

Boston Post Cane

The Boston Post Cane is presented to a municipality's oldest resident. Each municipality's cane is inscribed.



The Boston Post Cane is on display at the Benton Town Office. The following passage is from the book *MORE BOSTON POST CANES: The Pine Tree State and Little Rhody* by Barbara Staples [Flemming Press, Lynn, Massachusetts, 2002]:

Benton First Recipient: may have been *Appleton W. Reed*, 88, who was born July 18, 1821 and died June 1, 1911. He was a clergyman.

For more information about the Boston Post Cane, including the following "Origins of the Tradition," visit <http://web.maynard.ma.us/bostonpostcane/origins-of-the-tradition>:

On August 2, 1909, Mr. Edwin A. Grozier, Publisher of the Boston Post, a newspaper, forwarded to the Board of Selectmen in 700 towns* (no cities included) in New England a gold-headed ebony cane with the request that it be presented with the compliments of the Boston Post to the oldest male citizen of the town., to be used by him as long as he lives (or moves from the town), and at his death handed down to the next oldest citizen of the town. The cane would belong to the town and not the man who received it.

The canes were all made by J.F. Fradley and Co., a New York manufacturer, from ebony shipped in seven-foot lengths from the Congo in Africa. They were cut to cane lengths, seasoned for six months, turned on lathes to the right thickness, coated and polished. They had a 14-carat gold head two inches long, decorated by hand, and a ferruled tip. The head was engraved with the inscription, -Presented by the Boston Post to the oldest citizen of (name of town)- "To Be Transmitted". The Board of Selectmen were to be the trustees of the cane and keep it always in the hands of the oldest citizen. Apparently no Connecticut or Vermont towns were included (at one point it was the thought that two towns in Vermont had canes, but this turned out to be a bit of a myth.).

In 1924, Mr. Grozier died, and the Boston Post was taken over by his son, Richard, who failed to continue his father's success and eventually died in a mental hospital. At one time the Boston Post was considered the nation's leading standard-sized newspaper in circulation. Competition from other newspapers, radio, and television contributed to the Post's decline and it went out of business in 1957.

The custom of the Boston Post Cane took hold in those towns lucky enough to have canes. As years went by some of the canes were lost, stolen, taken out of town and not returned. Selectmen destroyed by accident.

Benton's current Boston Post cane recipient is Charles Kent. Pictured below: Charles Kent receiving the Benton Boston post cane from first selectman Ryan Liberty.

