



John F. Kennedy delivers his Inaugural Address, January 20, 1961. Jacqueline Kennedy and Dwight D. Eisenhower are seated behind him.

John Fitzgerald Kennedy

On May 29, 1917, John Fitzgerald Kennedy was born in the master bedroom of this modest home in Brookline, Massachusetts. The great grandson of Irish immigrants, and the second son of Joseph P. and Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy, this bright, spirited boy was filled with promise.

Kennedy is remembered as the man who led the United States to a New Frontier: the youngest individual and first Catholic elected to the American Presidency, he molded a sweeping Civil Rights Bill, launched the Peace Corps, promoted the space race, and negotiated a Nuclear Test Ban treaty during the hottest years of the Cold War. Also memorable were his successes in promoting arts and education, confronting corporate power, and expanding health insurance and public welfare legislation.

As the witty and energetic "media President," Kennedy inspired the nation with eloquent speeches and endless drive. His wife Jacqueline embodied elegance and verve. Together they captured the heart and imagination of a new generation. When he challenged Americans to "Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country," they responded with enthusiasm and activism.

Behind that public career, behind the romance and mythology of what came to be known as "Camelot," lay Jack Kennedy the private man. It was no coincidence that this son of a powerful, politically minded father, surrounded by bright and talented siblings, became an ambitious man, with a sense of family loyalty and commitment to public service. Nor was it surprising that his attentive, highly educated mother helped develop his quest for knowledge,

an appreciation of history and the arts, and the willingness to accept the consequences of his deeds. Clearly, the character behind Kennedy's public actions was influenced by his childhood in Brookline.

Though his life ended tragically on November 22, 1963, leaving the man and the vision in midstream, John F. Kennedy left an enduring legacy: "All this will not be finished in the first one hundred days. Nor will it be finished in the first one thousand days . . . nor even perhaps in our lifetime on this planet. But let us begin. In your hands, my fellow citizens, more than mine, will rest the final success or failure of our course."

"Let the word go forth from this time and place . . . that the torch has been passed to a new generation of Americans."



1914 World War I begins.

Joseph P. Kennedy and Rose Fitzgerald marry and move to Brookline, Massachusetts.

1917 John Fitzgerald Kennedy born at 83 Beals Street.

1927 The Kennedys move to New York.

1938 Joseph P. Kennedy becomes ambassador to Great Britain.

1939 World War II begins.

Left to right: Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy, 1927; Joseph P. Kennedy Sr., ca. 1914, one of the youngest bank presidents in the United States; Joseph P. Kennedy Jr. and John in 1925; John Kennedy as a member of the Dexter School football team, 1927. He and his brother Joe were teammates.



1940 John F. Kennedy graduates from Harvard College.

1943 Japanese sink PT109, patrol boat commanded by JFK.

1946 JFK elected to Congress.

1952 JFK elected to Senate.

1953 JFK marries Jacqueline Lee Bouvier.

1957 JFK's book, *Profiles in Courage*, awarded Pulitzer Prize.



1960 JFK elected 35th President.

1961 JFK signs bill establishing Peace Corps.



1962 JFK urges US to put an astronaut on the moon.

Cuban Missile Crisis.

1963 JFK proposes sweeping Civil Rights Bill.

JFK signs Nuclear Test Ban Treaty.



JFK assassinated in Dallas, Texas.

1969 Rose Kennedy dedicates John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site.

The Brookline Years

In 1914, when Rose and Joseph Kennedy moved into their first home at 83 Beals Street in Brookline, they were breaking—and making—tradition. Both members of this newly wedded couple were grandchildren of immigrants and children of politically prominent fathers who had risen through the ranks of Irish Catholic Boston.

While many young couples of their era settled into their parents' home or a rented apartment, Joseph Kennedy insisted on owning a house in the largely middle class, streetcar suburb of Brookline. Mrs. Kennedy explained that her husband "had a strong need for privacy, for independence, for being able to choose the people he wanted to be with in close association." She herself valued a healthful environment in which to raise her family, and recalled "a sense of openness in the neighborhood, with a vacant lot on one side of us and another

across the street, and fine big shade trees lining the sidewalks." Both Kennedys appreciated that the Beals Street home, where they lived from 1914 to 1920, was close to playgrounds, a Catholic church, good schools, Coolidge Corner retail stores, and trolleys to Boston. When they outgrew the Beals Street house, the family moved two blocks away to Abbottsford Road, where they lived until 1927.

Jack enjoyed many privileges while growing up in Brookline, but he also faced many challenges that helped shape him. From his parents he learned loyalty to family, love of knowledge and reading, pride in his Irish Catholic heritage, and a desire for social acceptance and position. Witnessing the frustrations experienced by Rosemary,



his sister with intellectual disabilities, and grappling with his own illnesses taught him perseverance, determination, and compassion for others. And his older brother Joe—willful, bright, and competitive—challenged Jack to develop, master, and have confidence in his own strengths and talents.

Though he left Brookline on his road to the White House, Kennedy fondly recalled his family's ties to Massachusetts. "There is within each man a very special affection for the place of his birth," he wrote. Later he said, "The enduring qualities of Massachusetts . . . are an indelible part of my life, my convictions, my view of the past, and my hopes for the future."

"I believe the times demand new invention, innovation, imagination, decision. . . . My call is to the young in heart, regardless of age . . ."

PHOTO CREDITS: FAR LEFT—© BETTMANN / CORBIS; ROSE KENNEDY PORTRAIT, JOE JR. AND JOHN AS YOUNG BOYS—COURTESY JOHN F. KENNEDY LIBRARY FOUNDATION; ROSE KENNEDY WITH CHILDREN (TOP)—BACHRACH STUDIO, BOSTON; ALL OTHER PHOTOS—COURTESY JOHN F. KENNEDY LIBRARY



Clockwise from top: John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site; Rose Kennedy at the dedication of the national historic site in 1969; John and Joseph P. Kennedy Jr. at the Beals Street home, 1919.

"We were very happy here and although we did not know about the days ahead, we were enthusiastic and optimistic about the future."

Rose Kennedy, 1969

Neighborhood Walking Tour

Rose and Joseph Kennedy began their life together in Brookline, Massachusetts, where they joined their early hopes and ambitions to the promise of this vibrant and growing community. For 10 years these neighborhood streets linked the daily life of John Fitzgerald Kennedy to those of neighbors, friends, and schoolmates. Much of the Kennedy-era streetscape is preserved; this tour and map will guide you in the footsteps of a young boy whose future course encompassed the world. *Most sites are not open to the public; please be considerate of property and privacy.*

1 John F. Kennedy National Historic Site

83 Beals Street

Following their wedding in 1914, Rose and Joseph Kennedy made their first home in this modest, five-year-old Colonial Revival house. At that time, it was the last house on the lovely, sycamore-lined street. "Here," Mrs. Kennedy later remembered, "we had light and air." Four of their nine children were born while the Kennedys lived here—Joseph Jr., John ("Jack"), Rosemary, and Kathleen. Like many Boston women of that era, Mrs. Kennedy preferred to deliver her children at home. In 1917 Jack was born in his parents' second floor bedroom, "in the bed nearest the window, so the doctor would have proper light."

Here the Kennedy children enjoyed family sing-alongs at the parlor piano, instructive discussions in the dining room, and nighttime book readings.

2 51 Abbottsford Road
Corner of Abbottsford and Naples
In 1920 the growing Kennedy

family moved to a more spacious home on Abbottsford Road, where they lived until 1927. It reflected Joseph Sr.'s successes as one of the nation's youngest bank presidents, a shrewd investor in the stock market, and a pioneering producer in the motion picture industry. From the large wraparound porch, the Kennedy family—which expanded to include Eunice, Patricia, and Robert—greeted friends, neighbors, and delivery people passing by.

3 Saint Aidan's Roman Catholic Church

201 Freeman Street

"On pleasant days, I took the children for walks," Rose Kennedy recalled. "I wheeled one in a carriage and two or three toddled along with me. I made it a point each day to take them to church." The church that Mrs. Kennedy and her children visited daily—and the place the family worshipped each Sunday—was Saint Aidan's, built in 1911 by the well-known Maginnis and Walsh architectural firm. Jack was baptized and served as altar boy here. A parishioner remembered him



Nursery at the Beals Street home

as a delightfully irreverent child who would "roller skate up to the chapel door as fast as he could go, tear the skates off, run in, go to confession, come out, put the skates on, and off he'd go."

4 Former site of Noble and Greenough Lower School / Dexter School

175 Freeman Street

Joseph Kennedy wanted his sons to associate with prominent families, so he enrolled Joe Jr. and Jack in Noble and Greenough Lower School in 1924. The boys were the only Irish Catholics at this private school that prepared students for eminent colleges. The school soon merged with Dexter School.

Joe Jr. excelled in academics. Though Jack did well in history and English, his strengths were sports and leadership; by age nine, he was quarterback and captain of the football team, on which Joe also played. When they were hassled for being Irish or Catholic, Joe often responded with fists while Jack stayed on the sidelines, quietly betting marbles that his brother would win the fight.



Saint Aidan's Roman Catholic Church

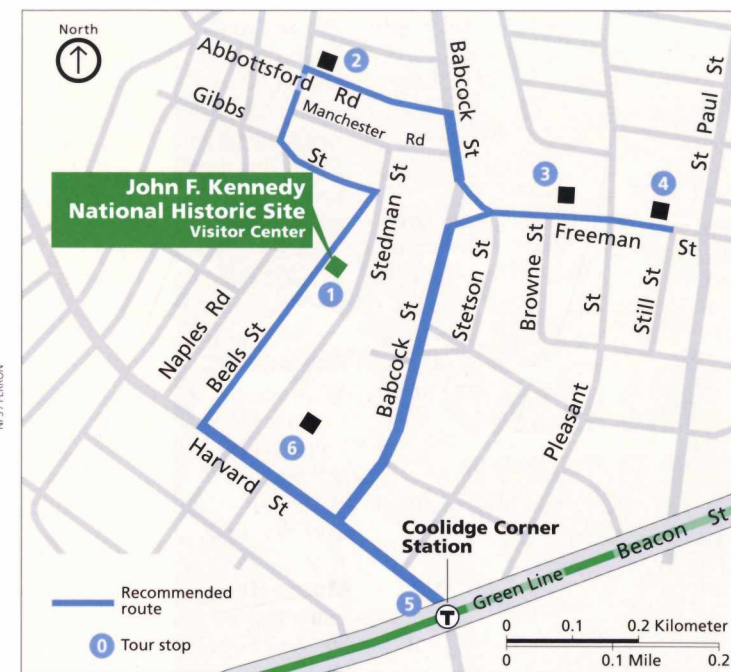
5 Coolidge Corner

Corner of Beacon and Harvard
Coolidge Corner was a retail hub of Brookline and a frequent destination of the Kennedy family. With "one child in his kiddycar and . . . one or two others on each side," Rose Kennedy would head out to shop at the Five and Dime, the bank, or the 1898 SS Pierce building. Here, the Beacon Street rail and electric trolley lines connected this streetcar suburb to downtown Boston, where much of the Kennedys' social, cultural, and political life was centered.

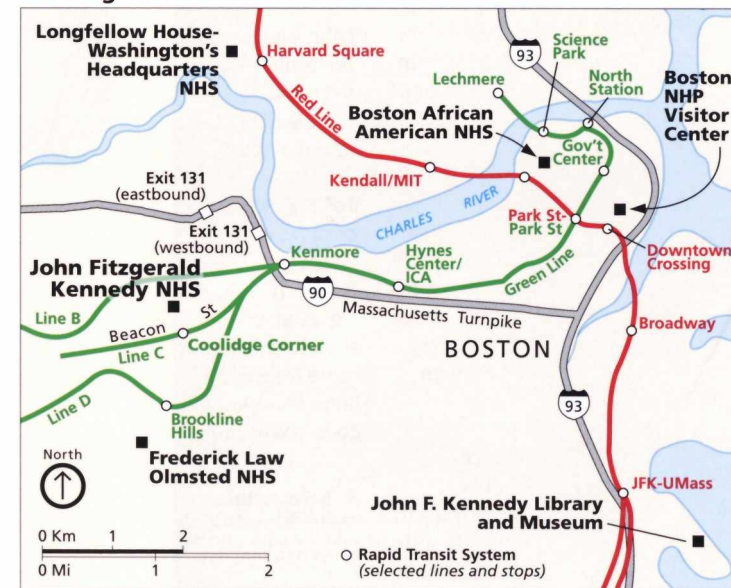
6 Florida Ruffin Ridley School

347 Harvard Street

When Jack attended this school it was called the Edward Devotion School. Named for an early benefactor of Brookline's public schools, it was known for academic excellence. Jack was an acknowledged daydreamer; at age six, he ran home to warn his mother that his teacher was coming to discuss his idleness. Jack's defense: "You know, I'm getting on all right, and if you study too much, you're liable to go crazy."



Getting to Brookline



About Your Visit

Gift to the American People

In 1961 the town of Brookline placed a commemorative plaque in front of the house at 83 Beals Street; in 1964 the house was designated a National Historic Landmark. In 1966 Rose Kennedy chose to memorialize her son and his contributions by preserving his birthplace and boyhood home. The Kennedy family repurchased the house, and Rose Kennedy enlisted decorator Robert Luddington, of the Jordan Marsh retail store, to recreate the home's 1917 appearance. Working from her remembrances, Mrs. Kennedy and Luddington assembled furnishings, photographs, and significant mementos for the principal rooms. Rose Kennedy recorded her reminiscences of family life in the house; these evocative recordings are part of the tour.

The Kennedy family donated the house to the National Park Service as a "gift . . . to the American people," and the site was opened to the public in 1969.

The site is open seasonally, Wednesday through Sunday, mid-May to October. Call or visit the park website for hours. Guided tours of the house and neighborhood are free but require tickets, which are available first-come, first-served from the basement-level visitor center.

How to Reach the Site

By Subway: Take Green Line ("C"—Cleveland Circle) trolley to Coolidge Corner stop. Walk four blocks north on Harvard Street, turn right on Beals Street, and continue to number 83.

By car: From Exit 131 (eastbound) or Exit 131 (westbound) on I-90/Massachusetts Turnpike, follow Allston/Brighton exit ramp, merge onto Cambridge Street, and go one mile. At fourth light, turn left on Harvard Street and proceed about one mile. Turn left on Beals Street and go to number 83. Limited street parking.

Accessibility

Visitors with accessibility needs should call before coming. The house is not wheelchair-accessible; the basement-level visitor center is fully accessible. Service animals are allowed.

More Information

John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site
83 Beals St.
Brookline, MA 02446
617-566-7937
www.nps.gov/jofi

John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site is one of over 400 parks in the National Park System. Learn about national parks at www.nps.gov.

John F. Kennedy Library and Museum

Continue exploring President Kennedy's life, leadership, and legacy at this presidential archive at Columbia Point in Boston. For more information call toll free 866-JFK-1960 (866-535-1960) or go to www.jfklibrary.org.

National Park Foundation
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