

HISTORY

Local square named for famous 19th century orator, politician

by Anthony Sammarco

Edward Everett Square was named in honor of one of Dorchester's most respected citizens, a man who served as the governor of Massachusetts and as a US Senator.

Edward Everett (1794 -1865) was the son of the Rev. Oliver Everett, who had been pastor of the New South Church in Boston. The Everett family moved to Dorchester in 1782, and Edward was born in the former mansion of Robert Oliver, on the site where the Dough-boy Donuts is today.

The Georgian country house was built in the 1760s by Oliver, a wealthy sugar plantation owner from the West Indies. He was related to the Royalls of Medford, and the Lechmeres of Cambridge, so was part of a well-connected and socially prominent family.

However, the Olivers left Dorchester during the Siege of Boston, sailing off with the loyalists who supported the Crown during the American Revolution. The house, left vacant for a few years, was then purchased by the Everett family.

Edward Everett, after his graduation from Harvard College, taught Greek and Latin at his alma mater. His election as president of Harvard in the 1820s pointed him towards a great career, and he was ultimately elected governor of Massachusetts. He first served as a state senator and representative and later served as a United States congressman and senator. He also served as ambassador to the Court of Saint James in Great Britain, a post that brought him great acclaim for his diplomacy and tact.

However, as great a statesman and educator as Edward Everett was, his greatest claim to fame was in his oratorical skills. He delivered numerous speeches, and



EDWARD EVERETT HOUSE used to stand at the corner of Boston Street and Columbia Road.

was present at the July 4, 1855 celebration in Dorchester in commemoration of the Declaration of Independence. Everett accepted the invitation from the citizens of Dorchester to speak on the achievements since the Revolution.

In a speech two hours and twenty minutes long (with no reference to his notes, according to one historical

account), he expounded upon the virtues of Dorchester, his childhood recollections, and the changes that Dorchester had undergone since his birth in 1804. He spoke in a reverent, respectful manner, clearly stating his admiration for a community so radically different from in his youth. The speech was considered a success by the audience and was later published by the town. It speaks volumes in regard to a man honored by his

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The junction of Boston Street, Columbia Road, and West Cottage Street had been known as "Five Corners" since the settlement of Dorchester in 1630. But after Edward Everett's death it was renamed to honor one of Dorchester's most prominent sons.

The Oliver-Everett House itself had been purchased by the Richardson family after 1830. It was there that John Richardson developed a garden that was to become well-known in horticultural circles. Richardson, a retiring bachelor, grew hybrid peonies, his greatest success being the "Festiva Maxima," a double white peony with a pink blush at its throat. The variety of not only peonies, but the multitude of flowers, was staggering. Richardson kept up the garden until his death.

The house, virtually unchanged since the days of the Everett family, was then purchased by Dr. William Stevens, who maintained the mansion until his death in 1908. Though there was an attempt at saving the house by various historical groups, including the Dorchester Historical Society, the house was demolished that same year. A laundry and a three-decker were built on site. However, the square named after one resident of that venerable house lives on, and we know "Edward Everett Square" as more than an exit on the Southeast Expressway.

Anthony Sammarco is the curator at the Dorchester Historical Society, whose headquarters is near Edward Everett Square.

