

Cambridge, Massachusetts
honors
Leroy Anderson

Harvard University Gazette
Cambridge, Massachusetts
July, 2003



Leroy Anderson

Cambridge, Massachusetts Mayor Michael Sullivan and the Cambridge City Council dedicated the corner of Chatham and Crawford Streets (Leroy's boyhood home) as Leroy Anderson Square on May 31, 2003.

Mayor Sullivan said in part that the naming of Leroy Anderson Square was "in honor of one of America's greatest composers of light music and the most inventive arranger for the Boston Pops."

When Leroy Anderson was one year old, his parents moved from 269 Norfolk Street in Cambridge to 12 Chatham Street. Leroy lived in this house with his parents and brother Russell from 1909 until 1936, when Leroy moved to New York City. He often returned to 12 Chatham Street where his parents continued to live. It was here in 1947 that he composed his *Irish Suite* in just eleven days.

Ken Gewetz of the Harvard University Gazette wrote: Leroy Anderson, one of the most frequently played American composers in the world, became part of



Leroy Anderson's Home
12 Chatham Street

Cambridge geography on May 31 when a square at the corner of Chatham and Crawford streets was dedicated to him. The son of Swedish immigrants, Anderson grew up in a house at 12 Chatham St., attended Cambridge High and Latin School (now Cambridge Rindge and Latin), and Harvard University (Class of 1929).

He went on to earn an M.A. in music from Harvard in 1930, then began a Ph.D. program, not in music but languages. It was while he was a graduate student that he became director of the Harvard Band. His inventive arrangements of Harvard classics, still being played to this day, brought him to the attention of Arthur Fiedler, legendary director of the Boston Pops.

The Pops debuted most of Anderson's orchestral miniatures as well as his longer works, and his relationship with the orchestra continued until his death in 1975.

On hand at the dedication ceremony to pay tribute to that partnership were the Pops' current conductor, Keith Lockhart, and Laureate Conductor John Williams, each of whom spoke briefly. Also present were Cambridge Mayor Michael A. Sullivan, Anderson's widow Eleanor Firke Anderson, and the composer's three grandsons.

Lockhart called Anderson "a crossover composer before anyone came up with the term. The voice of Leroy Anderson became the voice of the Boston Pops in its dual commitment to approachability and to excellence."

Williams spoke of Anderson a "an American original - direct, honest, personal, idiosyncratic, and free of pretension. His music is directed to, and reflective of, the American soul."

The Harvard Band, conducted by Tom Everett, director, played a medley of Anderson favorites, and, following the unveiling of the plaque, segued into Anderson's arrangements of Harvard songs, including "Ten Thousand Men of Harvard."

In the June 9, 2003 edition of The Boston Globe, Richard Dyer wrote about the naming of Leroy Anderson Square:



Harvard Band members with conductors
John Williams and Keith Lockhart

"Dignitaries, neighbors, and passersby at the intersection of Crawford and Chatham streets" gathered, along with the composer's widow, Eleanor, and "her children and grandchildren as Mayor Michael A. Sullivan addressed the crowd, which was also serenaded by members of the Harvard University Band under Thomas Everett. Anderson was conductor of the Harvard Band when the ingenuity of his arrangements attracted the attention of Pops conductor Arthur Fiedler."

Also at the dedication, composer and former Boston Pops conductor John Williams said "He was an American original. Leroy Anderson is one of the great American masters of light orchestral music. Though we have performed his works countless times over the years at the Boston Pops, his music remains forever as young and fresh as the very first day on which it was composed."