

ELEMENTS OF STYLE

A Boston Brew-Inn

F.J. Doyle's taproom is home to thirsty pols of all persuasions

Politics and alcohol are always a heady combination, especially in Boston, and never more so than at F.J. Doyle's, the legendary taproom on Washington Street in the Jamaica Plain district, where the television is turned on only for election results and presidential inaugurations. The long, dark bar has been burnished by the elbows of generations of pols—pro and am—coming in for a sip of such exotic brews as the spicy Welch Felinfoel ale or the bracing Old Fog Horn that are available on tap. If further inspiration is necessary, a mural depicting Blarney Castle rises from the assemblage of hard liquors behind the barkeep.

Politics is spoken here, and occasionally politics happens. Last year, when then-mayor Ray Flynn was dithering about whether to accept President Clinton's offer to appoint him ambassador to the Vatican, he called his predecessor Kevin White for some late-night consultation over a couple of brewskies at Doyle's. White was in his pajamas when the summons arrived, but he came. And, as if in some political allegory, then-city councilman Tom Menino was standing at the bar waiting for a pizza to go as these two eminences convened (after the Conversation, Menino would run for Flynn's vacated seat and win). A state trooper snapped a photo of Boston's holy trinity, a miraculous shot that *The Globe* dubbed "TROMPE DOYLE."

But Doyle's is that sort of place. The antique tin ceilings are high enough to leave a lot of room for the imagination. Closer to the ground, the walls are laden with mayoral memorabilia from the past ten or so administrations, with a special, adoring emphasis on "Himself," James Michael Curley, and "Honey Fitz," John F. Fitzgerald. An immense ancient clock over the door ticks away the happy hours for the patrons at the bar who have come for the two dozen beers, ales, lagers and stouts on draft. There are two more rooms in the back for those seeking a complete meal of reasonably priced pub food. Boneless prime ribs, scallops au gratin, broiled scrod—it's all under \$10, but it's not the stuff of legend.

F.J. opened Doyle's in 1882, back when Jamaica Plain was the brewery center of Boston. Gerry Burke bought it with his brothers, Eddie and Billy, in 1971. The Burkes have had a historic connection to the place since the Twenties, when the family firm kept the

bar stocked with what was discreetly termed "candy" during Prohibition. But the Burkes' links to Boston politics had been forged even before that. Their grandfather Billy Burke was a longtime supporter of James Michael Curley's who, in 1928, was awarded the concession for the nearby Franklin Park Zoo by Himself, as thanks for the fund-raising "smokers" Burke had hosted to cover some of Curley's many legal expenses. Curley was not, in fact, the mayor at the time (the office was officially held by the tipling Republican Malcolm "Alkie Malkie" Nichols), but that was a small detail. And their other grandfather, Edward Callahan, had been named the park's golf pro as a political favor by



All in the family, LEFT TO RIGHT: Gerry, Eddie and Billy Burke have owned Doyle's since 1971, but the family's link to Boston politics goes back much farther.

Honey Fitz, after Callahan's brother Timmy helped Fitz get out of some election-fraud problems.

Despite the Irish connection, the Burkes supported the Italian Menino in his race against the Irishman James Brett last time around—a bit of apostasy that is, possibly, a reflection of the times. Once the home of Curley himself, Jamaica Plain now harbors a mingling of all ethnicities, creeds and sexual orientations—which can get Doyle's jumping as never before on a Saturday night. "It's the melting pot of the melting pot," says Billy Burke. Then he hands a customer a brimming, wide-mouthed glass of amber, a melting pot of its own. —JOHN SEDGWICK