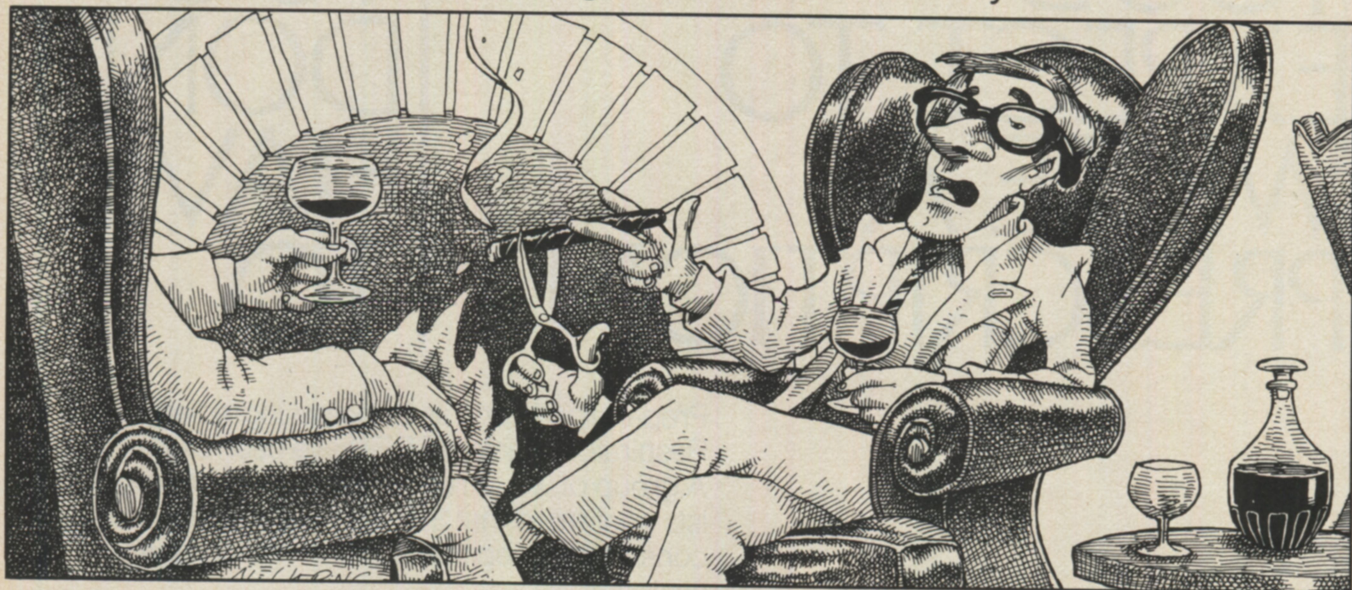


# Boston's Brahmins

An Entirely Subjective Perspective On A City Celebrating Its 350th Birthday



**P**ull up a wing chair by the fire here and let me pour you a brandy. As you probably know, this city of ours, Boston, just turned 350 years old. There's this festival going on called "Jubilee 350," with hundreds of exhibits, performances, and—to save the worst for last—speeches, lasting all summer long. I don't know why they can't let the poor city pass her anniversary in peace, but that's modernity for you.

The thing is that with all this hullabaloo, people are going to start to talk about the city, and that means, inevitably, they're going to jabber about us Brahmins. Even though we've been whacked and splayed, vilified and slandered, for going on four centuries, they're not going to let up on us now. They'll joke about our Haav'd accents—well at least we can get in!—and how we pawk owa cahs in Haav'd Yaad and only talk to a Cabot or a Lowell or God. They'll razz us for our primness and austerity. Don't they know decency and frugality when they see it? We've had our good times. As we say at the Porcellian Club, *Dum Vivimus Vivamus*—while we live, let's live.

Goodness knows they've tried to do

*John Sedgwick admits, blushing, that he is a member of a Brahmin family.*

us in. Time after time after time. But we've always won out in the end. Well, almost.

## Only The Best Families

Back in 1849, a proletarian professor of anatomy at Harvard, I'm ashamed to say, snatched up Dr. George Parkman, one of the foremost members of our little band and one of the five richest men in Boston, chopped him into little bits, and stuffed him into the fire. John Webster was the scoundrel's name; he was the son of an apothecary.

You call that manners? So Dr. Parkman was a little overeager to collect payment of the \$2,000 Webster owed him, importuning the professor in the hallways and sitting in the front row during his anatomy lectures giving him ghoulish looks. Where would the country be if everyone ignored his fiscal obligations? Parkman was doing Webster a favor, the way I look at it.

But Webster refused to follow Parkman's directions. He lured the good doctor into his medical school office, knocked him over the head, carved him up, and tossed him into the furnace like so many lumps of coal. But Brahmins don't burn so easily. Even after a fortnight, a good deal of Dr. Parkman remained. The bits and pieces ultimately were discovered

and identified by the police; Webster was sent to the gallows. Let that be a lesson to him. Don't mess with a Brahmin.

## True Bluebloods

But time passed and the lesson went unheeded. In 1919, the mostly Irish police force tried to buck police commissioner Edwin Curtis, whose family had come to Boston back in 1632. They joined the American Federation of Labor to try to increase their wages. Okay, so first-year policemen were still paid the same sixteen cents an hour for an eighty-seven-hour workweek that they had been paid for the last five years, even though the value of a penny had nearly halved. Teach them a little Brahmin thrift. Curtis promised to fire them if they tried to go union, so they went on strike, leaving Boston prey to every Tom, Dick, and Harry with nothing better to do than ransack our Athens.

And who marched in to fill the breach? We Brahmins, of course. Godfrey Lowell Cabot—now there was a man!—showed up in a naval cape with a brace of six-shooters strapped around his waist. Responding to a personal appeal from Harvard's President Lowell, bless him, college football coach Bob Fisher uttered these heroic words to his team:

"To hell with football, if men are needed to protect Boston!"

So all Harvard's football players and a good many of its students turned out. Among them was a twenty-four-year-old Harvard Law School student named Charles Coolidge, no relation to Calvin, the do-nothing governor and president. Brother Charles didn't wear a uniform, just stuck a pistol in his pocket and took up a patrol by what's now the Greyhound Bus station in Park Square. Pretty soon a crowd of rowdies surged up from old Scollay Square and hemmed in Coolidge and a host of other volunteers. Bluebloods embattled again. But the Brahmins played it cagey. They waited until just the right moment, then yelled, "Now!" and ran hell-bent at the insurgents. Coolidge himself, a fleet foot, ran down one scofflaw and bopped him over the head with his nightstick so mightily the man went down like a tub of lard. "Blood was pouring out of

his eyes," Coolidge told me (I wasn't there myself). "I'd seen quite a few men bleeding from the eyes during the war, and I knew he was done for." When a sergeant came up to him to ask how things were going, Coolidge had to tell him he thought he'd just killed a man. The officer said, "Good for you!" Good for him.

The next morning, after the ruckus had died down, Coolidge went to the police station to inquire about his victim of the night before. "The fellow was up and around," Coolidge reports. "All he had was a headache." See? The price of liberty is eternal vigilance, just as they say. Got to watch 'em every minute.

#### The Wages Of Sin

That's what the upstanding Methodist minister and Harvard man J. Franklin Chase believed. When he saw the strictures of morality and decency being hacked to bits by the underclasses, he didn't turn the other

cheek. Why, the rabble was neglecting to cover the legs of pianos and—horrible as it is to admit—was mixing the genders of authors on their bookshelves and worse. Chase headed an institution designed to preserve our freedom—our freedom from such vulgarity, I mean—called the Watch and Ward. Chase was quite a man. When he uncovered brothels and gambling joints and other satanic dens, he busted them up with his bare hands. "I've got plenty of red blood," the minister liked to say, "and I like to fight."

So when he read in the revolting *American Mercury*, edited by that rambunctious H. L. Mencken, a revolting, salacious story called "Hatrack," about—I can hardly bring myself to utter the words—a prostitute who conducts her business in a cemetery, he resolved to fix that Mencken. Chase sent word to news dealers to withdraw the offending issue from the stands or suffer his wrath. The *American Mercury* disappeared from  
continued on page 146 →

Schering

**convenience**  
**FULVICIN<sup>®</sup> P/G**  
brand of GRISEOFULVIN ULTRAMICROSIZED  
**250 mg. tablet**

...too valuable to keep in reserve

# Macrochantin®

(nitrofurantoin macrocrystals)

Capsules: 25, 50, 100mg

**INDICATIONS:** Macrochantin is indicated for the treatment of urinary tract infections when due to susceptible strains of *Escherichia coli*, enterococci, *Staphylococcus aureus* (it is not indicated for the treatment of associated renal cortical or perinephric abscesses), and certain susceptible strains of *Klebsiella* species, *Enterobacter* species, and *Proteus* species.

**NOTE:** Specimens for culture and susceptibility testing should be obtained prior to and during drug administration.

**CONTRAINDICATIONS:** Anuria, oliguria, or significant impairment of renal function (creatinine clearance under 40 ml per minute) are contraindications to therapy with this drug. Treatment of this type of patient carries an increased risk of toxicity because of impaired excretion of the drug. For the same reason, this drug is much less effective under these circumstances.

The drug is contraindicated in pregnant patients at term as well as in infants under one month of age because of the possibility of hemolytic anemia due to immature enzyme systems (glutathione instability).

The drug is also contraindicated in those patients with known hypersensitivity to Macrochantin, Furadantin® (nitrofurantoin), and other nitrofurantoin preparations.

**WARNINGS:** Acute, subacute and chronic pulmonary reactions have been observed in patients treated with nitrofurantoin products. If these reactions occur, the drug should be withdrawn and appropriate measures should be taken.

An insidious onset of pulmonary reactions (diffuse interstitial pneumonitis or pulmonary fibrosis, or both) in patients on long-term therapy warrants close monitoring of these patients.

There have been isolated reports giving pulmonary reactions as a contributing cause of death. (See Hypersensitivity reactions.)

Cases of hemolytic anemia of the primaquine sensitivity type have been induced by Macrochantin. The hemolysis appears to be linked to a glucose-6-phosphate dehydrogenase deficiency in the red blood cells of the affected patients. This deficiency is found in 10 percent of Negroes and a small percentage of ethnic groups of Mediterranean and Near-Eastern origin. Any sign of hemolysis is an indication to discontinue the drug. Hemolysis ceases when the drug is withdrawn.

*Pseudomonas* is the organism most commonly implicated in superinfections in patients treated with Macrochantin.

Hepatitis, including chronic active hepatitis, has been observed rarely. Fatalities have been reported. The mechanism appears to be of an idiosyncratic hypersensitive type.

**PRECAUTIONS:** Peripheral neuropathy may occur with Macrochantin therapy; this may become severe or irreversible. Fatalities have been reported. Predisposing conditions such as renal impairment (creatinine clearance under 40 ml per minute), anemia, diabetes, electrolyte imbalance, vitamin B deficiency, and debilitating disease may enhance such occurrence.

**Usage in Pregnancy:** The safety of Macrochantin during pregnancy and lactation has not been established. Use of this drug in women of child-bearing potential requires that the anticipated benefit be weighed against the possible risks.

**ADVERSE REACTIONS: Gastrointestinal reactions:** Anorexia, nausea and emesis are the most frequent reactions; abdominal pain and diarrhea occur less frequently. These dose-related toxicity reactions can be minimized by reduction of dosage, especially in the female patient. Hepatitis occurs rarely.

**Hypersensitivity reactions:** Pulmonary sensitivity reactions may occur, which can be acute, subacute, or chronic.

Acute reactions are commonly manifested by fever, chills, cough, chest pain, dyspnea, pulmonary infiltration with consolidation or pleural effusion on x-ray, and eosinophilia. The acute reactions usually occur within the first week of treatment and are reversible with cessation of therapy. Resolution may be dramatic.

In subacute reactions, fever and eosinophilia are observed less often. Recovery is somewhat slower, perhaps as long as several months. If the symptoms are not recognized as being drug related and nitrofurantoin is not withdrawn, symptoms may become more severe.

Chronic pulmonary reactions are more likely to occur in patients who have been on continuous nitrofurantoin therapy for six months or longer. The insidious onset of malaise, dyspnea on exertion, cough, and altered pulmonary function are common manifestations. Roentgenographic and histologic findings of diffuse interstitial pneumonitis or fibrosis, or both, are also common manifestations. Fever is rarely prominent.

The severity of these chronic pulmonary reactions and the degree of their resolution appear to be related to the duration of therapy after the first clinical signs appear. Pulmonary function may be permanently impaired even after cessation of nitrofurantoin therapy. This risk is greater when pulmonary reactions are not recognized early.

**Dermatologic reactions:** Maculopapular, erythematous, or eczematous eruption, pruritus, urticaria, and angioedema.

**Other hypersensitivity reactions:** Anaphylaxis, asthmatic attack in patients with history of asthma, cholestatic jaundice, hepatitis, including chronic active hepatitis, drug fever, and arthralgia.

**Hematologic reactions:** Hemolytic anemia, granulocytopenia, leukopenia, eosinophilia, and megaloblastic anemia. Return of the blood picture to normal has followed cessation of therapy.

**Neurological reactions:** Peripheral neuropathy, headache, dizziness, nystagmus, and drowsiness.

**Miscellaneous reactions:** Transient alopecia. As with other antimicrobial agents, superinfections by resistant organisms may occur. With Macrochantin, however, these are limited to the genitourinary tract because suppression of normal bacterial flora elsewhere in the body does not occur.

## Eaton Laboratories Inc.

A subsidiary of MortonNorwich Products, Inc.,  
Manati, Puerto Rico 00701

Address medical inquiries to:  
Norwich-Eaton Pharmaceuticals,  
Medical Department, Norwich, New York 13815

## CELEBRATION

continued from page 143



every magazine rack from Cape Cod to the Berkshires.

But the smart-aleck Mencken wasn't one to go down without a fight. He took a train up to Boston to hawk the magazine personally. Chase would have to take him to court to stop him. Sure enough, when H.L. set up by the city's Park Street subway station, with hundreds of left-leaning Harvard undergraduates cheering him on, the Reverend Chase came up to press a half-dollar into his palm to purchase the disgusting magazine. Mencken, ever the show-off, bit into the coin to assure himself it was genuine, then handed the *Mercury* over. When the transaction was completed, Chase whistled for a cop to haul the radical off to jail.

Unfortunately for the defenders of pure and unsullied literature, Mencken wound up with a free-thinking judge who said only that the magazine seemed overpriced and dismissed the complaint.

But Chase had the last word, sly devil, prevailing upon the more sensible authorities at the U.S. Postal Service to ban the publication from the mail. That fixed Mencken's wagon. Although the action came too late to affect the issue containing "Hatrack," it forced Mencken to cut an article on the social life of coeds from the next month's edition and, generally, tone down his act. Under postal rules, a magazine banned twice in a row was banned for good.

## Russians 8, Brahmins Zip

But we don't always win. In fact we lost a big one back in 1905 to the Russians at the Somerset Club, of all places. The Somerset is a splendid granite edifice with what they call "double-breasted bays" on stately Beacon Street, overlooking the Common. We have a lovely time in there. We run impromptu steeplechases over the furniture in the Morning Room and play poker, but mostly we just sit around and drink. At the Somerset, I'm proud to say, we take our martinis mixed ten to one.

Dedicated and proficient tipplers though we be, when, in 1905, trio of Russian diplomats came to dinner—that's lunch to you—we met our match. (I wasn't there, I hasten to say.) To mark the occasion, the clubmen invited their guests for a gin fizz or two on the lovely patio we call, with deep affection, the "Bricks." Just to be sociable, someone made up a little toast to the tsar. To the Tsar, he said. As everybody clinked glasses, the Russians insisted that the Americans observe the old Russian custom: to drink a toast properly one had to drain the whole glass. A delightful custom, all agreed. To the Tsar then! Bottoms up all round. The Russians weren't, however, going to let it go at that. To the President! they retorted, when all the highballs were refueled. Bottoms up again. Now the clubmen rose to the challenge as surely as if the Russkies had invaded Afghanistan. To the Tsarina! Up and over went the glasses once more.

After three straight gins, sad to say, our boys were beginning to teeter, though the Russians remained bolt upright. They came right back with a toast—to the Vice-President! And so it went, through the entire executive branch and the imperial family, until finally only one clubman was left standing. The rest were all comatose on the Bricks. The Russians couldn't have looked fresher. They said goodbye and marched off, as one awed spectator reported, "as though they had been drinking ice water."

## The Birthday Party Schedule

There. Finished your brandy? That's all the history of the last 350 years you need to know. What? So you insist on hearing about the other shenanigans of this Jubilee 350? All right then, here's a partial list for the rest of the summer, with a few places and dates thrown in:

- July and August: A historical revue of the Red Sox will be staged at the Next Move Theatre.
- August: An ethnic festival will be held, with twenty-six of the city's ethnic groups represented.
- September 17: The 1930 time capsule buried by fabled former mayor James Michael Curley will be unearthed and Mayor Kevin White's will be buried.
- September 21: The big bash itself, with a parade, a picnic featuring a Jubilee 350 birthday cake, and a Boston Pops concert on the Esplanade by the Charles topped off by fireworks. ■