

HISTORY

The Peabody: historic landmark, DCN's home

by Anthony Sammarco

"The Peabody" in Peabody Square, Dorchester, is the new headquarters of the Dorchester Community News. Located next to Ashmont Station on the Red Line, on the corner of Dorchester Avenue, the massive brick complex is in actuality a commercial and residential structure designed by the locally-famous architect, Edwin J. Lewis, Jr.

Lewis (1859-1937) was graduated from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1881, and served a six-year apprenticeship with Peabody & Stearns, a well-known architectural firm in Boston. In 1887, he established himself as an independent architect, with offices on Park Street, Boston. His commission from the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts in the design of The Peabody (1896-1897) was a major one, for the apartment complex was adjacent to All Saints Episcopal Church, designed by Ralph Adams Cram and considered one of his more successful designs. As a result, the U-shaped apartment complex was not just conveniently located, but within an upper-mid-

dle-class residential neighborhood that included Carruth and Beaumont Streets, two of the most attractive residential streets in Boston.

Massive Tudor-style building Lewis designed four integrated buildings with a massive slate roof

cial space, whether medical or professional, was directly accessible from Ashmont Street. The massing, and the use of brick, made The Peabody an attractive building that resembled a Tudor manor house.

The development of Peabody Square, named

feature in any square, added to the sense of "urbane" living in the Ashmont area of Dorchester. The Ashmont area, roughly the area bounded by Ashmont and Adams Street, Dorchester Avenue and Gallivan Boulevard, was relatively undeveloped until after the

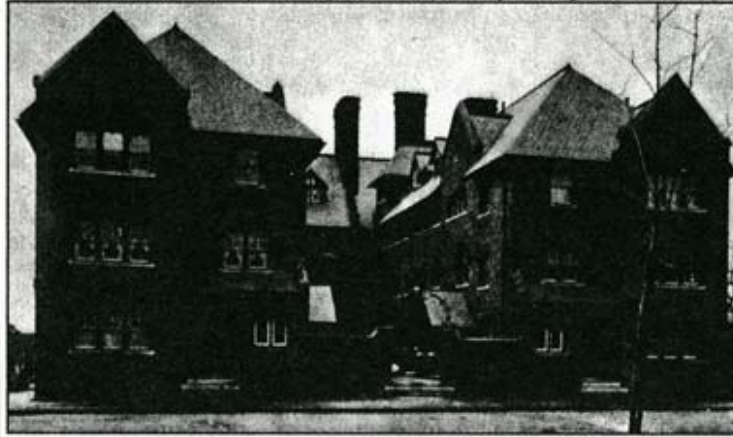
moved to Dorchester from Boston in 1847, according to his great-granddaughter, and had a large house built by the architect Luther Briggs, Jr. The estate was laid out by Briggs, with the present Carruth Street to Beaumont Street comprising the original carriage path to the house. Nathan Carruth, for whom the street was named, was the first president of the Old Colony Railroad and later the treasurer of the Northern Railroad of New Hampshire.

Carruth, along with his son Herbert Shaw Carruth, developed their estate during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, with the subdivision of the land for residential development. Herbert Shaw Carruth built his own home at 10 Beaumont Street, and his friends the Moseleys, Nichols and Kings, all members of the First Parish Church in Dorchester, had either Edwin J. Lewis, Jr. or John A. Fox design large houses for them on the former Carruth estate. The estate, which once had a large stable and barn, and two greenhouses, was subdivided for the new influx of residents to Dorchester.

A focal point for a vital community

"The Peabody", an apartment complex intended to have ten families and professional offices on the first floor, was quite different from the large houses being built in the Ashmont neighborhood. The residential area was adjacent to that of the commercial area, and Peabody Square had an attractive vantage point from both the Dorchester Avenue and Talbot Avenue approaches. The building of the firehouse at Peabody Square in the 1930s added an attractive building to the streetscape. The tenement apartment building opposite at the corner of Ashmont Street and Talbot Avenue allowed for less affluent apartments to be built in a well-designed area. The overall design of Peabody Square, however, gives the impression of a town newly annexed to the City of Boston, with The Peabody commanding a significant position in the square.

The offices of the Dorchester Community News not only are housed in an historic structure, but add to the building's history as a contemporary focal point for a vital community.



The Peabody Building, a residential and office building on Ashmont Street at Dorchester Avenue, looks much the same today as it did in 1897 when this photo was taken. The Dorchester Community News offices are through the first floor door on the right.

connecting the structures. The large coffered chimneys punctuated the roofline, and created a post-Medieval structure in streetcar-suburb Dorchester. The half-timbered porches off the central courtyard were the entrances to the apartments, while the commer-

for Oliver Peabody, a founder of the investment house of Kidder, Peabody and Company, was an early attempt at urban planning, with the erection of All Saints and The Peabody, followed by a granite horse trough given by the Peabody Family. The clock, an attractive

annexation of Dorchester to Boston in 1870.

The Carruth Family had a large tract of land, some eighteen acres, with their house, "Beechmont", at the summit of Ashmont, the present site of the condominiums in the former Ellen Richards School. Nathan Carruth had