

Newtowne Club

"If anything ever proved a 'long felt want,' the Rindge Club certainly has. It has afforded an opportunity for the young men of North Cambridge, irrespective of their church or former social affiliations, to meet together, know each other and to engage in healthy amusement."

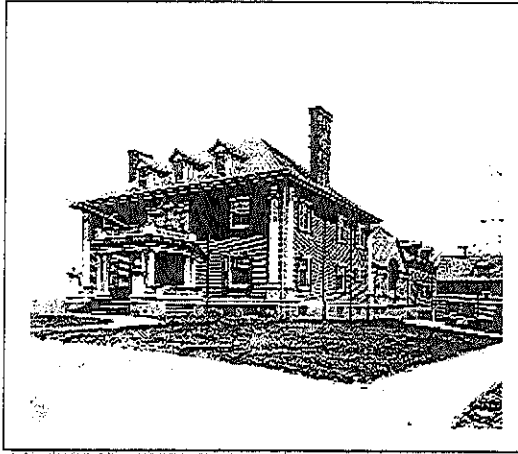
Cambridge Chronicle, January 20, 1894

Founded in 1893 as the Rindge Club but soon renamed "at the desire of Mr. Rindge," the Newtowne Club was a prominent landmark in North Cambridge.

The handsome, bright-red clubhouse, designed by the Boston architect J. Chandler Fowler, was built on this site in 1895.

The Newtowne Club offered "a fine gymnasium, with a stage, six of the best bowling alleys in the state, shower baths, billiard and pool room, library, card room, ladies' parlor, lounging room, ample lockers for a membership of five hundred, and all the appurtenances of a first class club house," reported the *Cambridge Chronicle* in 1896.

The club was organized by North Cambridge businessmen, manufacturers, and local officials. Its first president was Edwin D. Mellen, the wealthy owner of Curtis Davis & Co,



The Newtowne Club was one of the finest buildings on Massachusetts Avenue until 1924, when its porch was removed and stores were built in front of it. In this photograph, taken in about 1900, Davenport Street is at the right.

a Cambridgeport soap-maker that became the first American unit of Lever Brothers in 1897. At this time, the North Cambridge neighborhood was considered to begin at Linnaean Street, and the club drew its members from the many young and prosperous families settling in the suburban neighborhoods between Cambridge Common and Porter Square.

At the start of the 20th century, improvements in transportation changed the character of the neighborhood. Many of the fine 19th-century mansions that lined Massa-

chusetts Avenue were replaced by stores and apartment houses. Others were remodeled; few remained for long as single-family houses.

Changing social habits and an aging membership closed the Newtowne Club in 1917. The building was acquired by the Knights of Columbus and became known as Newtowne Hall. The Massachusetts Avenue frontage was sold in 1924 and a block of stores was built on the clubhouse lawn. The building was subdivided and rented to several local organizations.

In 1960, Stephen and James Zaglakas remodelled Newtowne Hall and opened the Stephen James House, an 800-seat function hall and restaurant that was a popular site for social and political functions until it closed in 1991. What remained of the Newtowne Club was razed in 1994.

Sources:

Cambridge Chronicle, January 20, 1894; July 14, 1994; July 28, 1994.

Cambridge Chronicle Semi-Centennial Souvenir, February 1, 1896.

Cambridge Historical Commission. *Report Five: Northwest Cambridge*. Cambridge, 1977.

Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities (photograph)

