



FAIRMONT COPLEY PLAZA

BOSTON



An Icon through the Ages

© 1911 Fairmont
Boston



Photo credit: Boston Pictorial Archive, Boston Public Library

A HOTEL THAT LOVES A GOOD STORY

In Boston, tea parties start revolutions. It's where Camelot comes to life and where home runs become the stuff of legends. And few, if any, buildings in our city have hosted more extraordinary moments than the Grande Dame of Boston, Fairmont Copley Plaza.

Since our grand opening in 1912—inaugurated by Mayor John F. Fitzgerald, grandfather of President John F. Kennedy, and attended by more than a thousand well-wishers—Fairmont Copley Plaza has inspired many artists, and captivated countless dignitaries and film stars. Along the way, we have played a starring role in the history of this city, of America and of the world.

The excavation site in 1911 for what would become The Copley Plaza after 16 months and \$5.5 million in construction.

Horse-drawn carts ferry the Museum of Fine Arts' collection a mile away from Copley Square to its current site.

1909

The Museum of Fine Arts moves to its current home on Huntington Avenue, allowing for the construction of The Copley Plaza to begin.



Photo credit: Boston Pictorial Archive, Boston Public Library

Linda Basse Lives in a Boston Hotel, But She Goes To Her South Reading Farm Every Day



Linda Basse, a young woman who broke barriers as the owner/operator of the largest chicken incubator in New England, resides at The Copley Plaza while commuting to work each day in 1924.

1920

John Singer Sargent resides at the hotel while painting his murals at the Boston Public Library. He also paints the ceiling of the Oval Room to represent the four seasons, but this work is covered up in the 1940s.

A ROARING BEGINNING

Despite some delays—in part due to some of our furniture being lost in the *Titanic* disaster—newspapers heralded the opening of our hotel as “a new era in hotel-keeping, not only in Boston but in the entire country.” Both inside and out, French and Venetian Renaissance flourishes mingled with stately Classical design. While many small—and some not-so-small—changes have been made to the interiors of our hotel over the decades, this timeless style abides, transporting guests through the eras every time they grace our doors.

We owe this distinctive look to designer Henry Janeway Hardenbergh, who also designed our sister hotel, The Plaza Hotel, in New York. Hardenbergh used many of the same plans for the two hotels—and both Plazas also share the famous back-to-back double “P” monogram he created to mimic the elaborate initials of many private clubs of the era.



The grandest lobby in Boston: a 21-foot-high glass opalite ceiling complements Italian marble floors and columns throughout the 5,000 square-foot space.



A GREAT PARTY NEVER GOES OUT OF STYLE

The twin troubles of Prohibition and the Great Depression cast a pall over Boston. But no matter the backdrop, the city's indomitable spirit lived on at The Copley Plaza. Throughout the late 1920s and into the 1930s, revelers took to the bars and salons of our hotel, with “tea” dances providing cover for revelers to celebrate together—somewhat discreetly.

Prohibition came to an end in 1933, ushering in a new era of nightlife at The Copley Plaza, the heart of which was the Merry-Go-Round Bar. Among the bar's first attendees were Massachusetts Governor Joseph B. Ely and Senator David I. Walsh, both vocal opponents of Prohibition, who toasted the opening with a round of martinis. While the carousel left our hotel in 1978, its original track is still inlaid in copper as an homage to this unforgettable chapter.



1933

The Merry-Go-Round Bar—now OAK Long Bar + Kitchen—hosts patrons as they celebrate the end of Prohibition in the way only Bostonians can.

Workers at The Copley Plaza unload a shipment of Champagne and spirits to the hotel after the passing of the 21st Amendment to end Prohibition.



From 1934 until 1978, patrons could be forgiven for thinking the room was spinning—they could take their seats on the Merry-Go-Round Bar's carousel while completing a full rotation over the course of an hour.

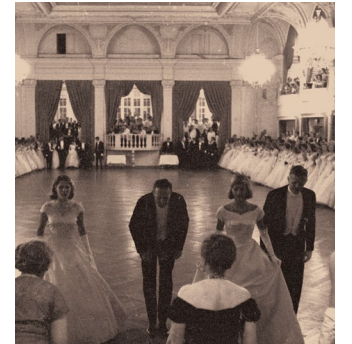


LIFTING SPIRITS AT HOME AND ABROAD

The advent of World War II meant sacrifices on the home front, and The Copley Plaza was no exception. To help our hotel uphold its standard of excellence, the minimum age requirement for elevator operators was raised to 65 years old. Doing so ensured that all draft-age men could fight overseas without fear of losing their jobs at home—and allowed the gentlemen operating the elevators to lend an air of grandfatherly gravitas to every visit.

After the war, our hotel returned to its role as the social epicenter of the city. Visited by the likes of General Douglas MacArthur, former President Harry Truman and heads of state from all over the world—England, Belgium, Greece, Thailand, Abyssinia, Iran and Denmark among them—The Copley Plaza emerged as a hotel without equal in Boston, welcoming guests with equal parts privacy and personality, no matter the occasion.

During World War II, The Copley Plaza significantly raises the age for elevator “boys” to release younger workers for war production activities. At the time of the photo, the combined age of the eight operators was 518 years old.



Boston debutantes are “presented” to society while accompanied by their fathers at the Grand Ballroom of The Copley Plaza in 1958.

1951

General Douglas MacArthur is feted with a grand night of dinner and dancing in the Oval Room, featuring a chef’s special of “grilled ham steak Hawaiian style.”

1962

Nearly 1,000 guests line up to shake the hand of President John F. Kennedy, Boston's most beloved son, in the Grand Ballroom.



Guests gather amid the palms of the Tea Court, which lures ladies from Beacon Hill and Commonwealth Avenue in the afternoons for crumpets, sweets and sandwiches.

THE GLAMOUR OF THE GOLDEN ERA

Throughout the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, Fairmont Copley Plaza capitalized on a reputation as one of the most sought-after destinations in the United States. Indeed, nearly every American president since Howard Taft has stayed here. No other occasion reflected this prominence quite like the 1961 visit by King Saud of Saudi Arabia, who flew in \$25,000 of flowers—\$250,000 in today's money—to transform the Grand Ballroom into a lush garden paradise for his 55 guests.

Hollywood celebrities and world-renowned musicians took notice as well, with a parade of luminaries lighting up our halls. Singers Frank Sinatra, Lena Horne and Tony Bennett all stayed here during this era, while actors Richard Burton and Elizabeth Taylor held *both* of their honeymoons here: first, in 1964, and then again in 1975.

King Saud's celebration unfolds with dignitaries from both Saudi Arabia and the United States—with opulent gold table service used for the meal.





Kitchen staff, seen here shortly after the opening in 1912, prepare for the day's service—and a century of culinary innovation.

A TASTE OF NEW ENGLAND

Along with artists, politicians and actors, our halls have long been home to culinary pioneers—and a distinctly New England sensibility toward dining. In the 1980s and 1990s, chefs Jasper White and Lydia Shire oversaw the kitchens at The Copley Plaza, a period that proved pivotal in defining the emerging New American cuisine. With a focus on fresh, local ingredients, White and Shire thrust regional dishes—emphasizing oysters, chowders, lobster and other seafood dishes—into the national spotlight, shaping palates across the country and around the world.

Chef Julia Child also forged a special connection to The Copley Plaza; she frequently stayed, dined and socialized here while visiting Boston. Child was so smitten with The Copley Plaza that she held her 80th birthday gala here on November 2, 1992, featuring top chefs from around the country honoring “television’s first lady of the kitchen.” Shortly thereafter, in 1996, our hotel became the seventh to join Fairmont Hotels, taking the name—Fairmont Copley Plaza—we carry to this day.

1966

Fifty-seven waitresses seeking to work at The Copley Plaza demand to join the men’s-only restaurant union. Courts side with the women, allowing them to work shoulder-to-shoulder with men throughout the hotel.

Staff of the Merry-Go-Round Bar in uniform; combined with the magnificent decor, the outfits bring the ambience of a British Officers’ Club to one of Boston’s most sought-after gathering places.



2009

President Barack Obama visits the private family gathering for the funeral of Senator Ted Kennedy.



The United Kingdom's Prince Charles attends a British consul reception during his visit to Boston in 1986, marking Harvard University's 350th anniversary. Two dozen violinists and masses of flowers from around the world create an atmosphere fit for a future king.

THERE'S SO MUCH MORE TO BE TOLD

The Grande Dame presides over Copley Square today as she has for more than a century, chronicling the eras as she beckons them in. For all the social history that has unfolded here, our hotel has also been at the heart of key technological advances in the industry:

- First hotel in Boston to be completely air-conditioned
- First hotel in the world to accept credit cards
- First hotel in the world to have an international reservations system
- One of the first hotels in the world to offer direct telephone dialing for guests

Yet after all the decades, the galas and the renovations, Fairmont Copley Plaza's core promise remains the same: to enchant every guest who graces our doors. Whether a Bostonian is stopping by for an evening, a president for a party or a traveler for weeks at a time, there's always a story waiting for them here. Maybe oysters and Champagne, too.





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