

Fernando King

HPL's Barber

Fernando King's parents were John A. King (b. July 1832 in Johnston, Rhode Island) and Celinda Elizabeth Colvin (b. February 11, 1838 in Scituate, Rhode Island). John and Celinda were married in 1858 at ages 26 and 20, respectively, the same year Celinda gave birth to a son, Fernando. In April 1860, the couple had a daughter, Melora. At the time of the 1860 census, the couple were living in a boarding house in Scituate and John was working as a day laborer.¹

1862

Fernando's sister Lilly is born (1862-unknown).

1864

Fernando's brother Frank C. is born (1864-1940).

1865

John King is listed as a shoemaker.² His 66-year-old mother-in-law Colita K. Colvin is living with the family temporarily³ in their house on the "road to Saundersville" (west of central Providence).

1868

Fernando's sister Mary E. born (1868-1943).

1870

John listed as a Laborer.⁴ Fernando is working in a cotton mill (age 11).

1878

Fernando working as a hairdresser and boarding at 29 Bishop.⁵

1880

Fernando living with a cousin at 755 Eddy Street.⁶

1882

Fernando living at 62 Sherburne Street (presumed demolished for Interstate 95).⁷

1883

Fernando again living at 755 Eddy Street.⁸

¹ 1860 Federal Census.

² 1865 Rhode Island State Census.

³ Colita [Zelota] Colvin died in Glocester, RI in 1881.

⁴ 1870 Federal Census.

⁵ 1878 Providence City Directory, p. 196.

⁶ 1880 Federal Census.

⁷ 1882 Providence City Directory, p.234.

1884

Fernando living at 27 Bowen Street.⁹ He marries Esther Isabelle Steere.¹⁰ There's almost nothing online about Esther, including a formal marriage record.



Figure 1: 27 Bowen Street.

1885

Fernando living at 3 Wall's Court.¹¹ His daughter Marjorie J. King is born.¹² Like her mother Esther, there's very little online about Marjorie. I wondered at first if she was really Fernando's daughter, but she's buried with him, so...

1887

Fernando living at 25 Rye Street in Johnston and listed as a milkman.¹³

⁸ 1883 Providence City Directory, p. 224.

⁹ 1884 Providence City Directory, p. 266.

¹⁰ 1900 Federal Census.

¹¹ 1885 Providence City Directory, p. 271.

¹² Find a Grave Memorial No. 86828949.

¹³ 1887 Providence City Directory, p. 306.



Figure 2: 25 Rye Street.

1895

The first listing for the King & Fontaine salon appears in the City Directory: Room 112 at 72 Westminster Street (site of the present Turk's Head Building, constructed 1913).¹⁴ Fernando's business partner was Eduard Fontaine [aka Edward Fontaine) (b. 1864), a French Canadian who emigrated to the US in 1875 and married Emilie (Emma) E. Cyr in 1892.¹⁵ Neither man appeared in city directories prior to 1895 as hairdressers or barbers—how did they meet and decide to go into business together? Dunno.

King & Fontaine would have been located somewhere behind the middle telephone/power pole in Figure 3, possibly across the street from the Brown Shoe Co. (and the Angell Hattery). In my search of city directories, wasn't able to find any other businesses that listed their address as 72 Westminster, so I assume that it was a separate storefront, although what's visible in Figure 4 doesn't clearly bear that out. Possibly, the salon was located under the far portion of the "Hefferman & Kempion" banner.

¹⁴ 1895 Providence City Directory, p. 249.

¹⁵ Rhode Island Marriage Index, 1851-1920.



Figure 3: The Turk's Head area in 1893.

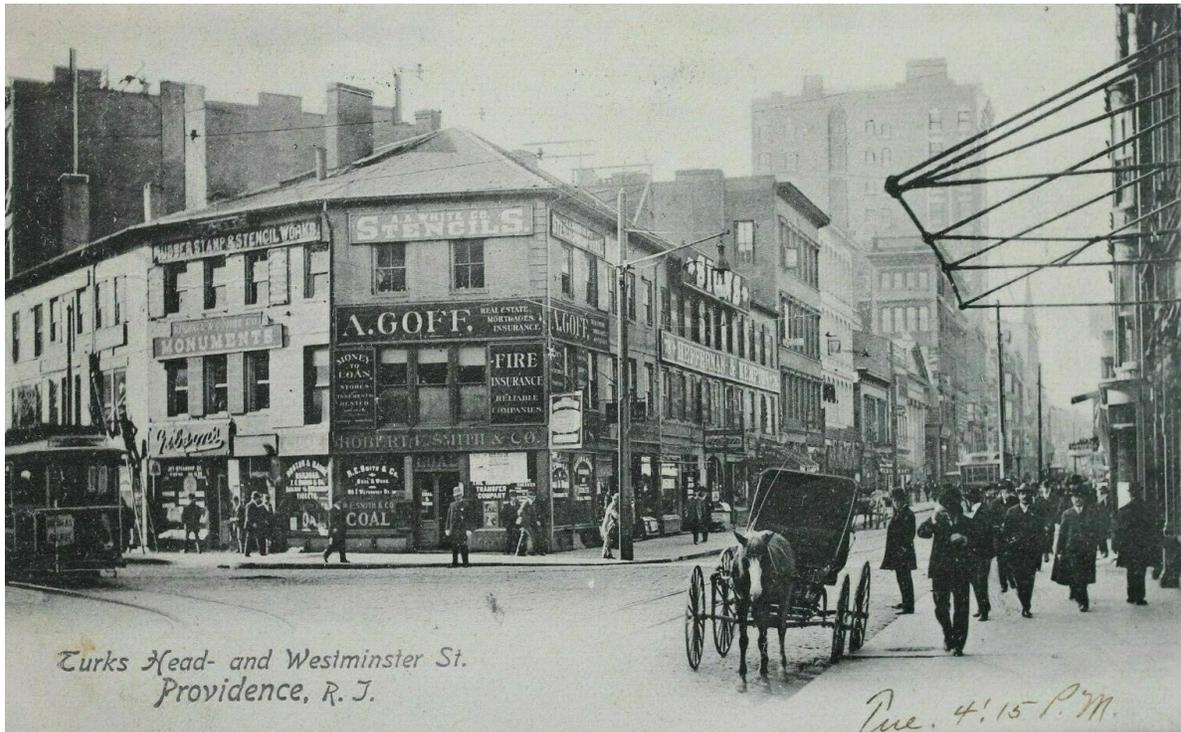


Figure 4: The Turk's Head area in 1893.

1900

Fernando living at 112 Mathewson Street (the George C. Arnold Building) (Figure 5) with R. A. Bradford (a 71-year-old female wig manufacturer from Massachusetts[!]). (Bradford remains intriguing and unresearched.)



Figure 5: 112 Mathewson Street.

1904

The Fountaines are also operating the Mme. Fontaine Restaurant at 104 Westminster, serving meals to “Ladies and Gentlemen who Appreciate Neatness and Enjoy Perfect Home Cooking”¹⁶ (Figure 6). (The restaurant’s awning *might* be visible in the middle distance of Figure 4.)

¹⁶ 1904 Providence City Directory, p. 1616.



Figure 6: Advertisement for the Mme. Fountaine Restaurant.

1908

Fernando's mother Celinda dies at age 69, the same year as her 50th wedding anniversary.

1909

On July 4th, Fernando (age 51) marries Lillian M. Adams (age 41; b. 1868), the daughter of George W. (a machinist) and Helen L. Adams.

1910

Fernando is living at 21 Corinth Street with Lillian and Fernando's 23-year-old daughter Marjorie (a stenographer at a jewelry factory).¹⁷ This is the last year that King & Fontaine listed in the City Directory at 72 Westminster Street.¹⁸

1911

Fernando and Eduard are listed separately in the Barbers heading of the City Directory. Fernando is at 72 Westminster Street (living at 21 Corinth Street) and Eduard is at 42 Westminster Street.¹⁹ My theory is that 72 Westminster was slated for demolition as part of the upcoming 1913 construction of the 17-story Turk's Head building and they decided to just dissolve their business partnership.

1912

Fernando's father John dies at age 80. King and Fountaine located at 171 Westminster Street, Room 224.

1915

Fernando and Lillian are living in her father's house at 213 Armington Street in Cranston, about 3 miles south of central Providence. Fernando's sister Mary is employed as their housekeeper.

¹⁷ 1910 Federal Census.

¹⁸ 1910 Providence City Directory, p. 674.

¹⁹ 1911 Providence City Directory, p. 711.

1919

Fernando's daughter Marjorie J. King dies.²⁰

1924

Fernando still living at 213 Armington Street.²¹



Figure 7: 213 Armington Street.

1932

Fernando's wife Lillian dies.²²

1937

Fernando dies on February 16 at age 78-79. (Of course, this is almost exactly one month before HPL's death. It makes me sad to think that HPL may have died with a haircut he didn't like). He was buried at Glenford Cemetery, North Scituate (Find a Grave Memorial No. 86828607).²³

²⁰ Find a Grave Memorial No. 86828949.

²¹ 1924 Cranston City Directory, p. 236.

²² Find a Grave Memorial No. 86828607.

²³ John, Celinda, Frank and his wife Grace, and Mary are also buried in Glenford Cemetery (Find a Grave Memorial No. 86824683). Fernando's sister Lilly's burial site is unknown.

1945

Eduard Fontaine dies at age .²⁴ He continued to be listed as a hairdresser or barber in the Providence city directories between 1937 and 1945.

²⁴ Rhode Island Deaths and Burials, 1802-1950.

From Chris Perrida's blog "H.P. Lovecraft and His Legacy":

The Legend of "Turk's Head": In Charles Dexter Ward

<https://chrisperridas.blogspot.com/2009/05/legend-of-turks-head-in-charles-dexter.html>

"While these serious steps were under discussion there occurred in the town an incident so terrible and inexplicable that for a time little else was mentioned for miles around. In the middle of a moon-light January night with heavy snow underfoot there resounded over the river and up the hill a shocking series of cries which brought sleepy heads to every window; and people around Weybosset Point saw a great white thing plunging frantically along the badly cleared space in front of the Turk's Head. There was a baying of dogs in the distance, but this subsided as soon as the clamour of the awakened town became audible. Parties of men with lanterns and muskets hurried out to see what was happening, but nothing rewarded their search. The next morning, however, a giant, muscular body, stark naked, was found on the jams of ice around the southern piers of the Great Bridge, where the Long Dock stretched out beside Abbott's distil-house, and the identity of this object became a theme for endless speculation and whispering. It was not so much the younger as the older folk who whispered, for only in the patriarchs did that rigid face with horror-bulging eyes strike any chord of memory. They, shaking as they did so, exchanged furtive murmurs of wonder and fear; for in those stiff, hideous features lay a resemblance so marvellous as to be almost an identity - and that identity was with a man who had died full fifty years before."

Weybosset Street is well known for the historic sky scraper "Turk's Head", but its predecessor is not as well known - except maybe to Lovecraft. Above you'll see a modern photo of the old place, and a postcard showing illos of the "new" skyscraper and its ancient predecessor. (More Images of the modern building tomorrow.)

A little history. The Turk's Head Building, a 16-story office high-rise in Providence, Rhode Island completed in 1913 - 215 feet (66 meters) tall it is currently the 11th-tallest building in Providence. When completed in 1913, the Turk's Head Building surpassed the 1901 Union Trust building to become the tallest building in downtown. It retained that title until 1922, when the Providence Biltmore was completed. Lovecraft would have been alive during all these constructions.

I suspect that the "the badly cleared space in front of the Turk's Head" would have been the excavation of the foundation circa 1912 when HPL was about 22. He would not have been a great fan of "new" construction razing an old structure.

The building was designed in a V-shape; the architects of the building "clearly had in mind Daniel Burnham's Flatiron Building" (in New York City). The skyscraper's peculiar name dates back to the early nineteenth century, when shopkeeper **Jacob Whitman mounted a ship's figurehead above his store. The figurehead, which came from the ship Sultan, depicted the head of an Ottoman warrior. Whitman's store was called "At the sign of the Turk's Head". The figurehead vanished in a storm** and today a granite replica of the original Turk head is found on the building's 3rd floor façade. An alternate history (true

story) was that the gale of 1815 swept away a store sign, and that the wooden Turk's Head was recovered and stored away for many years. The legend lived on. It had a turban and a horrid frown, according to legend.

One wonders if that "storm" and the "figurehead" might have had magical import in the tale of woe? Lovecraft could not contain all in his fiction, but read between the historical lines! Maybe write your own Mythos story.

Jacob was a "west-sider" not a privileged class in the council, but his power and prominence forced a position. He was well thought of by the "east-siders" and notably fought the council against splitting Providence into a new town of Westminster "west of Weybosset bridge, and the Harbour". This would probably have made Whitman a hero to HPL.

Posted by Chris Perridas at [5/26/2009 12:01:00 AM](#) 

Labels: [Charles Dexter Ward](#), [Providence](#), [Turks Head](#), [Weybosset Street](#)