill that the Boston area still holds for President Kennedy, and it was a moment for the site to shine and show off its incredible historical resources and the stories that could be told in one small home. More people than usual came through the house in 2017, in part, because the site experimented with staying open seven days a week during the summer season of the anniversary year. The concerns and challenges the site had faced since it opened in 1969 seemed surmountable during the celebration. The staff was excited that there were plans in the work to renovate the basement to suit both visitors and staff better. There would be a very creative rearrangement of space to allow separate bathrooms for staff, a new gift shop area, a wheelchair lift, an accessible bathroom for the public, and a place to show the new introductory film that the staff had worked hard to produce *The Shaping of a President, The First Home of John F. Kennedy*.

The film was the culmination of the shift in interpretation from focusing solely on the president's childhood and his family's life in the house to presenting Kennedy's legacy in public life. The film used Rose Kennedy's audio tour for the home and strategically used President Kennedy's speeches to present a vision of the man as an inspiring leader during an era of great change in the United States.<sup>4</sup> This was the first real introductory film for visitors that the site had ever produced. In many ways, this work was possible after the nearly two decades of work, funding, and research that happened at the site under Superintendent Myra Harrison's tenure.

Over the more than 50 years the site has been open to the public, staff at the Kennedy birthplace have faced many of the same challenges: parking, space limitations, interpretive concerns, concerns about respectfully representing the history of a powerful political family, and wear and tear on the structure itself. While early advocates for a Kennedy shrine at the birthplace concluded that the site would need, at minimum, parking and grounds that would require the demolition of at least eight neighboring homes, Harrison and other preservation-minded NPS staff today recognize the essential historical value of an intact neighborhood that has helped staff relay the history of this quiet street in Brookline. They've also faced struggles over interpretation, whether to focus on JFK's childhood, the early married lives of his parents, Rose Kennedy's commemorative efforts, or Kennedy's presidential legacy. Each theme has produced extensive research and interpretive work at the site.

Many of the same challenges will perpetually trouble the site, like parking, finding attention and funds in a competitive unit and public historical environment, and grappling with the constantly growing historical study of the Kennedy family. However, the process

---

<sup>4</sup> John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site, "The Shaping of a President, The First Home of John F. Kennedy." Produced by Northern Light Productions (Boston, 2017), film, with the National Park Service, Department of the Interior.

that staff went through to describe “alternatives” during GMP planning offers some concrete, though long-term, solutions. The most compelling of these was to expand the site to include the second home of the Kennedy family in Brookline, just two-and-half blocks away at the corner of Abbottsford and Naples Roads. If the house might come through a donation and if there were advocates in Congress, the space could allow a much further discussion of the Kennedy family and its legacy. There would be room for exhibits covering the full range of interpretive approaches that the NPS has explored at the birthplace. But given the austerity measures in place across the Service, such an opportunity, and the necessary budget increase for staff, could seem far-fetched. Perhaps the Town of Brookline, a powerful new friends group, or other philanthropic organizations will step in.

The 50-year history of the site reveals much about how an extraordinary history can be held in a home that is deceptively ordinary at its surface. Considering the long history of spurious or “recreated” presidential birthplaces, it’s important to remember that Kennedy’s birthplace is quite authentic historically by comparison to other NPS presidential birthplaces. After all Abraham Lincoln’s birthplace is not an example of an authentic birthplace; the “memorial house” at George Washington’s birthplace is completely fabricated; Teddy Roosevelt’s birthplace was reconstructed after it was demolished, Lyndon Baines Johnson’s birthplace is also a complete reconstruction. Even Herbert Hoover’s birthplace has a complicated history of additions and relocations. The Kennedy birthplace has had a few changes, some because of the 1975 fire and efforts to stabilize the house. Thanks to Rose Kennedy, the site also holds a number of furnishings that are tied to the President’s birth and childhood. Adding to interpretive interest at the site, the Kennedy birthplace is also nearly perfect in its representation of Rose Kennedy’s memory of the house. Though staff in the 1960s and 1970s, and perhaps today, were concerned about the occasional anachronistic item in the home, most other presidential birthplaces under the NPS’s care are nowhere near as genuine. By 2017, the site equitably balanced histories about Rose Kennedy, who left her mark by committing her depiction of the president’s idealized childhood to the historical record through her work restoring the house, and those of John F. Kennedy, who left his mark on the nation.

Nan Rickey’s 1969 Interpretive Prospectus really did identify nearly every concern that the site would face over the next 50 years. She speculated that it would take the NPS 100 years to come to terms with the key historical concerns at the site, and she might be right. But with the reflection that staff did in the run-up to the JFK Centennial and with a series of long-sought important studies from the last decade in place, perhaps the site is ready to take on the “Kennedy phenomenon” anew.

## Considerations for Further Study

There are many areas of study that came up in the research for this administrative history that researchers at the Kennedy birthplace, in the region, and in the NPS more broadly may want to focus efforts and research.

### The Political Legacy of the Kennedy Family

Perhaps the most pressing area of suggested further research for the site is the legacy of the Kennedy family as it relates to the Democratic Party in the United States. Given that Patrick Joseph (P. J.) Kennedy was first elected to state office in 1884, the nearly 140 years of family politics are worth investigating by the National Park Service. It is not an uncomplicated history. But the history of political parties is not the same thing as partisan history. John Fitzgerald Kennedy was part of this story, but the legacy of his family's involvement in US politics, and as perhaps the most recognizable political family in the United States, should not go unstudied. Rose Fitzgerald and Joseph Kennedy's roles in founding this powerful political family are perhaps underinterpreted at the site. It is also essential to recognize how party politics have played a role in the site's administration. Maurice Kowal, the first supervising ranger at the house, saw the downside of political affiliation with the Kennedys. Ted Kennedy's politics were physically linked to the site when antibusing arsonists targeted the house in 1975. The Kennedy family has had an important role in the history of the Park Service more generally. Over the years, it's also been clear that NPS staff were to varying degrees concerned about offending the Kennedy family with interpretation or changes at the birthplace. What better way to shake off this fear than by taking on the history of the family's role in party politics head-on?

### The Boston Group

The study of any unit of the National Park Service brings up threads of connection to other sites and significant historical figures. The timing of this study and the administrative histories of Longfellow House-Washington's Headquarters National Historic Site and the Boston National Historical Park has meant that several historians have pieced together parts of the history of work of the Boston Service Group. The group was a powerful administrative unit in the Northeast Regional Office until 1974. The "Boston Group" and Edwin Small had its hands in the beginnings of almost every historical park in the region. It had regular meetings that spanned multiple units, and it ran both from inside Minute Man National Historical Park and outside the park. The participants in this group made up the preeminent NPS expertise in the region. As a unit of the Northeast Regional Office, it is

well worthy of further study. Several administrative histories hold hints of the service group's importance. Still, an account of how such service groups worked within the NPS in the 1960s and 1970s might provide a meaningful picture of the origins of most parks in the region and an understanding of how service groups might function today. Chief among the individuals charged with leading this group was Edwin Small; his hand in developing historic sites in the Northeast is hard to overestimate. Perhaps a study that recounts his long role in the NPS is also overdue and would be exceedingly valuable to those trying to understand the history of many units.

## Urban Redevelopment, Federal Preservation, and Gentrification

While urban redevelopment played a minor role at places like the Kennedy birthplace, even Brookline felt the effects of federal urban renewal. While the Kennedy site's Brookline neighbors were suspicious that historic preservation efforts at the house could be connected to urban renewal and the seizing of properties by the federal government through eminent domain, elsewhere, especially in Boston, we see that there were real overt connections between federal, state, and local urban renewal efforts and the development of historic sites by the National Park Service. A complete study of the NPS's work alongside urban renewal efforts would be an essential addition to our understanding of the service. Done well, it would undoubtedly look at the role that the NPS efforts at preservation and conservation have played in contemporary gentrification. Such a study would significantly aid parks that share this complicated history of development in the 1950s and 1960s, and it would help current park planners think through the long-term historical effects of park development.

## Multisites as Units of Study

John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site is part of a multisite administration grouping that is not uncommon in the NPS. While the Kennedy birthplace is administratively connected to the Longfellow and Olmsted sites, it does not share a holistic approach across sites. While efforts to centralize services to the three distinct units have largely been successful, they have also required changes over time (especially as Superintendent Diamant's time at the site indicates). Other multisites like the John Muir and Eugene O'Neill National Historic Sites, Port Chicago Naval Magazine National Memorial, and the Rosie the Riveter—World War II National Historical Park in California might share similar concerns. While spanning centuries of history, various and unrelated constituents, and sometimes complicated geographies, multisite units meet challenges differently than large single parks.



These administrative structures are rarely looked at as a whole, even though the NPS has several such units. It's possible that such units have much to learn from each other, and administrative histories of their structures and choices might suggest modes of success and avenues for improvement.

## Robert T. Luddington Papers (JOFI 1510)

While this researcher was able to review the Luddington Papers before the publication of this report, the papers had not been archivally processed and arranged. Another look, especially for researchers and staff interested in the furnishing of the house, would be beneficial for further study.

## Email Access for Researchers

Study of the Kennedy site was difficult after the 1990s, when staff began making use of email. There are many reasons why email is a tricky source for historians looking to write histories of the National Park Service. The NPS has changed email service providers over the years, staff have been negligent about printing up important emails, and the “thread” and forwarding functions of email mean that email can be an unstable and changing source of communication for researchers to parse through. Moreover, email can often feel personal to individuals rather than a form of official federal communication. Nonetheless, it is an essential one. Not having access to but a very select email trail has meant that researchers are not able to piece together the daily life of the site, nor even some of the more important events and decisions over the last two decades. Researchers are completely reliant upon oral histories and a variety of other sparse paper trails to reconstruct events. I would recommend two actions on this front: (1) that the NPS puts in place a monthly email review and archiving process and (2) that the NPS (and other federal units) start a service-wide forensic process to reclaim lost communications. If some sort of solution to email functions for researchers and staff is not found, it would behoove those engaged in administrative histories to submit Freedom of Information Act requests about essential administrative topics prior to taking on projects. It's clear that there is a great deal lost to this history and others in missing the last nearly 30 years of electronic communications.



# Bibliography

Abraham Lincoln Birthplace National Historical Park. "Tourism to the Abraham Lincoln National Historical Park Creates over \$19 Million in Economic Benefit." News Release, June 15, 2020, <https://www.nps.gov/abli/learn/news/economic-benefits.htm#:~:text=Hodgenville%2C%20KY%20%E2%80%93%20A%20new%20National,in%20communities%20near%20the%20park>.

Alger, Horatio, John R. Anderson & Co., and Juvenile Collection (Library of Congress). *From Canal Boy to President, or the Boyhood and Manhood of James A. Garfield*. New York: John R. Anderson & Company, no. 17, Murray Street, 1881.

Allen, David Grayson. *The Olmsted National Historic Site and the Growth of Historic Landscape Preservation*. Boston: Northeastern University Press; published by University Press of New England, 2007.

Allen, Scott. "Park Service Chief, in Lowell, Says Cuts Imperil Smaller Sites." *Boston Globe*, June 1, 1995.

Altschuler, Glenn, and Eric Rauchway. "Presidential Biography and the Great Commoner Complex." *American Literary History* 16, no. 2 (2004): 363–74.

"'An Outrage' Viewpoint (Editorial)." *Boston Herald American*, September 9, 1975.

Anderson, Peter. "Bus Foes Shout Down Kennedy at Hub Hearing on Airline Fares." *Boston Globe*, February 15, 1975.

"Annual Report John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site." (1975) National Parks Service General Management. John F. Kennedy National Historic Site Resource Management Records, 1963–2003 (JOFI 1504), Box 8, Folder 16.

Arato, Christine. Oral history conducted by Hilary Iris Lowe, August 10, 2020.

———. "This House Holds Many Memories: Constructions of a Presidential Birthplace at the John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site." In *Born in the U.S.A.: Birth, Commemoration, and American Public Memory*, edited by Seth C. Bruggeman, 49–72. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2012.

"Assaults of Sen. Kennedy." Editorial statement. *Boston Globe*, April 8, 1975.

Associated Press. "Six Charged with Child Pornography: Boston Man Arrested." *Boston Globe*, March 26, 1994.

"At JFK Birthplace—Discord; 3-Way Struggle in Brookline on Seizure for Kennedy Shrine." *Boston Globe*, December 14, 1963, 7.

"At Work." *The Boston Herald, Sunday Magazine*, August 31, 1986.

## Bibliography

- Baker, Paula. "The Domestication of Politics: Women and American Political Society, 1780–1920." *American Historical Review* 84, no. 2 (1984): 620–47.
- Banks, Alan. Oral history conducted by Elena Rippel, July 7, 2016.
- Biliczky, Carol. "Hiram Purchases Historical House Once Owned by President Garfield." *Akron Beacon Journal*, November 12, 2018.
- "Bill Asks State Take Birthplace." *Brookline Chronicle-Citizen*, December 5, 1963.
- Black, Chris. "North End Tour Is Path to Past for Fitzgeralds and Kennedys." *Boston Globe*, June 30, 1980.
- Boatwright, Ken. "Roar Vows to Continue Confronting Se. Kennedy." *Boston Globe*, April 8, 1975.
- Boeschstein, Warren. "Design of Socially Mixed Housing." *Journal of the American Planning Association* 3, no. 5 (1971): 311–18.
- "Boston: Thousands at Services, All Business Is Stilled." *Boston Globe*, November 25, 1963, 1, 8.
- Braude, Dick. "Tourism Down at JFK Birthplace." *Boston Globe (Associated Press)*, November 23, 1980.
- Breslin, Jimmy. "JFK Books—A Major Industry: Market Seems Insatiable." *Boston Globe*, July 8, 1965.
- Brockell, Gillian. "Virginia Dare's Unwanted Legacy: A White Nationalist-Friendly Website Called VDare." *Washington Post*, August 22, 2018.
- "Brookline Can't Paint Birthplace of Kennedy." *Boston Globe*, February 28, 1961.
- "Brookline Landmark Threatened." *Newsletter of the Brookline GreenSpace Alliance*, 2002.
- "Brookline Picks Group to Study Kennedy Shrine." *Boston Globe*, December 25, 1963.
- "Brookline Pupils Urge Kennedy Birthplace Plaque." *Boston Globe*, November 18, 1962.
- "Brookline to Get Big Pay Hike." *Boston Globe*, March 13, 1963.
- "Brookline Was His Birthplace: Whole Boston Area His Home." *Boston Globe*, November 23, 1963.
- Brown, Patricia Leigh. "Reliving Myth of the Presidential Log Cabin." *New York Times*, May 25, 1997.
- Bruggeman, Seth C. "George Washington Birthplace National Monument Administrative History," edited by National Park Service. Washington, DC, 2006.

## Bibliography

- . “Locating the Birthplace in American Memory.” In *Born in the U.S.A.: Birth, Commemoration, and American Public Memory*, 1–25. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2012.
- . *Lost on the Freedom Trail: The National Park Service and Urban Renewal in Postwar Boston*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2022.
- Burns, James MacGregor. *John Kennedy: A Political Profile*. 1st ed. New York: Harcourt, 1960.
- “Buys McKinley Birthplace; Ohio Woman Lawyer Will Make House Long Used by Tramps, A Museum,” *Washington Post*, November 29, 1909.
- Carroll, Kevin. “1984 Annual Report: John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site.” John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site, Resource Management Records.
- Carroll, Orville. Weekly Field Report, April 17, 1970, MIMA Archives Orville Carroll Research Records, MIMA 63772, Box 2, Folder 22.
- . Weekly Field Report, September 11, 1970. MIMA Archives Orville Carroll Research Records, MIMA 63772, Box 2, Folder 22.
- . Weekly Field Report, September 23, 1970. MIMA Archives Orville Carroll Research Records, MIMA 63772, Box 2, Folder 22.
- Cash, William. “JFK Birthplace to Reopen in October.” *Boston Globe*, August 20, 1976.
- Catalano, Kathleen. “John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site Collections Preservation Guide.” (1985), Site Manager Lee Farrow Cook Documents, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.
- Cheney, Jim. “Presidential History in Pa.: Touring James Buchanan’s Home and Birthplace.” *PennLive*, November 2016.
- Chilcoat, Richard, “Completion Report: Structural Stabilization Kennedy House,” April 1992, John F. Kennedy National Historic Site Resource Management Records, 1963–2003 (JOFI 1504), Box 2, Folder 24.
- “Class of 2014.” *Arrowhead: The Newsletter of the Employees & Alumni Association of the National Park Service* 21, no. 4 (Fall 2014).
- Clines, Francis X. “Boston Beyond the Kennedys: Listening to the Echoes of a Dynasty in Tape Recordings and Student Rallies.” *New York Times*, July 31, 2004.
- Coffin, Charles Carleton. *The Life of James A. Garfield*. Boston: J. H. Earle, 1880.
- “Cohen Triumphs, GOP Claims Foul.” *Boston Globe*, April 15, 1964, 1, 3.
- Collins, Michael. “James K. Polk’s Tennessee House Could Become Park of the National Park Service.” *The Tennessean*, April 17, 2018.

## Bibliography

- “Congress Approves \$1.6 Million for Longfellow National Historic Site.” *Longfellow House Bulletin* 2, no. 2, December 1998: 1–8.
- Cook, Lee Farrow. Unprocessed files, printed email, found in Supervisory Ranger’s Office, John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site, Brookline, Massachusetts, March 27, 1999.
- . Email to Gerald Kaplan, November 21, 1994. John F. Kennedy National Historic Site Resource Management Records, 1963–2003 (JOFI 1504), Box 1, Folder 5.
- . “Oral History.” By Elena Rippel, April 26 and May 12, 2017.
- Crawford, Diana. “‘The Shrine’ Is Hardly Mecca to Everyone on Beals Street.” *Boston Globe*, May 4, 1970, 1, 16.
- “Daily Log.” John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site Unprocessed Files, Longfellow House-Washington’s Headquarters National Historic Site Archives.
- “Daniel Tyler Jr., 68, Ex-State GOP Head.” *Boston Globe*, May 22, 1967.
- David, Ann. “Burying the Hatchet.” *American Educational History Journal* 43, no. 1/2, March 2016: 149–65.
- DeSalvo, Lora. “Progress Report Worksheet for Lora DeSalvo, 2/16/94–2/20/94.” Unprocessed John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site Files, Longfellow House George Washington’s Headquarters National Historic Site, Archives, 1994.
- Diamant, Rolf. “Oral History.” By Hilary Iris Lowe, November 11, 2019.
- . “Oral History.” By Joan Zenzen, June 2, 2014.
- Dilsaver, Lary M. *America’s National Park System: The Critical Documents*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016.
- . *America’s National Park System: The Critical Documents*. Edited by Lary M. Dilsaver. Lanham, MD: Rowan & Littlefield Publishers, 1994.
- “Director Pays First Visit to John F. Kennedy National Historic Site.” *US Fed News Service*, April 25, 2006.
- Doherty, Brian, Acting Site Supervisor. “Semi-Annual Report, January-September 1985.” John F. Kennedy National Historic Site Resource Management Records, 1963–2003 (JOFI 1504), Box 6, Folder 16.
- Driscoll Jr., Edgar J. “Theresa Morse, Community Leader on Housing, Social Services.” *Boston Globe*, November 28, 1983.
- “Eastern National Annual Report, November 1993–October 1994,” Site Manager Lee Farrow Cook Documents, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.
- Engstrom, John. “Remembering JFK.” *Boston Globe*, January 20, 1991.

## Bibliography

- “Executive Order 10959 Authorizing the Appointment of Mr. Maurice L. Kowal to a Competitive Position without Regard to the Civil Service Rules and Regulations,” edited by Federal Register: 26 FR 7753, August 19, 1961.
- Farkas, Karen. “President James A. Garfield’s Former Home to Be Studied by Archeologists.” *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, October 11, 2017.
- Federal Bureau of Investigation. *Kennedy Fire (9/8/1975) Investigation Report*. In John F. Kennedy National Historic Site Resource Management Records, 1963–2003 (JOFI 1504), Box 4, Folder 14.
- Fox, Wendy. “For Handicapped, Advice and Self-Help: 5-Year-Olds Assess JFK’s Birthplace.” *Boston Globe*, June 25, 1982.
- “From Schools to Silver Dollars. . . in Memory.” *Boston Globe*, November 29, 1963.
- “Garfield Monument.” In *Encyclopedia of Cleveland History*. Cleveland: Case Western University, 2019.
- Garry, Candace. “Year of the Visitor: A Lot of Little Extras.” *Courier: The National Park Service Newsletter* 2, no. 12, October 1979: 2.
- Goodwin, Doris Kearns. *The Fitzgeralds and the Kennedys*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987.
- Group Scoop* 1, no. 17, February 2, 1971.
- “Handwritten Note.” John F. Kennedy National Historic Site Resource Management Records, 1963–2003 (JOFI 1504), Box 6, Folder 4, 1981.
- Hardy, Dee. “Decorator’s Magic Worked for Rose Kennedy and Dee.” Clippings file, circa 1969, John F. Kennedy National Historic Site Resource Management Records, 1963–2003 (JOFI 1504).
- Harmon, Lawrence. “Brookline Movie House Required Skillful Rescue.” *Boston Globe*, November 8, 2014.
- Harrison, Myra. Email March 21, 1999. Unprocessed files, found in Supervisory Ranger’s Office, John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site, Brookline, Massachusetts.
- . “Oral History.” By Hilary Iris Lowe, November 20, 2019.
- Hartzog, George. “Notes from Telephone Interview with Charlene K. Roise and Bruce C. Fernald, January 21.” (1981), Box 1, MIMA Archives, 1989 Administrative History Records, MIMA 76679, Minute Man National Historical Park Archives, 1981.
- Hassenfeld, Merrill to Robert F. Kennedy. September 4, 1966.
- Hays, Roy. “Is the Lincoln Birthplace Authentic?” *Abraham Lincoln Quarterly* 5, no. 3 (1948): 127–63.

## Bibliography

- “Hearing Before the Subcommittee on Parks and Recreation of the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, United States Senate, Nineteenth Congress, First Sessions on S. 1161, a Bill to Establish the John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, March 20, 1967.” US Government Printing Office, 1967.
- Hernandez, Efrain. “Mass. Parks in Line for \$30M in Federal Funds.” *Boston Globe*, October 29, 1990.
- “History of the Site.” Circa 1982, John F. Kennedy National Historic Site Resource Management Records, 1963–2003 (JOFI 1504), Box 6, Folder 13.
- Hodson, Janice. “Historic Furnishing Assessment: John F. Kennedy National Historic Site.” Northeast Museum Services Center, National Park Service, 2005.
- Ho, Manli. “JFK Birthplace Gets a Facelift Following Fire.” *Boston Globe*, October 15, 1975.
- Hogan, Michael J. *The Afterlife of John Fitzgerald Kennedy: A Biography*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017.
- “How to Save Birthplace? JFK Shrine a Worry.” *Boston Globe*, July 8, 1964.
- Hudson, Richard. “Boston Area Bombing, Threats Will Continue, FBI Says.” *Boston Sunday Globe*, July 4, 1976.
- “Hundreds Sign Book at Kennedy Library.” *Telegram & Gazette*, May 24, 1994.
- “Hundreds Watch in Dark.” *Boston Globe*, November 23, 1963, 3.
- Huxtable, Ada Louise. “The Museum Upstages the Library.” *New York Times*, October 28, 1979.
- “In Boston—People Wept: Shock Is Greatest in Kennedy Home City.” *Boston Globe*, November 23, 1963.
- Iudica, Doreen E. “Budget Stalemate Shuts Down Some Mass. Historical Sites.” *Boston Globe*, October 8, 1990.
- “J.F.K.—The Childhood Years, a Memoir for Television by His Mother.” In *Who, What, When, Where, Why*, interview of Rose Kennedy by Harry Reasoner, CBS News Special, October 31, 1967.
- “James Lowell, 84; Was Headmaster at Brookline School, Taught English.” *Boston Globe*, June 5, 1984.
- Jett, Cathy. “New Washington House Replica at Ferry Farm Opens Its Doors to Visitors.” *The Free Lance Star*, October 7, 2017.
- “JFK Birthplace Attracts Host of Visitors.” *Worcester Telegram*, July 27, 1969.
- “JFK Birthplace to Be Restored.” *Brookline Tab*, January 7, 1992.



## Bibliography

- “JFK Birthplace to Get Replacement Ice Chest.” *Bosting Evening Globe*, November 13, 1975.
- “JFK House.” *Boston Globe*, December 10, 1975.
- “JFK Site Firebombing Shocks Neighbors.” *Boston Herald American*, September 9, 1975.
- “JFK Site to Shut Monday.” *Boston Globe*, November 17, 1968.
- John F. Kennedy Birthplace National Historic Site (Proposed) Personal Services and Supporting Costs. March 1967. Copy in JOFI Background Book.
- John F. Kennedy National Historic Site. “Challenge Goals and Annual Work Plan, FY 94, 1–3 Year Goals and Objectives,” Unprocessed files, found in Supervisory Ranger’s Office, John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site, Brookline, Massachusetts., n.d. (circa 1993).
- John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site. “A House of a Different Color,” National Park Service, <https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/a-house-of-a-different-color.htm>, accessed May 29, 2022.
- . “John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site Celebrates Semi-Centennial and President Kennedy’s 100th Birthday,” <https://www.nps.gov/articles/john-fitzgerald-kennedy-national-historic-site-celebrates-semi-centennial-and-president-kennedy-s-100th-birthday.htm>, accessed May 29, 2022.
- . *The Shaping of a President, The First Home of John F. Kennedy*. Produced by Northern Light Productions (Boston Massachusetts, 2017), film, with the National Park Service, Department of the Interior.
- . “Work Session, Memorial Period ‘The Issues,’” unprocessed files, found in Supervisory Ranger’s Office, John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site, Brookline, Massachusetts, n.d.
- Jones, Arthur. “Grand Jury to Call Witnesses on Phase 2 Disruptions Probe.” *Boston Globe*, October 1, 1975.
- Jones, Victor O. “Memorials.” *Boston Globe*, December 25, 1963.
- Kasperowicz, Pete. “George W. Bush’s Childhood Home Could Soon Be Part of the National Park System.” *Washington Examiner*, December 10, 2018.
- Kayakachoian, Gary. “JFK Birthplace Returns to Kin.” *Boston Globe*, November 1, 1966.
- . “JFK Home to Be Open for the Public.” *Boston Globe*, May 18, 1969.
- . “Mrs. Kennedy Ends Confusion over President’s Birthplace.” *Boston Globe*, March 25, 1962.
- Kemp, Susanna. “Annual Project at Devotion Honors Kennedy,” *The Sagamore*, JFK Issue, May 2017.

## Bibliography

- “Kennedy Birthplace: A National Shrine?” *Boston Globe*, November 5, 1963.
- Kennedy, Edward M. to Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy, Note, “EMK to JBK, May 1966,”  
Written by hand atop the typed page. May 1966. Robert Luddington (1925–) Papers,  
1915–2006, JOFI 1510.
- Kennedy, Rose Fitzgerald. Rose Kennedy to Regional Director, November 14, 1977. John F.  
Kennedy National Historic Site Resource Management Records, 1963–2003 (JOFI  
1504), Box 6, Folder 19.
- Kennedy, Rose Fitzgerald. Audiotaped Interview by National Park Service, May 22, 1969.  
John F. Kennedy National Historic Site Resource Management Records, 1963–2003  
(JOFI 1504).
- Kennedy, Rose to Edward Kennedy. November 25, 1964. Robert Luddington (1925–)  
Papers, 1915–2006, JOFI 1510.
- . *Times to Remember*. 1st ed. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1974.
- “Kennedy Tour Highlights Boston as ‘The Town That Jack Built.’” *The Boston Irish  
Reporter*, June 1, 1995.
- Kenney, Robert. “Update: Restoration of JFK Birthplace Going Well.” *Boston Globe*,  
January 18, 1976.
- Kerr, Ernest A. “Many Nations Rushing JFK Commemorative.” *Boston Globe*, December 8,  
1963.
- Kevin Carroll, Chief Interpreter. “Annual Statement for Interpretation and Visitor Services,  
John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site. 1980.” John F. Kennedy National  
Historic Site Resource Management Records, 1963–2003 (JOFI 1504), Box 6, Folder 5,  
1981.
- . “Resource Management Plan, John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site,  
1981.” John F. Kennedy National Historic Site Resource Management Records,  
1963–2003 (JOFI 1504), Box 6, Folder 11, 1981.
- Khan, Iman. “Remembering Kennedy: Residents’ Stories,” *The Sagamore*, JFK Issue, May  
2017.
- Kowal, Maurice. Maurice Kowal to Mrs. Lincoln, February 7, 1962, Papers of John F.  
Kennedy. Presidential Papers. President’s Office Files, 196: KA-KEN, JFK Library.
- Kramer, Jean. *Brookline, Massachusetts: A Pictorial History*. Boston: Historical Publishing  
Company, 1989.
- Lawrence, Janelle. “Brookline: Flier Irks Taxation Coalition.” *Boston Globe*, February 18,  
1994.

## Bibliography

- Layton, Timothy, Adrine Arakelian, and Maggie Coffin Brown. "Cultural Landscape Report for John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site," edited by National Park Service. Boston: Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation, 2012.
- LeMessurier, Kirk W. "Birthplace Calmer, but Not Quiet, after Tragedy." *Brookline Tab*, September 9, 1999.
- "Longfellow House Re-Opens Its Doors after Three-Year Rehabilitation." *Longfellow House Bulletin* 6, no. 1, June 2002: 1–8.
- Subcommittee on Parks and Recreation of the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, United States Senate, 92nd Congress, Second Session, S. 3129. *Longfellow National Historic Site, Hearing before the Subcommittee on Parks and Recreation of the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, United States Senate, 92nd Congress, Second Session, S. 3129*, February 15, 1972.
- Luddington, Robert. Oral history conducted by Carole Perrault, Elena Rippel, and David Daly, July 26, 2016.
- . Luddington to Gargan. December 30, 1966. Robert Luddington (1925–) Papers, 1915–2006, JOFI 1510.
- Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park. "Reconstructed Birthplace, Plan Your Visit." National Park Service.
- Mackintosh, Barry. "The Historic Sites Survey and National Historic Landmarks Program: A History," edited by National Park Service. Washington, DC: History Division, 1985.
- . *The National Parks: Shaping the System*. Washington, DC: National Park Service, 1991.
- Macleod, David I. *The Age of the Child: Children in America, 1890–1920*. Twayne's History of American Childhood Series. New York: Twayne, 1998.
- Mahoney, John. "History Closes in on Lincoln Families: Park Residents Resist Eviction." *Boston Globe*, July 10, 1972.
- Martin, Richard, and Robert Rosenthal. "Kennedy Jostled, Rushed by Crowd of Busing Foes in Quincy." *Boston Globe*, April 7, 1975.
- Massachusetts House of Representatives. *Journal of the House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts*. Boston: Wright & Potter Printing Co., 1963.
- Massachusetts House of Representatives. *Journal of the House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts*. Boston: Wright & Potter Printing Co., 1964.
- "McKinley Birthplace Torn Down." *Washington Post*, May 22, 1894, 1.
- "McKinley's Birthplace: Old Homestead at Niles, Ohio, Now Site of Savings Bank." *Rosebud County News*, June 8, 1905.

## Bibliography

- Meier, Mary. "Kennedy Birthplace Open Today." *Boston Globe*, December 18, 1976.
- Memo: To General Superintendent, Boston Group, from Chief, Office of Programing and Budget, Northeast Region, Martin B. Christenson, January 15, 1974. John F. Kennedy National Historic Site Resource Management Records, 1963–2003 (JOFI 1504), Box 2, Folder 5.
- Memo: To NPS from Richard Bates, Special Agent in Charge, FBI, October 3, 1975, John F. Kennedy National Historic Site Resource Management Records, 1963–2003 (JOFI 1504), Folder 14, Box 4.
- Memo: Comprehensive Interpretive Planning Process at Kennedy NHS, Information Package to Superintendent, OLMS/LONG/JOFI, from Lead Park Ranger, JOFI (James Phelps). January 20, 1994. Found in Site Manager Lee Farrow Cook Documents, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.
- Memo: Development Package Proposal No. 101, Historic Structure Report, John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site, to Director of the Northeast Region, from General Superintendent, Boston Group, Herbert Olsen, January 29, 1973. John F. Kennedy National Historic Site Resource Management Records, 1963–2003 (JOFI 1504), Box 2, Folder 5.
- Memo: Trip Report: John Fitzgerald Kennedy Birthplace, to North Atlantic Regional Office to Chief, Historic Preservation, from Associate Regional Director P&RP, April 2, 1984. John F. Kennedy National Historic Site Resource Management Records, 1963–2003 (JOFI 1504), Box 8, Folder 19.
- Memo: Fire at John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site, to Associate Regional Director, Park System Management, from Regional Architect to Associate Regional Director, Park System Management, September 10, 1975. John F. Kennedy National Historic Site Resource Management Records, 1963–2003 (JOFI 1504), Box 4, Folder 14.
- Memo: FY92 Operating Shortfall for John F. Kennedy NHD, to Regional Director, North Atlantic Region, from Superintendent Rolf Diamant, May 13, 1991. John F. Kennedy National Historic Site Resource Management Records, 1963–2003 (JOFI 1504), Box 2, Folder 11.
- Memo: Historic Structure Report, to Director Northeast Regional Office, through General Superintendent from Maurice Kowal, January 24, 1973. John F. Kennedy National Historic Site Resource Management Records, 1963–2003 (JOFI 1504), Box 2, Folder 5.
- Memo: Hours of Visitation, to Acting Superintendent from Supervisory Park Ranger John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site, Longfellow National Historic Site. April 1, 1981. John F. Kennedy National Historic Site Resource Management Records, 1963–2003 (JOFI 1504), Box 3, Folder 3.
- Memo: Interpretive Prospectus, John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site, July 1, 1969, to Regional Director, from Acting Chief, Division of Planning and Interpretive

## Bibliography

- Services (Alan E. Kent), John F. Kennedy National Historic Site Resource Management Records, 1963–2003 (JOFI 1504), Box 3, Folder 11.
- Memo: John F. Kennedy Birthplace, to Deputy Director Bill Harthon from Assistant Chief, Office of Information, Edwin N. Winge. September 19, 1967. John F. Kennedy National Historic Site Resource Management Records, 1963–2003 (JOFI 1504), Box 3, Folder 3.
- Memo: John Fitzgerald Kennedy Birthplace National Historic Site Proposal—Comments on the Report Prepared in March 1967, to Regional Director from Project Keyman Edwin Small, April 12, 1967. Memos 1967.
- Memo: Law Enforcement Funding Report, to Associate Director, Administration, WASO, from Associate Regional Director (Denis P. Gavin), October 10, 1975, John F. Kennedy National Historic Site Resource Management Records, 1963–2003 (JOFI 1504), Box 8, Folder 8.
- Memo: Memorialization, to Superintendent from Site Supervisor (Kevin Carroll), May 10, 1984. John F. Kennedy National Historic Site Resource Management Records, 1963–2003 (JOFI 1504), Box 6, Folder 14.
- Memo: Project Keyman Monthly Report, July 1967, for John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site, to Regional Director, from Edwin Small, Project Keyman, August 3, 1967. Memos 1967.
- Memo: Report on Craigie-Longfellow House to Director, from Chief Historian. March 19, 1953. “Transition Files” LONG Unprocessed Boxes and Files, Longfellow House-Washington’s Headquarters National Historic Site, Box 53, Folder 3.
- Memo: Resources Basic Inventory (RBI), to Regional Director, from Superintendent, Russell J. Berry Jr., November 30, 1973. John F. Kennedy National Historic Site Resource Management Records, 1963–2003 (JOFI 1504), Box 2, Folder 5.
- Memo: Rest Room Project—John F. Kennedy National Historic Site: To Lemuel Garrison, Benjamin Zerbey, February 25, 1970. John F. Kennedy National Historic Site Resource Management Records, 1963–2003 (JOFI 1504), Box 2, Folder 6.
- Memo: Superintendent’s Annual Report, to Regional Director, from Superintendent, Russell W. Berry Jr., February 4, 1974. John F. Kennedy National Historic Site Resource Management Records, 1963–2003 (JOFI 1504), Box 5, Folder 6.
- Memo: Third Floor Loading Limits, JOFI NHS, to Chief of Maintenance, from Historical Architect, Building Conservation Branch, Cultural Resources Center (David Bitterman), November 22, 1991. John F. Kennedy National Historic Site Resource Management Records, 1963–2003 (JOFI 1504), Box 9, Folder 24.
- Memo: Visit to J. F. Kennedy Birthplace, to Regional Director, from George Palmer, Associate Regional Director, June 5, 1967. Memos 1967.

## Bibliography

- Miller, Laura. *"Things Kept and Cherished": A History of Adams National Historical Park*. Washington, DC: National Park Service, US Department of the Interior, 2020.
- Milley, Kathleen Catalano. "Oral History." Interview with Sara Zarrelli, May 28, 2020.
- Moreland Hills Historical Society. "About Us." <https://mhhsOhio.org/about-us>.
- "Mr. Bryan Speaks at Canton: Says One Term Is Enough for a President—Also Speaks at Mr. McKinley's Birthplace." *New York Times*, October 16, 1900.
- "Mrs. Joseph Kennedy in Tape Interview at Brookline Home." *Boston Globe*, October 29, 1967.
- Murphy, Jerimiah. "The Day the Crowd Booed a Kennedy in Boston." *Boston Globe*, September 10, 1974.
- Murphy, Shelley. "Bulger Linked to '70s Antibusing Attacks." *Boston Globe*, April 23, 2001.
- NA, Photo Caption in "Happenings" *Boston Globe*, March 6, 1986.
- National Park Service. "By the Numbers." National Park Service, Department of the Interior, <https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/by-the-numbers.htm>.
- . "Frederick Douglass National Historic Site Cultural Landscapes Inventory," edited by National Park Service. Washington, DC, 2013.
- . "Historic Structures Report: Theodore Roosevelt Birthplace National Historic Site," edited by National Park Service. Washington, DC, 2008.
- . "'Park Superintendents,' Historic Listing of National Park Service Officials." [https://www.nps.gov/parkhistory/online\\_books/tolson/histlist.htm](https://www.nps.gov/parkhistory/online_books/tolson/histlist.htm).
- . "Personal Resume, Maurice L. Kowal, Management Assistant, John F. Kennedy National Historic Site." News Release, 1969.
- . *The National Park Service Plan, Part I*. Washington, DC: Department of the Interior, 1972.
- . "The Presidents: From the Inauguration of George Washington to the Inauguration of Gerald R. Ford: Historic Places Commemorating the Chief Executives of the United States," edited by National Park Service. Washington, DC, 1976.
- Negri, Gloria. "Kennedy Tribute by N.C. Negroes: Sing at Brookline Birthplace." *Boston Globe*, December 25, 1963.
- "Neighbors Kick Up Fuss: They Don't Want a Shrine Made of Kennedy Home." *Boston Globe*, December 15, 1961.
- "New England Heritage: A Picture Story of the Democratic Presidential Nominee from Birth through School Years. . . ." *Boston Globe*, July 15, 1960.

## Bibliography

- Newman, Jason. "Site Renovation Updates." John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site. <https://www.nps.gov/jofi/planyourvisit/site-renovation-updates.htm> Accessed May 29, 2022.
- Niles Historical Society. "The Story of Lot #20, President William McKinley's Birthplace." Niles Historical Society, <http://www.nileshistoricalsociety.org/lot20.htm>.
- "96 Historic Sites Approved by US: Kennedy Birthplace Among Places." *New York Times*, July 19, 1964.
- "No Reason for Lack of 1-Cent Pieces." *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, November 4, 1917.
- O'Connor, Thomas H. *Building a New Boston: Politics and Urban Renewal, 1950–1970*. Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1993.
- Obleschuk, Leslie. "Annual Statement for Interpretation and Visitor Services, FY 1987." 1986, John F. Kennedy National Historic Site Resource Management Records, 1963–2003 (JOFI 1504), Box 6, Folder 17, 1986.
- . Conversation with Author, December 14, 2016.
- Olsen, Herbert. "Notes from Telephone Interview with Charlene K. Roise and Bruce C. Fernald, January 15." (1981) Box 1, MIMA Archives, 1989 Administrative History Records, MIMA 76679.
- Orville Carroll. Interview with Joan Zenzen. October 22, 2004.
- "Other Patriots Weekend Re-Enactments and Parades." *Boston Globe*, April 16, 1981.
- "Painters Swarm in Brookline: Free Facial for Kennedy House." *Boston Globe*, September 12, 1961.
- "Park Service Objects to Carter Historic Site." *New York Times*, June 23, 1985.
- Peskin, Alan. "From Log Cabin to Oblivion." *American History Illustrated* 11, no. 19 (1967): 25–34.
- Pitcaithley, Dwight. "Abraham Lincoln's Birthplace Cabin: The Making of an American Icon." In *Myth, Memory, and the Making of the American Landscape*, edited by Paul A. Shackel, 240–54. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001.
- "Political Notes." *Daily Inter Ocean*, September 11, 1896.
- Price, Carla. "Oral History." Interview with Kate Hanson Plass, Elena Rippel, and Rufai Shardow, April 22, 2016.
- "Primary Clinched by Cohen, Koplów." *Boston Globe*, March 25, 1964.
- Reber, Paul, and Laura Lawfer Orr. "Stratford Hall: A Memorial to Robert E. Lee?" In *Born the U.S.A.: Birth, Commemoration, and American Public Memory*, edited by Seth C. Bruggeman, 113–29. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2012.

## Bibliography

- “Replica of McKinley Childhood Home Dedicated.” *Associated Press State & Local Wire*, May 5, 2003.
- “Response to Fire Becomes Busing Message: Pupil Safety Comes First, Kennedy Says.” *Boston Globe*, December 10, 1975.
- Rickey, Nan. “Memo to Alan Kent, Planning and Interpretive Services,” Mini Folder, John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site, January 9, 1968, John F. Kennedy National Historic Site Resource Management Records, 1963–2003 (JOFI 1504), Box 4, Folder 2.
- Roberts, James. “Oral History,” by Elena Rippel, November 16, 2016. Unprocessed files, printed letter, found in Supervisory Ranger’s Office, John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site, Brookline, Massachusetts John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site, Brookline, Massachusetts.
- . Jim Roberts to Richard and Doris Goodwin, December 15, 2016.
- Roise, Charlene. “Notes from Telephone Interview with Maurice Kowal.” (1981) Box 1, MIMA Archives, 1989 Administrative History Records, MIMA 76679.
- Roise, Charlene, and Bruce Fernald. “Notes from Telephone Interview with Herbert Olsen.” (1981) Box 1, MIMA Archives, 1989 Administrative History Records, MIMA 76679.
- Roise, Charlene, Edward W. Gordon, and Bruce C. Fernald. “Minute Man National Historical Park: An Administrative History (Report Draft).” Box 1, MIMA Archives, 1989 Administrative History Records, MIMA 76679.
- Rymsza-Pawlowska, M. J. *History Comes Alive: Public History and Popular Culture in the 1970s*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017.
- Sabin, Douglas. Douglas Sabin to Mrs. J. Kostenly, September 23, 1974, John F. Kennedy National Historic Site Resource Management Records, 1963–2003 (JOFI 1504), Box 4, Folder 18.
- Sabulis, Thomas. “Revere Rides Again.” *Boston Globe*, April 12, 1979.
- Sales, Bob. “Sen. Kennedy Jeered from Stage at Rally: Antibusing Crowd Throws Tomatoes, Eggs.” *Boston Globe*, September 10, 1974.
- Scharnhorst, Gary, and Jack Bales. *The Lost Life of Horatio Alger, Jr.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985.
- “Selectmen Approve Article on JFK Birthplace.” *Brookline Chronicle-Citizen*, December 12 1963.
- “Serious Vandalism at Historic Sites.” *Brookline Chronicle*, February 4, 1971.
- Shapiro, Leo. “Synagogues, Hebrew Schools Pay Tearful Tribute.” *Boston Globe*, November 25, 1963.



## Bibliography

- Shea, Jim. "Oral History." Interview with Elena Rippel, November 17, 2016.
- Shepard, Scott. "Presidential Memorial Restriction Considered." *Washington Post*, June 23, 1985.
- Site, John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic. "Revisiting-and Re-Visioning-John Fitzgerald Kennedy NHS: A Scholars' Roundtable Co-Sponsored by the National Park Service and the Organization for American Historians, July 2006." John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site, Lee Farrow Cook files, Unprocessed, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site, Brookline, Massachusetts.
- Slade, Rachel. "A Colorful Past: Coincidences Abound When a Designer Begins Renovating Her Stately Brookline Manse." *Boston Magazine*, Fall 2013.
- Sloat, Bill. "Long Seen as Grant's Birthplace, Home May Be a Historical Hoax." *Austin American Statesman*, February 12, 2000.
- Small, Edwin. "Oral History," by Herbert Evison, October 19, 1971.
- Sprinkle, John H. *Crafting Preservation Criteria: The National Register of Historic Places and American Historic Preservation*. New York: Routledge, 2014.
- . "'Of Exceptional Importance': The Origins of the 'Fifty-Year Rule' in Historic Preservation." *The Public Historian* 29, no. 2 (Spring 2007): 81–103.
- "Statement for Interpretation." John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site (1990), Lee Farrow Cook files, unprocessed, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site, Brookline, Massachusetts.
- Stavrianos, Cynthia. *The Political Uses of Motherhood in America*. Routledge Series on Identity Politics. New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2015.
- Stening, Tanner. "Revisiting the History of Coolidge Corner Theater." *Brookline Hub*, February 17, 2016.
- Stone-Gordon, Tammy. *The Spirit of 1976: Commerce, Community, and the Politics of Commemoration*. Public History in Historical Perspective. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2013.
- "Summary Sheet." John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site, Massachusetts, 90th Congress, 1967 Copy in JOFI Background Book.
- Superintendent Minute Man to Director Northeast Region, Memo: National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings—Information on the John Fitzgerald Kennedy Birthplace, Brookline, Massachusetts. March 24, 1964.
- Swartz, Mark. "Oral History." Interview with Elena Rippel, November 29, 2016.
- "Tablet Finally Marks Kennedy Birthplace." *Boston Globe*, September 12, 1962.

## Bibliography

- Taylor, John M. "Post-Assassination Gloom in the Gilded Age." *Manuscripts* 53, no. 3 (2001): 219–24.
- Tebbel, John William. *From Rags to Riches; Horatio Alger Jr. and the American Dream*. New York: Macmillan, 1963.
- "The Work Begun: The Republican Campaign in Ohio Finally Opened." *Evening Bulletin*, August 24, 1891.
- "To Perpetuate Memory of a President." *Sea Coast Echo*, November 23, 1912.
- Toogood, Anna Coxe. Anna Coxe Toogood to Robert Luddington, May 7, 1971, John F. Kennedy National Historic Site Resource Management Records, 1963–2003 (JOFI 1504), Box 8, Folder 14.
- . "John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site, Massachusetts, Historic Furnishings Plan," edited by Eastern Service Center Office of History and Historic Architecture, National Park Service. Washington, DC, 1971.
- . "Oral History." Interview with Hilary Iris Lowe, May 3, 2017.
- "Transcript: A Conversation with World War IT PT Boat Veterans." [https://www.jfklibrary.org/sites/default/files/2018-04/2005\\_06\\_27\\_PT\\_Boat\\_Veterans.pdf](https://www.jfklibrary.org/sites/default/files/2018-04/2005_06_27_PT_Boat_Veterans.pdf).
- US Congress, House, Committee on Appropriations. "Department of the Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill, 1992, 102th Cong., 1991, H. Rep. 102–116," 1991.
- Udall, Stewart. "Statement of Witness for the Department of the Interior before the Subcommittee on National Parks and Recreation, House Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, on H.R. 6424, a Bill to Establish the John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts," March 15, 1967.
- . Stewart Udall to Henry M. Jackson. March 17, 1967, March 17, 1967, copy in JOFI Background Book.
- "Uncertain on Kennedy Birthplace." *Boston Globe*, March 11, 1962.
- Von Hoffman, Alexander. *John F. Kennedy's Birthplace: A Presidential Home in History and Memory (a Historic Resource Study)*. John F. Kennedy National Historic Site, Brookline, Massachusetts: National Park Service, Department of the Interior, 2004.
- Vrabel, Jim. *A People's History of the New Boston*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2014.
- Ward, Robert. "State Sites Get Tighter Security." *Boston Globe*, June 4, 1976.
- Weinbaum, Paul. Unprocessed files, printed email, found in Supervisory Ranger's Office, John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site, Brookline, Massachusetts. June 26, 1998.

## Bibliography

- West, Patricia. *Domesticating History: The Political Origins of America's House Museums*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1999.
- Whitesell, Stephen. "Resource Management Plan Update, John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site." John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site, Resource Management Records, 1963–2003, Box 6, Folder 11, 1987.
- Wilkie, Curtis. "Busing Foes Again Heckle Kennedy in Boston." *Boston Globe*, March 8, 1975.
- Yudis, Anthony. "Old Buildings Must Be Replaced by Modern Construction, Brookline Problem: No Room to Expand." *Boston Globe*, October 3, 1965.
- Zarrelli, Sara Patton. *The Long Road to Restoration: An Administrative History of Longfellow House-Washington's Headquarters National Historic Site*. National Park Service: US Department of the Interior, 2021.
- Zenzen, Joan. *Bridging the Past: Minute Man National Historical Park Administrative History*. National Park Service, Northeast Region History Program, 2010.
- Zerbey, Benjamin. "Notes from Telephone Interview with Charlene K. Roise, January 8." Minute Man National Historical Park Archives, 1981.
- . "Oral History." By Joan Zenzen, April 13, 2005.



# Index

Page numbers in italics indicate a figure on the corresponding page.

- Abraham Lincoln Birthplace National Historical Park, 15, 15n37, 22
- Adams, John, 5, 14, 15, 15n36
- Adams, John Quincy, 5, 5, 14, 15, 15n36
- Adams National Historical Park, 15, 15n36, 44, 44n63, 58
- administrative histories, 44, 79, 83, 136; of George Washington's Birthplace National Monument, 10–11; of the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, 36n34; of Minute Man National Historical Park, 44n63; of related regional sites and future study, 135–37; requests for JOFI, 79–80, 83n2
- ADT security system, 52
- Advisory Committee for National Landmarks, 16–17
- African Americans: Black employees at JOFI, 124, 124n77, 124n78; Black History Month, 91; Black Lives Matter movement, 35; employed at JOFI, 124, 124n77, 124n78; Frederick Douglass Memorial, New York City, 12; history, 7n8, 19n60, 35n29, 93; *see also* segregation
- Alger, Horatio, 23, 23n75
- Allen, Robert, 120
- American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA), 84–85, 94
- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), 77, 121
- Andrew Johnson National Historic Site, 15, 15n39
- Anthony, Susan B., 13
- Arato, Christine, 3, 52n101, 90, 103, 109–10, 112–14, 120, 120n65, 121n67, 125–28
- Archeological Overview and Assessment, 103
- archival collections. *See* primary sources
- Arthur, Chester A., 9, 14, 17, 17n56
- assassination: birthplaces of assassinated presidents, 20–26; of John F. Kennedy, 1, 26, 29–32, 29n11, 30, 53, 110, 111, 113, 127; of Robert Kennedy, 45, 49, 109, 115; *see also* memorialization/memory
- Atsales, Jason, 126, 130, 131
- audiovisual materials, 50; Eleanor Roosevelt's audio tour at Hyde Park, 40–41, 50n90; new orientation video, 97, 121–22, 127, 133; NPS Division of Audiovisual Arts, 52, 54; Rose Kennedy's audio tour at JOFI, 2, 40–41, 49–54, 62–63, 79, 88–92, 101, 128, 133; *The Shaping of a President, The First Home of John F. Kennedy* (introductory film), 133; slide show for educational purposes, 62; Ted Kennedy's audio tour at the JFK Library, 94–95; "To Each Their Own," presentation of Kennedy women, 91–92
- authenticity, 8, 11–12, 13–19; growing professional standards for, 26; hoaxes, 13; of Lincoln's cabin, 20–22, 21, 134; refurbishing and furnishing JOFI, 40–41, 48, 111n30, 126, 134; replica houses, 6, 8, 10, 11–12, 13–17, 13n30, 13n32, 19, 20, 22, 25; *see also* memorialization/memory
- Baker, Robert M., 19
- Banks, Alan, 95, 108
- Banks, Liz, 111n31
- Battle, Bill "Bitter," 59n8
- "Beirut Massacre," 81
- Belle Grove Plantation, Virginia, 14
- Berry, Russell W., 57n1, 68–69, 68n48, 69, 69n52, 70, 72, 73, 75
- Bicentennial (1976), the, 19, 24, 74–75
- Big Bend National Park, 68n49
- birthplaces and childhood homes: Abraham Lincoln's birthplace, 20–22, 21, 134; American interest in, 7–8; "birthplace of" sites, 13, 13n31; birthplaces of assassinated presidents, 20–26; childhood homes, 5–26; for-profit, privately owned sites, 14; George Washington's childhood home, 9–11; hoaxes, 13; house museums, 1, 5, 11, 41, 48; Jefferson Davis's cabin, 20, 21, 21n67; replica houses, 6, 8, 10, 11–12, 13–17, 13n30, 13n32, 19, 20, 22, 25; rise as sites of national memory, 13–19; women's roles in preserving and recreating presidential, 11–12; *see also* authenticity; John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site; preservation; *other former presidents*
- Black History Month, 91
- Black Lives Matter movement, 35n29

- “blight,” 32n21
- Bloomer, Ray, 77
- Boston: Cambridge, 1, 67; Congress Street pier, 74; Democratic machine politics, 34, 89, 94, 96, 135; Dorchester neighborhood, 33, 36, 84; Freedom Trail, 84; Harvard University, 36, 73, 83; JFK’s apartment at 122 Bowdoin Street, 29, 37; John F. Kennedy Federal Building, 69; Jordan Marsh department store, 39–40; North End neighborhood, 75; Paul Revere’s ride reenacted, 38n41; Roxbury neighborhood, 32, 32n13, 69; *see also* Brookline
- Boston African-American National Historic Site, 93
- Boston Globe, The*, 27, 29, 58, 76, 98n73
- Boston Harbor Islands National and State Park, 109
- Boston Marathon, 32n21
- Boston National Historical Park, 45, 85, 135
- Boston National Historic Sites Commission, 34
- Boston Service Group, 1, 43–45, 44n63, 54, 55, 57, 58, 59, 65–68, 135–36; Maurice Kowal’s time at, 59–60, 60n12, 61, 65–68; newsletter, *The Group Scoop*, 44, 67; superintendents of, 34, 43n61, 58, 59, 60n12
- Brookline: annual Memorial Day parade, 131; burglaries in, 52; Dexter School, 61; Edward M. Devotion School, 77, 84, 87, 122; Kennedy family house at 51 Abbottsford Road, 36, 108n17, 115, 121, 122, 134; neighborhood walking tours, 50–51, 67, 88, 88n21, 115; the now Jewish neighborhood of, 36, 50; preservation of an intact neighborhood, 114–15, 133; selectmen of, 27–29, 29n11, 32–33, 32n21, 37–38, 120; St. Aidan’s Catholic Church, 53, 86, 114–16, 120
- Brookline Barracks of the Veterans of World War I, 28, 35
- Brookline Birthplace Memorial Committee, 32–33
- Brookline Civil Rights Committee, 32n18
- “Brookline Farm Area,” 29n8, 32n21
- Brookline High School, 131
- Brookline Historical Society, 32n21, 33
- Brookline Planning Board, 32–33
- Brookline Redevelopment Authority, 29n8, 32n21, 33
- Broudy, Natalie, 28
- Brown, George V., Jr., 32, 32n21
- Brown, James L., 57n1, 75
- Brown, Matthew, 33
- Bruggeman, Seth, 7
- Bryan, William Jennings, 24, 24n83
- Buchanan, James, 14
- budgeting, 4, 42, 57, 81–82, 134; budget increases, 4, 42, 84–86, 101, 119; cost-cutting measures, 81, 123; earmarks, 83, 86, 100; estimates, 42; flowers, 81; fundraising, 21, 25n87; government shutdown of 1990, 93–94; misconceptions about local taxation, 84; operating cost shortfalls, 123–24; Operation of the National Park Service (ONPS) base monies, 78; salaries, 81; structural and maintenance concerns, 92–93, 125; system-wide increase in entrance fees, 94
- “Building X,” 10n16
- Bulger, James “Whitey,” 72, 72n67
- Burns, James MacGregor, 34–35
- Bush, George H. W., 14, 83–84
- Bush, George W., 5–6, 14, 123
- busing, 57, 69–70, 71, 72, 74–75, 95, 135
- Butler, Joseph C., 25
- Buttrick Mansion, 44
- California, 15n34, 18, 19, 136
- Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1, 36, 67, 73, 83
- “Camelot,” 111
- Cammerer, Arno B., 33
- Carroll, Kevin, 78, 80–82
- Carroll, Orville, 61, 66–67, 111
- Carter, Jimmy, 5, 14, 16, 19, 75–77
- Carver, Eugene P., Jr., 27, 32
- Catalano, Kathleen, 57n1, 68, 68n48, 77, 85, 112
- Catholicism, 49, 51, 110, 114–16
- CBS News, 46
- Chappaquiddick car accident, 69
- Charlotte Temple* (Rowson), 7n7
- Chertok, Sumner, 32, 32n21
- Chester A. Arthur State Historic Site in Fairfield, VT, 17n56
- childhood homes. *See* birthplaces and childhood homes
- church. *See* Catholicism
- civil rights, 31, 32n18, 91, 127

- Civil War, 9, 9n12, 12, 20
- Clemens, Samuel L. (Mark Twain), 13, 21
- Clifton, Albert, 13
- Clinton, Bill, 5, 14, 16, 93, 100, 123
- Clinton, Hillary, 99
- Cliver, Blaine, 73
- Coffin, Charles Carleton, 23
- Cohen, Beryl, 31, 33, 33n24
- Cold War, 28, 81
- Collections Preservation Guide (1985), 77, 112
- college basketball, birthplace of, 13
- Collier, Robert, 21
- commemoration. *See* memorialization/memory
- community. *See* Brookline; stakeholders
- Concord, Massachusetts, 36, 44, 105. *See also* Minute Man National Historical Park
- Congregation Kehillath Israel, 32
- Cook, Lee Farrow, 83n2, 100–101, 100n79, 103–5, 104, 107, 109, 110, 113, 117, 120–22, 120n65, 121n67, 125, 128, 130, 131
- Coolidge, Hamilton, 32
- Cooper, John Sherman, 41–43
- Coquette, The* (Foster), 7n7
- costs. *See* budgeting
- costumed interpreters, 3n5, 50
- Crawford, Diana, 58
- Cultural Resources Center (CRC), 105
- Custis, George Washington Parke, 9
- “Daily Log,” 81, 81n105, 98n73
- Daly, David, 111n31, 130
- “Dames, the,” 11
- Dare, Virginia, 7n8
- Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR), 11, 12
- Davis, Jefferson, 20, 21, 21n67
- Dawes, William, 38n41
- Day After, The* (TV drama), 81
- Deegan, Carl, 46–47, 52
- Democratic Party, 34, 89, 94, 96, 135
- Dennett, Alfred W., 20–21
- Denver Service Center, 65
- Departmental Management Program, 68, 68n49, 75
- Dexter School, 61
- Diamant, Rolf, 83–85; changes in administration of the trisites, 96–101, 98n73, 104, 106, 136; changes in interpretation, 88–92; expansion of educational programming under, 87–88; funding under, 123–24; new Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation, 97, 100, 109; removal of Rose Kennedy’s audio tour under, 88–92; reorganization by, 82, 85–86, 85n10; structural and maintenance concerns under, 92–93
- Diethorn, Karie, 85
- Dilsaver, Larry, 94
- Division of Audiovisual Arts, 52, 54
- Dix, Dorothea Lynde, 13
- Doherty, Brian, 96n64, 98–99, 98n73
- donor relations, 2. *See also* Kennedy family
- Dorchester neighborhood of Boston, 33, 36, 84
- Dorman, Charles, 62, 66, 112
- Douglass, Frederick, 12
- Dukakis, Michael, 131
- Dutton, Wilbur, 46–47
- education: Brookline High School, 131; desegregating Boston public schools (busing), 57, 69–70, 71, 72, 74–75, 95, 135; Dexter School, 61; educational programming at JOFI, 62, 87–88, 92, 100, 126; Edward M. Devotion School, 77, 84, 87, 122; METCO school desegregation program, 69–70; Park School, 32n21; Student Conservation Association interns, 131; “What JFK Means to Me” essay contest, 87, 131
- Edward M. Devotion School, 77, 84, 87, 122
- Eisenhower, Dwight D., 5, 14, 15n34, 16
- eminent domain, 32, 32n21, 35–36, 58, 67n42, 114, 136
- executive orders, 9–10, 15n39, 21–22, 59, 60n12
- “Family History: The Legacy Endures, The” educational programming, 87
- Family Medical Leave Act (1993), 81–82
- Farm Urban Renewal Project, 29n8
- Fay, Paul “Red,” 59n8
- FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation), 70–72, 98

- federal government: Department of Justice, 72; federal preservation programs, 136; government shutdown of 1990, 93–94; National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), 5, 15n34, 73n79; urban redevelopment and renewal, 28–29, 29n8, 32n21, 136; War Department, 22; *see also* National Park Service (NPS); presidential history; US Congress; US Department of the Interior
- Fennell, Rose, 131
- Ferry Farm, Fredericksburg, VA, 13
- Fillmore, Millard, 14, 65
- firebombing of JOFI, 69–75, 71, 77, 93, 95, 134
- First Ladies, 14, 22, 33, 99
- Fitzgerald, John Francis (“Honey Fitz”), 35, 89
- Fitzgeralds and the Kennedys, The* (Kearns Goodwin), 89, 89n25
- Florida Ruffin Ridley School (Edward M. Devotion School), 77, 84, 87, 122
- Fogg Art Museum, 73
- Ford, Gerald, 14, 19
- for-profit, privately owned sites, 14
- Foster, Hannah Webster, 7n7
- Foundation Documents, 3, 100, 103, 119, 119n59, 127, 127n86
- Frank, Barney, 86, 120
- Frederick Douglass Memorial, New York City, 12
- Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site, 1, 57, 75, 77, 83–85, 106, 123, 136; archival collections at, 83–84, 92, 100–101; budget at, 84, 92–93, 94; developing its archival holdings for public access, 84, 97; lobbying by the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA), 84–85, 94; Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation, 97, 100, 109; staff at, 85, 95–101; visitors to, 94, 94n48
- Freedom of Information Act, 137
- Freedom Trail, 84
- Freeman Street Condominium, 116
- friends groups, 57, 100, 101, 104, 122, 123, 134
- “Friends of the JFK Birthplace” group, 122
- From Canal Boy to President* (Alger), 23, 23n75
- fundraising, 21, 25n87
- Garfield, James A., 5, 14, 20, 22–24, 22n73–23n75
- Garfield, Lucretia Rudolph, 22–23
- Garfield National Monument Association, 22
- Gargan, Joseph F. (Rose Kennedy’s nephew), 38, 39
- Garrison, Lemuel, 46, 60n12
- General Management Plan (GMP), 100, 117–23, 125, 127, 127n86, 134
- gentrification, 136
- George W. Bush Childhood Home, 5–6, 14
- “ghosting” on walls, 73
- Gilded Age, 11
- Goodwin, Doris Kearns, 89, 89n25
- Goodwin, Richard, 89n25
- government shutdown of 1990, 93–94
- Graffam-McKay Local Historic District, 108n17
- Grant, Ulysses S., 5, 13, 14, 28
- grave tourism, 7, 7n7
- Great Depression, 33
- Group Scoop, The* (newsletter), 44, 67
- hagiography, dangers of, 88, 109
- Hale, Eugene, 13
- Hanse, James, 94
- Harcourt Brace publishing company, 34
- Harpers Ferry Center for Media Development, 65
- Harris, Earl, 57n1
- Harrison, Myra, 103–8, 106; elevating Rose Kenedy’s role, 6, 109–10; on the Kennedy family, 106n19; politics of memory and, 113; reflections after retirement, 122; site development without a GMP, 117, 119–23, 121n47, 124–28, 133; St. Aidan’s church, 116; staffing at JOFI and, 123–24, 129, 130, 133
- Harrison, William Henry, 8, 14
- Hartzog, George B., 17, 39, 40–41, 43, 65–66, 124
- Harvard University, 36, 73, 83
- Hassenfeld, Merrill, 38, 38n41
- Hayes, Rutherford B., 14
- Health, John, 57n1
- Herbert Hoover National Historic Site, 15, 15n42
- Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service, 105
- heritage organizations, 11–12



- Hernandez, Rhineland, 57n1
- Hiram College, Hiram, Ohio, 22n73
- Historic Architecture Program, 112
- Historic Furnishing Plan (1971), 66, 80, 112
- Historic Furnishings Assessment (2005), 111n30, 112
- historic markers, 14
- history: of American memory and commemoration, 7, 109–10, 113–14; architectural, 44n43, 103, 111; of domesticity and domestic servants, 114; educational, 9; historians employed at JOFI, 41, 52, 107, 113; presidential historians, 34–35, 89n25; *see also* administrative histories; archival collections; birthplaces and childhood homes; presidential history; primary sources; women's history
- hoaxes, 13
- Hodson, Janice, 111n30, 112, 125
- Hoffman, Michael A., 35n29
- Hogan, Michael, 31n25
- Home of Franklin D. Roosevelt National Historic Site, Hyde Park, NY, 15, 16, 40–41, 50n90
- Hoover, Herbert, 5, 9–10, 14, 15, 15n42, 16, 18, 134
- Horn, Christine, 79
- house museums, 1, 5, 11, 41, 48
- Huxtable, Ada Louise, 76
- Iannarelli, Thomas, 60n12
- Independence National Historical Park, Philadelphia, PA, 62
- interpretation: changes under Diamant, 88–92; costumed interpreters, 3n5, 50; dangers of hagiography, 88, 109; Interpretive Prospectus (1969), 2–3, 49–52, 65, 68, 91, 134; neighborhood walking tours, 50–51, 67, 88, 88n21, 115; nine primary “themes,” 65; visitor acceptance of changes in, 90–92
- Interpretive Prospectus (1969), 2–3, 49–52, 65, 68, 91, 134
- Irish immigrants and Irish Americans, 35, 35n29, 63, 80, 89, 110, 114
- Jackson, Henry M., 41–43
- James A. Garfield Monument, Cleveland, OH, 22
- James A. Garfield National Historic Site (Lawnfield), Mentor, OH, 22–24
- James K. Polk House, Columbia, TN, 5, 14
- jazz, birthplace of, 13
- Jefferson, Thomas, 5, 14, 19n60
- “JFK Centennial” celebration (2017), 103, 127, 132, 134
- “JFK: How We Know What We Know” educational program, 87
- Jimmy Carter National Historical Park, 16, 16n47
- Joffe, Ruth, 28
- John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site (as administrative unit), 1–4, 131–37; Archeological Overview and Assessment, 103; busing and the firebombing of, 69–75; changes in administration, 96–101; in the context of childhood homes of US presidents, 5–26; in the context of “the trisites,” 82, 83–86, 93–94, 96, 99–101, 103, 104, 113, 117, 123–24, 131; “Daily Log,” 81, 81n105, 98n73; daily work in the 1980s, 78–82; dedication and opening in 1969, 53–54; development of the site, 43–42; during the Carter and Reagan Years, 75–78; early management to the late 1980s, 57–82; early recognition as a site of importance, 27–55; early studies at, 61–68; first unigrid, 117, 118–19; Foundation Documents, 3, 100, 103, 119, 119n59, 127, 127n86; General Management Plan (GMP), 100, 117–23, 125, 127, 127n86, 134; Interpretive Prospectus (1969), 2–3, 49–52, 65, 68, 91, 134; “JFK Centennial” celebration (2017), 103, 127, 132, 134; lack of an administrative history until now, 79–80, 83n2; legislation establishing, 39–43; Master Plan, 47, 68, 117; memorializing the Kennedy family generally, 95–96, 107–8, 114; modern management in the 1990s, 83–101; operations, 57, 83–84; oral history program at, 61, 79; personal connections, 59–61; politics of memory in the new century, 103–28; politics of the 1990s, 93–94; reorganization under Diamant, 85–86; as “satellite” of Longfellow, 80n102, 82; staffing at, 123–24; Standard Operation Procedures, 99; Statement for Management (1977), 68, 80; suggestions for further study, 135–37; threat of eminent domain in developing/expanding, 32, 32n21, 35–36, 58, 67n42, 114, 136; *see also* administrative histories; Boston Service Group; primary sources
- John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site (structure and collections): acquisition of the site, 21, 38, 43–44; ADA compliance and, 121; authenticity when refurbishing and furnishing, 40–41, 48, 111n30, 126, 134; basement of, 62, 71, 77–78, 80, 88, 121, 127, 133; bassinette, 73;

- bathrooms, 62, 68, 121, 133; bed where JFK was born, 27, 37, 44, 46, 128, 129; bedspreads from Ireland, 1, 79, 79n96; bronze plaque from the Brookline Board of Selectmen, 27–29; busing and the firebombing of, 69–75; challenges of limited space at JOFI, 43, 49, 95, 117; children’s books in the nursery, 51, 111; children’s silver porringers, 1, 46; climate control/HVAC system, 78, 106; collections management concerns, 75, 122; Collections Preservation Guide (1985), 77; erosion of the foundation, 77–78; furnishings, 4, 47–52, 62–66, 112, 134; exterior paint, 3, 27–28, 28, 61, 65–66, 69, 111–13, 111n30, 125–28, 125; fire safety systems, 70; firebombing of, 69–75, 71, 77, 93, 95, 134; “ghosting” on the walls, 73; handwritten notecard, 128; Historic Furnishing Plan (1971), 66, 80, 112; Historic Furnishings Assessment (2005), 111n30, 112; Historic Resource Maintenance Plan (1976), 80; Historic Resource Study (2004), 79–80, 103, 107, 113–14; horsehair plaster, 72; kitchen, 48, 64, 70–73, 71, 93; National Day of Mourning at, 30; neighborhood walking tours, 50–51, 67, 88, 88n21, 115; open houses at, 86, 95, 115, 131; parking, 35, 43, 50–52, 58, 95, 103, 121, 133; pink carpeting, 47, 51, 111n30; plastic bottle of Johnson’s baby powder, 64, 111; porringers engraved for Joe and Jack Kennedy, 1, 46; public transportation, 121–22; radiators, 72, 80; security at the site, 51–52, 74, 77, 99; stove, 64, 73, 123; structural and maintenance concerns, 61, 77, 83, 92–93, 121; third floor fire hazard, 99–100; visitor facilities at, 62, 78–79; wallpaper, 45, 52, 71, 72, 80
- John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, 31, 31n15, 55, 76
- John F. Kennedy Federal Building, Boston, MA, 69
- John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum (JFK Library), 36, 36n34, 59n8, 76, 87, 95, 95n53, 108
- John F. Kennedy’s Birthplace: A Presidential Home in History and Memory* (von Hoffman), 110–11
- John Muir and Eugene O’Neill National Historic Sites, 136
- Johnson, Andrew, 5, 14, 15, 15n29
- Johnson, Harriet Lane, 14
- Johnson, Lyndon B., 5, 7, 14, 16–19, 18, 16n46, 39, 55, 89n27, 134
- Jordan Marsh department store, 39–40
- Kammen, Michael, 114
- Kennedy, Caroline, 87
- Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, 31, 31n15, 55, 76
- Kennedy, Edward (Ted), 33n24, 37–38, 53, 55, 94–95, 99, 105; the politics of busing and, 69–70, 69n52, 72, 135
- Kennedy family, 1, 31n15, 35n29, 37–43, 94–96; compound at Hyannis Port, 18, 39n45; in the context of Irish immigrants and Irish Americans, 35, 35n29, 63, 80, 89, 110, 114; death of JFK Jr., 107–8; house at 51 Abbottsford Road, 36, 108n17, 115, 121, 122, 134; obligation to living members of the, 95; political legacy of, 89, 135; in the politics and administration of JOFI, 59, 95–96, 135; private family reunion at the site, 95; religion and wealth of, 115; role in the history of the Park Service more generally, 135; *see also* Smith, Jean Kennedy
- Kennedy, John Fitzgerald: “Address to the Nation on Civil Rights,” 91; apartment at 122 Bowdoin Street, Boston, 29, 37; assassination of, 1, 26, 29–32, 29n11, 30, 53, 110, 111, 113, 127; biography of, 34–35, 49; Catholicism, 49, 51, 110, 114–16; Centennial celebration, 103, 127, 132, 134; childhood illnesses of, 128; connection with King Arthur and Camelot after death, 111; at the Dexter School, 61; early biographies of, 63–64; embracing his adult life and presidency, 91; as the first Catholic president, 49; postage stamps in Kennedy’s honor, 30; presidential campaign, 27, 35, 39, 114; PT (Patrol Torpedo) boats, 59, 59n8, 60; speeches of, 127, 133; tomb at Arlington National Cemetery, 31, 31n15, 42, 55; Warren Commission, 41n52
- Kennedy, John Fitzgerald., Jr., 107–8
- Kennedy, Joseph P., 27, 35, 81, 81n105, 89, 95, 107, 110, 135
- Kennedy, Joseph P., III, 131
- Kennedy Onassis, Jacqueline, 31n15, 36–38, 52, 95
- Kennedy, Patrick Joseph (P. J.), 135
- “Kennedy phenomenon,” 34, 34n27, 49, 51, 134
- Kennedy, Robert, 34n34, 45, 109, 115
- Kennedy, Roger G. (no relation), 93–94
- Kennedy, Rose, 1–2, 2, 37–54, 54, 129; as architect of memory, 109–14; assorted biographical notes by, 63–64; audio tour by, 2, 40–41, 49–54, 62–63, 79, 88–92, 101, 128, 133; autobiography of, 51, 89, 89n25, 109; death of, 91, 95, 101; elevating the role

- of, 6, 109–10; herself an important historical subject, 90–91; letter to the Department of the Interior, 91; as mother and matriarch, 3–4, 48, 64, 92, 112, 128; nephew of, 38, 39; refurbishing and furnishing JOFI, 37–38, 42; relationship with interior designer Robert T. Luddington, 3, 39–41, 40, 45–48, 48n78, 48n81, 53, 72–73, 110–12, 111n30, 126, 128, 129; Rickey’s interviews of, 46–47, 62–63; *see also* Luddington, Robert T.
- Kennedy, Rosemary, 95
- “Kennedy Story, The,” 87
- “Kennedy Walk, The,” 87–88
- “Kennedy Women: To Each Their Own, The” educational programming, 91–92
- Kentucky, 20–21
- Keresey, Dick, 59n8
- King, Martin Luther, Jr., 13
- Kopechne, Mary Jo, 69
- Koplowl, Fredya, 33, 33n24
- Korean War, 59
- Kowal, Maurice, 3, 57n1, 59–61, 59n8, 61–68, 60, 60n12, 128, 135
- Kratz, David, 107
- “Land of Kennedy” vanity license plates, 3
- Law, Beth, 122
- Lawnfield (James A. Garfield National Historic Site), 22–24
- Lebanon, 81
- Lee, Robert E., 13
- legislation. *See* US Congress
- Lexington, Massachusetts, 36, 44. *See also* Minute Man National Historical Park
- libraries: John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum (JFK Library), 36, 36n34, 59n8, 76, 87, 95, 95n53, 108; McKinley Memorial Library, 25; presidential, 5, 15n34, 19, 23, 42
- Life of Washington* (Weems), 9–10, 23
- Lincoln, Abraham, 5, 7, 8, 12, 14–16, 20; Abraham Lincoln Birthplace National Historical Park, 15, 15n37, 22; birthplace cabin, 20–22, 21, 134
- Lincoln Boyhood National Memorial, 15, 15n38
- Lincoln Farm Association (LFA), 21
- lobotomy of Rosemary Kennedy, 95
- log-cabin presidents, 6, 8, 15, 20–22, 21, 21n67, 23–24, 25
- Longfellow House-Washington’s Headquarters National Historic Site, 1, 57–58, 67–68, 75, 77, 80n102, 82, 104, 124, 135, 136; archival collections at, 68, 100–101; in the context of “the trisites,” 82, 83–86, 93–94, 96, 99–101, 103, 104, 113, 117, 123–24, 131; JOFI as “satellite” of, 80n102, 82; during the 1990s, 93; staff at, 85, 95–101
- Loveless, Andrew M., 47
- Lowell, James A., 32, 32n21
- Lowell National Historical Park, 84, 126
- Luddington, Robert T.: objects from his own family homes, 64; personal papers and oral history of, 48, 62–63, 63n28, 137; working with Rose Kennedy, 3, 39–41, 40, 45–48, 48n78, 48n81, 53, 72–73, 110–12, 111n30, 126, 128, 129, 130
- Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park, Stonewall, TX, 16, 16n46, 17
- Mackey, Lula E., 12, 25
- Mackintosh, Barry, 39n45
- Madison, James, 14
- Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park, Woodstock, Vermont, 100
- Massachusetts: Cultural Resources Center (CRC) in Lowell, 105; Hyannis Port, 18, 39n45; Lexington and Concord, 36, 44, 105; Lowell National Historical Park, 84, 126; misconceptions about local taxation, 84; New Bedford Whaling Museum National Park, 109; Plymouth Rock, 74; Salem Maritime National Historic Site, 34, 44, 44n63, 58, 84, 93; Saugus Iron Works National Historic Site, 43, 44, 44n63, 45n68, 58, 93–94; Springfield Armory National Historic Site, 93; state legislature, 31–33; *see also* Boston; Brookline
- Massachusetts Historical Commission, 116
- Massachusetts state legislature, 31–33
- Massachusetts Turnpike, 61
- Master Plan, 47, 68, 117
- MBTA trolley line, 121–22
- McInerny, John E., 70
- McKinley Memorial Library, 25, 25n89
- McKinley Memorial Museum, 25

- McKinley, William, 12, 14, 20, 24–25, 25n87, 65
- McNeilly, George D., 32
- Medina, Victor, 127
- memorialization/memory: history of, 7, 109–10, 113–14; Brookline’s annual Memorial Day parade, 131; coins, 25n87, 30; commemorative plaque at 83 Beals Street, 27–29; the emotional experiences of visitors, 6, 49, 107–8, 121; dangers of hagiography, 88, 109; historic markers, 14; “JFK Centennial” celebration (2017), 103, 127, 132, 134; the “Kennedy phenomenon,” 34, 34n27, 49, 51, 134; memorabilia and souvenirs, 25, 25n87, 61; national day of mourning, 30, 31–32; the nation’s Bicentennial, 19, 24, 74–75; patriotism and, 7, 9; postage stamps, 7n8, 30; trauma and, 98–99, 109, 113; memory studies, 110; politics of memory in the new century, 103–28
- Metcalf, Lee Warren, 43
- METCO school desegregation program, 69–70
- Mid-Atlantic Regional Office, 44, 67
- Millard Fillmore Boyhood Home Site, 14
- Minute Man National Historical Park, 33–34, 36, 44–45, 58, 135; administrative history of, 44n63; Buttrick Mansion, 44; community advisory commission, 57n3; in the context of “the trisites,” 82, 83–86, 93–94, 96, 99–101, 103, 104, 113, 117, 123–24, 131; superintendents of, 33, 43n61, 44
- Mission 66, 49
- Moffit, David, 57n1
- Montford, Franklin, 57n1
- monuments. *See* memorialization/memory
- Moore, Terry, 120, 122
- Moreland Hills Historical Society, 24
- Morse, Alan, 32n21
- Morse, Theresa, 32, 32n21
- Mount Rushmore, 5, 15n34
- Mount Vernon Ladies’ Association, 9n12, 11, 19n60
- “Museum Upstages the Library, The,” 76
- “Nation of Immigrants, A” educational program, 87
- National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), 5, 15n34, 73n79
- National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), 60n12
- National Association of Colored Women’s Clubs, 12
- National Historic District, 108n17
- National Historic Landmark status, 16
- National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 39
- National Historic Sites Act, 33
- National Landmarks Program, 6–7, 17, 39, 110
- National McKinley Birthplace Memorial, 24–25, 25n87
- National Park Service (NPS): Advisory Committee for National Landmarks, 16–17; Building Conservation Branch, 92; Cultural Resources Center (CRC), 105; Denver Service Center, 65; Departmental Management Program, 68, 68n49, 75; diversifying the, 124; Division of Audiovisual Arts, 52, 54; early assessment of the site, 27–55; emails for research, 137; executive orders related to historic sites, 9–10, 15n39, 21–22; FDR’s Executive Order No. 6166, 21–22; Harpers Ferry Center for Media Development, 65; historians in the, 16, 21n47, 31n25, 33, 58, 62, 94, 110; Historic Architecture Program, 112; legislation requiring General Management Plans (GMPs), 117; Mid-Atlantic Regional Office, 44, 67; Mission 66, 49; multisites as units of study, 136; National Landmarks Program, 6–7, 17, 39, 110; New Deal programs in historic architecture and preservation, 33; newsletter *The Courier*, 76; North Atlantic Regional Office, 44, 83, 67, 90–91, 92; Northeast Regional Office, 44, 46, 60, 66–67, 135–36; Office of History and Historic Architecture, 62; Operation of the National Park Service (ONPS) base monies, 78; Philadelphia Planning Services Center, 45; “politicization of the directorship,” 82, 94; system-wide increase in entrance fees, 94; unit types in the, 64–65; women serving in the, 62, 103, 103n1; work alongside urban renewal, 136; *see also* administrative histories; Boston Service Group *National Park System Plan* (Hartzog), 65–66
- National Register of Historic Places, 5, 18, 110, 116
- National Society of the Colonial Dames of America (Dames), 11
- Nelson, Nancy, 57n1
- New Bedford Whaling Museum National Park, 109
- New Deal, 33
- New Orleans, 13
- New York City: Frederick Douglass Memorial, 12; John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, 31, 31n15, 55, 76

- New York State: Home of Franklin D. Roosevelt National Historic Site in Hyde Park, 15, 16, 40–41, 50n90; Pan-American Exposition of 1901 in Buffalo, NY, 20, 25; Roosevelt Campobello International Park, 15n44, 16; Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Sites, 53, 59
- New York Times, The*, 76
- Niles Historical Society, 25n86
- “1917: A Time to Remember,” educational program, 87
- Nixon, Richard, 14, 15n34, 19, 55, 64n35, 65
- Noonan, Thomas J., 32
- North Atlantic Regional Office, 44, 83, 67, 90–91, 92
- Northeast Regional Office, 44, 46, 60, 66–67, 135–36
- Obama, Barack, 6, 123
- Obleschuk, Leslie, 80, 87, 88, 88n23
- O’Connell, Jim, 120–21, 121n67
- Office of History and Historic Architecture, 62
- Ohio, 12, 13, 23, 24–25, 25n86, 25n87
- Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation, 97, 100, 109
- Olmsted, Frederic Law. *See* Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site
- Olsen, Herbert, 58–59, 58n5, 66, 66n39
- O’Neill, Tip, 37, 41, 55, 99
- open houses, 86, 95, 115, 131
- Operation of the National Park Service (ONPS) base monies, 78
- oral histories, 36n34, 61, 79, 83n2, 85n10, 137
- O’Toole, James, 114
- Paint and Decoration Contractors Association of America, 27, 28, 112–13
- Palladino, Florence, 29
- Palmer, Phyllis, 114
- Pan-American Exposition of 1901 in Buffalo, NY, 20, 25
- parking, 35, 43, 50–52, 58, 95, 103, 121, 133
- Park School, 32n21
- patriotism, 7, 9
- Paul Revere’s ride reenacted, 38n41
- Peabody Properties, 116
- Pei, I. M., 76
- Pennsylvania, 13, 62
- Perrault, Carole, 112, 125, 130
- Phelps, James, 91
- Philadelphia Planning Services Center, 45
- Pitcaithley, Dwight, 21n67
- Plymouth Rock, 74
- politics: Boston’s Democratic machine politics, 34, 89, 94, 96, 135; Democratic Party, 34, 89, 94, 96, 135; the Kennedy family, politics, and the administration of JOFI, 59, 95–96, 135; in the Massachusetts state legislature, 31–33; of the 1990s, 93–94; “politicization of the directorship,” 82, 94; politics of memory, gender, and the presidency, 103–28; Republican Party, 32n21, 37, 41n52, 83–84, 93–94; the Whig Party, 6; threat of eminent domain in developing/expanding JOFI, 32, 32n21, 35–36, 58, 67n42, 114, 136
- Polk, James K., 5, 14
- Pollack, Martha, 27–28, 31–32, 37–38, 38n41, 112–13
- Port Chicago Naval Magazine National Memorial, 136
- preservation: climate control/HVAC system, 78, 106; federal preservation programs, 136; of an intact neighborhood, 114–15, 133; National Park Service (NPS) during the New Deal, 33; St. Aidan’s Catholic Church, 53, 86, 114–16, 120; women’s roles in preserving and recreating presidential history, 5–6, 8, 9n12, 11–12
- President William Jefferson Clinton Birthplace Home National Historic Site, 16, 16n48
- presidential history: elections, 6, 24–25, 81; executive orders, 9–10, 15n39, 21–22, 59, 60n12; First Ladies, 14, 22, 33, 99; the “log-cabin” presidents, 6, 8, 15, 20–22, 21, 21n67, 23–24, 25; presidential historians, 34–35, 89n25; *see also* assassinations; birthplaces and childhood homes
- presidential libraries, 5, 15n34, 19, 23, 42. *See also* John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum (JFK Library)
- Price, Carla, 124, 124n77
- primary sources: anti-Kennedy bias at NPS not supported by, 60n12; archival collections at Longfellow, 100–101; archival collections at Minute Man National Historical Park, 44n63; autobiographies, 6, 51, 89, 89n25, 109; Collections Preservation Guide (1985), 77, 112; “Daily Log,” 81, 81n105, 98n73; emails as, 137; Foundation Documents, 3, 100, 103, 119, 119n59, 127, 127n86;

- Historic Furnishing Plan (1971), 66, 80, 112;  
 Historic Furnishings Assessment (2005), 111n30,  
 112; Historic Resource Maintenance Plan (1976),  
 80; Historic Resource Study (2004), 79–80;  
 Interpretive Prospectus (1969), 2–3, 49–52, 65, 68,  
 91, 134; at the JFK Library, 36, 36n34; management  
 of archival collections, 75; Master Plan, 47, 68, 117;  
 oral histories, 36n34, 61, 79, 83n2, 85n10, 137;  
 personal papers and oral history of Robert T.  
 Luddington, 48, 62–63, 63n28, 137; published  
 research vs., 51; Statement for Management (1977),  
 68, 80; *see also* administrative histories; archival  
 collections; audiovisual materials; John Fitzgerald  
 Kennedy National Historic Site (as administrative  
 unit)
- private organizations. *See* stakeholders
- Providence Preservation Society, 105
- PT (Patrol Torpedo) boats, 59, 59n8, 60. *See also* Kowal,  
 Maurice
- public transportation, 121–22
- race and racism: civil rights, 31, 32n18, 91, 127; heritage  
 organizations, 11–12; Irish immigrants and Irish  
 Americans, 35, 35n29, 63, 80, 89, 110, 114; White  
 supremacy, 7n8, 11; *see also* African Americans;  
 segregation
- Ragged Dick* (Alger), 23n75
- rangers: at JOFI, 68, 78, 80, 87, 95, 98–99, 107, 109, 120;  
 resistance to change among, 96; supervisory,  
 80n102, 83n2, 96–97, 96n64, 98–99, 103, 109,  
 112–13, 126, 131, 132; tours led by, 50, 87–88,  
 88n21, 89–91
- Reagan, Ronald, 14, 77–78, 81
- Reconstruction, 9n12
- Reidenbach, Dennis, 123
- replica houses, 6, 8, 10, 11–12, 13–17, 13n30, 13n32, 19,  
 20, 22, 25
- Republican Party, 32n21, 37, 41n52, 83–84, 93–94
- Rhode Island, 105
- Rickey, Nan: on exterior paint color and furnishings,  
 66, 111n30, 112; Interpretive Prospectus (1969),  
 2–3, 49–52, 65, 68, 91, 134; interviews of Rose  
 Kennedy, 46–47, 62–63; during JOFI's early  
 development, 2–3, 46, 49–50, 111; on need for a  
 Master Plan, 68; on parking and safety, 51–52; on  
 staffing needs, 52; on the religion and wealth of the  
 Kennedy family, 115
- Riddle, Theodate Pope, 12
- Rigney, C. Sue, 96, 116
- Rippel, Elena, 46n69, 121n67, 130, 132
- Roanoke colony, Virginia, 7n7
- Roberts, James, 126–27, 130, 131, 132
- Roosevelt Campobello International Park, 15n44, 16
- Roosevelt, Eleanor, 40–41, 50n90, 53
- Roosevelt, Franklin D., 5, 7n8, 14–15, 15n43; childhood  
 summer retreat at Campobello, 15, 15n44, 16;  
 Executive Order No. 6166, 21–22; Home of  
 Franklin D. Roosevelt National Historic Site in  
 Hyde Park, 15, 16, 40–41, 50n90; New Deal, 33;  
 postage stamps, 30–31; Roosevelt-Vanderbilt  
 National Historic Sites, 53, 59
- Roosevelt, Theodore, 5, 12, 14, 15–16, 93, 134
- Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Sites, 53, 59
- Rosie the Riveter—World War II National Historical  
 Park in California, 136
- Rowson, Susanna, 7n7
- Roxbury neighborhood of Boston, 32, 32n13, 69
- Rust, Josephine Wheelwright, 10
- Rust, Marie, 105
- Sabin, Douglass, 57n1
- Sagamore Hill National Historic Site, 75
- Sagamore, The* (student newspaper), 131
- Saint-Gaudens, August, 21
- Salem Maritime National Historic Site, 34, 44, 44n63,  
 58, 84, 93
- Saltonstall, Leverett, 37
- Saltzman, Manuel, 32, 32n21
- Saugus Iron Works National Historic Site, 43, 44,  
 44n63, 45n68, 58, 93–94
- Savage, Teri, 57n1
- security, 51–52, 74, 77, 99
- segregation: in Boston and Brookline, 31–32, 32n18;  
 desegregating Boston public schools (busing), 57,  
 69–70, 71, 72, 74–75, 95, 135; Jim Crow, 35n29; *see  
 also* African Americans; race and racism
- September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, 109
- Shaping of a President, The First Home of John F.  
 Kennedy, The* (introductory film), 133

- Shary Berg, 57n1;
- Shea, Jim, 96–100, 96n64, 98n73, 99
- Sheehan, Thomas A., 33
- Shiloh National Military Park, 58
- “Shortfellow,” 82
- Small, Edwin, 3, 33–37, 43, 53, 60, 60n12, 135–36; community advisory group, 57n3; as “Project Keyman,” 44–46, 45n68, 46n69, 48
- Smith, Jean Kennedy, 53
- Springfield Armory National Historic Site, 93
- staffing: Black employees at JOFI, 124, 124n77, 124n78; costumed interpreters, 3n5, 50; curatorial staff, 85, 98 111; cuts in, 124; dramatic turnover, 57, 98; executive orders related to staffing, 59, 60n12; Family Medical Leave Act (1993), 81–82; First Amendment rights of federal employees, 60n12; historians employed at JOFI, 41, 52, 107, 113; mandatory pay raises for federal employees, 124; morale, 81–82, 83, 98–99; museum technicians, 52n100, 111n31, 124; Project Keyman, 44–46, 45n68, 46n69, 48; salaries, 81; seasonal/temporary staff, 41, 49, 79, 98, 109, 124, 124n77, 126; site managers, 52n100, 59, 66–67, 96–98, 99, 100, 105, 113, 122–23, 131; staff concerns about authenticity, 111n30; staff retreat, 108; Student Conservation Association interns, 131; *see also* rangers; superintendents
- St. Aidan’s Catholic Church, 53, 86, 114–16, 120
- stakeholders, 11–12; Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR), 11, 12; donor relations, 2; friends groups, 57, 100, 101, 104, 122, 123, 134; “Friends of the JFK Birthplace” group, 122; fundraising, 21, 25n87; Garfield National Monument Association, 22; heritage organizations, 11–12; Lincoln Farm Association (LFA), 21; Moreland Hills Historical Society, 24; National Association of Colored Women’s Clubs, 12; National Society of the Colonial Dames of America (Dames), 11; Niles Historical Society, 25n86; public scoping meeting, 121–22; Student Conservation Association interns, 131; United Daughters of the Confederacy, 13; *see also* Kennedy family
- Standard Operation Procedures, 99
- Stark, Jack, 76
- Statement for Management (1977), 68, 80
- Stearns, Liza, 87
- Storrie, Muriel, 62, 68, 79n99
- Stratford Hall, Robert E. Lee’s birthplace, 13
- Student Conservation Association interns, 131
- suffrage, 7n8, 11
- superintendents: Berry’s tenure, 68, 68n50, 70, 72, 75; of the Boston Service Group, 34, 43n61, 58, 59, 60n12; managing JOFI, 57, 57n1, 61; of Minute Man, 33, 43n61, 44; Olsen’s tenure, 58–59, 58n5, 66, 66n39; of Salem Maritime National Historical Park, 34; Whitesell’s tenure, 57n1, 77, 79–80, 79n99, 83; Zerbey’s tenure, 43n61, 44–45, 51–52, 57n1, 57n3, 58, 62, 66; *see also* Diamant, Rolf; Harrison, Myra; Small, Edwin
- Taft, William Howard, 5, 14, 15, 15n41
- Tarbell, Ida, 21
- Taylor, Zachary, 5, 14
- Temple Kehillath Israel, 32
- Tennessee, 5, 15, 20, 58
- Texas, 5–6, 16, 16n46, 17
- They Were White and They Were Slaves* (Hoffman), 35n29
- Thorfinnsson, Snorri, 7n8
- Times to Remember* (R. Kennedy), 51, 89, 89n25, 109
- “To Each Their Own,” presentation on the Kennedy women, 91–92
- Toogood, Anna Coxe, 62–66, 112
- tourism: historic grave tourism, 7, 7n7; house museums, 1, 5, 11, 41, 48; local trolley tours, 94–95; memorabilia and souvenirs, 61; neighborhood walking tours, 50–51, 67, 88, 88n21, 115; *see also* birthplaces and childhood homes
- trauma, 98–99, 109, 113
- “trisites, the,” 82, 83–86, 93–94, 96, 99–101, 103, 104, 113, 117, 123–24, 131. *See also* Longfellow House-Washington’s Headquarters National Historic Site; John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site; Minute Man National Historical Park
- Truman, Harry S., 5, 14, 16–17, 53
- Trump, Donald J., 6, 123
- Tuckahoe Plantation, VA, 14
- Twain, Mark, 13, 21
- Tyler, Daniel, Jr., 32, 32n21
- Tyler, John, 14

- Udall, Stewart, 16, 41–43, 42n53, 55
- United Daughters of the Confederacy, 13
- urban redevelopment and renewal, 28–29, 29n8, 32n21, 136
- US Congress, 9–10; Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), 77, 121; appropriations for the Department of the Interior, 86n15; appropriations for the John F. Kennedy Center for Performing Arts, 31n15; and the challenge of expanding the site, 47, 49; enabling the Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site, 75; Family Medical Leave Act (1993), 81–82; Freedom of Information Act, 137; legislation allowing the federal government to accept property, 15n43; lobbying in, 84–85, 94; National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 39; National Historic Sites Act, 33; requiring General Management Plans (GMPs), 117; role in acquiring and developing JOFI, 37, 39, 41–43, 45, 47, 49; Secretary Udall’s testimony before, 41–43, 42n53; the Republican Congress of the 1990s, 84, 93–94; themes in founding legislation, 110
- US Department of the Interior, 41–43; appropriations for, 86n15; Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service, 105; internal communication records of, 83n2; National Historic Landmark Status, 16–17; Rose Kennedy’s letter to, 91; *see also* National Park Service (NPS)
- Van Buren, Martin, 5
- Vanderwoude, Saul, 31
- Vermont, 17n56, 100
- Veterans for Kennedy, 59
- Virginia: Arlington National Cemetery, 31, 31n15, 42, 55; Ferry Farm in Fredericksburg, 13; Jefferson’s birthplace at Tuckahoe Plantation, VA, 14; Jefferson’s estate at Monticello, 19n60; Madison’s birthplace at Belle Grove Plantation, 14; Roanoke colony, 7n7; Robert E. Lee’s birthplace, 13; Washington family house at Pope’s Creek, 9–10; Washington’s estate at Mount Vernon, 9n12, 11, 19n60
- visitors/visitation, 1, 6; to Abraham Lincoln Birthplace National Historical Park, 22; American with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance and, 77, 121; challenges of limited space at JOFI, 43, 49, 95, 117; changing opening hours, 81; elderly visitors, 77; emotional experiences of, 6, 49, 107–8, 121; interpretation at JOFI and, 90–92; JOFI’s prospects for visitation, 35–36, 49–51, 67; limits to the visitor season at JOFI, 82, 86, 97, 120–21; to Olmsted, 94, 94n48; visitation levels at JOFI, 61–62, 74–77, 79, 86, 88, 107–8; visitor knowledge, 79, 90–91, 126–27; visitor reception areas, 78, 84, 88, 97; “Year of the Visitor,” 77; *see also* education; interpretation; memorialization/memory
- von Hoffman, Alexander, 110–11, 114
- Voyageurs National Park, 68n49
- Wade, Jephtha A., 22
- Wakefield National Memorial Association, 10–11, 12
- walking tours, 50–51, 67, 88, 88n21, 115
- wallpaper, 45, 52, 71, 72, 80
- Warren Commission, 41n52
- Washington, George, 5, 7, 8, 9–11, 12, 13, 13n30, 13n32, 14–15; “Building X,” 10n16; George Washington’s Birthplace National Monument, 10–11, 10n16, 15, 22; hatchet and cherry tree story, 9, 9n11; *Life of Washington* (by Weems), 9–10, 23; Mount Vernon, 9n12, 11, 19n60; second childhood home replica at Ferry Farm, 13; Washington family house at Pope’s Creek, Virginia, 9–10; *see also* Longfellow House–Washington’s Headquarters National Historic Site
- Washington Monument, 9
- Watt, James, 82
- Weems, Parson Mason Locke, 9–10, 23
- Weinbaum, Paul, 110, 113, 113n40, 114
- “What JFK Means to Me” essay contest, 87, 131
- Whig Party, 6
- White, Peregrine, 7n8
- Whitesell, Stephen, 57n1, 77, 79–80, 79n99, 83
- White supremacy, 7n8, 11
- Whittier, John Greenleaf, 13
- William Howard Taft National Historic Site, 15, 15n41
- William McKinley Birthplace Memorial in Niles, OH, 24–25
- William, Ryan, 32n18
- Wilson, Woodrow, 14, 17
- Winter, Diane, 52
- Wirth, Christine, 121n67
- Wirth, Conrad, 124



## Index

- women's history: African American women, 7n8; in educational programming, 19n60, 91–92, 107; First Ladies, 14, 22, 33, 99; Gilded Age “public motherhood,” 11; motherhood and memorializing presidents, 6, 11; role in preserving and recreating presidential history, 5–6, 8, 9n12, 11–12; Rose Kennedy as architect of memory, 109–14; Rose Kennedy as mother and matriarch, 3–4, 48, 64, 92, 112, 128; suffrage, 7n8, 11
- Women's History Month, 92
- Women's Roosevelt Memorial Association (WRMA), 12
- World War I, 28, 33, 35, 89
- World War II, 5, 34, 59, 59n8, 136
- “Year of the Visitor,” 77
- Yorba Linda, California, 15n34, 19
- Zarrelli, Sara Patton, 126
- Zenzen, Joan, 44n65
- Zerbey, Benjamin, 43n61, 44–45, 51–52, 57n1, 57n3, 58, 62, 66