



The portrait of Albert H. Gordon by Fairfield Porter which hangs over the fireplace on the second floor landing is a familiar sight to our members and visitors. Perhaps more than any other, this work causes a strong, sometimes shocked reaction because it varies greatly from the traditional aesthetic of most of the other portraits in the Club. The creation of the portrait brought together two very different Harvard graduates, their stories in brief are as follows:



Albert H. Gordon *Class of 1923*
Harvard Business School 1925



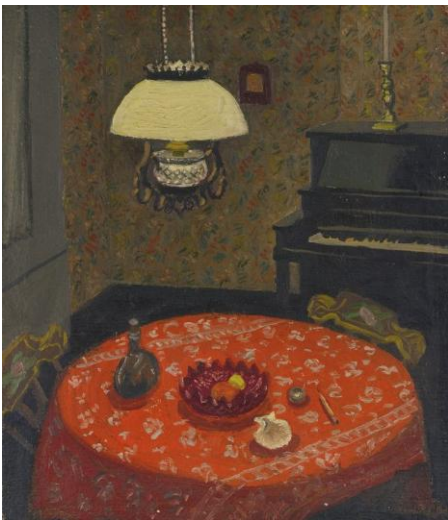
Fairfield Porter *Class of 1928*

FAIRFIELD WADSWORTH PORTER, Class of 1928, was born in Winnetka, Illinois in 1907 into a wealthy family with a wide Harvard legacy. He was a cousin of T.S. Eliot Class of 1910, his father was Class of 1895, and his older brother, Eliot Porter, the nature photographer, was Class of 1924; MD1929. Fairfield studied philosophy and fine arts at Harvard.



Rooftops at Cambridge, 1927

After graduating in 1928, he never worked a 9-5 job. From college he moved directly into the bohemian leftist world of Greenwich Village. He had no inclination to join the Harvard Club; instead he joined the John Reed Club and was a lifelong Socialist. He traveled through Europe and the Soviet Union when he had the occasion to meet Trotsky and later collected money in the late 1930s for his legal defense. He studied painting briefly at the Art Students League with Thomas Hart Benton but was largely self taught. He painted in a style well outside the mainstream of his time, which was dominated by Picasso and Leger. Porter instead was inspired by the Post Impressionists, Bonnard and Vuillard, who painted intimate scenes of bourgeois life.



City Dining Room 1945



John Ashbery, 1958



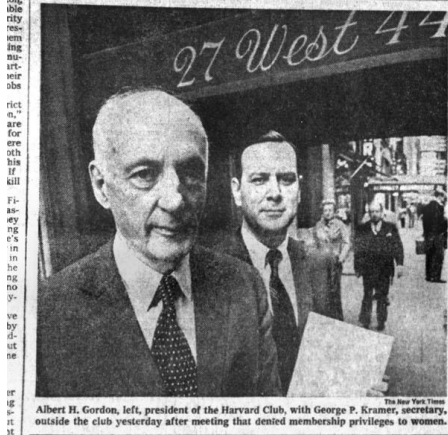
Anemones and Daffodils, 1968



Penobscot Bay and Yellow Field, 1968

After WWII the art market was dominated for the first time by an American art, Abstract Expressionism. Porter knew and admired these artists, especially Willem de Kooning who was a friend and neighbor, but Porter continued in his allegiance to representational painting. At this point he was more well-known as a philosophical art critic/poet writing regularly for *ArtNews* and *The Nation*. He wrote the first published review of de Kooning's work and a MoMA catalogue essay on Vuillard. In the 1960s when Pop Art became the fashion, Porter stuck with his subjects: family, friends and New England landscapes. He received very little public attention for his painting and welcomed the opportunity in 1975 to paint a portrait for the HCNy of the retiring president.

ALBERT HAMILTON GORDON, Class of 1923. Born in Massachusetts, his father was a sheepherder in Wyoming who had moved east to become a successful leather merchant, supplying the British Army in World War I. Young Albert broke his nose playing football at Roxbury Latin School where he prepared for Harvard. At college he ran on the Track Team for four years, a sport he continued throughout his life. He graduated cum laude and then ranked third in his class at Harvard Business School in 1925. From Cambridge, Gordon went directly to work on Wall Street. He was on the floor of the exchange the day of the Crash of 1929. He built Kidder Peabody up from the rubble and became a pillar of the investment world working well past his 100th birthday. He was a generous benefactor to Harvard giving the Albert H. Gordon Track and Tennis Center as well as a professorship at the business school. He was Co-Chairman of the Harvard Campaign, and received the Harvard Medal for his extraordinary service. He was a sustaining member of our Club and President from 1971 - 1975. While President, he oversaw the votes to allow women members. He was politically very conservative, writing in his 50th Class Report: "What a reward my unwavering love for the Republican Party has brought me! My heroes are at the helm—Nixon in Washington, Rockefeller in Albany. No wonder I am optimistic!"



Albert H. Gordon, left, president of the Harvard Club, with George P. Kramer, secretary, outside the club yesterday after meeting that denied membership privileges to women.

Harvard Club to Remain a Male Enclave

By DAVID A. ANDELMAN
The Harvard Club, the last of the city's traditional all-male fraternal organizations, voted last night to stay just that way—a 107-year-old monument to male exclusivity.

But it was a narrow victory for tradition, with 1,654 members in favor of admitting women as full members and 854 against—18 votes shy of the two-thirds needed to amend the bylaws.

With the black-gowned, grim-visaged features of 13 past presidents gazing down from the mahogany-paneled walls of Harvard Hall, the ballots were cast and counted.

The members made their choice known in person or by proxy, and when the ballots were counted, it was clear that they had decided to prevent the club from becoming, in the words of one member of the class of '38, "another East Side singles bar."

"The bars ought to be allowed to peck at each other," one elderly gentleman remarked as the meeting got under way.

And that traditionally has been the way the Harvard

Club, at 27 West 44th Street, has been. Women have been relegated to a separate entrance, a separate dining room and separate bar, except for certain special evening occasions, weekends and dinners during the summer.

But times have been hard for all of the city's university clubs. Last year, the Harvard Club lost more than 300 members, its costs rose and it continued to lose money.

So the dues of Harvard's thousands of women graduates looked inviting.

Even as the members were voting, two groups moved against the bastion.

The New York Civil Liberties Union announced that it had filed suit seeking revocation of the club's liquor license on the ground that the state, by issuing the license, was encouraging the discrimination.

And Mrs. Eleanor Holmes Norton, chairman of the city's Commission on Human Rights, sent a two-page letter to the club's manager warning that "a number of groundbreaking court decisions have provided a broad framework in which this commission might consider matters of this kind to fall within the scope and protection of the Human Rights Law."

"That lawsuit irritated a lot of people," said Albert H. Gordon, president of the club. He gazed glumly at the yellow legal pad in front of him that showed the voting results.

"Only a hard core of the club's members are in support of this resolution," according to Harrison D. Blair, Harvard Business School class of 1929. "It's just like when Russia became Communist. Only a hard core of Communists liquidated 20 million

others who did not go along." There are 3,700 members eligible to vote.

There was probably more concern about the complications in such mundane areas as the toilet facilities, squash courts and locker rooms, not to mention the black-tie, male-only "gambling nights."

The city's other major Ivy League university clubs seem, however, to have resolved the problem. The Yale Club, for instance, which has admitted women since 1963, is renovating its lobby off 44th Street and Vanderbilt Avenue to do away with the "for women only" areas.

The Princeton Club goes back even farther. It has been admitting women since 1963, when the new clubhouse at 15 West 43d Street was built.

In a letter read to the members at the Harvard Club yesterday, Mrs. Norton said:

"The end to segregation by sex in Harvard's schools and the changing social values and expectations of the day provide sufficient impetus for the corresponding change contemplated by the Harvard Club. And the current integration of Harvard-Radcliffe dormitories makes ridiculous any continued segregation by sex."

"All that makes no difference to me," said one member, who identified himself only as "class of '68."

"All you have to do is look at their physiology and you can see men and women are different," he said. "We aren't going to have them running all over the place here."



News Summary and Index

FRIDAY, MAY 5, 1972

The Major Events of the Day

International
The United States and South Vietnam, citing "a complete lack of progress in every available channel," indefinitely suspended the Paris peace talks on Vietnam yesterday. They clearly implied that secret as well as open negotiations were deadlocked. North Vietnam and the Vietcong said the break-off was the prelude to a new United States

long-time F. B. I. director a "legend" the nation should be proud of. [1:4.]

Nearly complete unofficial results from the Ohio Presidential primary Tuesday gave Senator Hubert H. Humphrey a slender victory in the voting for the at-large slate of 39 delegates. Mr. Humphrey also appeared to have won enough delegates from Congressional districts to give him a statewide edge over Senator George McGovern. [1:4.]

The Other News

Four Turkish hijackers give up in Bulgaria. Page 2
Italy protests IS from underground terrorists. Page 2
Brazil and Barzel agree on date for debate. Page 3
Premier Meir begins talks in Rumania. Page 3
New torture inquiry ordered in Ulster. Page 3
Soviet missile submarine reported in Cuba. Page 4
Workers strike at Chile's biggest copper mine. Page 5
Rogers says U.S. will counter Hanoi drive. Page 22

Quotation of the Day

"America's pride has always been its people, a people of good men and women by the millions, of great men and women of remarkable numbers, and, once in a long while, of giants who stand head and shoulders above their countrymen, setting a high and noble standard for us all. I, Edgar Hoover was one of the giants."
—President Nixon, at Mr. Hoover's funeral. [15:1.]

Amusements and the Arts

Soviet confirms two divisions of moon. Page 7
Psychologists report clue to schizophrenia. Page 8
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Page 57
Amusements and the Arts: Mabel Mercer transforms St.

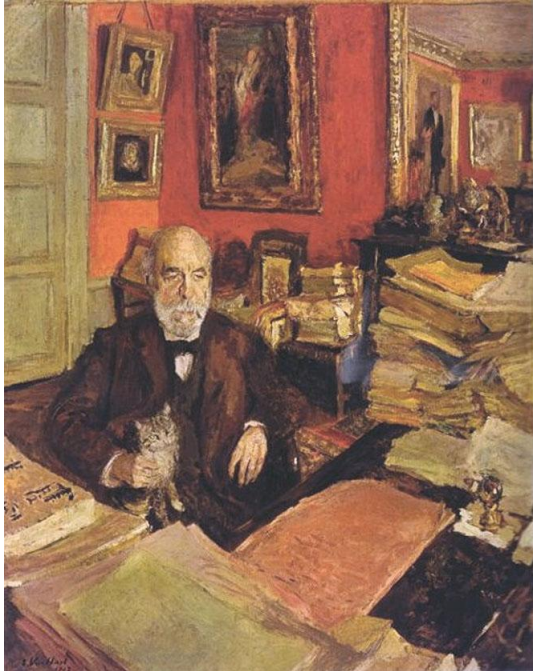
Lottery Numbers

NEW YORK
The winning lottery number is: 073309
Tickets matching the number above win \$50,000. Tickets matching the last five

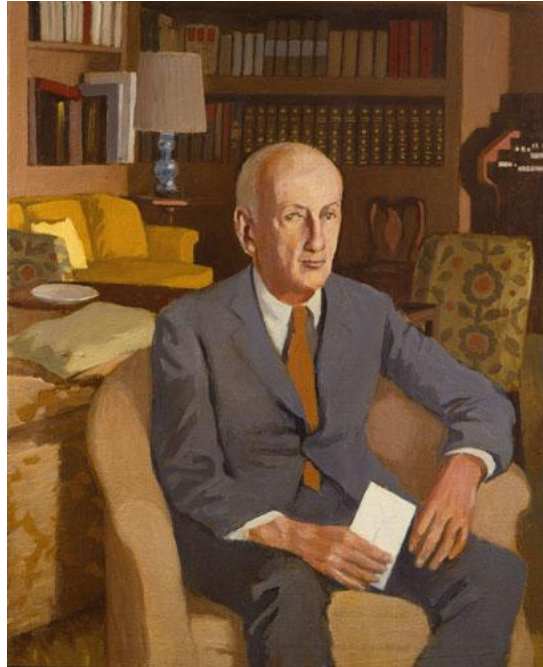
New York Times May 5, 1972 one of the early votes on women members

So, how did he choose this Socialist bohemian to paint his portrait? In 1997 I had a phone conversation with Mr. Gordon about the circumstances of the Fairfield Porter commission. He told me that while it was usual for the Club to pay for the portrait, he wanted the freedom to select the artist himself. His wife had some associates at the Museum of Modern Art who recommended Porter for the job. "He was the cheapest and I wanted to shake up the Club and give them something that in 25 years might be interesting." The artist came to the Gordon apartment on Gracie Square to paint. They never discussed politics. Gordon reminded Porter to contribute to the Harvard Annual Fund and was pleased when the artist reported he had. Mr. Gordon told me he was surprised that the artist posed him sitting in front of the library, with his back to the spectacular view of the East River. Vuillard, the hero of Porter's art pantheon inspired Porter's aesthetic approach. (illustration below) We see Porter's intent to paint a tonal-poem to convey the spirit of the sitter, modeled on the Vuillard portrait.

The day the portrait was unveiled on September 18, 1975, Fairfield Porter died of a heart attack while walking of the beach in Southampton; Albert H. Gordon lived another 34 years and died May 1, 2009 at the age of 107, the oldest Harvard graduate. Over that time Porter's reputation continued to grow, and today his painting is among the most valuable in our collection, proving Gordon's knack for picking the right horse!



Edouard Vuillard
Portrait of Theodore Duret, 1912



Fairfield Porter
Portrait of Albert H. Gordon, 1975

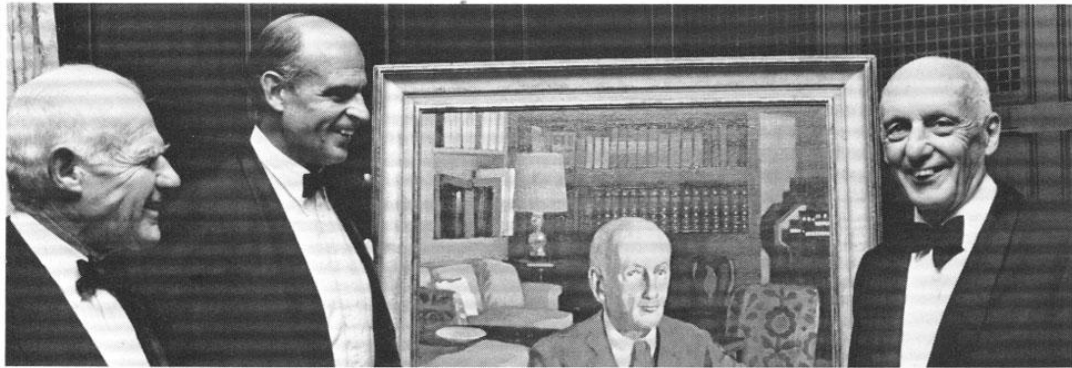
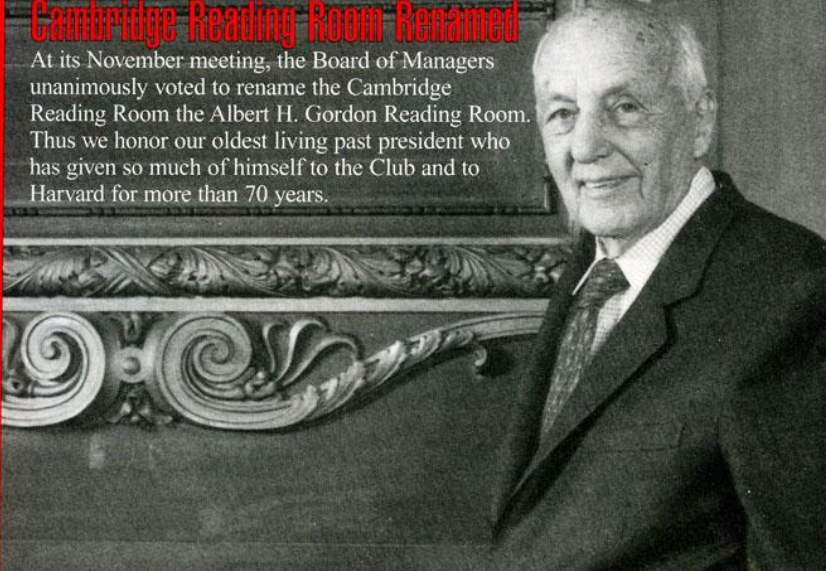
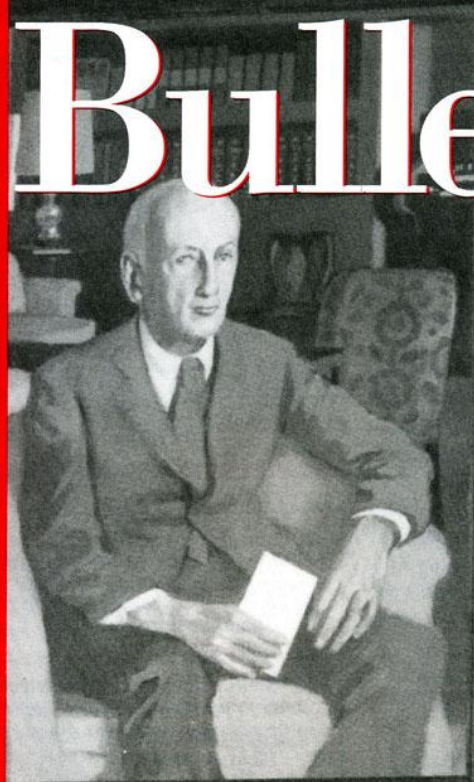



PHOTO: HELEN MARCUS

Shown above is Albert H. Gordon, '23 (right), unveiling his portrait to the Board of Managers at their dinner, September 18. The portrait is a gift to the Club from our outgoing President. It was painted by the late Fairfield Porter, '28. Known primarily for his landscape painting, Mr. Porter was chosen by Mr. Gordon in order to give his portrait "a slightly different flair." As can be seen from the result, success was achieved on all counts.

February 1996

Bulletin



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Cambridge Reading Room Renamed

At its November meeting, the Board of Managers unanimously voted to rename the Cambridge Reading Room the Albert H. Gordon Reading Room. Thus we honor our oldest living past president who has given so much of himself to the Club and to Harvard for more than 70 years.

Please send any questions, comments, corrections to msaunders@hcnyc.com Thanks!

Mary Saunders
Curator