CODMAN SQUARE: A History

Although today, the main business street of Dorchester is Dorchester Avenue, running the entire four miles\(^1\) of the community from Howell Street in the north to Neponset falls in the south, Codman Square is the true crossroads because it is the geographic center of the district. The oldest road in Dorchester is Norfolk Street in Codman Square which, combined with Centre Street, was an ancient Massachusett Indian trail that led from the salt marshes of Commercial Point to the freshwater meadows and hills of Mattapan and Milton.\(^2\)

![Postcard ca. 1920 showing Washington Street leading north and the 1893 James Haddock block.](image)

Codman Square became a crossroads* in 1655 when the new Upper Road to Lower Mills was built crossing Norfolk Street. It was called simply the Upper Road to distinguish it from the Lower Road, now named Adams Street, which had been built in 1633 to connect the town center of Dorchester at Pleasant and Pond Streets to Stoughtons’s gristmill at the Neponset River. The Lower Road, which served the town of Dorchester, took a wide curve around the base of Jones Hill following the line of Hancock and Stoughton Streets.

*In July, 1994, Codman Commons was opened, and the 17\(^{th}\) century crossroad was taken up by a walkway; Center Street no longer crossed Washington Street; it was shifted over to form a right angle to Talbot at the Latin Academy Apartments.

\(^1\) Actually 3.7 miles.

\(^2\) At Commercial Point—or Captain’s Point in the 17\(^{th}\) c—was located the successful cod fishing business of John Holland beginning in the 1630’s. Mattapan was an uninhabited wilderness called the 500 acre lot in the 17\(^{th}\) century and Upper Mills after 1709 when two mills were built on the banks of the Neponset where the senior housing is today. These were the first tanneries in New England—(Sunday Herald, Boston, May 26, 1901).
The town of Roxbury and the capital at Boston needed a more direct route not only to the mills (and the mills to the towns) but also to the southern plantations of Massachusetts Bay, so the Upper Road, now known as Washington Street, would be the most direct southern land route from the time of its construction until after Independence. In 1654, the General Court authorized the construction of a better roadway to the Stoughton’s mills and to Braintree and Plymouth. This remarkably straight road continued from the old Roxbury road that is today Warren Street and turned through Grove Hall. It was then laid along the crest of the ridge that forms the foot of Mt Bowdoin through what was known as the Great Lotts and due south to the twin falls of the Neponset River.3

Codman Square sits on the ridge that separates the plains of Dorchester. The ridge can be quickly noticed walking up Moultrie or Center Street from Shawmut MBTA station. One plain sweeps northeast to the saltmarshes and the ocean bays and the other sweeps southerly to the forests and fields across Mattapan as far as the Blue Hills, arrested only by Wellington Hill and the knuckles of the drumlins dotting Franklin Park. Stand at the corner of Talbot and Washington Street on a crisp autumn afternoon and face west to get a sense of that broad plain.4

Dorchester is two miles long and 2.5 miles wide. The northern half is characterized by three drumlins—Jones Hill, Meeting House Hill and Mt Bowdoin—and the peninsular hummock called Savin Hill whose sandy bottom is washed by Dorchester Bay, the site where the first English settlers set up camp after traveling overland from Nantasket after being set ashore by their captain, who was fearful of underwater hazards in the inner harbor. The Mary and John was the first of the Winthrop Fleet of 14 ships to arrive in the New World as part of what became known as the Great Migration.

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3 The first house in Codman Square was that built on The Upper Road in 1666 by Bernard Capen. Capen land extended over much of land west of Washington Street as far as Bernard. By 1909 those lands had been reduced to 27,000 square feet on which the house stood at # 501-517 Washington Street. The house was removed board by numbered board to Hillside Street in Milton in 1909. (Boston Herald Feb 7, 1909). In 2007 the house was sold, taken apart again and stored in numbered pieces waiting for another buyer. Boston Globe, Feb 25, 2007.

The fifteen hundred people who arrived in the 1630s first settled around what is now the intersection of Pond, Cottage and Pleasant Streets, a neighborhood called Allen’s Plain in the 19th century with easy access to flat well drained farmland, saltmarsh for grazing and good bays for fishing. The earliest road was present day Pleasant, Pond and Crescent Street that led to calves pasture—so called because of its rich grazing land (the present-day Columbia Point). The first meeting house was built at Pleasant and Cottage Streets.

Settled in 1630 the area was known at first as Mattapan, but in September, the General Court of the colony approved a change of name to Dorchester. The year 1633 was important for the settlement—it established town government by selectmen and it
began its first industry; the latter was the first grist mill in British North America\textsuperscript{5}. One followed the other. Dorchester became the first town in North America to choose representative democracy by electing a set of 12 selectmen who would meet weekly on Monday. A moderator was voted from among the dozen (although it seems the first board numbered seven).\textsuperscript{6}

The potential of the Neponset River was quickly recognized as Dorchester’s most important natural resource.\textsuperscript{7} One of the very first acts of the town selectmen in November, 1633, was to grant Israel Stoughton rights to build a mill at the Lower Falls of the Neponset; this was approved by the General Court on April 1, 1634 and thus began three centuries of industry at Lower Mills. Stoughton was granted 101 acres on the south banks of the Neponset called Indian Fields because the sunny slopes were planting grounds for the Massachusett who lived there in summer.\textsuperscript{8} In January, 1634 Stoughton was permitted to build a fish weir and bridge. This was probably a footbridge since grain and milled products came and went by boat. The Stoughton mill was four miles from any large settlement to the north, while to the south, there were only small settlements all the way to the large town at Plymouth.

![View of Bridge over Neponset River at Lower Mills looking toward Dorchester from the Milton side of the River, 1830.](image)

The Selectmen were largely concerned with the grants of land, the regulation of fences, the care of livestock on commons and the layout of highways. One of its first acts

\textsuperscript{5} Orcutt, William Dana. \textit{Good Old Dorchester}. Cambridge, 1893, p. 57.
\textsuperscript{7} Zurawski & Whitney, pg 19.
\textsuperscript{8} Adams Street crosses over the hill today and Governor Hutchinsons Field overlooks Indian Fields and the Neponset salt marshes below. An epidemic of what was probably smallpox in 1633 had reduced the Indian town that lived around the falls to less than 100 people; the disease also took the venerable sachem Chickataubut, who was so hospitable to the first families of Dorchester.
regarding public ways was to direct that a cartway be made to the mill at Neponset, the cost of which was not to exceed 5 pounds; this was present-day Adams Street. The first bridge across the Neponset was built on the order and at the expense of the General Court in 1656 and connected to the recently completed Upper Road. This was a Massachusetts Bay Colony issue because it connected towns within the colony. A new bridge was built jointly by the towns of Dorchester and Milton in 1765.

The selectmen—who appointed a town clerk to record all meetings in 1656—were also greatly concerned with strangers who stayed above a week “without license”, those who were unemployed and wild animals. The unemployed were fined and bounties were set on the heads of animals deemed a threat by the town government. In 1638 prizes were set on wolves; in 1735, 2 shillings was given for the head of a striped squirrel.

To the south of Meeting House Hill to which the second meeting house removed in 1673, lay the plain called the Great Lotts, extending to the Neponset on the south and the saltmarshes of Dorchester Bay to the east, and yeoman farmed this land in large holdings as granted by the General Court (mostly 50 acre tracts). Codman Square was in the center of the Great Lotts. The large estates that surrounded Codman Square until the turn of the 20th century were the result of large landholdings passed down from the early years of settlement.

CODMAN SQUARE BECAME A BUSINESS DISTRICT about 1763 when James Baker (1739-1825), who became bored first with the study of the ministry and then medicine, opened a one-story woodframe store at the southeast corner of Norfolk St and the Upper Road, where the Bank of America branch at the Lithgow building is today. He built his home across on the opposite corner where # 603 Washington Street. The crossroads soon became known as Bakers Corner’s. Like so many houses of the 17th and 18th centuries, Baker’s house was placed close to the roadside with no front yard, and the store was built right at the curb like barns were. Maps show that this house and store stood until the mid 1890’s when little else had been built up around the Square.

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9 Zurawski and Whitney, p. 16.
In the fall of 1764 Baker met and befriended an Irishman named John Hannon who complained—perhaps over the store counter—that in all of British North America there was no chocolate mill. Still restless, Baker bought the ruins of an old gunpowder mill that exploded in 1744 and rebuilt it to mill cacao beans. Gunpowder had been first manufactured when two pastors and a deacon from Dorchester First Church invested in the munitions business to capitalize on King Phillips War in the 1670s. Their business lasted 71 years. Through his store, Baker ordered millstones, kettles and cacao and provided start up capital to put Hannon in business as the first chocolatier in America, producing “Hannon’s Best Chocolate.” Hannon was lost at sea on a cacao-buying trip in 1779\(^\text{10}\), and in 1780 James Baker took over the mill; he bought a second one\(^\text{11}\) in 1791 and soon much of Lower Mills became Walter Baker & Co. (after the grandson of James who took over the company) and the rest is well-known history.

\(^{10}\) Another story has it that Hannon abandoned his wife and business and returned to Ireland.

\(^{11}\) The Belcher paper mill built in 1706.
CODMAN SQUARE BECAME A COMMUNITY in 1806 when a second Dorchester church was built at Washington and Center Street. The growth of population, especially in the southern reaches of the town, made services crowded and travel longer from the meeting house on Winter Street, and in 1805 a committee of three church members, Samuel Clapp, Samuel Withington and General Steven Badlam respectfully asked to form a second church called simply the South Meeting House. One acre of land was purchased—probably from the Clapp family—at the corner of Washington and Center Street opposite Bakers home and store, and the building was dedicated on October 30, 1806. Interestingly a vote of the town was taken accepting the Second Church on June 19, 1807.
It was thought by the more open minded Second Church members (of whom James Baker was one) that this new church would be Unitarian unlike the First Church which was Congregational, the faith of the Puritans. This hope was dashed after Rev John Codman was elected pastor on Sept 8, 1808; Codman was a strict Congregationalist. After years of ideological strife, a compromise was reached in which the Unitarians left to form their own church and Codman purchased their pews in the Second Church. Called the New South Meeting House (or Third Church), the new society was located at lower Washington Street on the edge of the bustling village that had grown up around the four Neponset mills.

Rev. Dr John Codman served Dorchester Second Church until his death on Dec. 23, 1847. Bakers Corners was renamed Codman Square by a grateful town in 1848. In his will he donated a 3.7 acre parcel of his land on Norfolk Street for a church cemetery; his was the first burial.

Inset from Walling's map of Norfolk County, 1858.

12 Born in Boston on Aug 5, 1782, Codman was in that class of first generation American.
TOWN CENTER

On Sept 23, 1815 a violent storm badly damaged Dorchester’s fourth meeting house built on the site of the present Soldiers monument at Meetinghouse Hill in 1743. It was a huge building 68 feet long, 46 wide with a 104-foot steeple. The need for reconstruction caused the town selectmen to consider that population growth might require a new location for town offices. On May 12, 1817, a special committee of ten appointed by the selectmen reported out that a new town house should be built at Washington Street and Norfolk Street; the construction of which should not exceed $3000.  

This was highly significant for two reasons. This was the first time since town government was founded on October 8, 1633, that civic affairs was conducted in a separate building from the church; up to that time the business of the selectmen took place in the same hall as weekly worship. Secondly it marked the location of town government in the geographic center of Dorchester on its two main cross roads, Norfolk and the Upper Road (Washington Street). At the turn of the 19th century the population growth of Dorchester was expanding so rapidly that the even the 1795 enlargement of the 1743 Winter Street meeting house was too small for elections and public hearings. The population was also moving south—as it had since the 1670s—but in the second decade of American independence, the area long called The Great Lotts, centered at Baker’s Corners, was rapidly building up. As mentioned above the Second Church moved to the geographic center of the town anticipating this increase in southerly growth.

The town still had some control of church affairs, however. Church property was town property and the proceeds from rents of common lands and investments was annually divided equally between the First and Second and Third Churches. The separation of meeting house from town hall made church members want fiscal separation as well; in 1824 ministerial property—lands, investments and rents—was divided into four equal parts and distributed to the churches for use and investment as the members saw fit: two parts to First Church and one part each to Second and Third churches.  

The new town hall was built of brick on a site diagonally opposite Second Church and across the street from Baker’s store on a triangular parcel probably donated by the Tolman family. The hall was originally 60 feet long and 30 feet wide; about 1851 a rear addition was built for Selectmen’s offices.  

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15 Boston Sunday Herald, July 10, 1904.
The Tolman family emigrated in 1635 and settled in the Great Lotts. (The narrow two-story house at 26 Norfolk Street – facing west with its end wall at the street line – is a Tolman family house, which, judging by its architectural style, was built before 1800.\textsuperscript{16}

In 1850 the Roman Catholic Archdiocese bought ten acres from John Tolman for a cemetery with a connecting easement off Norfolk Street, called St Mary’s Cemetery. The easement became New England Avenue after the railroad viaduct was built in 1890; the entrance is still evident today as the narrow section lined with garages.

Religious services continued to be held in the town hall, although this time it was at pleasure of the selectmen and probably for rental income. In 1843 the first Episcopal service in Dorchester was held at the hall, and from this beginning St Mary’s Church, now on Cushing Avenue, was born.\textsuperscript{17}

After annexation on January 1, 1870, the town hall was used as a ward room for voters until a new one was established at Field’s Corner in 1890. In 1872 the Dorchester High School military company held their drills there until 1900. The first basketball game in Dorchester was held there by Dorchester High School students, but from 1900 until demolition began for the new library in June 1904, the building stood empty.

\textsuperscript{16} An inspection of the building by architectural historian John Goff led him to believe that the portion of the house closest to Norfolk Street is the oldest part of the house, probably dating from before 1800.

\textsuperscript{17} Orcutt. \textit{Good Old Dorchester}, p. 278. Also \textit{History of the Town of Dorchester, Massachusetts. By a Committee of the Dorchester Antiquarian and Historical Society}. Boston, 1859, p. 414.
TRANSPORTATION

The plains of Dorchester were ideal topography for the railroad. Codman Square had access to two lines. The first was the Old Colony Railroad, which opened on Nov 10, 1845. It traveled along the eastern saltmarshes from South Boston to Plymouth.

The creation of the railroad was met with strong opposition; at a town meeting chaired by Col Walter Baker, on Feb3, 1842, three resolutions were passed objecting to the railroad, one of which stated that the road should be built across saltmarshes and creeks not near business and residential sections. The selectmen considered the road a transit through Dorchester not to it. The Old Colony’s first president and general manager, Nathan Carruth (1808-1881), saw the situation much differently; he used the new transportation phenomenon to promote real estate, after moving to a fine 12 acre estate he built on Ashmont Hill in 1847.

The next year 1848, he opened a spurline called the Dorchester and Milton branch with a terminal at present-day Ashmont station. In 1871 he incorporated the Shawmut Branch. It had an enormous impact on the suburban subdivision of the streets from Park to Moultrie when the Melville Station was opened in 1872 at present day Waldeck and Tremlett, reached by an easement across the Vinson estate (cut in half by railroad tracks). It was not built at Center Street in 1872 because the location would be too close to Codman Square.

This station lasted about 20 years; after which it was moved closer to Center Street where the current Shawmut Station is located—a move done in large part to connect the rail line with electric street cars on the new Talbot Avenue.

The second railroad was the Midlands Branch built by the Boston and New York Central Railroad (by 1864 it was called Boston Hartford & Erie R/ R.). Its passenger station was at Summer Street and Atlantic Avenue, and docks for ship to rail commerce were located where Anthony’s Pier 4 is today. Chartered in 1850, the Midlands Branch began service in January 1855 on a route that took it across South Bay saltmarsh on wooden piles, through the rock sided trench dug out of the side of Mt Bowdoin (where the Mt Bowdoin stop was built at Washington Street making Grove Hall far more accessible), and across the western plains of Dorchester into Mattapan and Readville.

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18 Passenger service ceased on the Shawmut branch on Sept 24, 1926, after it was acquired by the MBTA. The Dorchester Extension from Columbia Road to Ashmont - the present Red Line- was opened on September 1, 1928. The rapid transit line was put into a tunnel south of Fields Corner as approached the slope of Park Street to Ashmont Station.
The town fathers didn’t seem to have objections to the Midlands Branch because it was allowed to cross Dudley Street within a few blocks of Uphams Corner. The only objection they raised, and it was enough to take them to court, was that the trains should not cross streets at grade but over bridges; this injunction was dropped and the tracks ran at grade for the next 40 years. Trains crossed over a bridge at Lauriat Avenue (later renamed Woodrow Avenue) built about 1890. The next stop south of Park Street (crossed by the railroad tracks) was named simply Dorchester Station at Norfolk Street and Lauriat Ave. The latter street was not laid out until 1870, although originally it functioned as a narrow wagonway leading from Blue Hill Avenue.

Never a money-making rail line, largely carrying freight, the Midlands or today the Fairmount Line, was last owned by the New Haven Railroad, which ceased passenger operation (but not freight) in March of 1944. Passenger use was revived by the current owner, the MBTA on Oct. 15, 1979.

The Dorchester Station brought some residential development to the Codman Square neighborhoods, but this was limited to smaller homes scattered on nearby streets. The line was mostly freight, attracting light industry and a mechanic population. Developers did not build big fine homes on the streets around it as they did at Melville
Avenue and Tremlett Street and other neighboring streets, probably because the Midlands did not have a real estate promoter as its president.

A Metropolitan Street Railway street horsecar barn was in operation at Codman Square by 1874\textsuperscript{19} with track laid down along the Upper Road to Grove Hall, where there was another large car barn. The Codman Square barn was built on Tolman land where the Kit Clark Senior Center at 641 Washington Street is now located (In fact the facility is about the same size as the car barn). This line became electrified about 1898\textsuperscript{20} which made travel time faster; the car barn at Codman Square was slowly phased out as the central facility at Grove Hall was enlarged in 1888, but it was still used as a stable until 1916 when it was razed and replaced by a store, automobile garage and bowling alley.

\begin{figure}[h]
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\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{car-barn.png}
\caption{Car barn}
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In 1889 – 1892 Talbot Avenue was built ruler straight from Blue Hill Avenue to Washington Street, then curving toward Ashmont to connect the two privately built toll roads, Brush Hill Turnpike (Blue Hill Avenue) built in 1804 and the Dorchester Turnpike

\textsuperscript{19} Two years after the Dorchester turnpike became a public road on April 22, 1854, horsescars lines were operating so it is probably safe to assume that the horsecar barn at Codman Square was built about 1856-1857.

\textsuperscript{20} Electric streetcars began operating out of Grove Hall on Oct 24, 1898.
built and opened in 1805\textsuperscript{21} (briefly named Federal Avenue after the town acquired the roadway in 1854).

One could go anywhere in Dorchester from Codman Square in 1892. Codman Square at the turn of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century was in the very center of the major cross town road that linked Blue Hill Avenue with Dorchester Avenue, while Washington Street was one of the main north south arteries to Roxbury and Boston, Milton and Quincy. The streetcars and the buslines quickly followed, and by the end of the Great War the business district we know today began to emerge.

Codman Square never lacked for transportation systems from the introduction of the straight and level Upper Road in the 17\textsuperscript{th} century to two railroad lines in the 19\textsuperscript{th}—what it lacked until the turn of the 20th century was quick dependable and frequent transportation.

**HOUSING**

Dorchester’s population began to grow in the 1880s commensurate with the advance of quick, cheap and expansive transportation. But this made land scarce and expensive around business cores and main streets. The apartment house, after initial public skepticism in the 1870s and early 1880s, had become an acceptable welcome answer to the need for homes around growing commercial areas like Codman Square at the end of the 1880s.

In 1886 Carolyn Jackson\textsuperscript{22} built the first apartment block in Codman Square when she developed a row of five set-back attached three-family brick houses with long steep stoops designed by architect Artemus Sherman to look like row houses at 15-33 Norfolk Street facing the town hall.\textsuperscript{23}

The construction of Talbot Avenue across Washington Street had divided an 8.75-acre rectangular parcel of land originally owned by Edmund Baker and included the Baker store. It was bounded by Washington, Center and Brent streets, and the new cross-town neatly cut it into two triangular lots, one owned by Lydia Taft and the other bought by the city of Boston. Two of Codman Square's four signature buildings were built in those triangles between 1898 and 1901.

Codman Square’s second of its four iconic buildings (the first being Second Church) is the three story swell-front Lithgow Building developed by Lydia Taft in 1899.

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\textsuperscript{21} The term “turnpike” is derived from the long wooden pike set on two posts across the route guarded by the toll keepers house. When the toll was paid according to the weight of the wagon load, the pike was turned aside and the farmer was allowed to pass. Fields Corner was a tollgate on the Dorchester Road and the intersection of Blue Hill and Glenway was gate house on the Brush Hill Turnpike.

\textsuperscript{22} This was Samuel Capen land in 1882. The Capens owned enormous tracts of land west of Washington Street.

\textsuperscript{23} In 1925 the stoops were removed and storefronts added to the property line and new entrance halls were constructed. Saul Moffie was the architect.
on her triangular lot. It was designed by the Milton architect Joseph T Greene, a prominent Mason. Greene designed the interior programming to include a third floor Masonic hall over second floor offices and first floor commercial space. It remained a Masonic Lodge until 1950, still owned by Lydia Taft. On May 13, 1913, six one-story wood and brick stores were added along Washington Street to Lithgow Street designed by HB Homer.

Completing the triangular lot owned by Taft, eight attached wood-frame 3-family apartment houses, forming a block called the Shakespeare, were built at 369-383 Talbot Avenue. Designed in faux Elizabethan style with shingle and half timber, the block was built about 1912.

At the right side of the picture, the Shakespeare is barely visible.
The Shakespeare and a three-decker to its left are more visible in this Dorchester High School class picture.

Neglect forced this to be razed after a disastrous fire in 1971; the lot remained vacant for the next 20 years until 1992, when the Lithgow residential block was completed. It was designed by architects Steffian-Bradley and developed by Codman Square Neighborhood Development Corporation. This was combined with a block of attached buildings on Lithgow Street for a total of 31 apartments at a cost of $1.8 million. The architects obviously took inspiration from the old Shakespeare because they used similar style massing and height as the original apartment block. It was the first new housing built in Codman Square since 1927. The Lithgow Building was restored and redeveloped by CSNDC as Lithgow Commercial building, adding a long wood and brick two-story wing from the 1899 building to Lithgow Street for upstairs offices and ground floor retail. This was completed on Feb 14, 1992. The architects maintained the Classical revival style of the older building and added a second swell-front on the Lithgow corner. They also kept the bowed front motif that characterizes Codman Square by designing the Lithgow-Talbot corner as a curved end; the interior rooms have a nice spacious floor plan. As a whole, the brick Lithgow commercial and the wooden board-and-batten-style residential rows filled in the whole triangular block with a uniform style and massing that compliments the Square.

In 1903 Jackson completed a substantial row of four attached brick three-story buildings containing a total of 15 homes with ground floor retail at 327-339 Talbot Avenue. The stores with wide awnings faced Norfolk Street. A small one story store was built between #339 and the Norfolk Street apartment block, which had been built 17 years earlier, leaving an access alley to service both buildings.
The residential character of Washington Street at Codman Square changed in 1904 when William H. Sherman developed, designed and built three brick apartment buildings at Washington and Lyndhurst Streets. Numbered 544–546 Washington Street and 2-4 and 12-14 Lyndhurst, they were originally built for a total of 20 families.
Rosedale Street was built, and 13 wood-frame single and duplex homes were completed between 1894 and 1898. At the corner of Washington St, Sherman developed, designed and built a fourth apartment house, originally for 12 families, numbered 4-6 Rosedale Street in 1907.
Each of these replaced smaller single-family wood-frame homes. The multi-family houses were built on the streetcar line at the edges of residential streets. Past the corner the streets were characteristically lined with broad wood-frame homes on small lots shaded by generous verandas and dotted with dormers, bay windows and bracketed cornices of the late Queen Anne and the emerging Colonial revival styles.

One of the largest of these homes characterizing the residential quality of the square before 1900 was the Francine May home designed by Alden Frink in 1895\(^{24}\). A broad and tall house, it had a cupola to match the old Dorchester Academy building across the street. Set back from Washington Street at the corner of Aspinwall, the May house spent most of its life as a hospital and nursing home beginning in 1915 when it was changed into a hospital with a doctors residence; by 1933 it was called the Codman Square Hospital, 45 years before the Codman Square Health center opened. Empty and boarded up, 3-5 Aspinwall St was still standing in 2009; a three-family house and a row of brick stores blocks its view of Washington Street today.

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\(^{24}\) Alden Frink’s most famous Boston home is the AD Williams house of 1872, which today houses the Museum of Afro American Artists at 300 Walnut Avenue
Two other brick apartment houses together with a row of triple-deckers were built before World War I. In 1909 two triangular brick apartments were built at Talbot, Aspinwall and Whitfield that became homes for 28 families. The Talbot Avenue building, called "The Grenham", had ground floor stores. The two blocks were designed by Silverman Engineering, architects of many apartment houses.
Another bow-fronted apartment house was completed in 1913 at 326 Talbot and Southern Avenue by Carl Cahner and was designed by Samuel S. Levy in yellow brick. Built for seven families, it had storefronts on the Talbot Avenue side.

A handsome row of seven wood and stucco triple-deckers was built in 1914-1915 by William H. Crosby at 517-511 Washington and 8-14 Wheatland, designed by the noted architects of multi-family homes CA and FN Russell. These were designed and built with care in detailing and proportion.

This was the second multi family development designed by the Russells. In 1897 they designed a three-story block at 702 to 728 Washington Street with two attached buildings at Walton Street for James Haddock, who earlier had developed the Baker house property. The 700 block was designed for 24 families with three ground floor storefronts. This large and handsome apartment building is united by a series of rhythmic angular and drum bays along both Walton and Washington streets.

In 1917 the Russells designed 464 Washington Street and 4-6 Regina Road for Frederick Rockwell, built for 18 families. This was a bold brick building with corner bays and Greek portico entrances.

In this same pre-Great War period, Codman Square witnessed the march of triple-deckers on side streets like Whitfield and Aspinwall and along Talbot Avenue towards Franklin Field. Triple-deckers mingled with broad-shouldered duplexes on streets like Colonial Avenue. Multi-family homes dominated the west-of-Washington-Street area because it had been the least built up.

The last multi-family development built in Codman Square—and indeed the last new housing until 1992—was the 12-family apartment at 8 Kenwood developed by Simon and Nathan Weiner and designed by Eisenberg & Feer in 1927. Like 4–6 Rosedale, 8 Kenwood is an apartment house on the edge of an area of strictly wood-frame single and duplex homes.

With more homes came families with children, and the old town hall became part of the progress of redevelopment; in June of 1904 the wreckers took it down to make way for the Codman Square Library – the 4th iconographic building in the Square. It was designed by architect Charles Bateman in Colonial Revival style with a gambrel roof and cupola.

THE SCHOOLS

These families also needed schools closer to home. For most of the previous 100 years Codman Square youngsters attended what became known as the Gibson School, first built about 1800 on the Upper Road near school Street.

Charles Bateman also designed the parish house for Our Lady of Victories Church at 27 Isabella Street near Columbus Ave. in 1887, He may have designed the adjacent church which began construction in 1888.
The Christopher Gibson name was used again and again. This building was built in 1857 on School Street near Washington Street.

The first public school in Codman Square, the Henry L. Pierce School, was opened in 1892 at Washington Street and Welles Avenue named for the owner of the Baker Chocolate mills who brought the company to international prominence. Designed in Romanesque style by Harrison A Atwood, the school building burned and was demolished in 1970.
Eight years later the Codman Square branch library was built on the site. Designed by Eco Texture architects, its wide Syrian arch brick entrance recalls the door of the old school.

Actually the first school in the square was the private Dorchester Academy established in 1831 by a board of trustees that included John Codman (son of the first pastor of Second Church). At the end of that year, with a class size of 103, it moved into a Greek revival building with tall white Doric columns supporting a gable front with a center cupola on Washington Street near present day Lyndhurst. It’s curious that the academy was not built at the crossroads of Norfolk and Washington Street near the seat of town government and Reverend Codman’s own church, unless the outskirts proved more peaceful to study. The private academies made way for the public schools, and the Academy building became a private home as it still is today. In one of the earliest acts of historical preservation in Dorchester, William H Sherman moved the building over to a lot he owned numbered 18 Lyndhurst Street when he built 4-6 and 12-14 Lyndhurst apartment buildings in 1904. The architects of the apartment houses were Smith & Ball who no doubt coordinated the delicate job of lifting up and moving over to new foundation a 75-year-old 2-story Greek Revival house.

17 Or maybe it was to keep the young men away from the rowdiness of the punch fueled crackerbarrel political debates at Bakers store.
Two years after the Pierce School opened, the city of Boston broke ground on Dorchester High School, the finest building in Dorchester and the second iconic building in Codman Square. The first Dorchester High School was built in 1852 on the “South Boston Turnpike” (Dorchester Avenue) at the corner of Gibson Street; the two story school began with a class of 59 from all over the town including 7 from the Gibson School. The second high school, a two-story brick building, was located at the corner of Dorchester Avenue and Center Street. But the population of the town required a larger more modern and centrally-located high school and the city commissioned Hartwell-Richardson who designed a yellow brick Renaissance Revival high school lavishly decorated. Opened on May 29, 1901, it was enlarged with an annex in 1910 designed in yellow brick but in a more restrained style by the same architects.

27 The site today is the Patrick O’Hearn elementary school built in 1957.
28 Hartwell Richardson designed the Franklin Park Refectory in 1895 and the First Spiritualist Temple (Exeter Theater) in 1888. The latter in dark brownstone the first in yellow terra cotta.
29 See the Boston Herald May 29, 1901, pg 10.
30 In 1905 the town fathers of Dorchester, England presented a set of grey and red Roman pavement tiles dating from about 55 BC. either to the school or the Dorchester Historical Society. These were set in the entrance to the main entrance of the building where they are walked on daily. See Dorchester Community News Dec.2,1986.
This remained Dorchester High School until a companion high school was opened in 1928 on Armandine Street facing Roberts’s playground. It was designed by Harrison A. Atwood and designated Boys High School. The Talbot Avenue building became Girls Latin Academy. In 1986 it was renovated into 58 apartments by the Codman Square Neighborhood development Corporation in partnership with Robert Walsh Associates, which bought the closed building for $1 from the City of Boston. An additional 24 apartments were added to the old cafeteria and gymnasium of the 1901 building that required adding four new floors; completed in July 2008. The school chimney was gutted and reused as an elevator shaft.
Atwood also designed the Emily Fifield Elementary School on Dunbar Avenue facing Roberts Park in 1918.

In 1905 the Whittier School was opened at 60 Southern Avenue designed by Parker & Thomas.
The fifth school built in Codman Square was The Lucy Stone constructed on the site of the 1750 Walter Baker mansion on Regina Road in 1937. Frank I. Cooper Corp. were the architects who designed a striking Art Deco school on a dead end street. Its schoolyard abutted the 464 Washington Street apartment house built 20 years earlier.

The Walter Baker Mansion, later the Colonial Club, was replaced by the Lucy Stone School.
The ecclesiastic hegemony enjoyed by Second Church in Codman Square for decades ended in 1888 when a lot of land was purchased from Charles Capen at the corner of Norfolk and Darlington for a Catholic church, not far away from Dorchester Station and St Mary’s Catholic cemetery. The first mass was said on Christmas day, 1890; at first a mission of St Gregory’s Church at Lower Mills, it became St Matthews parish in the year 1900. This church marked a major demographic turning point that indicated the growing residential neighborhood west of Washington along the ancient Norfolk thoroughfare; it also suggested an emerging working class community.
St. Matthew’s Church, 2003.

Whether the archdiocese intended to build a bigger church on this one-acre piece of old pasture is unknown, but in 1923 the magnificent St Matthews church\textsuperscript{31} was opened on Stanton Street, about a mile away.

The old wooden chapel then became St Matthews School.

\textsuperscript{31} This great Roman style church with monumental attached pillars flanking a rosette window set in a bands of inset arched brick was designed by Charles R. Greco. Greco designed everything from churches to Hebrew schools and office buildings. In St Matthews he used left over design themes from his majestic Blessed Sacrament that he designed a decade earlier in Jamaica Plain; St Matthews is is younger brother. In June, 1975 the Archdiocese sold the old St.Matthews on Norfolk St to the Ancient Egyptian Arabic Order of Nobles Syria Temple no 31
Wooden building used as St. Matthew’s Church and sold by the Archdiocese in 1975.

On Oct 3, 1889 ground was broken on Dorchester Temple Baptist Church at the corner of Washington Street and Welles Avenue. Designed by Arthur H Vinal\(^\text{32}\), it is the finest Romanesque shingle style church in Boston and the most handsome house of worship in Dorchester (which does not lack in great church architecture). It is characterized by a bell tower shaped to resemble a light house, emphasizing not only Dorchester’s shipping and fishing heritage but also the Scriptural metaphors of light. Dorchester Temple was organized only 3 years earlier with a membership of just 36 under the leadership of Deacon George Chipman\(^\text{33}\) who built its first hall on Norfolk Street in 1884 as a mission of Tremont Temple. The church was dedicated on Nov 17, 1892. In 2006 it changed its name to Global Ministries Christian Church.

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\(^{32}\) Vinal was City Architect during the construction of the Park System and was involved in the design of Agassiz bridge in the Fens and the Playstead Overlook in Franklin Park. Two of Boston’s great post Richardson Romanesque public buildings belong to Vinal. The Chestnut Hill Reservoir pump house and the Back Bay Firehouse on Boylston Street. All in 1888. He also designed 12 Melville Ave in 1883 using the stick style of architecture.

\(^{33}\) For whom the Norfolk sidestreet is presumably named.
The third ministry to build its house was congregation Tikvas Israel which commissioned Weinbaum and Wexler to design a small synagogue at 114 Southern Avenue in 1925. It was opened in time for High Holidays in September 1926. This building had a short life as a temple because by 1945 it was the Dorchester Hebrew School for which it served until its sale to a church in 1970. In 2009 it is the Prayer Room Pentecostal Church.
At least as shown by its churches, it would appear that Catholics, Baptists, Congregationalists and Jews all lived in Codman Square in the 1930s as the business district began to grow.

BUSINESS DISTRICT

The earliest storefronts in Codman Square were built about 1893, a year after Talbot Avenue opened for travel. James Haddock razed the Baker house and built three attached wood-frame four-story buildings each with four bay windows anchored by a heavy cornice. Apartments were located on the top two floors above ground floor retail. Architect FA Hatch used all of the 6000 square-foot Baker property and placed the main entrance on the corner bay which led upstairs to probably three apartments; another door at about #597 allowed access to three more apartments in that separate building. A third attached four-story, three-family house was built in 1903 at #1–5 Norfolk also with storefronts on the street. In 1898 two additional stores were built on Washington Street at the corner of Southern Avenue, where #587-595 Washington Street is today. These were one-story wood and brick stores, the precursor of what the commercial district would look like after 1916. (It will be recalled that in 1897, Haddock developed the long and more distinctive 700 block next to the Pierce School.)

Haddock also developed a new street called Norfolk Terrace (today Epping Street) behind the town hall about 1893. He built four wood-frame two-family homes and row of wooden stores on the Washington Street corner.
About 1910, Louis Greenblatt bought a triangular parcel at Talbot, Southern and Whitfield and hired the architect Fred Norcross to design four attached stores. Completed in 1911, it was for many years the home of Kaspar Brothers Meat Market. It has been a church since 1974.

297-303 Talbot Avenue, 2009.

THE CODMAN SQUARE BUSINESS DISTRICT

The business district—defined for this study as between Talbot/Norfolk and Melville Avenues—developed in four stages. The first was James Haddock’s 1893 crossroads housing-over-retail blocks; the other three are 1917, 1922-1927 and 1932-1937/1946. Five blocks of stores replaced existing homes—not unusual in urban centers, but a block of stores built over an older house as late as 1946 is uncommon except for gasoline stations. Another uncommon feature are business blocks that were either replaced or substantially remodeled in 1932-1937, in the depths of the Great Depression, when businesses were contracting not expanding.

Haddock’s development of housing-over-retail in 1893 was the last of that typical mixed use urban model in Codman Square; thereafter would come the long narrow strip stores such as the second commercial development built by Katherine Nelson at 559-563 Washington Street at the corner of Aspinwall, completed in 1917. Designed by DT Nelson in tapestry brick it was a subdivision of the Francine May estate, the home of which had been remodeled into a hospital with a doctor’s residence in 1915.
Six business blocks were built between 1922 and 1927, three of which replaced existing homes. Number 555-557 Washington Street was built next to the Nelson block in 1927 and replaced the ca 1893 Ida Woods house.

Across the alley AD Boyle had designed a row of five cast stone stores in 1923 at #547-553 that in 2008 houses the popular Kim’s Fish Market and the long-time Rosedale market.
These markets were built next to the three story brick apartment house number 4-6 Rosedale that William H Sherman developed, designed and built in 1907; these were roomy flats because it was planned for 12 families; converted into 27 in 1958, indicating the need for housing in the 1950’s Codman Square. Proving that apartment house renters and professional home owners can live on the same corner, the next year 1908 Dr Nicholas Drummey built a fine broad-shouldered Colonial revival home at 533 Washington Street in which he also had his practice office, suggested by the two entrances. Robert Watson was the architect; the building permit was issued on April 25, 1908. In 2008 it is the Joy of Learning Montessori Institute.

533 Washington Street, 2009.
Following the postwar recession the business district took off. In 1922 the notable apartment house architects Silverman Brown and Heinan designed a line of five brick stores at 569-573 Washington Street. These were completely rebuilt in 1935 by a different owner with the architects Shepard & Stearns—beginning a Codman Square trend of either razing or remodeling storefronts, built only a decade or so earlier, in the 1930s. Half of this block was taken for back taxes and razed for the current municipal parking lot.


On the Aspinwall corner the Dorchester Savings Bank asked architect J Williams Beal to enlarge and remodel its savings and loan offices in 1959.
The WT Grant building was built in 1927-1928 at 583-585 Washington Street, a large L-shaped store designed by Eisenberg & Feer. It replaced two homes, the AE Austin house built by 1893 on Washington Street and a home built in 1895 at #11 Southern Avenue (its twin # 9 still stands).

Across the street there was a narrow lane called Church Place that led to long wooden carriage sheds of Second Church. Next to the lane was a house owned by Carolyn Jackson that she razed in 1900, replacing it with a two story wood frame store.
with apartments above designed by H J Preston. Moultrie Street was continued through to Washington Street by 1914, and in 1926 the Jackson stores were razed, and architects Preston & Gay designed a new block of seven stores at 580-592 Washington Street. By 1948 the corner store had been remodeled into what later became the First National Bank and then Unity Bank & Trust; in 2008 it is Payless Shoe store.

The largest single commercial building in the Square is People’s Market at 576 Washington Street. It replaced the Marion Means house built by 1873 on 1/2 acre of land. The architect Michael A. Dyer designed a market building in 1938; later additions to the Kenwood Street side and in back were added in 1948 filling out the whole lot. For decades it was First National Stores, which may have commissioned the building. Finast closed in December, 1978, and after a false start to reopen another market, the building remained empty until People’s Market opened in 1998.


34 This may have resembled 660 Washington Street, a two story apartment over store built by Hannah Smith in 1912 designed by WE Cotter with a wide second story veranda supported by white columns. It replaced the Charlotte Baker house. The Greater Life Baptist Church replaced the store.

35 Michael A. Dyer of Medford opened his practice in 1931 and one of his first projects was the Chittuck School in Mattapan (1931). He designed Heath Street public housing in 1941 ad Columbia Point homes in 1954 as well as the Lemuel Shattuck Hospital, also in 1954. The Timilty School in Eliot Square (1937) are also his designs.
Number 562-570 Washington Street on the opposite corner of Kenwood is a series of five brick stores designed by SS Eisenberg & Herman Feer in 1926-1927. By 1946 the corner store had been remodeled and converted for the Dorchester Savings Bank, which occupied it until moving to a spanking new building across the street thirteen years later.

Next to # 562-570 was the two family wood-frame house that William H Sherman designed and built for Bertha Wylie in 1909 opposite his Lyndhurst St apartment houses. This house made way for the last commercial block in Codman Square at 554-556
Washington Street. In early 1946 the Wylie house was razed and a storefront was built by a young Dorchester contractor named Norman Leventhal\textsuperscript{36} designed by Carney & Goldberg. The building permit was issued on Sept 16, 1946. The Dorchester Station of the US post office relocated from Talbot Avenue and Brent Street to the corner storefront in 1998. This was its fourth location in the Square beginning at 593 Washington St in 1898, moving to a new building at 325 Talbot Avenue about 1925 before moving to a larger Talbot Avenue location.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{554-556-Washington-street-2009.jpg}
\caption{554-556 Washington street, 2009.}
\end{figure}

The largest and grandest house in Codman Square was the home of Elbridge Torrey at Melville Avenue and Washington Street. It was rambling stick style Queen Anne pile designed by Cabot & Chandler and completed in 1880\textsuperscript{37}—eight years after the Melville Ave railroad station was opened. By the Hoover era the Torrey House was a dinosaur from a previous epoch; about 1933 the house was bought and taken down.

\textsuperscript{36} Born on Wolcott Street, he attended Temple Beth El on Fowler Street. After WWII he and his brother Robert opened Beacon Construction that went on to build the G&G Deli at 1106 Blue Hill Avenue, (1948) and Rowes Wharf (1985).

\textsuperscript{37} See American Architect and Building News, Dec. 11, 1886 for a photograph of the house.
Its 1 1/2 acre grounds were subdivided into three storefronts numbered 530-542 Washington Street and the Codman Square Esso gas station at the corner of Melville Avenue. A new street, the cul de sac Melville Lane, was graded and paved through the back of the lot following part of the old carriage drive and five homes were built; numbers 7 and 18 were completed in 1933 for Oscar Anderson (who may have been the developer of the entire parcel). One Melville Ave was completed in 1936 designed by the prolific domestic architect Albin Brodin using discarded misshapen bricks on the façade. (The other two homes #10 and #14 were completed in 1951 and 1946 respectively). The Torrey family carriage house at the rear of the property—behind #26 Lyndhurst St. was bought by the Franklin chapter of the International Order of Odd Fellows and remodeled as their lodge. In 2008 it is the Faith Urban Assembly Church.
About 1929 Arthur E. Dorr, a developer of commercial blocks, bought the four Haddock buildings on Washington and Talbot and 587-593 Washington Street. He razed the Haddock buildings and remodeled and enlarged the rest. He built a group of three very fine and distinctive stores and offices designed by Eisenberg & Feer in Art Deco style stores and offices built between 1930 and 1932. The architects used yellow and buff colored brick and cast stone cornice friezes. Number 338-348 Talbot Avenue was designed as a two story office building using the lower grade of that street to add a second story without making the building taller than its adjacent stores. Over the granite-framed door is a distinctive cast stone tablet in low relief, both of which appear to be a bow to Louis Sullivan.
Dorr remodeled the two 1898 buildings—probably because they were in better condition structurally—in 1937 adding modern fronts and extending and enlarging number 587 Washington Street with a wing along Southern Avenue, all by Eisenberg & Feer, Architects. Number 587 and 593 were combined and remodeled as an FW Woolworth store that opened in 1942. In 1998 after years of neglect this bleak block was completely renovated and improved; number 587-593 was subdivided into five stores and offices by the new owner the Codman Square Neighborhood Development Corporation which moved into the new offices in September 2000 from a smaller space in the Lithgow Building.

TOGETHER WITH HOMES, SCHOOLS AND BUSINESSES OTHER AMENITIES CAME to Codman Square such as a social club, movie theater, automobile garages and district court.

"The closing years of the 19th c are rich with significance for the feminine portion of the present generation, as bringing in their tide the inspiration of union among women," sniffed the writer of the *Dorchester Book Illustrated* of 1899. He was referring to the Dorchester Women’s Club founded on Harvard Street in 1892. The Club opened its beautiful Georgian Revival clubhouse at 38-40 Center Street in November 1898. It was designed by the Dorchester architect A Warren Gould on a street then nicknamed “old maid’s lane” because of the number of single women living in the fine homes on that street. Gould designed the hall in two distinctive but attached parts, one the auditorium and the second the parlors and grand staircase. It was called Whiton Hall after one of its
founders and benefactors, Ella Whiton of Melville Avenue. The hall faced the Dorchester High School, then just starting construction in 1898. Not very active politically, it was nevertheless the most active of the State Federation of Women’s Clubs for over 50 years.

Among its works, it provided scholarships and musical instruments to Dorchester High School students, mittens and scarves to patients at Carney Hospital and was, of course, very active in supporting the armed forces in both world wars, from collecting books to making bandages. Whiton Hall was sold to Doyle’s Caterers in 1951, but the Women’s Club still remained in offices and meeting rooms and continued to offer teas, lectures and other programs until it closed in 1995. It is in 2008 The New Life Restoration Temple church.

The Codman Square Theater was built about 1917 on the site of the Dorchester Stable; a large wooden building at 635 Washington Street owned and operated by Charles Hinds. This was relatively early for neighborhood motion picture houses, most of which were built in the 1920’s. The Strand Theater at Uphams Corner opened in November 1918, but the one in Codman Square predates it by at least six months. The May 19, 1918 Boston Globe announced that the Codman Square Theater would feature Barney Gilmore starring in “The Irish Honeymoon”. No photograph has been located yet of the Codman Square Theater but it was basically a brick box with a taller vertical wing in the back that housed the screen and a lower story in front for the box office and lobby on Washington Street; the façade of which was no doubt lavishly decorated with terra cotta or more likely weatherproof plaster scrolls, sunbursts and masks. Over the glass front box office there was no doubt a tall neon lit sign and marquis announcing the next Gloria Swanson or Tom Mix feature with a Silly Symphony or Three Stooges opening short.
The theater did not seem to meet with the approval of Second Church; in its Nov 7, 1918 edition the Globe reported that 80 property owners and church members led by Mr. Charles H. Curtis of 18 Welles Ave petitioned Mayor Andrew Peters at a public hearing chaired by the mayor regarding Sunday night performances. The signers feared that stage and screen shows would draw young people away from regular church services meaning “a financial gain for the theater at a loss to the church”. The outcome is unknown but the theater continued until about 1960, for many years as part of the Gordon Theater chain that owned and operated the Strand and The Scollay. The site was vacant in 1963 when a nursing home was proposed, which after a false start was built in 1965 with 80 beds. It was designed by Ralph Lee Rankin and later became known as the Edgewater Nursing Home. The nursing home was acquired in 1993 by the Codman Square Health Center that had been offering outpatient services in the renovated basement of the 1904 library since 1979 (as well as in an addition added to the Epping Street side in 1937 as an election department ward room). In 1993 Arrowstreet Architects gutted and renovated the old nursing home into a spacious and more modern health center that was enlarged by a 3 story addition (presumably by the same architects) in 1999. In six years the Health Center had invested $6 million in Codman Square. In 2001 a two-story addition was added facing Epping Street for the new Codman Academy. It replaced two of the two-family homes built by James Haddock about 1893. The architect was William Stearns of Miller Dyer Stearns who planned a school originally for 38 students.

There is a photograph in the collection of the Dorchester Historical Society from about 1920 showing a young man with a young lady behind him standing at the Center St curb presumably waiting for a streetcar. In the background are the Haddock block and the swell-front Jackson block with the library on the left of the frame. A street car is climbing the grade at Talbot and Norfolk going towards Ashmont. One touring car is taking the Talbot corner passing the streetcar. A second open-seater touring car has crossed the intersection, passed the library and is heading down Talbot Avenue. Behind the couple standing in a raised open booth is a helmeted police officer obviously directing this traffic flow.
Codman Square had car barns for horsedrawn and electric streetcars, stables for horses, work wagons and travel carriages and in 1905 a new architectural form for the new machines in the old photograph – the automobile garage. In 1905 Arthur Crane built a long stone automobile storage garage at 270 Talbot Avenue at the corner of Spencer Street made of cast stone blocks. Automobile owners on Spencer and Whifield streets could rent space in the fireproof building for their cars, saving themselves the expense of building their own auto storage shed, if they had enough land to build one on. It was owned by the Pastene brothers who subsequently enlarged it over the next decade and turned it a repair shop for cars and trucks. 38

Interestingly this was built opposite the Davenport Stables, a large 10,000 square foot wooden building on the corner of Spencer Street built shortly after Talbot Avenue was completed. It served the same function as the auto storage garage but for different modes of transportation. Davenport boarded horses, stored and repaired carriages, fixed harnesses and reshod horses for the owners who lived in the homes on Spencer and Whitfield Streets. After 1900, he probably kept light racing carriages for those men who

38 Renting enclosed parking spaces outside of the congested city center was never very popular. Most people then as now preferred their automobile right in front or on the side of their home where they could see it.

In 1958 Cities Service built a gasoline station across the street at the corner of Millet.
enjoyed harness racing at the Franklin Field track, the starting gate of which was opposite Wales Street. In the 19030’s it was owned by the HP Hood Milk Company, in which it kept their home delivery horse-drawn milk wagons. It is a vacant lot today.

The Metropolitan Street Railway barn and depot at 641 Washington Street was a large wood-frame building 110 feet long by 50 feet wide that in its day housed horse drawn cars and boarded the horses, which pulled the cars over the same rails that were used later by electric cars after about 1903. But after 1915 this facility was no longer needed because the electric lines had been consolidated at the Grove Hall complex of buildings and storage yards where the Grove Hall’s Mecca shopping center is today. In August 1916 the building was sold and taken down.

The next year the owners Libman and Sherman developed a new architecture for the opening of the automobile retail age in Codman Square—an auto storage garage with street front retail stores and an upstairs bowling alley. The architects Silverman Engineering used the whole lot—nearly 100 feet square—for their cast stone and brick building and used the slight grade change to advantage and located the garage below the second story. The front was lined with stores that flanked the automobile entrance bay. The Libman-Sherman building was probably completed at the same time as the theater, so patrons could park at the garage and eat at one of the lunchrooms. The new building for a new age wasn’t all that different from the livery stable owned and operated next
door by Charles Hinds, replaced by the movie theater. Hinds boarded horses, rented and stored carriages and teams for decades serving those with business at the Town Hall, shopped at the Washington Street stores built by James Haddock in 1893 or attended church at Dorchester Temple Baptist. In 1995 the building was acquired and completely renovated by Federated Dorchester neighborhood House as a senior center. A second story and rear addition was added in 2002 designed by Gail Sullivan who had done the earlier remodeling. The old parking garage was kept and is used to park the senior shuttle vans.39

After the Great War ended and the American economy revived, the way Codman Square looks today really took shape. In 1924 Bertha Irving bought the remainder of the land on Talbot Avenue from #329 Talbot to the Southern Avenue corner. She used the entire 1/2-acre parcel to build a one story brick, cast stone and steel public parking garage designed by SS Eisenberg. Next to #32940 Eisenberg built a Colonial Revival gabled façade to house the new Codman Square post office. Irving used every square inch of her land by building the walls right up against the property line of the 1910-built triple-deckers at 5-7 & 9 Whitfield. It was called the Dorchester Motor Mart and for many years was an automobile dealership. It was bulldozed in 2006 for the Mt Washington Savings Bank that opened for business in August 2007. Half the property was paved as parking lots or as a drive-through automated-banking booth illustrating that for commercial buildings large lots are as important to accommodate the automobile in 2008 as they were in 1924.


39 The Epping Street houses, the Codman Square Theater/Health Center/Codman Academy and the Metropolitan Street Railway car barn/senior center were all built on land originally owned by the Tolman family; Each property abuts the last remaining Tolman house at # 26 Norfolk Street.
40 The end wall of the three story brick apartment house built in 1903 is blank with few windows suggesting it was anticipated that the same type of three story multi family development would continue to the end of the block.
The first automobile building designed and built specifically for the display and sale of cars in Codman Square was just outside the district at 70 Talbot Avenue. In 1929, H K Noyes bought a piece of flat Dorchester plain between Nightingale and Talbot and built a long gleaming showroom designed by HE Tilden for the Noyes Dorchester Buick. It opened in 1930 with picture window display rooms, service bays and plenty of adjacent space for new and used cars. It became a laundry in 1950, a supermarket in 1958 and finally in 1976 it was sold to the GW Carver Grand Lodge of Masons and converted into Russell Auditorium.

COURTHOUSE

After an absence of almost sixty years, civic government—at least the judicial arm if it—returned when the Dorchester District Courthouse was completed on March 27, 1927, at 508-510 Washington Street between Melville and Tremlett. The Classical Revival building was designed by Mulhall and Holmes, architects and replaced four homes, the low granite boundary walls of which are still in place. It was tripled in size with two new wings and new entrance and portico by Goody Clancy architects in 1998. The additions were designed in the Egyptian Revival style, a rarely used form of which only four examples exist in Boston. Yet the principle architect from Goody Clancy knew their architectural history: the Egyptians believed that their enlightened civilization would last forever and so they produced an architecture of timelessness. In its forty years of popularity in America (roughly 1820-1860) the style was used almost exclusively on public buildings, mainly prisons and courthouses. 41 Government believed then that these buildings dispensed enlightened, timeless justice and the Egyptian style fit that goal. 42

Richard Heath
January 19, 2009
Illustrations editor: Earl Taylor

42 The Bunker hill and Washington monuments were designed in the Egyptian Revival style for that same reason.
The new Dorchester Courthouse is also one of five Boston buildings with the name of the architect carved on the cornerstone. “Goody Clancy 1998” was cut into the granite on the Melville Avenue side.
Courthouse first half of twentieth century.

Courthouse, 2009.