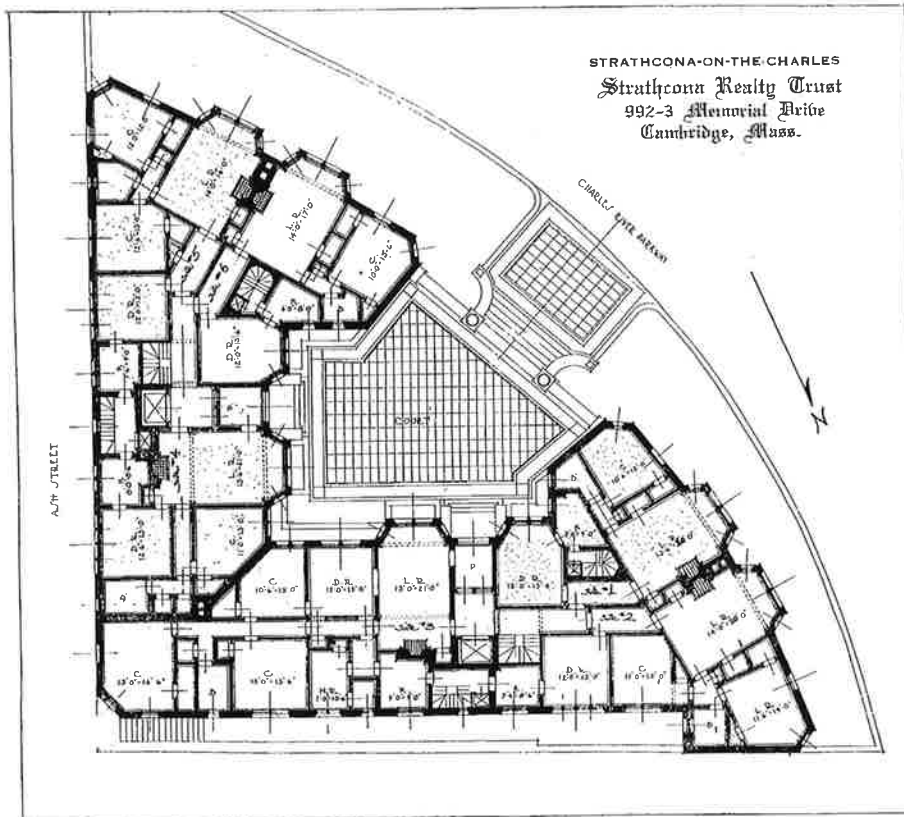


**Strathrona-on-the-Charles** CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS. Located on Charles River Road, overlooking the Stadium, four blocks west of Harvard Square.



TYPICAL FLOOR PLAN—SUITES INDICATED BY SHADING.

## A SHORT HISTORY OF STRATHCONA ON CHARLES

Strathcona on Charles Condominium occupies an historic site along the Charles River. In colonial times the site area was known as Windmill Hill, for its windmill, and was accessed by Windmill Lane. The location has also housed a gasworks, and according to some accounts, a glass factory. The site rests on bedrock in comparison with neighboring properties along Memorial Drive, which are built on landfill and silt. When the road was first developed along the river it was named Charles River Road. The sycamore trees were planted in 1898. The roadway terminated in front of the building and intersected with Hawthorne Street. Opposite the building had been a wharf, which was razed in 1900. In 1922 the name of the roadway was changed to Memorial Drive in honor of World War I victims. The Memorial Drive Extension opened in 1949. The Longview Cooperative buildings at 983-986 Memorial Drive were built in 1916 and the Barrington Court condominium buildings at 987-989 were built in 1924. The Episcopal monastery buildings of the Society of St. John the Evangelist were built between 1926 and 1936. In 1986, the four buildings at 983-993 were listed as the Memorial Drive Apartments Historic District on the National Register of Historic Places.

The property along the river was purchased from Cambridge Gas Light Company in 1913 by City Realty Trust, Forris W. Norris, trustee. The plan was for City Trust to develop the 81,000 square foot parcel with a hotel and apartment buildings, in addition to the Strathcona property. City Realty Trust employed the architect W.L. Mowll to design the "Strathcona Hall."

William Luther Mowll graduated from Harvard in 1899 and then won the Rotch Traveling Scholarship that paid for him to travel through Europe for two years to study and observe architecture. He was an assistant professor of architecture at Harvard from 1905-1910 and then organized the firm of Mowll and Rand. He wrote a book on decoration and ornamentation. He was best known for the design of theaters.

The Cambridge Architectural Inventory notes that the building permit to construct Strathcona Hall is dated February 3, 1914. The builder was John B. Byrne, Inc. The inventory page notes the building of "somewhat Elizabethan in detail" and the "use of cast stone ornament though used with restraint of limestone."

Marketing of rental units at Strathcona Hall began in the autumn of 1914. An advertisement appeared in the September 26, 1914 edition of the Boston Evening Transcript. The ad describes "A high-class Elevator Apartment" and lists rentals for 4 rooms and bath...\$50 to \$62.50; 5 rooms and bath...\$60 to 72.50 and 7 rooms and two baths...\$75 to \$100.00. "References indispensable." An article in the Cambridge Tribune dated 3 October 1914 describes Strathcona Hall as "nearly ready for occupancy." The article describes the structure made of "Harvard brick with limestone trimmings" Several of the suites are equipped with Murphy In-a-Dor beds which cannot accidentally close. The seven room suites contain a maid's room with

private bath and 14 additional maid's rooms with several baths are provided in the basement. The interior finishes are of gumwood. The 03 and 04 suites had porches with tile floors.

The name "Strathcona" may well derive from the Gaelic or Scottish word "Strath" which is a large valley and, typically, a river valley that is wide and shallow. The word "Strathcona" received notoriety when a Canadian financier and politician, Donald Smith, received a British peerage in 1900 and the newly minted title of Baron Strathcona. The name Strathcona was apparently invented for this purpose. Ironically, Donald Smith's estate bequeathed a large sum of money (\$500,000) to Yale University, where buildings were named in his honor, and not to Harvard.

Strathcona Hall went through numerous changes in ownership. In 1919 City Realty Trust sold Strathcona Hall (along with the "Allyn" on Ash Street) to one Richard Cox. He became the largest owner of real estate in Cambridge. In 1920, Mr. Cox's interest in the property was subject to a mortgage foreclosure. It was purchased by Bertha Cohen, who had immigrated to Boston in 1905 and worked as a milliner. She resided in Strathcona Hall and maintained an office for her real estate empire in the basement apartment that later became the superintendent's apartment. After her death, Strathcona Hall and other of Ms. Cohen's properties were purchased in 1965 by the real estate developer Max Wasserman.

Wasserman renovated Strathcona Hall in a process that included the removal of the gumwood ceiling moldings, installation of sheetrock over the old cracked walls and modernization of kitchens and bathrooms. He filed papers in August 1971 to create Strathcona on Charles Condominium shortly after Massachusetts adopted a statute that authorized the creation of condominiums. By some accounts, it was the first condominium in Cambridge and the third in Massachusetts.

Strathcona Hall housed many noteworthy people [including you, dear reader]. One such resident, Arthur Drinkwater, moved in with his Mother around 1927. When he died in 1978, still residing in unit 601 at 993 Memorial Drive, he was Harvard College's oldest alumnus, class of '00. When Wasserman renovated the building he agreed to leave the Drinkwater unit alone. It still features the original moldings.

1931 BEACON ST., BROOKLINE  
1229 COMMONWEALTH AVE., ALLSTON

# NOW READY

## STRATHCONA-ON-THE-CHARLES CAMBRIDGE

Four blocks beyond Harvard Square on Charles River Road. A high-class Elevator Apartment overlooking Soldiers' Field and the Metropolitan Parkway.

- 4 rooms and bath . . . . . \$50 to \$62.50
- 5 rooms and bath . . . . . \$60 to \$72.50
- 7 rooms and two baths . . . \$75 to \$100.00

Quiet, convenient and desirable. References indispensable. Apply to Janitor or

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*1070 & 1120*

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**May Day**

*Location:* Memorial Drive,  
Mt. Auburn and Hawthorne streets

*Date:* c. 1925

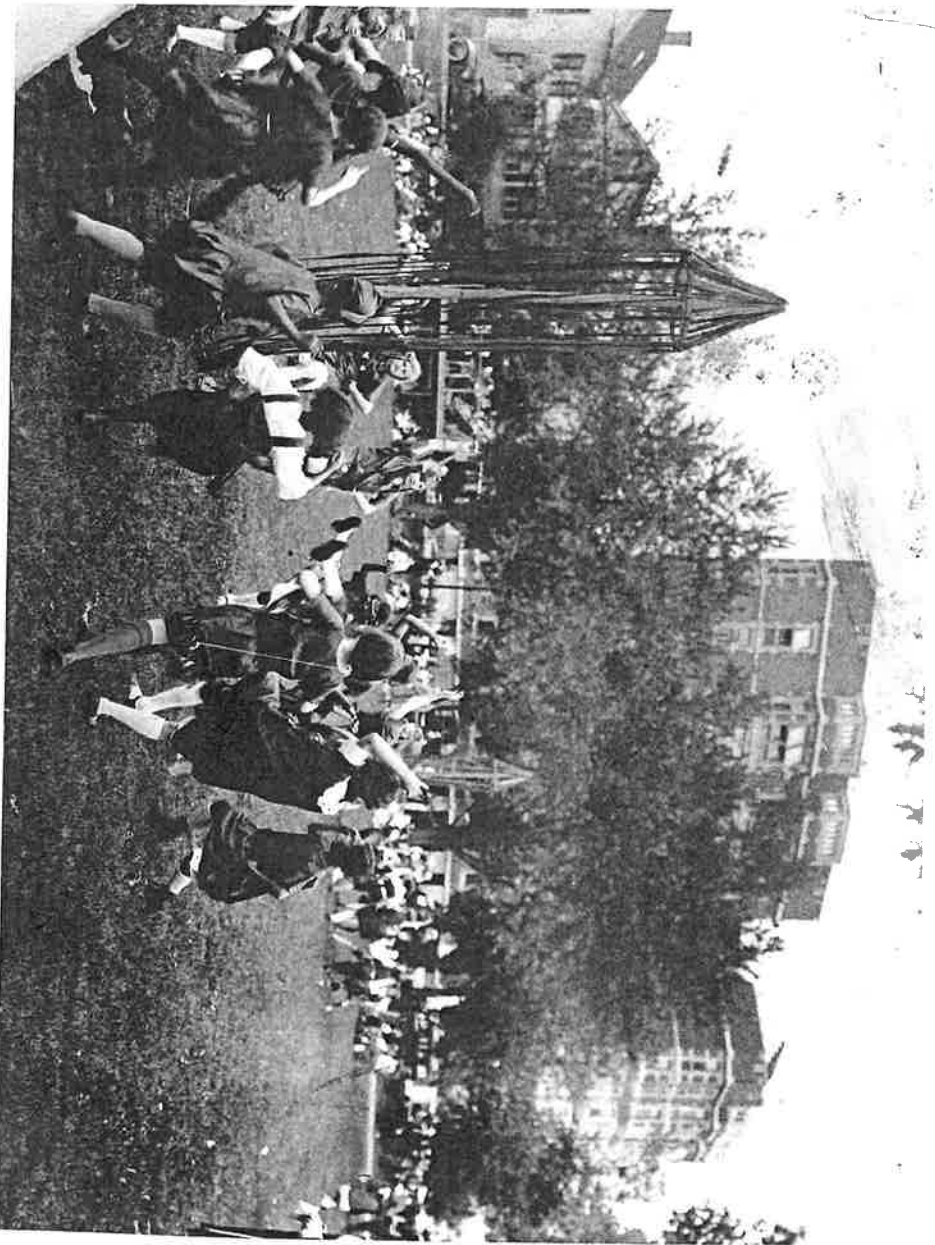
*Photographer:* Herbert W. Taylor

*Source:* Cambridge Recreation Department



These schoolchildren dancing around the Maypole typify the American version of May Day festivities. Many such festivals were organized for schoolchildren by the Cambridge Recreation Department during the Twenties. In addition to the May Day celebration, the department sponsored mock jousts with a medieval theme, patriotic pageants, and regular playgroups at parks and playgrounds throughout the city.

Herbert Whyte Taylor, the photographer, ran a studio at 349 Harvard Street in Cambridge from 1909 to 1927. Taylor's work received attention in *Photo Era Magazine* in 1899, which called him "one of the most sensitively artistic of modern photographers."



**Strathcona-on-the-Charles** is a modern, high class, apartment building delightfully situated in Old Cambridge, four blocks west of Harvard Square, on Memorial Drive. It is directly opposite Soldiers' Field, the athletic grounds of Harvard University and adjoins the land of the Cambridge Boat Club and Longfellow Park. The location will appeal to those who appreciate fresh air, sunshine and quietude. It affords an extended view of the Metropolitan and Cambridge Parkways and the beautiful, winding Charles River, on which it fronts.

Here out of door life is seen at its fullest. From early spring to late fall, the college athletes may be seen training for the track, baseball and football games, tennis matches and races. The river is fairly alive with canoes, boats, and the Harvard Crews training for races which are splendid spectacles. Winter brings its sports such as ice boating and skating.

Strathcona is most accessible, yet just far enough removed from the street cars to be free from their noise. Several Mount Auburn street car lines, affording frequent service, are less than a half a block away. It is but three minutes walk to the Harvard square subway station, the local shops, stores, banks and Harvard College. From Harvard square by subway train, one may ride in eight minutes to Park street, Boston's shopping and theatre centre.

The house itself is built of Harvard brick with limestone trimmings and is six stories high. It is served by two elevators, has large living rooms, ample closet room, porches, vacuum cleaners, laundry dryers, hydraulic dumb waiters, adequate heat radiation, continuous hot water and janitor service. In fact, it contains all that a modern apartment house demands and approves. Several of the suites are equipped with "out-of-sight" beds. The seven room apartments contain a maid's room with a private bath and lavatory. There are also fourteen additional maids rooms with several baths provided in the basement.

The interior finish of the living room, dining rooms and the reception halls is gum wood. The chambers are white and the bathroom floors tiled. Each living room faces the river and is approximately 23 x 15 feet, with an old fashioned fireplace. Each of the thirty-six apartments have all outside rooms and from two to five of the rooms command a view of the Charles River.

Fire Protection has been given special attention. Every precaution was taken in the erection of the building to eliminate fire hazards.

The arrangement and layout of the rooms was carefully planned by William L. Mowll, architect, formerly professor of architecture at Harvard University.

Years of experience makes for efficient service in the care of this property by the Strathcona Realty Trust, 992-3 Memorial Drive, Cambridge, Mass.

## SCHEDULE OF SUITES

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SUITES numbered 1 on plan, 4 rooms and bath.  
SUITES numbered 2 on plan, 5 rooms and bath.  
SUITES numbered 3 on plan, 7 rooms and bath.  
SUITES numbered 4 on plan, 4 rooms and bath.  
SUITES numbered 5 on plan, 5 rooms and bath.  
SUITES numbered 6 on plan, 4 rooms and bath.

Provision for disappearing beds is made in suites numbered 1, 6. Suites numbered 3 and 4 have porches.

**Strathcona Realty Trust**

MANAGEMENT

992-3 Memorial Drive

Cambridge, Mass.