

Cogswell Photograph Collection

Cambridge Historical Commission
831 Massachusetts Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02139

Provenance: This collection was indefinitely loaned to the Cambridge Historical Commission by Roger Cogswell, grandson of Charles N. Cogswell.

Collection ID: P014

Dates: 1883-1921

Extent: 1 flat box, 1 file

Processing and finding aid by: Elise Riley, March 2018

Access: Collection is available for research under the CHC rules of use.

Collection Description:

The Cogswell Photograph Collection consists of one photo album, card photographs, and loose photographs. The photographs and related material date to the late 19th to early 20th century. The photograph album was presumably compiled by Charles N. Cogswell.

The images feature views of the Cambridge urban environment as well as members of and associates of the Cogswell family. The photographs of Cambridge depict notable places such as the Shady Hill neighborhood, Harvard University, Cambridge Common, Holmes Field, and regattas on the Charles River. Also included are hand-drawn maps accompanied by photographs of streets being built during the late 19th to early 20th centuries. Further notations are believed to have been Cogswell's. Some photographs are undated and the figures unidentified.

Processing Information:

This collection was given to the Cambridge Historical Commission with little information and so names and dates attributed to some photographs are speculative. The information given is based on notes written on the photo album pages and on the back of the photographs.

Biography Note:

The Cogswell family began living at 61 Kirkland Street May 1882. Edward R. Cogswell, a physician, and his wife Sarah moved into the house with their four children: Charles N., George P., Margaret E., and Edward R. Jr.

Charles Northend Cogswell was born July 11, 1864, moving to the Kirkland house when he was 18. Charles went to Joshua Kendall's School in Cambridge and graduated from Harvard in 1886. He went on to study architecture at M.I.T. and the Ecole de Beaux Arts, Paris. He was a practicing architect in Boston from 1893 to his retirement in 1938. Throughout this time he lived at 61 Kirkland Street. His two brothers moved out after they were married, and Charles's father lived there until his death in 1914. Charles continued living with his sister Margaret at 61 Kirkland until his death in 1941, age 76.

Cogswell was a notable architect in Boston. He was named a fellow of the American Institute of Architects in 1931. He was responsible for the redesign of 100 Beacon Street which was bought to house Noble and Greenough School in 1901. The school moved out in 1922. He served as editor of the Boston Society of Architects' bulletin since its beginning in 1916 and as chairman of the committee on public information and publications for 10 years. He was also the chairman, secretary, and treasurer of the trustees of the St. Peter's Episcopal Church's endowment fund. Cogswell also served as secretary for St. Botolph Club, a private gentlemen's club in Boston, for several years in the 1920s. In his non-professional life, Charles N. Cogswell was a member of the Dramatic Club for over 60 years and performed in many of the club's productions.

Historical Note:

This collection contains photographs primarily of Cambridge, MA. Charles N. Cogswell, the assumed creator of the photo album, took photos and documented changes to streets and construction of buildings in his neighborhood of Shady Hill. A large portion of the pictures feature 59 and 61 Kirkland Street. The house the Cogswells lived in was split into two each side given a separate address. The Norton family lived in 59 Kirkland during the same period as the Cogswells. The house was designed and built in 1858 by Charles W. Eliot. The house was split since its beginning; one half for Charles Eliot and the other for his father. Grace Norton owned and lived in the 59 Cogswell half from 1881 to its demolition in 1927. The house is currently owned by Harvard University and houses the Weatherhead Center for International Affairs.

The earlier photographs from 1882-1890 show the environs of and around 61 Kirkland Street including Norton's Woods and Shady Hill. The later photographs from around 1910-1920 show the development of the Shady Hills area. A series of photographs within the collection tracks the infrastructural growth around Irving, Scott and Francis Streets. Irving Street became home to many notable Cambridge residents. Of note, in 1891 when the photo was taken, Professor Josiah Royce lived at 103 Irving Street with his wife and William James at 95 Irving. Royce was a tenured professor of philosophy at Harvard University. 70 years later the house would be home to Paul and Julia Child. Photos of the construction of the Andover Seminary, Gore Hall, and the Harvard freshmen dormitories are also included in this collection.

Scope and Content

This collection holds 115 photographs and 4 miscellaneous papers. 87 remain housed in the scrapbook they were donated in, and remaining 28 are loose photographs, 4 of which are attached to boards. 4 of the photos are cyanotypes and the remainder are black and white. The 4 miscellaneous papers are article clippings and a numbered inventory list of photographs. It's unclear how the list relates to the rest of the collection. Summarily the photos are of buildings and construction in Cambridge as well as members of Charles N. Cogswell's family. This includes Charles N. Cogswell himself, George P. Cogswell, Edward R. Cogswell Sr., Josephine F. Cogswell, and Elliot P. Cogswell. Several individuals and buildings are unidentified.

Box List

1 photograph album, 87 photographs; 28 photographs and 4 miscellaneous papers, removed from original folder titled "Miscellaneous" and placed in a separate folder.

Related Resources:

Digitized images from this collection can be found on the Cambridge Historical Commission's Flickr account: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/cambridgehistoricalcommission/albums/72157689445876820>

Boston Public Library's "City of Boston Blueprints" Collection

St. Botolph Club Records at the Massachusetts Historical Society

Added Entries

103 Irving Street

Noble and Greenough School

100 Beacon Street

Photography

Cambridge – Massachusetts

Scrapbooks – 19th century

Scrapbooks – 20th century

Buildings – Cambridge – Massachusetts

Architecture, Domestic

Architects