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## Where there's smoke, there's history



PHOTOS | NEW HAVEN BIZ

The Owl Shop at 268 College Street.

By Michael C. Bingham

**E**ven Sigmund Freud acknowledged that, sometimes, a cigar is just a cigar. But this special commemorative Havana is no sneaky Castro, no bogus blunt.

The Foundation Cigar Co. doesn't normally create private labels or exclusives, but just this once Nicholas Mellilo, founder and owner of company, has made an exception to honor a landmark New Haven business.

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Last week the Windsor cigar maker announced it is releasing a special-edition Owl Shop 85th Anniversary Cigar. It's a cigar produced by Foundation for the Owl Shop to commemorate the College Street retailer's 85 years in business.

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"I had to make an exception because it's my hometown," said Mellilo. "I was born in New Haven and my family has been shopping at the Owl Shop for over 50 years."

Or maybe more. Joseph St. John opened the original Owl Shop at 84 1/2 Wall Street (New Haven's) in 1934 as a bookstore catering to the Yale crowd. The Greek immigrant also sold tobacco and mixed his own blends as a sideline. In recent years it has evolved into a cigar lounge with a coffee bar, light food and weekly live music.



**Light my fire: Foundation Cigar's 85th anniversary Owl Shop stogie.**

According to Foundation, the Owl Shop 85th Anniversary release uses the Havana Seed CT No. 142 wrapper found on the Tabernacle Havana Seed No. 142, a Mexican binder, and Nicaraguan fillers from Estelí and Jalapa. (We're not sure what that means, but cigar aficionados might.) The This website uses cookies to ensure you get the best experience on our website. Our privacy policy cigar comes in one size: a 5 1/2 X 54 Robusto Extra. The cigars are presented in 20-count boxes that retail for \$253 per box. Foundation said it planned to produce 100 boxes of the product. Individual cigars sell for \$12.65.

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“After 85 years in business and much research, we finally found the perfect relationship with Nick Mellilo and Foundation Cigars to create our own Owl Shop Cigar,” said Owl Shop owner Glen Greenberg.

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But Mark Twain may have put it even better when he said, “If I cannot smoke cigars in Heaven, then I shall not go.”



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