

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

John Fitzgerald Kennedy  
National Historic Site



## TEA WITH A TWIST

In 1952, Boston women of every social, ethnic, and religious background might have found hidden among bills in their mailboxes an unusual piece of mail – a personal invitation to meet Mrs. Joseph Patrick Kennedy. Mrs. Kennedy, whose celebrity status in Boston was due to her father, the former Mayor John “Honey Fitz” Fitzgerald, was widely admired. Women flocked to the teas, perhaps not realizing they were attending a political event. At the tea she proudly introduced her son, John F. Kennedy, who was running for Senate.

No matter their background, women were interested in meeting the wife of the former ambassador to Great Britain. Mrs. Kennedy obliged, holding events all over Massachusetts, including industrial cities like Quincy and African American communities like Roxbury.

Women who attended the teas shook hands with a politician who said he was interested in their lives. The women were charmed by Kennedy. He had cleverly embedded his political agenda in a social ritual, and in doing so, Kennedy



Mrs. Rose Kennedy at the dedication of the John F. Kennedy NHS, 1969. Courtesy of John F. Kennedy Library Foundation.

presented politics in a way that was palatable to women and their husbands at a time when women were seen as wives and mothers, not voters.

Polly Fitzgerald had not considered herself political when asked by her nephew Jack Kennedy to organize the teas. She did, however, know how to connect with women and involve them in

Kennedy’s cause. She identified women who were active in a given community and used those women’s networks to reach other women. As the returns came in, it became clear that the ladies of Brookline, the ladies of Lowell, and ladies all over Massachusetts had helped to elect Kennedy.

*“My grandfather, the late John F. Fitzgerald, ran for the U.S. Senate and lost by only thirty thousand votes in an election where women were not allowed to vote. I hope by impressing the feminine electorate that I can more than take up the slack.”*

– John F. Kennedy

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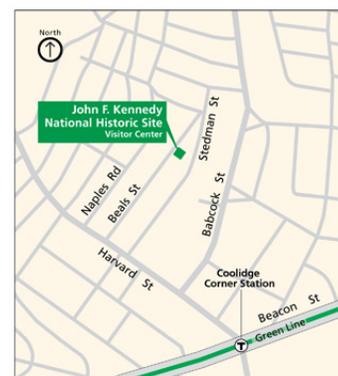
**Hours:**  
10:00am – 4:30pm  
May – October  
Wednesday – Sunday  
Admission charged

### How to get here:

*By Subway:* Take the Green Line (“C” Cleveland Circle trolley) to Coolidge Corner. Walk four blocks north along Harvard Street. Turn right onto Beals Street and continue to #83, on the right

*By Car:* Follow Route I-90 to Exit 18. From Alston/Brighton exit ramp, merge onto Cambridge St. and proceed one mile. Turn left onto Harvard St. and continue for one mile. Turn left onto Beals St. and continue to #83, on the right.

**For more information contact:**  
Superintendent  
John Fitzgerald Kennedy NHS  
83 Beals Street  
Brookline, MA 02446  
617.566.7937  
[www.nps.gov/jofi](http://www.nps.gov/jofi)



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