

Local History Resource Center  
Peabody Institute Library  
82 Main Street, Peabody, MA 01960

## Peabody Church Papers, 1816-1958

**Reference Code:** MPeaI

**Repository:** Local History Resource Center, Peabody Institute Library, Peabody, Massachusetts.

**Call Number:** MS7

**Collector:** John Wells

**Title:** Peabody Church Papers, 1827-1958

**Dates:** 1816-1958; 1866-1920 (Bulk)

**Size:** One box with Nine Folders

**Language(s):** Collection materials are in English.

**Abstract:** Peabody Church Papers are a collection of papers and sermons left to the Peabody Institute from the Unitarian Church, Universalist Church, St. John's Catholic Church, the Methodist Episcopal Church, St. Paul's Episcopal Church and the West Congregational Church.

### Organizational History

Rev. Edward Gushee founded St. Paul's Episcopal Church in 1874. On April 12, 1874, the first service was held ladies Parlor of the Union Block. It should be noted that the Massachusetts Episcopal Convocation opposed the church in Peabody because Peabody was a promising place for a mission. Until a church could be built, the church rented a billiard saloon on the top floor of the Allen Block in Peabody Square. The original church, built in 1876, was located on at Lowell & School Streets and its first pastor was the Rev. George Walker, who presided over the parish until 1888. The church remained at its original location until 1913 when it moved to the second building on Washington Street. The 8-room rectory, adjacent to the church, was purchased in 1938. The Parish House was added and the McCarthy Room was built and served as the main meeting room in 1952. By 1960, the Church had established a Day School and various rooms were renovated and modernized including Guild Hall, renamed John Young Hall. In addition, a thrift shop opened and operated out of the church for many years before closing for unknown reasons. By 1973, the Church's mortgage and other debts including the Parish House and Rectory were paid off. The church continued to expand and grow and the last of the stained glass windows were installed – completing all of the windows in the church and in the vestibule – in 1981. On October 28, 2015, St. Paul's held their last service and merged with All Saints Episcopal of the North Shore in Danvers.

The First Unitarian Church was founded in 1825 at 7 Park Street, in the area known as South Danvers. The wood frame church was built in 1826. The front facade has a projecting rounded entrance hall decorated with pilasters and a heavily bracketed cornice. The main part of the facade also has pilasters rising to a pedimented gable with large-scale dentil molding. The side walls have six lancet-style windows. The tower, which lacks a steeple, has quoined corners, and molding on the cornice of its roofline that matches that of the main roof. Members of the church included the Suttons. The congregation remained stable over time, but during the 1950s and into 1960, membership fell. In addition, First Unitarian Church began to adopt some of the Universalist ideas.

The church closed in 1960 and merged with other Unitarian and Universalist churches in the area, building a new church in Danvers. Since then, the building has been converted to condominiums.

Around the same time of the First Unitarian Church, the Universalist were establishing themselves in South Danvers. In 1832, a group of 43 people formed The Second Universalist Church. Not much is known about its location. The church renamed itself shortly after Peabody incorporated as a city in 1916 and became known as the First Universalist Church of Peabody. Unlike the Unitarian Church, the Universalists in Peabody had membership and financial issues and were not as stable. During the 1960s the two churches looked at merging. The two churches would hold joint services in the late 1940s but would not official merge until 1965.

Dimitrios and George Adrianos, the first Greek residents of Peabody, founded St. Vasilios Church around 1897. They came from Sparta, Greece and lived in Lowell before coming to Peabody. The church building itself wasn't built until 1906 mainly because it was not until 1905 that there was a significant Greek population in the area. The Church was in a former fire station named Torrent 3, located on Walnut Street in Peabody. Several prominent Greek men purchased the station: Michael Mandas, George Pappas, Christos Paraskevopoulos, Efthimios Spiliotis, George Bakopoulos, John Pramataris and Athanasios Koutsogeorgis. They transformed the building into a church and it was ready for service in 1906. The Rev. Fr. George Sakallarios gave the liturgy at the new church. (the first?) Service was held on the feast day of St. Vasilio and the members named the church St. Vasilios. In the 1960s, St. Vasilios purchased some land adjacent to the school St. Vasilios had established. They built a new church on that land and this is the Church still being used today.

West Congregational Church started in 1873 when prayer meetings were held near Devil's Dishful Pond. The congregation became a branch of the Second Congregation Church on September 6, 1883. Two years later the congregation incorporated and built their own church. It was not until 1891 when an agreement was reached with the South Peabody Church to separate; the next year they built a parsonage. The church was added onto and rehabilitated in the late 1940s and early 1950s. The congregation continued to gain members during the 1950s and went from fifteen to two hundred and twenty-five. During the 1960s, members determined that the current building was to inadequate. Construction began in 1960 and was completed in 1961. The church continued to additions, including an educational building, school classrooms; kitchen among other things the church still serving the community of West Peabody and the surrounding area.

The history of Saint John's Catholic Church starts just before 1871. The Catholics in Peabody had to go to St. James Church in Salem. In 1868, the Rev. John J. Gray, who was a pastor at St. James, looked to establish a parish in Peabody. A fair was held in Salem, which raised enough money to purchase land from Thomas E. Proctor for \$10,000 in 1870. In 1871 work started on the church and it was decided that it would be named St. John's. Once completed, it was the largest and most expensive building in Peabody. The first service was held on Christmas in 1871, but the building was not be finished until November 1879. St. John's was the only Catholic Church in Peabody from 1871-1928. The church added a school in 1893, which started with 500 students. The Sisters of Notre Dame oversaw the school and so a convent was built on the property. The school suffered a fire in 1915, which killed twenty-one students. The school was rebuilt and later expanded in 1967. The church continues to be an important part of the Peabody Catholic community.

The First Methodist Episcopal Church of Peabody dates back to 1832 when early meetings were held at Sanger's hall, also called Goodridge Hall, on Park Street. Later Alfred N. Chamberlin rented Armory Hall, located at the corner of Holten and Sewall Streets. The property later served as the Sutton Home for Aged Women. Chamberlin also got preachers to come and lead services at the hall, which lasted for three years. After 1840, Chamberlin started a Sunday school for the twenty-three members. Between 1840 and 1843, the members bought a building on Washington Street above Oak Street and converted it into a meeting house. Once completed, it became clear that the

meeting house was too small and they needed a new building. Around the same time, the South Congregational Society offered the Methodists the old South Meeting House in Peabody Square. The Church moved from Peabody Square to near the corner of Washington and Sewall Streets on land that was owned by Timothy Walton. In 1848 there was a financial issue, which caused the Church to lose money on account of the mortgage. The Society dissolved, but continued to use the church to worship and by 1853, a new society was formed and charter was granted under the title of "First Methodist Episcopal Church of Danvers. The group repurchased the building from Timothy Walton. In 1914 the church celebrated its seventy-fifth anniversary. During that year the Rev. Robert M Pierce was able to obtain funding, some of which, came from a donation from Andrew Carnegie. In 1924 there was a fire that destroyed much of the church, but the fire department was able to save much of the building. The members rebuilt and updated the building. Since then, the Church continued to grow and expand over the years.

## Arrangement

### Series 1: Peabody Church Papers

- Subseries 1.1: Unitarian Church
- Subseries 1.2: Universalist Church
- Subseries 1.3: St. John's Church
- Subseries 1.4: Methodist Episcopal Church
- Subseries 1.5: St. Paul's Episcopal Church
- Subseries 1.6: Saint Vasilios Greek Orthodox Church
- Subseries 1.7: West Congregational Church

## Scope and Content

Peabody Church Papers are a collection of papers found at the Library and which document the history of six churches within the city.

Included are sermons preached in 1827 at the ordination of Charles Sewall, another given at the ordination of Frank Appleton in 1846, a talk given at the Semi-Centennial of the Unitarian Society in 1876, two annual reports on the Universalist Church's Sunday School in 1866 and 1867, two 1985 notes sent to John Wells regarding the transcription of those reports, Programs for the First Grand Reunion of St. John's Parish in 1911, a 1935 Reunion of St. John's Church, a 1946 letter written by a child at St. John's School, a 1949 Program for the Diamond Jubilee of the Church, a 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration of the Ordination of Rev. John J. Murray, a Dedication program of the Edgerly Memorial Chapel in 1958, an address given by Henry Cabot Lodge Jr. on May 30, 1946 to the Veterans of World War II at St. Vasilios' Greek Orthodox Church, 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Program of the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1914, a 1929 History of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1918 Consecration of St. Paul's Church, a 59<sup>th</sup> Year Jubilee Program, a press release announcing that Norman Kellett would become the new rector at St. Paul's, the *Parish Chronicle* from September 1900 to June 1901, a program of St. Paul's 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and a 1958 history of the West Congregational Church.

## Administrative Information

**Preferred Citation:** [Identify the item], [Folder Number], Peabody Church Papers Collection, Local History Resource Center, Peabody Institute Library.

**Provenance:** The provenance of the Peabody Church Papers is unknown. However, the handwritten reports for the Universalist Church and their transcriptions were apparently donated by John Wells sometime in the late 1980s.

**Acquisition Information:** Found in Collection.

**Processing:** Nancy Barthelemy, Archivist 2007. Reprocessed by Erik R. Bauer, Archivist, 2013.

**Access Rights:** Collection is open for research.

**Physical Access Restrictions:** None.

**Tech. Access Restrictions:** None.

**Restrictions & Copyright:** Copyright has not been assigned to the Peabody Institute Library. All requests for permission to publish or quote from manuscripts or other material must be submitted in writing to the archivist. Permission for publication is given on behalf of the Peabody Institute Library as the owner of the physical items and is not intended to include or imply permission of the copyright holder, which must also be obtained by the researcher.

**Conservation Work:** Papers were unfolded; tears mended; staples and paperclips were removed.

**Related Collections:** Several postcard of some of the churches can be found in the Postcard Collection and the Michael Schulze Postcard Collection.

**Separated Material:** One volume of St. Paul's Episcopal Church's *The Parish Chronicle* was cataloged and stored with the rare books.

## Controlled Access Headings

### Corporate Name(s)

Unitarian Church  
Universalist Church  
St. John's Catholic Church  
Methodist Episcopal Church  
St. Paul's Episcopal Church  
St. Vasilios Greek Orthodox Church  
West Congregational Church  
Peabody Churches

**Genre(s)**

Danvers (Mass.)—History  
 Peabody (Mass.)—History  
 South Danvers (Mass.)—History  
 Church History (Danvers, Mass.)—History

**Personal Name(s)**

Bigelow, Andrew (1795-1877)  
 Lodge Jr., Henry Cabot (1902-1985)  
 Parkman, Francis (1823-1893)

**Subject(s)**

Sermons  
 Reports

**Collection Inventory****Series 1: Church Documents**

Box contains church documents, programs, receipts, histories and other materials.

**Subseries 1.1: Unitarian Church Papers, 1827-1876**

Included are sermons preached in 1827 at the ordination of Charles Sewall, another given at the ordination of Frank Appleton in 1846, a talk given at the Semi-Centennial of the Unitarian Society in 1876.

Box	Folder	File Title	Dates (if know)
1			
	1	Unitarian Church Papers	1827-1876

**Subseries 1.2: Universalist Church Papers, 1866-1867**

This subseries has two annual reports on the Universalist Church's Sunday School in 1866 and 1867, two 1985 notes sent to John Wells regarding the transcription of those reports.

Box	Folder	File Title	Dates (if know)
1			
	2	Universalist Church Papers	1866-1867
	3	Universalist Transcriptions of Annual Reports and notes to John Wells.	

**Subseries 1.3: St. John's Church Records, 1911-1957**

This subseries contains programs for the First Grand Reunion of St. John's Parish in 1911, a 1935 Reunion of St. John's Church, a 1946 letter written by a child at St. John's School, a 1949 Program

for the Diamond Jubilee of the Church, and a 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration program of the Ordination of Rev. John J. Murray.

Box	Folder	File Title	Dates (if know)
1	4	St. John's Church Records	1911-1957

**Subseries 1.4: Methodist Episcopal Church Papers, 1914, 1929**

Included in this series is a program from the dedication of F.H. Edgerly Memorial Chapel; 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Program of the Church from 1914 and a brief history of the Methodist Episcopal Church from 1929.

Box	Folder	File Title	Dates (if know)
1	5	Methodist Episcopal Church Papers	1914, 1929

**Subseries 1.5: St. Paul's Episcopal Church Papers. 1918-c.1940**

This subseries contains the Consecration of Saint Paul's Church program from 1918; a 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary program from 1924; photo of the original Saint Paul's Church; press release about the Rev. Norman Lawrence Kellett; a Saint Paul's Church Diamond Jubilee program and a centennial program for the Church.

Box	Folder	File Title	Dates (if know)
1	6	St. Paul's Episcopal Church Papers	1918-c.1940
Shelf	F74 S7 .P3	<i>The Parish Chronicle</i>	September 1900 to June 1901

**Subseries 1.6: Saint Vasilios Greek Orthodox Church, 1946**

This subseries has a copy of a speech by Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr. on Memorial Day on May 30, 1946.

Box	Folder	File Title	Dates (if know)
1	7	Saint Vasilios Church (Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr. Speech)	1946

**Subseries 1.7: History of the West Congregational Church, 1958**

This subseries contains a history of the Congregational Church by Clara A. Bradstreet for the church's 74 Anniversary in 1958.

Box	Folder	File Title	Dates (if know)
1	8	History of the West Congregational Church	1958