

The South Danvers Observer

George Peabody Bids Farewell But Not Forever.

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"I wished once more to see the land of my birth and early youth, and the surviving members of my family; once more to greet my friends. . . I have. . . come to the conclusion to refuse all invitations to dinner with the single exception of my native town of Danvers."

George Peabody to the members of the welcoming delegation from New York

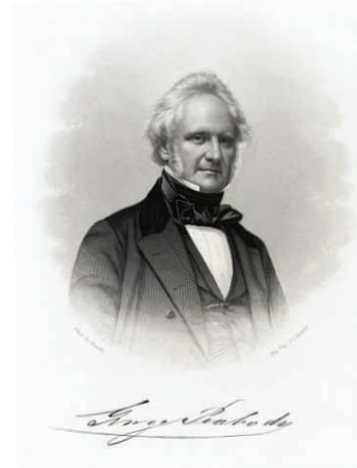
Oct. 11, 1856 — Nearly twenty years ago, George Peabody left his native soil to sail for London. Even he never expected to have remained in England for so long.

His return to the United States and his decision to begin his American tour here in his hometown has created a celebration unlike any Danvers has ever known.

But once George Peabody was among us, it soon grew clear just how unwilling we were to have him depart.

Though he must have been exhausted from his welcome which lasted well into Thursday night, Mr. Peabody rose early on Friday to make a stop at the Peabody Institute. After applying for the privilege of borrowing books, he met with the Trustees and pronounced everything to his satisfaction.

Reception for George Peabody at the Peabody Institute



That afternoon, he traveled with his sisters to enjoy the "homes and haunts" of his friends and family. At five o'clock, Mr. Peabody and his sisters began their return journey to Georgetown.

Word didn't take long to spread that George Peabody was leaving. Near the Village Bank, a large crowd gathered. As he and his sisters passed by, Mr. Peabody was as gracious as ever and bowed to all. His pleasure with the

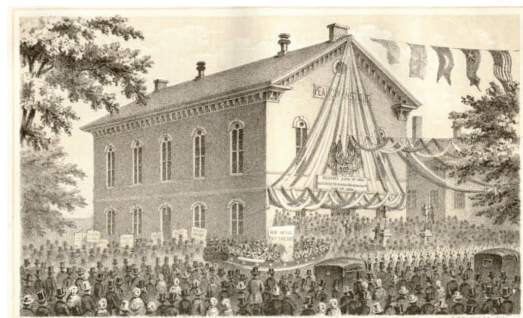
enthusiasm of their greetings was obvious.

Little did he expect to be waylaid by the tiniest members of our town!

A line of children joined hands across the street to create a chain Mr. Peabody could not break. Though forced to stop, he expressed his delight with the means used to keep him among us.

As everyone pressed close to shake his hand, he thanked them for the honors they had bestowed upon him. They were more than he could have expected, he said, and would be cherished for the rest of his life.

And with those words, George Peabody returned to his carriage and, at last, bid his goodbye. Cheers rose from the throng, echoing far and wide and followed Mr. Peabody until he was out of sight.





Maple Street, Danvers, at the beginning of the parade.

"I am still, in heart, the humble boy who left yonder unpretending dwelling, many—very many years ago."

George Peabody, at speech given at Peabody Institute.



The parade as it processed down Main Street in South Danvers

Mr. Peabody's Parade

October 11, 1856— Two days ago, on Thursday, October 9, George Peabody left his sister's quiet home in Georgetown to travel to Danvers.

As if knowing the importance of the day, the sun rose onto what had to be one of the most tranquil of New England fall mornings. But if Mr. Peabody expected his reception to be either quiet or tranquil, the hundred gun salute which announced his arrival to the town changed all that.

The welcome from the Reception committee was no less exuberant. And once they guided the guest of honor to the awaiting barouche, the parade could now begin.

Leading the procession as it wound its way from Maple Street, down High Street

to Danversport and to its conclusion in South Danvers was our very own Gilmore's mounted Brass Band.

Though they played as well as ever, they had to work hard to be heard over the thundering cannons and cheers of the 20,000 to 30,000 people who had come to welcome Mr. Peabody.

When the parade arrived at the intersection which was once known as *Pine Tree* and is now called Wilson's Corner, it stopped appropriately enough near the home of another of our renowned sons, that of Nathaniel Bowditch.

As Mr. Peabody's barouche passed beneath the arch welcoming him to South Danvers, Gilmore's band played "Home Sweet Home" followed by "God Save the Queen."

Only Mr. Peabody knows his emotions as he rode down Central Street, by the South Congregational Church and turned into Main Street to pass Captain Sylvester Proctor's store. We imagine his memories must have taken him back to his boyhood and the years he worked beneath that roof. And the sorrow of not being able to once again greet the man from whom he learned so much.

The changes he saw in our town were many. But one of the most impressive differences came as a result of his own generosity. Because it was at the Peabody Institute that the parade drew to a close. And where the reception for our native son continued well into the night.

An Account of the Parade for George Peabody from Miss Alice Putnam

We were fortunate to be able to speak to one of our Salem neighbors who came for the celebration, a delightful girl of seventeen years by the name of Miss Alice Putnam.

She was more than eager to relate to us the excitement of her day.

"A party of us girls rode up in an Omnibus, and I enjoyed the ride up about as well as I did anything during the day. The Omnibuses were all crowded and we considered ourselves fortunate in securing a

standing place in one. . . In the course of time we reached our destination safely, without any bones being broken. . .

We walked through the principal streets to see the decorations which for the most part were got up in very good style. Many displayed a great deal of taste, while others struck one as being somewhat comical. There was a tall ladder dressed with evergreens and at the top Peabody was written in large letters. They seemed to have left him nothing to do but tumble down again.

"The procession was long, but many parts of it were very

pretty, but I felt rather tired before they had all passed.

"Mr. Peabody is a fine looking man, quite tall and stout; he looked warm and dusty from his long ride, but had a fine open countenance. We could not hear the reception address which was delivered from a platform in front of the Peabody Institute, but witnessed the pantomime of gestures . . .

Mr. Peabody appeared very much affected and his hand trembled very much.

"We all agreed, however, that we had passed a very pleasant day."

Mr. Peabody— Our Very Own Rip Van Winkle

“Like Rip Van Winkle, I am almost appalled at the wonderful changes that already meet my eyes.”

George Peabody in reply to invitation to dine in New York.

“Few boys ever left a New England town under circumstances more humble than I did. None could return more honored. . . .”

From George Peabody’s address at Oct. 9, 1856 Dinner

It cannot be said that George Peabody slept away these past twenty years in England. And yet, his return to our town after so long must seem as disconcerting as what happened to Rip Van Winkle after his long sleep.

More perhaps.

Because though he has been absent from our shores for twenty years, George Peabody hasn’t seen his South Danvers for over forty-five years. Just the changes we’ve known in these last twenty years have been vast.

In 1837, when George Peabody sailed for England, we were one town, comprised of a North Parish and South Parish. One year ago, we divided into two towns and are now Danvers and South Danvers.

Though we had begun to ponder the benefits of joining our town to a railroad, in 1837, it was but a dream. Now we have three railroad branches to insure a lively commerce.

In 1837, the old Alms-house was not only too

small to meet the need of the poor, but it was beyond repair. In 1843, our town found the funds to build a new farm to help those most in need.

Our population, which was under 5,000 in 1837 is now approximately 10,000 for both Danvers and South Danvers. South Danvers alone has nearly 6,000 residents. And with the increase, our town budget has reached new heights. Where in 1837 the Selectmen appropriated \$8,000 to run the town, today that same figure before our towns divided was \$36,000.

Twenty years ago, there were 13 districts for both towns. Each held summer and winter sessions for approximately 1500 students, few of which were older than ten. We raised \$3,000 for their support.

Before our separation last year, Danvers boasted two high schools, as well as 14 districts with 32 separate sessions or primary schools. Nearly 2200 scholars were taught in our schools and \$10,000 was raised to support them.

And where South Danvers had approximately 35 streets in the 1830’s—most of those unnamed, now we have close to 70 streets. And their names have changed through the years.

Main Street received its name not long George Peabody sailed for England. The Old Boston Road Mr. Peabody would recall now comprises both Washington Street and Lynn Street. Central Street was simply the highway to Andover when George Peabody lived here. And last Mr. Peabody heard, Lowell Street was called Reading Road.

Even more amazing is that many of these streets are now illuminated at night by gas.

Of course, our town’s progress reflects our nation’s growth. Though Mr. Peabody’s long absence from our shores may have caused him to feel like a man out of time, there is no one who is more in step with the need for change and progress than he. And no one we are more delighted to welcome home.



South Danvers square in 1828



South Danvers in 1848

From Near and Far



"I especially remember one of those entertainments that took place during the year of the great Exhibition, in 1851. We made a rather poor show at the commencement. . .and American stock stood about as low in the social scale of Europe as it could be. . .We had taken a very large space in the eastern end of the Crystal Palace. . .we had put up an immense eagle. . .with a big bunch of lightning flashing from his talons. . .we were displaying some few hundred or thousand square yards of daguerreotypes, [laughter] several bushels of shoe-pegs, [laughter], some excellent tanned leather, with the tanner's name on it in gilt letters, accompanied by his daguerreotype, I believe; [great laughter] some beautiful preserved peaches. . .were presented to the Queen, but I do not know whether she ate them. . .we had to go to our friend Mr. Peabody, and ask him to furnish the money (to create the proper displays for the Great Exhibition) . . .and it was in the midst of all this discouraging signs that Mr. Peabody conceived the idea of celebrating the 4th of July in London by a large ball. . .I shall not attempt to describe it, for language would fail me. . .I can only say (after the dinner). . .there began to be manifest a change in the feeling towards America."

From J. B. C. Davis's reminiscences of the George Peabody Dinners at the Reception for George Peabody on Oct. 9, 1856.

"Our Friend! the people's friend,
We now our voices blend
To welcome thee.
Thy glad return we greet,
With joy this day we meet,
Our hearts with ardor beat,
Thy face to see.:"

From *Ode* by Mrs. George A. Osborne to commemorate George Peabody's return

"The whole people came out to do honor to a private citizen, and paid a tribute to simple manly worth, which the greatest of sovereigns and conquerors might envy."

From the *Salem Register* regarding the parade for George Peabody

"From. . . the despotic far East, let us turn to a small village in the Republican West, where, in the same files that tell of the barbaric monstrosities at Moscow, is given the story of another fête—the village of Danvers in New England. There, too, were rejoicings, decorations, civil and military processions, gatherings of statesmen, scholars and divines, streets strewn with beautiful flowers. . .The object of this demonstration was neither a Czar nor an Emperor, nor even a Lord nor a General, a great novelist nor great divine. Nothing but a humble New Englander, who . . .returns to his native village, after forty years of absence and that village, with joy and pride, comes out to meet George Peabody. . .now this is beautiful."

From the Oct. 23, 1856 *New York Times* on reception for George Peabody



"I reached London a stranger to him, having no letter of introduction to him, not even letter of credit. he sought me out, and invited me to one of those almost regal entertainments; and the hours that I spent in the society gathered by him on that delightful occasion, are among the most pleasant reminiscences of my foreign tour."

From Harvard professor, Cornelius Conway Felton's speech at Reception for George Peabody, Oct. 9, 1856, recounting his invitation to the George Peabody Dinners in London

"The citizens of the good old town of Danvers turned out en masse, Thursday, to receive their former fellow-citizen, now the distinguished London banker, who, by his public benefactions and private hospitality, has won a place in the hearts of men the world over."

Report on parade in the *Boston Atlas*

"Mr. Peabody's long residence in England. . .was very gracefully taken. . . and it pervaded all the proceedings of the day. The two flags waved everywhere. . .and at the dinner, to which above 1200 guests sat down. . .the same sentiment of mutual friendship gave a pleasing tone to all the speeches."

From the *London Times* concerning the parade and reception for Mr. Peabody