

# JFK

John Fitzgerald Kennedy, 35th President of the United States, was born and spent his babyhood in this house at 83 Beals Street, in the Boston suburb of Brookline. In reminiscing about those days, his mother, Mrs. Joseph Kennedy, said that "every mother can influence her son to a great extent. . . . And what you do with him and for him has influence, not for a day or for a year, but for time and eternity."

In 1914 Joseph P. Kennedy purchased the Beals Street house in anticipation of his marriage to Rose Fitzgerald. They moved into it on returning from their wedding trip. Four of their nine children were born while they lived here: Joseph, at Hull, Mass., in 1915, John in 1917, Rosemary in 1918, and Kathleen in 1920.

Joseph P. Kennedy, son of a prosperous family from East Boston, had already begun his illustrious career in business and finance by the time he married and moved to this house. Following his graduation from Harvard University in 1912, he became active in the stock market, real estate, and banking. At 25 years of age, 1 year before his marriage, he became president of the Columbia Trust Company. This was his major occupation when he and his bride moved to Beals Street. In 1917 he entered the managerial field, becoming Assistant General Manager of the Fore River Shipyards.

Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy grew up in the world of Boston politics. Through her father, John F. Fitzgerald, onetime Mayor of Boston and member of Congress, she had been given opportunities to know leading men and women in all fields, and had developed a keen interest in current affairs. Educated in this country and in Europe, Rose Kennedy was endowed with intelligence, poise, wit, and a zest for living that touched all about her.

The years during which the family lived here were quiet ones, typical of a young married couple starting their family. The father went to work each day and dined with his family every evening. His wife oversaw details of the growing household, attended concerts and club meetings with other young women who shared her interests, and gave to each of her children unstinting devotion and care. The Kennedys attended Mass at St. Aidan's Catholic Church, took their youngsters sledding in winter, and entertained at small dinners.

In this house John F. Kennedy learned the basic skills each man must learn: to walk, to talk and laugh and pray.

In 1921, when he was 4 years old, the family moved, having sold the house to the wife of Edward E. Moore, a close friend and business associate. Since then, the house has had various private owners. It was repurchased by the Kennedy family in 1966. Rose Kennedy has supervised the restoration and refurbishing of the house to its appearance in 1917.

The town of Brookline marked the house with a commemorative plaque in 1961, and the house was designated a National Historic Landmark in May 1965. Two years later Congress authorized its inclusion in the National Park System and made it a National Historic Site.

## Neighborhood Walking Tour

In 1914, when Joseph and Rose Kennedy moved into the Beals Street house, the lots adjoining and across the street were vacant. In those days, the neighborhood had a good deal of elbow-room and there was little street traffic.

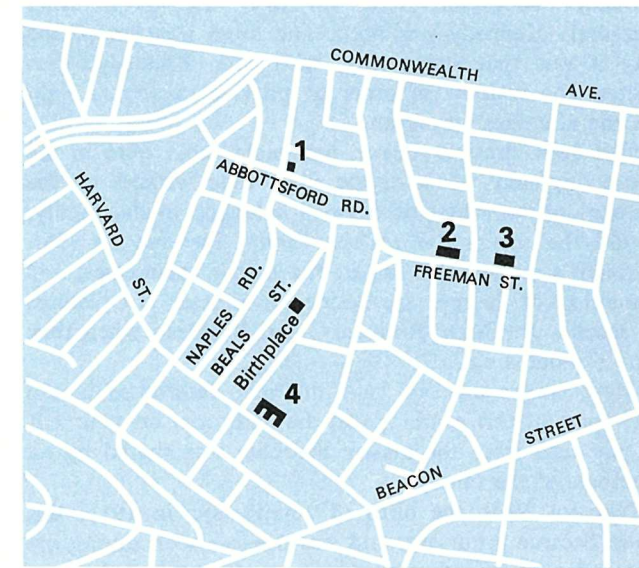
Four sites of importance to the early years of the Kennedy family are nearby; all are within easy walking distance. You will find them marked on the accompanying map; the text explains their significance.

**1 Naples Road Residence.** The house on the northeast corner of Abbottsford and Naples Roads is the one to which the Kennedy family moved in 1921 when they outgrew the Beals Street residence. They lived here until 1927, when they moved to Riverdale, N.Y. The foundation of the Kennedy fortune was laid during these years. The family itself also grew: Eunice, Patricia, and Robert were all born here. Jean and Edward were born after the family moved to New York.

John F. Kennedy lived here from age 4 to 10—years that saw his first ventures into the world outside his immediate family. We may be sure that this house was clearly recalled as the home from which he first went to school, where he learned to love sports, and where his life-long habit of reading was established.

*The house is privately owned, and the owner's privacy and property must be respected. Please view the house only from the sidewalk or across the street.*

**2 St. Aidan's Catholic Church** played an important role in the life of the Kennedy family while they lived in Brookline. Here the children were baptized. The family went to church here each Sunday morning, the children attend-



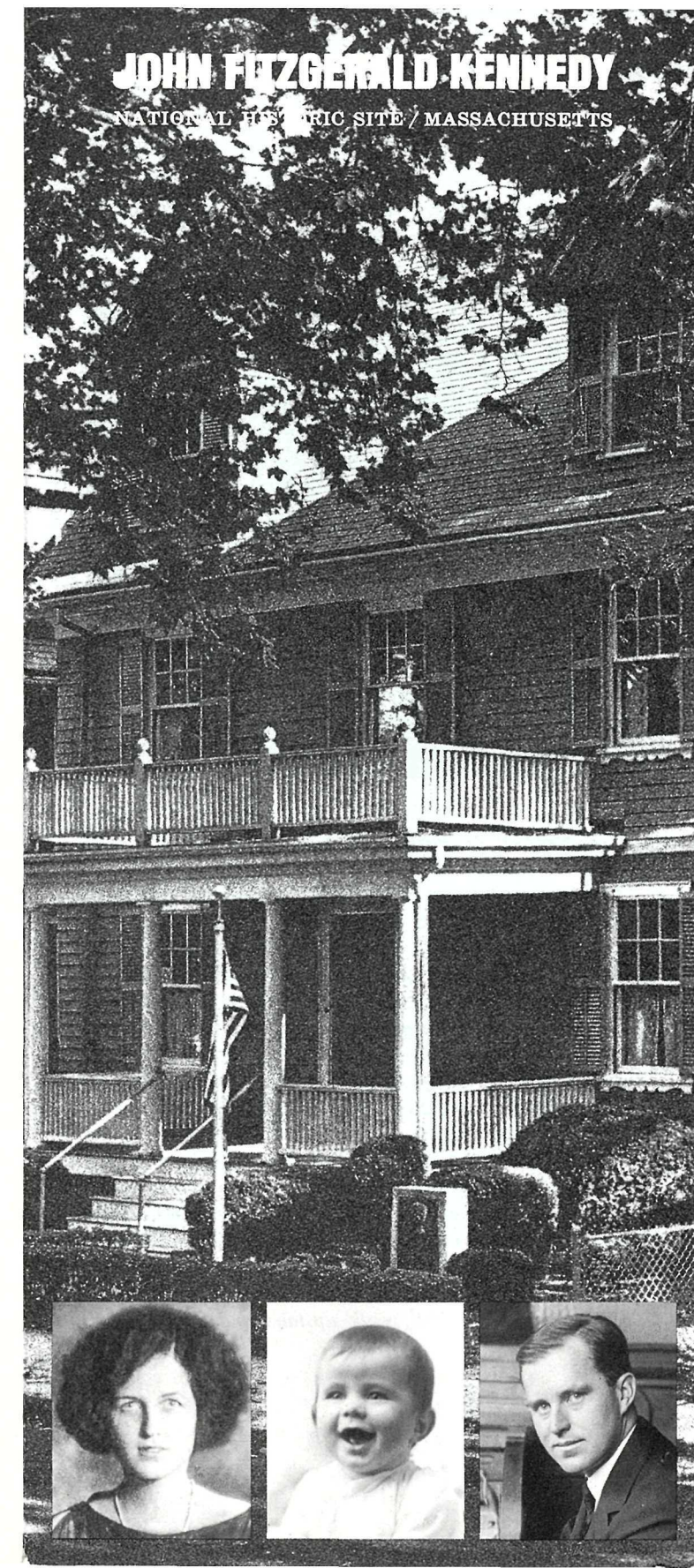
ing a special children's Mass. Both Joseph, Jr., and John were altar boys here. The main section of the church building was almost new when the Kennedys moved to Brookline; additions to the building have since been made. **3 The Dexter School**, a private, nonsectarian school, was attended by both John and Joseph, Jr. While they started their formal education at the public Edward Devotion School, they soon transferred to this institution, where (their mother recalls) they might have the most careful supervision in school work and play. Here John Kennedy acquired the fundamental skills for education and participated for the first time in organized sports. His love of learning and of physical activity were to endure throughout his life.

The building in which the boys went to class is no longer standing, and the Dexter School itself has moved to a new campus.

**4 The Edward Devotion School.** This public school was the one first attended by John and his older brother. In front of the school building is the Edward Devotion House, a historic structure dating from the early 1700's. Operated by the Brookline Historical Society, the house is open to the public on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 2:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m., and at other times by appointment.

## JOHN FITZGERALD KENNEDY

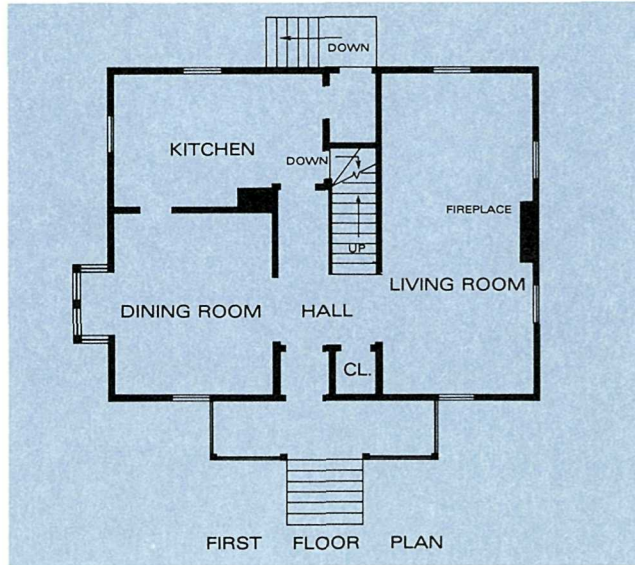
NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE / MASSACHUSETTS



Cover: Birthplace of John F. Kennedy. Inset: mother Rose Kennedy, John at 6 months, father Joseph Kennedy. Photos of John F. Kennedy and Joseph Kennedy courtesy of Kennedy Family Collection, John F. Kennedy Library.

## A TOUR OF THE HOUSE

The following tour is keyed to the accompanying floor plans. Uniformed Park Service personnel will be happy to answer any questions you may have.



The **hallway** in which you are standing had a coat closet and a small table for the telephone.

**Living room.** As in most small households, the living room was the center of social and recreational life. Here the Kennedys spent their evenings reading and talking. Mr. Kennedy customarily sat in the red chair against the northwest wall, while Mrs. Kennedy sat in the armchair on the other side of the gateleg table. Often Mrs. Kennedy played the piano and the family sang. She seldom permitted a fire in the gas-log fireplace because of danger to the children who played here in bad weather.

Many of the objects in this room were used by the Kennedys from 1914 to 1921. The piano was given to Mrs. Kennedy as a wedding present from her uncles, James and Edward Fitzgerald. Its brocade cover dates from those early days. The mahogany gateleg table originally stood in its present location, as did the mantel vases. The oriental rug was here when the family lived in the house.

*Returning to the hall, walk upstairs and turn right at the top.*

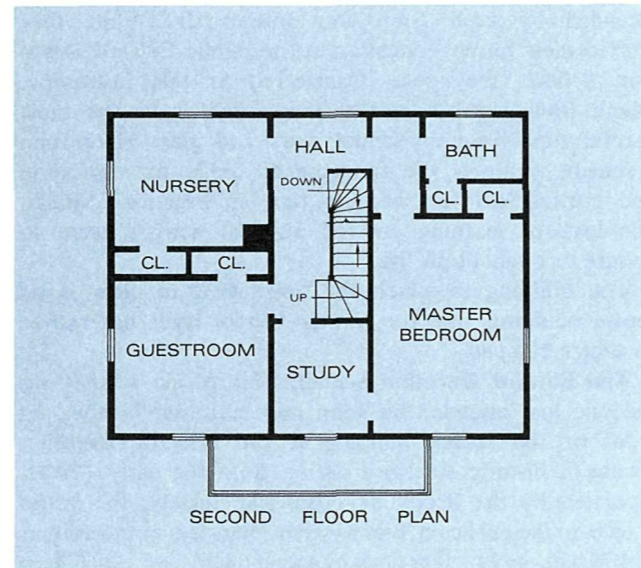
**Master bedroom.** Here, on May 29, 1917, John Fitzgerald Kennedy was born. The room is arranged the way it was that sunny day, with Mrs. Kennedy's bed nearest the window in order to provide maximum light for the attending physician.

The beds, dresser, mirror, and night table were in the house originally. Most of the silver toilet articles on the dresser and the chest of drawers belonged to the family, as did the silver vase on the vanity. Pictures are: Mr. Kennedy's mother and father, the couple themselves, and a number of Joseph, Jr. Beside the dresser are pictures of Joseph, Jr., John, Rosemary, and Kathleen when they were 6 months old.

Most houses did not have multiple bathrooms in the early part of this century, and the bathroom on your left as you turn from the master bedroom was shared by all members of the family.

**Nursery.** With the birth of Joseph, Jr., in 1915, this room became a nursery, and was used as such during the remainder of the family's years here. After John was born in 1917, the brothers shared the room. With the arrival of Rosemary in 1918, the boys were moved to other quarters, and the room again became a nursery.

Rose Kennedy used the bassinet for all her newborn



children. In later years, it also sheltered many visiting grandchildren. Originally it had a canopy. Shown here, too, are the christening dress, bonnet, and outer coat and cape worn by all of the Kennedy children (and by John F. Kennedy, Jr., son of the President). They were handmade by the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary in East Boston. The book, *King Arthur's Knights*, on the chair, was one of the childhood favorites of the President.

**Guestroom.** Before Rosemary was born in 1918, this room was a guestroom, used mostly by visiting family or school friends. After her birth, it was made into a children's room. It is furnished now as a guestroom.

The dresser and the bed footboard are pieces originally in the room; the headboard is a reproduction. The silver vase and the bud vase on the dresser were wedding gifts. The silver toilet set, marked with Rose Kennedy's maiden initials, consists of a hand mirror, brush, powderbox, loose-hair jar, container for smelling salts, shoehorn, nail file and polisher, button hook, and pin box.

**Study.** Rose Kennedy used this tiny room to write letters, to read in quiet moments, and to do some of the endless mending and button-sewing needed by a growing family. The mahogany desk and Martha Washington sewing cabinet were originally in the room. Hanging on the wall above the desk is a framed Mother's Day poem given to Rose Kennedy by her children. Also framed and hanging here are a photograph taken on the Kennedys' wedding day, their wedding announcement, Joseph P. Kennedy, Sr.'s birth announcement, and a photograph of Rose Kennedy with her sisters and Sir Thomas Lipton, taken on the latter's yacht.

*The stairway in the hall leads to the third floor, where the cook and nursemaid had their rooms. These are now the site's administrative offices. Returning to the first floor, turn to your right at the foot of the stairs.*

**Dining room.** Since the Kennedy children were very small when they lived here, they did not sit at the large table with their parents. When they became old enough to manage mealtimes for themselves, they were seated at the small table nearby, where their mother could supervise them. The young family customarily spent holidays and other special occasions with grandparents, but the dining room was the scene of several birthday parties for the children.

The dining room furniture, with the exception of the

china cabinet, is the same the Kennedys had at the time. The porringers, napkin rings, forks, and spoons on the children's table are those used by Joseph, Jr., and John. They are marked with their initials. All the other china, glass, crystal, and silver also belonged to the family: the hand-painted punchbowl; the Limoges porcelain (Mrs. Kennedy's bridal service), decorated by her sister-in-law, Margaret Kennedy Burke; and the silver flatware from Mrs. Kennedy's original table service. The cut-glass water pitcher and the ruby cut-glass decanter and wine glasses were made in Prague and inherited by Mrs. Kennedy from her mother. In the china cabinet are six tea cups and saucers from the service of Sir Thomas Lipton's yacht, "Erin." Sir Thomas gave them to Rose Kennedy before her marriage.

**Kitchen.** This was the domain of the cook and the nursemaid, and was the scene of much activity. Meals were, of course, prepared here, bread was baked, and dishes washed. In addition, when the family included an infant—which it did during most of the Kennedys' years in the house—bottles were sterilized on the stove while formulas were prepared. The nurse and cook took their meals here.

*Please leave the house through the back door. A path leads to the street.*

### Administration

John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. A management assistant, whose address is 83 Beals Street, Brookline, MA 02146, is in immediate charge.

### Department of the Interior

As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has basic responsibilities for water, fish, wildlife, mineral, land, park, and recreational resources. Indian and Territorial affairs are other major concerns of America's "Department of Natural Resources." The Department works to assure the wisest choice in managing all our resources so each will make its full contribution to a better United States—now and in the future.

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
U.S. DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

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