Peabody started off as a [farming](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Farming) community, but its rivers and streams attracted mills which operated by [water power](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Water_power). In particular, Peabody was a major center of [New England](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_England)'s [leather](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leather) industry, which attracted immigrants from all around the world. By 1915, a third of the population was born outside the United States.[[3]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peabody,_Massachusetts#cite_note-:0-3) In addition to becoming home to large [Irish](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Irish_people) and [Russian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_people) populations, Peabody developed a large community of laborers hailing from the [Ottoman Empire](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ottoman_Empire), mostly Turkish and Kurdish speakers from the region of [Harput](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elaz%C4%B1%C4%9F" \o "Elazığ), now known as Elazığ.[[3]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peabody,_Massachusetts#cite_note-:0-3) The population was situated primarily on Walnut Street, where they filled [boarding houses](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boarding_house) and coffee houses to such an extent that it became known as ‘Ottoman Street,’ and, more [pejoratively](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pejorative) and less accurately, ‘Peabody's Barbary Coast’, as the United States was at war with the Ottoman Empire during [World War I](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_I).[[3]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peabody,_Massachusetts#cite_note-:0-3) One visitor even noted that signs in town were written in both English and [Ottoman Turkish](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ottoman_Turkish_language).[[3]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peabody,_Massachusetts#cite_note-:0-3)

The [tanneries](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tanning_(leather)) that lined Peabody's ‘Ottoman Street’ remained a linchpin of the city's economy into the second half of the 20th century. The tanneries have since closed or been relocated elsewhere, but the city remains known locally as the Leather City or Tanner City. The mascot of [Peabody Veterans Memorial High School](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peabody_Veterans_Memorial_High_School) is named the Tanners.