Radical Events (and Bad Behavior) in Cambridge, 1819-2000

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Cambridge Historical Commission
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Harvard dining hall food fight, 1819
Spring Riot,
May 4, 1937

HARVARD STUDENTS APOLOGIZE FOR RIOT

Send Note of Deep Regret to Cambridge Police

A note of apology from members of the student body of Harvard University relative to the student riot of Thursday night was received yesterday through the mail by Chief of Police John J. McBride of Cambridge.

The anonymous note, which was typewritten on Harvard stationery, failed to draw any comment from the police head. The note follows:

“To the Cambridge police vice squad and other involved or injured citizens:

“With the calm of a true afternoon, Harvard, or, to be more exact, the class of 1935, wishes to express a formal apology to the Police Department, Fire Department and merchants in the Harvard sq vicinity for its insane and ridiculous conduct on Thursday night last, with specific apologies to Lieut. John E. Winlow and other officers involved, and indirectly to Mayor Richard M. Russell, Radcliffe College.

“Harvard leaves its position in the eye of the public to the clemency of those recipients of its outrageous conduct, at the same time hoping that these apologies will be accepted with a minimum amount of ill feeling.”

In declining to comment on the communication Chief McBride pointed out that the stationery could be purchased in several Harvard sq stores.
The folk scene in Harvard Square attracted performers from all over New England. Joan Baez, shown performing behind the kiosk in 1959, used this picture on the cover of her first album.
Cambridge Planning Board, “The Road Ahead,” ca. 1949
Sketches illustrating the effect of the proposed widening prepared by the Citizens Emergency Committee to Save Memorial Drive received national attention when they were published in *Time* magazine in February 1964.
M.D.C. police break up a Save the Sycamores demonstration, May 9, 1964
Inner Belt march on City Hall, February 26, 1966
Police break up protest against war research at M.I.T., 1969
Occupation of University Hall, April 1969
Fist poster, produced during the 1969 Harvard student strike, originated with a design by School of Design architecture student Harvey Hacker.
The 1969–70 academic year was marked by repeated violence. On April 15, 1970, antiwar protestors rioted in Harvard Square, setting fires and trashing storefronts despite a massive police presence.
Antiwar riots and marches between Harvard Square and Boston in 1970 drew national attention.

*Boston Herald*, April 18, 1970
Hayes Bickford’s was a regional chain of inexpensive cafeterias. The 24/7 Harvard Square outlet was an informal headquarters of student radicals until 1967, when the landlord forced it to close between 4:00 and 5:00 a.m. Photo ca. 1962.
“Eighteen persons arrested last month while peddling Avatar--five Harvard students among them--were convicted in East Cambridge Court yesterday of selling obscene literature.”

The Harvard Crimson, March 1, 1968
Felix’s Newsstand at 1304 Massachusetts Avenue was evicted in 1970 “because of unhappiness with some of the books and magazines” it sold (Crimson, 6/11/1970). Felix Caragianes had been arrested in 1926 by agents of Boston’s Watch & Ward Society for selling copies of H.L. Mencken’s allegedly obscene literary magazine, The American Mercury; Mencken himself came to Boston to be arrested on the same charge but was acquitted. Felix’s nephew Angelo was arrested twice in the 1960s for similar reasons. Photo September 20, 1970.
On June 11, 1970, community members led by future city councillor Saundra Graham (with bullhorn) invaded Harvard’s 319th commencement to protest the university’s intrusion into the Riverside neighborhood.
March 1971: Women of the Bread & Roses collective occupy a Harvard Building at 888 Memorial Drive

Mayor Alfred Vellucci is being refused admission.
Commencement 1971:
Radcliffe women protest
April 18, 1972: Antiwar protesters burn files at Harvard’s Center for International Affairs
The caption of this postcard reads, “This is our scene. ... Try to get in it.”
I.M. Pei’s 1973 plan for the Kennedy Library included Harvard’s Institute of Politics and School of Government in the same complex as the museum and the presidential library. Community members were terrified that the six million annual visitors to Kennedy’s gravesite would overwhelm Harvard Square.
Tent City demonstration against M.I.T., November 1, 1987
Holmes Block protest, 1997
The Tasty, ca. 1997
The Rebelliad, commemorating the food riots of 1819
PROLOGUE.

OH! IN HARVARD!

PARODY ON HOXSLODEN.

I.
At Harvard, when the sun was low,
All bustling was the kitchen’s glow;
And hot as tophet, was the flow
Of coffee, boiling rapidly.

II.
But Harvard saw another sight
When the bell rang at fall of night,
Commanding every appetite
To snatch a supper hastily.

III.
By mess and table fast arrayed,
Each Freshman drew his eating blade,
And furious every jaw-bone played,
Devouring Cooley’s cookery.

IV.
Then shook the Halls with racket riven,
Then rushed each Soph to battle driven,
And louder than the bolts of heaven,
Round smashed the brittle crockery.

When Nathan threw a piece of bread,
And hit Abijah on the head.
The wrathful Freshmen, in a trice,
Sent back another bigger slice;
Which, being butter’d pretty well,
Made greasy work where’er it fell.

And thus arose a fearful battle;
The coffee-cups and saucers rattle;
The bread-bowls fly at woful rate,
And break many a learned pate.

On either side the boldest close,
And kick and cuff with furious blows;
While others, fearful of their bones,
Slink out of sight and fight with stones,
Although they now and then appear,
And rave heroic, curse and swear;
But, when the danger comes, quick flee
Behind a neighb’ring wall or tree;