

The well-traveled history of Dorchester's Edward Everett Sq.

by Anthony Mitchell Sammarco

Five Corners in Dorchester is the junction of Boston, East Cottage and West cottage Streets, Columbia Road and Massachusetts Avenue. The earliest known intersection in town, it dates to the Seventeenth Century, but in the ensuing three centuries, it has collected many more than five comers.

HISTORY

Known today as Edward Everett Square, the intersection just east of Uphams Corner is a major traffic Connector to Roxbury and the South End, the Southeast Expressway and Andrew Square in South Boston.

Named for the great statesman, orator and native-born son, whose statue stands with uplified hand in Richardson Park, Edward Everett (1794-1865) was born in a house that originally stood on the site of Dunkin Donuts. Of

course, it was rural at that time, but it is a bit of trivia that you might contemplate the next time you are in line for a cup of coffee.

Seen in the accompanying photograph, dating from 1921, Columbia Road has been laid out with streetcar tracks that extended from South Boston to Roxbury. Originally known as Boston Street (a continuation of the present street by that name), it eventually became known as Columbia Street west from Upham's Corner to Blue Hill Avenue. In 1893, the two streets were regraded, straightened and renamed Columbia Road and became part of the Emerald Necklace begun by Frederick Law Olmstead. His successors, the Olmstead Associates, created a greenspace extending from Franklin Park to Marine Park in South Boston that ran along the center of Columbia Road. Though the trees no longer survive along the center greenstrip today, this photograph shows that it divided the automobile road on the left and the streetcar tracks on the right.

By the turn of the century, Dorchester's contribution to American Architecture was being built with gusto. The three decker, a wood framed building with three independent apartments in a vertical rise, had its start in Dorchester by the late 1880's, and would eventually represent over thirty percent of the housing stock of the town. Here, looking west from Edward Everett Square, the three deckers on the right extended from Massachusetts Avenue on the right almost to Eastman Street. These three deckers created an impressive streetscape when they were built as multiple units, sharing uniform rooflines, similar projections and similar building materials. Here, the three deckers translate the brownstone townhouses of Boston's Back Bay and the red brick rowhouses of Boston's South End to Dorchester's wooden three deckers. Often with both



Edward Everett Square in 1921.

front and rear porches, Colonial Revival detailing, interior plumbing and fixtures and the circulation of air on all four sides, three deckers were a God-send to those who sought homeownership with the added benefit of rental income from the apartments to assist in paying the mortgage.

Though some of the three deckers in the accompanying photograph survive, those on the far right had been demolished over a decade ago and are today being replaced by red brick two story townhouses—a necessary commodity due to the lack of affordable housing and an overwhelming plethora of vacant lots in Dorchester.

{Editor's note: Mr. Sammarco will be holding a slideshow/lecture and booksigning at the Codman Square Branch of the Boston Public Library -- 690 Washington Street, Dorchester -- at 6:30pm. For more information call 436-8214.}

Anthony Mitchell Sammarco's award-winning columns are a regular feature of the Dorchester Community News.