

A History of the Thomas Carroll School by S.M. Smoller

The history of the school built in 1913 in the east end of Peabody rightly reflects the rich diversity of the neighborhood. A sort of "junior grade melting pot", it has been home to many immigrant communities and programs, including early adult education and "Americanization" or assimilation programs.

The Greek Society began to offer language classes at the school in the 1920s. A decade later, residents clamored for a recreational hall with an auditorium and the school was expanded with a hall and twelve classrooms.

During the Great Depression, the local office of the Works Progress Administration used the school's gymnasium during the evening. Two years later, a child care class for mothers was arranged at the school.

Peabody was the first in the state to establish a class for immigrants to receive instruction on becoming a United States citizen. Some of these early "Americanization" classes were held at the Carroll School. They were created in 1916 to assist more than three thousand Russians, Greeks, Kurds and Poles residing in Peabody.

When an influx of immigrants- mostly from the Azores and Portugal- started arriving after the war, the Carroll School solved the problem of the language barrier by putting the children into classes for the handicapped. As the wave of immigration swelled, a new approach was adopted.

The generation of immigrants attending the Carroll in the late 1950's was placed in a single, multi-age level classroom known as "the New English class" where as many as nine languages may have been spoken simultaneously. It was compromised of immigrant students age six to sixteen. The class had one teacher who struggled "to outlaw foreign tongues." In some instances, the teacher also struggled to "Americanize" foreign sounding names.

In 1963, the *Boston Herald* reported, "Coming from countries as widely dispersed around the globe as Indonesia, Cuba, Portugal, Greece, and the Azores, the youngsters do share one thing in common- when they first entered the class none of them spoke a word of English. And for the most part, they share this dilemma with their parents who by night struggle to absorb through adult education courses that that by day their children learn at school."

It's fitting that the school is named in honor of an immigrant: Irish leather boss, civic-minded politician and local historian Thomas P. Carroll. Born in Tipperary, Ireland in 1839, his family arrived in Salem about ten years later. Shortly thereafter, the family moved to South Danvers (now Peabody) where he attended the Wallis School. He attended the two-year- old Peabody High School in 1852 with a class of seven pupils. Graduating three years later, he entered the leather trade and eventually built a factory on Grove Street where he carried on business until 1892.

He represented the town of Peabody as a Democrat in the House of Representatives in 1893. In addition, he was a member of the School Committee for twelve years, serving as chairman of the board for five years. He was a Trustee of the Peabody Institute for six years (1883-1889) and served on the Lyccum and Library Committee for more than 30 years.

In 1895 President Grover Cleveland appointed Carroll as the Deputy Collector of the income tax for most of Essex County. He received an annual salary of about \$1500 a year until the tax was declared unconstitutional. He then became a life insurance agent for Provident Life and Trust Co. In 1906, he was elected a member of the new sewerage commission that installed the town's system, and he then became the clerk of the board. He served for four years.

Carroll had much local pride in his hometown and was described as "undoubtedly the best historian the city had". He was responsible for contributing to many of the city's written and printed records. He published *The History of the Leather Industry in Salem and Danvers, Mass., U.S.A.*, in *Hide and Leather*, a well-known paper, in 1902. He wrote about the town's Lexington Monument in the Twelfth Annual Report of the Peabody Historical Society in 1907-08.

Another article, *Bands and Band Music in Salem* appeared in the Essex Historical Society Collections.³

A year before he died, the school committee honored him by naming the brick schoolhouse going up at 60 Northend Street after him. On January 28, 1914, just after the new schoolhouse was finished, he died at the age of 73.

The gymnasium at the Thomas Carroll School is named in honor of Elizabeth F. Quinlan, who joined the local school system in 1903 and retired 51 years later. The school committee's special resolution reads "The many who studied at her feet over all those years became the solid citizens, the successful members of the professions, and the teachers in our community life."

There is a marker in Room 12 in tribute to another long-time teacher at the Thomas Carroll School: CATHERINE APOSTOLIDES. She worked in the same room in the same grade for forty years.

By *S. M. Smoller*, the "History of Peabody" columnist for the *Salem Evening News* and media specialist at Higgins Middle School, Peabody. Most of the information presented here is a result of the Peabody School History Project, a program of the Peabody Public Schools conducted in 1998 involving Smoller and eighth grade students in researching school records and compiling and publishing a website. The team of students researching the Thomas Carroll School for the project were: Joe Balestaci, Vinny Luciano and Michael Miranda.