

Somerville in the Age of Improvement: 1872–1890



Union Square Police Station. 50 Bow Street, 1874. G. H. Clough, architect.

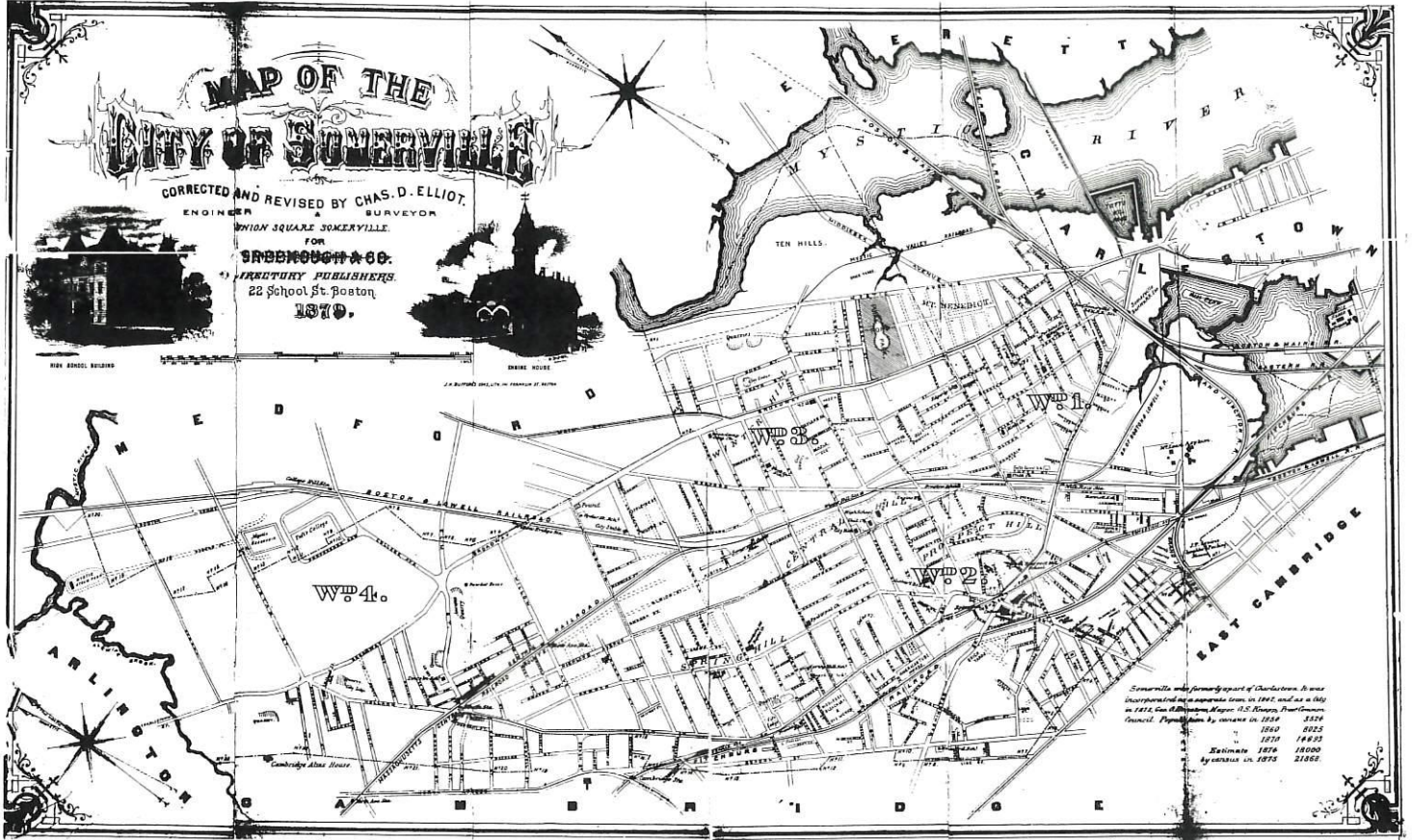
Somerville became a city in 1871. Sixteen schools and one public library served the growing population. The commercial center was firmly established at Union Square with the construction of high-styled masonry business blocks, hotels, churches, and a police station. The Victorian Gothic, a style of pointed arches, irregular rooflines, and polychromy, was frequently chosen by the builders of commercial structures in Union Square, and by the architects of public buildings.

Central Hill

Central Hill was chosen as the town's civic center and first public park in 1870 with the purchase of a 38-acre tract between Walnut and School Streets. During the next thirty years, Central Hill Park (already the site of the 1852 Greek Revival High School, later City Hall) became the site of all major public buildings. The 1871 Engine House by Shepard S. Woodcock and 1871 Latin High School designed in Victorian Gothic Style by Boston architect Samuel J.F. Thayer were followed by the 1884 Romanesque Style Public Library designed by Somerville architect George F. Loring.

Latin High School, Central Hill, 1871. Samuel J. F. Thayer, architect. Photograph ca. 1900. The 1895 English High School designed by Hartwell and Richardson is shown to the left of the Latin School. A major addition to the English School, built in the 1930s, now occupies the site of the Latin School.

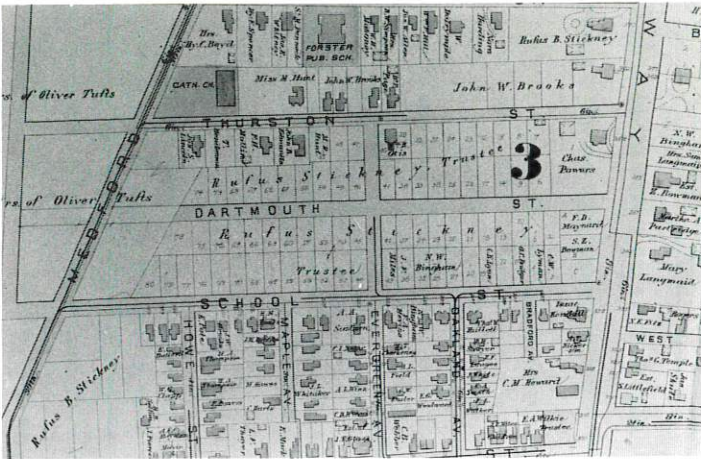




Map of the City of Somerville, 1879. Charles D. Elliot, Engineer and Surveyor.



Somerville City Hall, 93 Highland Avenue, 1852 with later additions. Photograph 1898. Somerville's City Hall, in Central Hill Park, was constructed as the Town of Somerville's first high school. In 1867, Town Offices were moved to the second floor of this Greek Revival building from their original location in the Forster School on Sycamore Street. In 1872, after the opening of the Latin School, City Offices took over the building. A public library was opened at the rear of City Hall in 1870. Various additions—including a south rear wing were made to the building in 1896 and 1902. A major enlargement took place in 1923–24 with the construction of a wing at the north, and a third story capped by a clock tower, spire and weathervane.



1874 G.M. Hopkins Atlas

Residential development boomed between East Somerville and Davis Square between 1869 and 1873, then declined for several years and resumed about 1880. West Somerville and Davis Square began rapid residential development with the construction of the Lowell and Arlington Branch Railroad through Davis Square in 1870 and with the extension of horse-car lines to Davis Square and Broadway. Transportation lines were continually improved, making Somerville a desirable location for speculators to develop housing tracts. In the early 1870's several extensive tracts were subdivided, among them the Thurston-Dartmouth-School Street tract on Winter Hill, formerly orchard and quarry land. This large tract and several others, however, were not developed for nearly another two decades.

Subdivision Practice

Subdivision practice in many sections of Somerville diverged from the standard lot and block system seen in surrounding towns. Short, dead-end streets known as courts or terraces were added to long blocks at right angles, substantially increasing the number of housing units. In the last three decades of the nineteenth century, two-family, and later, three-family, houses were the standard house type. The combination of the multi-family unit and the court or terrace resulted in densely built neighborhoods.

As Somerville's farms and lowlands filled with houses, it is interesting to note how town officials and residents appear to have perceived both the density and character of its residential and industrial developments. Some, clearly had a pessimistic view of future growth:

How long will it be before all these spare acres are taken and covered several stories deep with wood and brick?

Boston Post, May 10, 1869

In the decade after the Civil War, as Somerville's population increased, the services of town government specialized, eventually resulting in a municipal organization. In the years before Somerville became a city, there was a growing public awareness of the inherent quality of Somerville's natural setting and the often weak character of some its housing stock. In the late 1860s, a conservation spirit surfaced among residents, particularly businessmen. It was directed at improving the city's lowlands, creating open space, and improving the city's housing. The conservation of historic sites, particularly Prospect Hill, was also urged in newspaper editorials. Between 1872 and 1900, Somerville created two major parks (Broadway [Foss] and Nathan Tufts), several small parks and playgrounds, and debated the construction of parkways and boulevards linking the city to the regional park system of the Metropolitan Park Commission. Citizen's groups appear to have had a major role in these developments.

Underimproved streets and poor approaches from other cities and towns, via Washington Street and Broadway, were cited by critics as impeding quality residential development—views of the Miller's River and Happy Hollow Flats (the latter near the 1874 Broadway Park), they charged, gave little impetus to quality settlement:

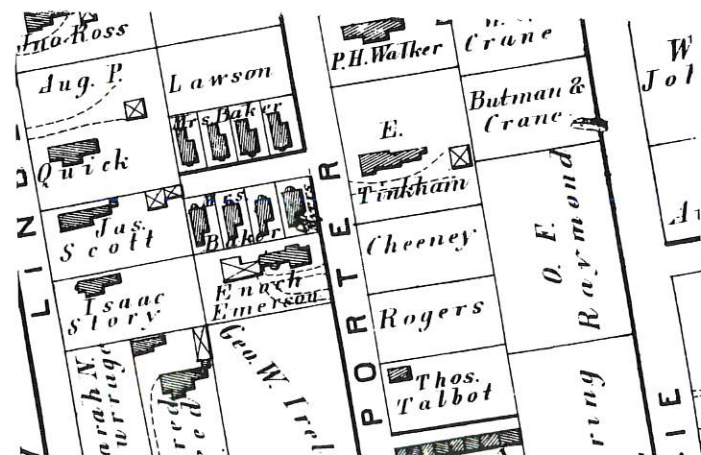
Here was Somerville with her only two inlets from Boston—two noble broad avenues offering the intending citizens such sinks as these. It was useless to tell them that beyond were the beautiful residences of wealthy citizens, handsome streets with all the advantages of city life at small cost. . . .

Somerville Journal, November 22, 1879



Evergreen Terrace, off Porter Street. ca. 1873. By 1870, Milk Row, now Somerville Avenue, had several large factories, such as the Middlesex Bleachery, which employed local workers. This eight-unit, mansard-roofed row is one of many built after the Civil War to house Somerville's growing number of factory workers.

Williams Court, off Porter Street. ca. 1868. Williams Court, like Evergreen Terrace, was built to house factory works. Eight identical gable-roofed houses with simple Italianate details were all owned by a "Mrs. Baker" in 1874.



Low-priced land allowed the construction of cheap houses on small lots where otherwise well-planned subdivisions might have been constructed. Somerville's town officials kept taxes low, in comparison with surrounding towns. Road building and municipal improvements were done gradually with the town seldom acquiring major debt; Somerville, therefore, lagged behind neighboring cities in the quality of its streets and general condition. Realtors criticized the city's relatively low land valuation, charging that it attracted lower land prices, and house construction which was inferior to neighboring Cambridge.

In the 1880s, social clubs interested in the growth and improvement of Somerville lobbied for ordinances which would restrict setback, control density, and encourage builders not to construct the same house plan repeatedly. Trees were called for, and land speculators' lack of landscaping in new subdivisions was condemned.

Although industry provided employment and a tax base, many citizens and land dealers were particularly critical of the effect that slaughterhouses and factories had on residential development. After a fire destroyed the North Packing Plant in 1879, the company petitioned to rebuild a larger facility at Medford Street and Somerville Avenue. The **Journal** reported:

It is claimed by some persons that the existence of such industries within the limits of our city has a tendency to vitiate the atmosphere, to endanger the public health, and to keep away from the city *a class of people whose presence would be very desirable.*

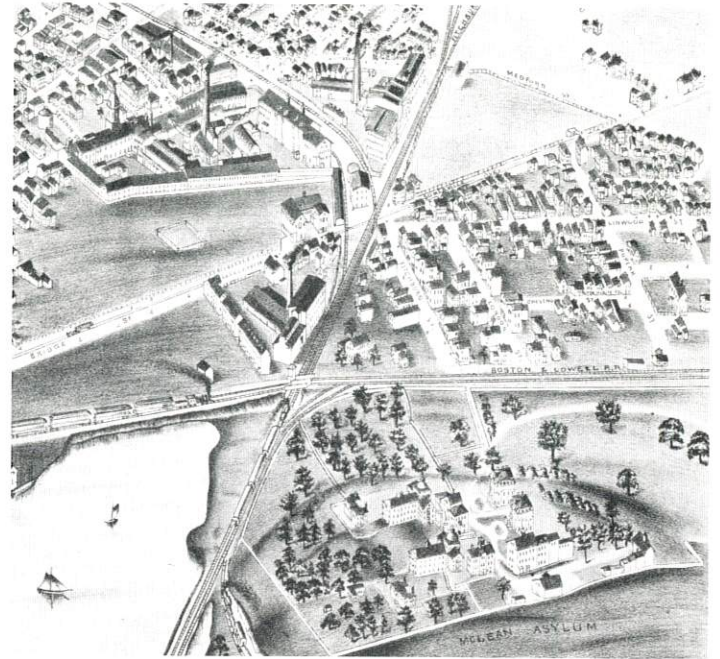
Public debate was strong, but the petition was accepted. Other slaughtering and processing plants were also accepted, and by 1898, Somerville was the third largest slaughtering city in the United States.

When the economic depression of the 1870s ceased and building activity boomed in the early 1880s, the industrial districts were already well established at the edges of the city, and dictated the direction of further residential development. Although the existence of industries created a poor environment for attractive housing, cheaply-constructed houses and tenements had done *their* damage; some charged:

Somerville has been unfortunate in some respects, though not so much in respect of its peculiar location as the character of a class of its houses, which has had a bad effect upon persons who might be attracted to it for settlement. One of the drawbacks to Somerville is a poor class of houses constructed just before the hard times. A class of builders, having little or no means of their own, succeeded in bonding land, obtaining credit for lumber, and when the buildings which they were erecting were covered in, they would go to the savings banks and obtain on mortgage enough to give them a good profit on the transaction. They would finish the houses so that they could be occupied; but they were shells, badly put together . . . these houses are now occupied at a good rate of rent, but their existence has injured our city very materially.

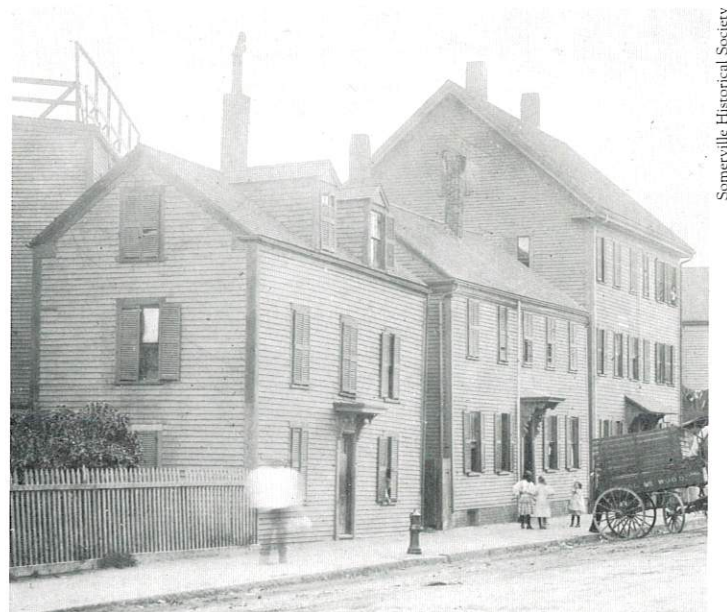
Somerville Journal, June, 1882

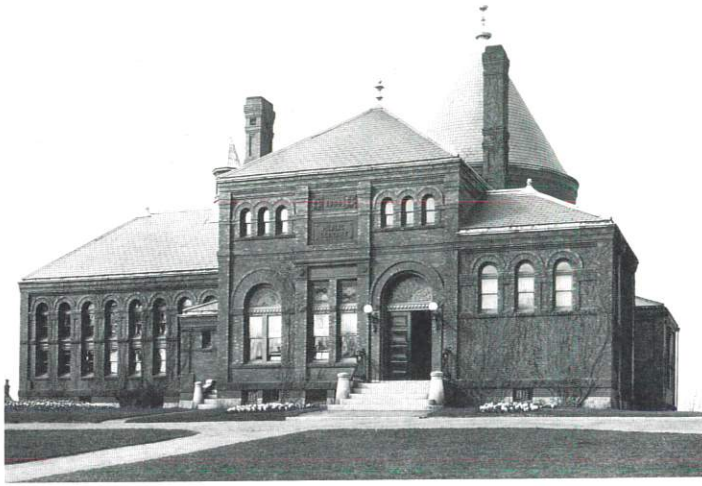
The "poor class of houses" described in the **Journal** were often ill-sited in good residential sections, but most were built in the "Brick Bottom" area near Washington Street, Medford Street, and Somerville Avenue, in the poorly-drained industrial district of Ward II, and along Broadway near the brickyards of Ten Hills and the Medford Turnpike (Mystic Street).



Ward II, 1879. From 1879 *Bird's Eye View of East Cambridge*. Among Somerville's most densely built neighborhoods was the district near the North Packing Plant and Ward II industries.

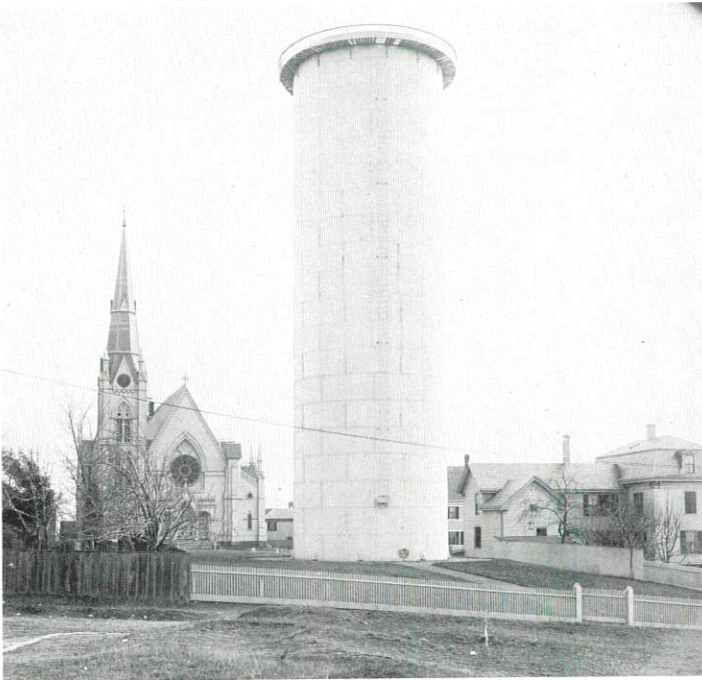
Brick Bottom. Photograph ca. 1925. Among the areas criticized by city "improvers" of the 1870s and 1880s was Brick Bottom, a small residential district near the yards of the Boston and Lowell Railroad and several brickyards and slaughterhouses.





Public Library, Central Hill, 1884. George F. Loring, architect.

Spring Hill Standpipe, 1889. Now Bailey Park.



Winter Hill Station, 1888.



With the growth of Somerville's transportation network and industries between 1870 and 1880, its commercial centers expanded around the transfer points of commuters and goods. Union Square, Davis Square, and Gilman Square became the largest retail and light manufacturing districts, but Broadway in East Somerville and Somerville Avenue also supported a variety of commercial activities. Such decentralized commercial districts served the residents of the formerly village-like Somerville.

The 1880s and 1890s were decades of civic improvement and investment: a new public library (1884) and fire station (1895) were built; a new city hall and memorial hall advocated (1890), and streets, sewers, and street lighting systems extended throughout the city. The Somerville Electric Company was established in 1887, with a plant on Willow Street. Architects, particularly the firm of Loring and Phipps and Aaron Gould figured importantly in the construction boom of these decades, as they designed public buildings, churches and homes for prominent citizens.

In the 1880s, as in the previous decades, Somerville's civic-minded citizens were concerned about protecting the city's hills. In 1874, Prospect Hill had been cut down, and the next decade saw the complete demolition of Mt. Benedict. In 1881, one *Journal* writer called for the hills of Somerville "to always be reserved for private residences". Another suggested that the hills be subject to a "law of residence":

Nature has done more for Somerville than for any of our sister cities in the gift of charming hills, beautiful in outline, graceful in slope, easy of ascent and fortunately connected. To these hills the better class of the community inevitably tend. There seems to be a law of residence as of morals that the best go upon the heights eventually, as the lower classes trench upon their lowland territory. . . .

Somerville Journal, August 5, 1882

Large-scale building on the hills of Somerville initially had drawbacks, however. Although the city was served by a municipal water system first established in 1837 and improved over the next fifty years, the highest elevations of the city were without sufficient water pressure. In 1889, a high-service water system was built to serve 309 acres of the city, about one-eighth of the total area. The system included a pumping station at Broadway and Cedar Street and a standpipe on Spring Hill. The 100-foot high, 30-foot in diameter standpipe was made by Henry R. Worthington of New York, and had a capacity of 528,768 gallons. The development of tracts on Spring, Prospect and Winter Hills was spurred by the construction of this high-service system, although large estates built along Broadway and Summer Street had previously been served satisfactorily by private wells.

Somerville's population reached 29,971 in 1885. New Hampshire, Vermont, and Maine continued to supply a substantial influx of new residents (4619), but Canadian immigration was also becoming significant. In addition to 318 Canadians, 623 settlers from New Brunswick, 1294 from Nova Scotia, and 116 from Prince Edward Island were represented in the 1885 census. Irish-born population totalled 3431, Portuguese only 87.

Between 1885 and 1890, the Boston and Maine Railroad built three new passenger stations in Somerville. Architect Alden Frink of Boston created impressive designs for the Winter Hill, Prospect Hill, and Somerville Highlands stations, which were worthy of the best suburban setting. Finished in red marble ashlar trimmed with rock-faced marble from Isle la Mont, Vermont and roofed with Brownsville slate, the stations helped to sell house lots to prospective commuter-residents. Interior comforts were well-provided; the interior of the Winter

Hill Station, for example, was finished in birch, with a massive marble and cherry trimmed fireplace at one end of the waiting room.

With the building boom of the 1880s, subdivisions which were platted a decade or two earlier were finally built up. The Somerville City Improvement Society, concerned with the impact of rapid growth, was formed in 1881 to lobby for the improvement and beautification of the city. Tree planting was among the foremost projects of the Society:

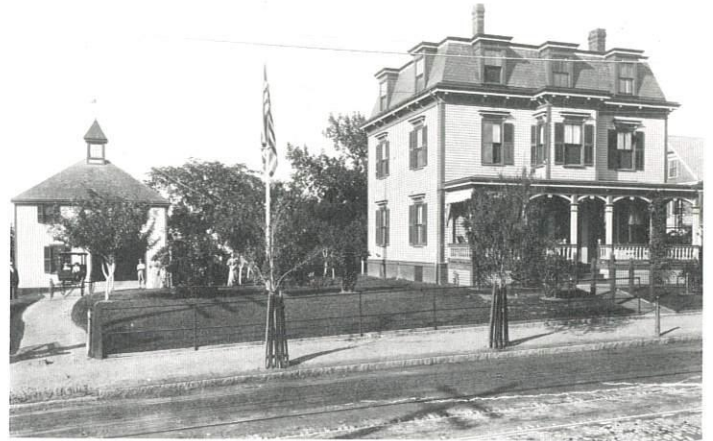
The more primal needs of education, highways, water supply and drainage have absorbed the interest of our city authorities and taxed the people so heavily as to make impossible that official attention or public funds should be devoted to the aesthetic interests of the city. There has ever been, we judge, an undue haste in the zeal to establish new grades, widen and straighten streets, to sacrifice noble old trees or thriving rows of elms or maples that would have added great beauty and comfort to our streets . . . he who plants a shade tree on a naked street is a public benefactor.

Somerville Journal, May 10, 1881

Between 1880 and 1890, Somerville's population almost doubled, growing from 24,933 to 40,152. By 1888, a serious housing shortage occurred. "Never before," noted the *Journal*, "has there been so large a number of people desirous of coming to Somerville to live. The city needs urgently a few hundred small modern houses, well-built to cost with a moderate piece of land \$4,000-\$6,000 each, planned with ordinary taste and good judgement."

Somerville's building industry grew with the demand for lumber and building components. A strong woodworking industry developed, with carpenters, builders, lumberyards, furniture makers, picture-frame makers and museum case and coffin manufacturers located throughout the city. Many of these firms began operation in Boston, and moved to Somerville in the 1880s and 1890s. A variety of other industries expanded, particularly the manufacture of glass, iron, and boilers, and the processing of food (distilleries, vinegar works, bakeries and meat). Unlike the previous generation of industries, company owners were often non-residents of Somerville. Lincoln's Julian de Cordova, president of Union Glass, exemplified the wealthy non-resident industrialist of the period. Charles North, however, described by the *Journal* as the "pork prince," resided in a fine home atop Prospect Hill, his packing house in full view. Brickyards, the largest local industry at mid-century rapidly declined in the 1880s and 1890s until only one yard remained by 1900, located on the Mystic River flats of Ten Hills farm. Electric streetcar service was introduced in 1889, bringing inexpensive transportation to the western sections of the city, and stimulating the growth of Davis, Teele, Union and Gilman Squares.

West Somerville Car at Clarendon Hill Barn, ca. 1898.



287 Highland Avenue, ca. 1898. Shade trees were protected by wooden or metal guards against damage by horsecars and carriages.

S.P.N.E.A.

C. A. KIRKPATRICK, Carpenter and Builder.



SHOP ON PEARL STREET,
Westerly from and near Cross Street,
EAST SOMERVILLE.

PATENT ROOFING BRACKET.

Rights for Patent Roof Shingling and Slating Bracket for sale.

For simplicity and ease of putting up and taking down they are unequalled. They also leave the work in the best condition, as no nail or other holes are left in the roof after taking down. The saving in material and time is from 5 to 10 dollars on each house. Any one can make them after purchasing the right, for a very small amount, as no foundry or machinist work is needed, and all necessary material is at the easy command of any Carpenter. Another invaluable feature is their PERFECT SAFETY. PRICE REASONABLE.



Development in the Last Decade: 1890–1900



Charles X. Dalton House, 99 Highland Avenue, ca. 1890. Photograph ca. 1900. A shingled gable, turned porch posts, and clapboard siding are characteristic Queen Anne details. Dalton was a manufacturer of optical instruments.

Louville Niles House, 45 Walnut, 1890. Edwin K. Blaikie, architect.



50 percent of the housing units in Somerville were built between 1890 and 1910, and Queen Anne, Colonial Revival, and Shingle Style houses contributed to Somerville's major wave of residential building. Many Somerville carpenter-builders began to advertise their services at this time, and some produced handsome houses of wood and brick construction. Builders appear to have used the many builders' guides of the period, and may have derived some inspiration from the work of local architects such as George Loring and Shepard S. Woodcock. Somerville builders constructed many new units in response to the housing shortage. In 1890, the **Somerville Journal** recognized that "it is a matter of congratulation that the style of buildings which are now erected are a great improvement over those of 15 to 20 years ago, when there was a big boom in building and not much attention was given to architecture. . . . more people are building homes of their own and consequently are more careful to have them attractive looking and well-built . . ."

Late Nineteenth Century Styles: Queen Anne, Colonial Revival, and Shingle

Among architects popular with Somerville's leading citizens were George Loring and Sanford Phipps, who produced some of Somerville's finest late nineteenth century residences. Loring and Phipps worked in the medieval English Revival Style popularized by Richard Norman Shaw, and translated by Boston's Henry Hobson Richardson. Though the best examples of their work have been razed, two fine remaining examples are Loring's own gambrel-roofed house atop Central Hill (1895) and a Shingle Style house at 152 Summer (1895). Loring and Phipps also designed many houses in the Prospect and Winter Hill areas in Georgian or Federal Revival styles. Typical characteristics include a dormered, steep-hipped roof, and round projecting bays at either side of a central entrance. Several houses of this type still survive on Highland Avenue.

A more conventional, less-literary form of Queen Anne Style was produced by the city's many builders to good effect. On Prospect Hill, the house of provision dealer Louville Niles at 45 Walnut and the adjacent house at 97 Munroe (also built by Niles) display the Queen Anne hallmarks of the period: turrets, oriels, and lavish use of patterned shingles and stained glass. Portions of Winter Hill, Spring Hill, and Prospect Hill were built up with several hundred similar Queen Anne houses, housing a well-to-do class of businessmen and professionals. Although a number of national periodicals such as **Harper's Weekly** provided information on the construction of tasteful homes, the **Somerville Journal** provided more encouragement at the local level. The "Homestead Series" begun in

1888 provided plans for modest, attractive, single family houses costing \$4,000–\$6,000. Stylistically, the houses were eclectic versions of popular Queen Anne designs.

As in the earlier Italianate and Greek Revival styles, the 2½ story, sidehall plan was a type widely used by builders of Queen Anne houses. Examples can be found across the city which show the potential of Queen Anne decorative elements on the smaller house: patterned shingles, turned posts, and a prominent sunburst in the porch gable are characteristic features.



10 Arlington Street, 1898.



152 Summer Street, 1895. George F. Loring, architect. Smooth, shingle-clad wall surfaces, simple ornamentation, and circular turrets and verandas integrated into the overall design are characteristics of the Shingle Style, which appeared in Somerville in the 1890s.



William P. Hill House, 155 Sycamore Street, 1891, James Kelley, architect. The Colonial Revival borrowed from a variety of sources, including eighteenth and early nineteenth century Federal architecture. Gambrel roofs, fanlights, semi-circular porticos, and classical columns are typical features of Somerville's Colonial Revival Style houses. William P. Hill, the first owner, was a Boston dealer in saddlery hardware.



Carriage house, Columbus Avenue. A jerkin-head roof and multi-paned windows are distinctive features of this Queen Anne Style carriage house which dates from the 1890s.



Bay State Avenue, ca. 1899. A real estate promotion featured this photograph of Bay State Avenue shortly after the first houses were built by H. D. McGray. Decorative oriels and millwork enhanced the shingle covered, gambrel-roofed designs.



Bay State Avenue.

343 Highland Avenue, ca. 1895.



Two Family Houses and Three-Deckers

As in previous styles, Queen Anne and Colonial Revival ideas filtered into the standard, speculatively-built house of the day. Between 1895 and 1915, entire sections of the city filled with near-identical two-family and three-decker houses. In 1906, the *Somerville Journal* reported that "Somerville is growing along all lines . . . from East Boston, Dorchester, Charlestown and Roxbury, there is a steady stream of inquiries for new houses in Somerville . . . there is no place near Boston where so much land, well-situated, can be bought so cheaply and will insure such safe and profitable returns." The dwelling desired by the clerks, small businessmen, skilled laborers and teachers who made up the bulk of new residents was the two-family house with five to eight rooms per floor. Equipped with modern conveniences, the two-family house provided the owner with a rental unit bringing \$25-\$35 per month. According to the *Journal*, a group of visiting architects called the Somerville version of the two-family house "the best in the state." Front and rear porches were a distinguishing feature of the two-family house; a projecting front bay was also common.

Although the two-family houses were often of rather uninspired design, usually with a broad gambrel or gable roof, and some classical detailing, some are of architectural interest. In the Highland-Cherry Street area, builder-architect A.D. Rice detailed his designs with an abundance of jigsawed and turned porch work. Approximately one dozen houses of Rice's standard plan and elevation are richly embellished with pendant brackets and elaborately turned posts and spindles. In the Kidder-Bay State Avenue area, and throughout the Holland-Simpson area, two-families built after 1890 on former brickyard land by various builders have handsome massing and Shingle Style treatments. Gambrel or gable roofs often have oriels projecting from the gable end. Turned trusswork and stained and leaded glass decorate the exterior of some of the houses. Zebedee E. Cliff and H. D. McGray were among the best-known builders of two-family houses, particularly in West Somerville. As was the case in Cambridge (where two-families also were built in large numbers between 1893 and 1935), the builder of two-families often owned the land and was his own designer, "so that many streets were the product of one man's efforts."

A few three deckers are of architectural interest, comparing favorably to the best examples found in three-decker "centers" such as Dorchester and Fall River. A ca. 1910 Preston Road house exemplifies the best standard of Somerville three-decker construction. It was on the two-family house, however, that the turn-of-the-century Somerville builders lavished their attention.

Although two-family houses and three deckers were constructed throughout the city, Ten Hills, Mount Benedict, and the entire western section attracted the right combination of inexpensive land, speculative builders, and eager buyers who desired a good transit connection to Boston. By 1891, 53 trains served West Somerville via the Arlington and Lexington Branch Railroad. The 6¢ fare bought a 10 to 18 minute trip to Boston. Three lines of horsecar lines went to Bowdoin and Park stations; electric car service ran on nearby Massachusetts Avenue in Cambridge.

A variation of the wood-frame, wood-sided multiple family house was introduced in 1905, when a real estate syndicate represented by Andrew Killoren constructed the city's first cement house at 77 Raymond Street. Plans for cement block houses were advertised for "do-it-yourselfers" by mail order sources such as Sears Roebuck and Company, and were also popular with some developers. The cement block house was popular for a brief period until World War I.



16-18 Preston Road, ca. 1900.



Three-decker commercial and residential units, McGrath Highway, photograph 1925. This building housed a grocery and cafe at the ground level. Razed.



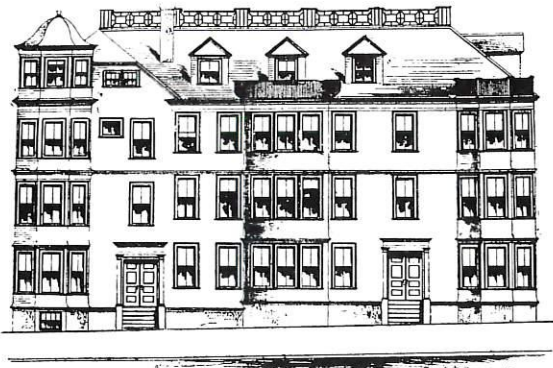
Porter Street three-deckers, ca. 1900.



8 Cherry Street, 1908. Salesmen were among the first residents of this Georgian Revival-inspired three-decker example at the edge of Spring Hill.

56 Vinal Avenue, 1913. Three-deckers were among the last additions to the Prospect Hill residential area. This Colonial Revival example is well-conserved, with original clapboards, raking cornice, and porches intact.





J. B. HUMPHREY'S BLOCK, HIGHLAND AVENUE.

The Cumberland, 40-42 Highland Avenue, 1890. One of Highland Avenue's finest apartment hotels advertised its roof garden and views to the north and south.



GEORGE D. GOODRICH'S BLOCK, SCHOOL STREET.

The Montrose, 156 School Street, 1894. George Goodrich, a dealer in drain and sewer pipes, originally constructed this building with four turreted bays. Although the turrets were removed long ago, the building has been sensitively restored.



Photograph 1989

The Quincy, 15 Quincy Street, 1895. Antonio Sears, a tailor, constructed the Quincy as an apartment hotel. At the turn of the century, the building housed many tradesmen and workers. The prominent Palladian window, a frieze of swags and garlands, and Ionic columns at the entry are among the building's distinctive features.

Apartment houses and rowhouses of brick construction built between ca. 1883 and 1900 are among the most interesting of Somerville's late nineteenth century buildings. Many were built by non-resident speculative builders. The 1900 City Directory lists 45 apartment "hotels," boasting names such as The Grandview and The Ideal. The 1889 Langmaid Terrace, decorated with terra cotta and stained glass insets, is among the most architecturally significant. The 1890 Highland, atop Central Hill, is representative of the Richardsonian Romanesque Style, well-crafted in heavy masonry with conical-roofed turrets. Frame apartment rows were also built to a high standard, particularly in Classical Revival styles. Prospect and Winter Hills, well situated with rail and horsecar stations, were popular with apartment builders.

At the turn of the century, residential construction was dominated by the two-family house, but three small residential developments still catered to the few individuals desiring a large, single-family house. Hardware dealer Charles Bradshaw's Westwood Road, brickyard owner Nathan Tufts' Powerhouse Terrace, and spice manufacturer Rufus B. Stickney's School, Dartmouth and Thurston Street subdivision were the site of some of the city's finest Shingle and Queen Anne Style buildings. Lot sizes were characteristically small, and houses were sited within several feet of the next, with little or no rear yard. Although the developments (on former brickyard land) of moderately priced two-family houses at Somerville Highlands (1905-1910) and Ten Hills (1917) created the most crowded neighborhoods, residents of the elegant enclaves such as Westwood Road eventually complained about building density in their areas as well. Neither such closely-built subdivision practice nor the construction of three-deckers were restricted by building ordinances. Surprised residents of West Somerville protested the march of three-deckers into the Powerhouse Boulevard area, complaining that the three-decker eroded the park-like ambience of the Boulevard and crowded the surrounding homes.

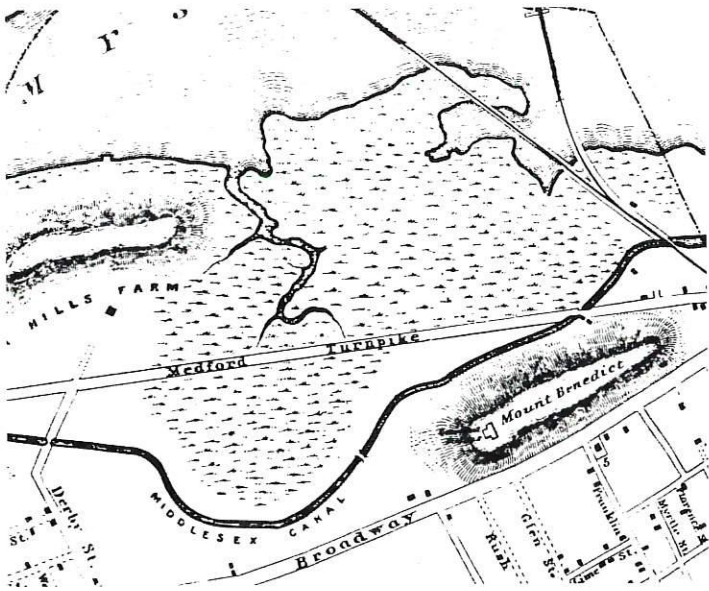


Langmaid Terrace, 359-365 Broadway, 1889. Rowhouses and apartment rows began to replace large single family houses on Winter Hill in the 1880s and 1890s. Among the finest apartment row in the city is this brick and terra cotta building, with a variety of roofs and crenellated parapets. Of note is the stained glass work and terra cotta inset "Langmaid Terrace" in the front parapet.



Eldridge Newton House, 8 Westwood Road, ca. 1897. One of the early houses of Westwood Road, and representative of the Shingle Style preferences of Westwood Road builders.

Agricultural Village to Suburban Town: 1800–1842



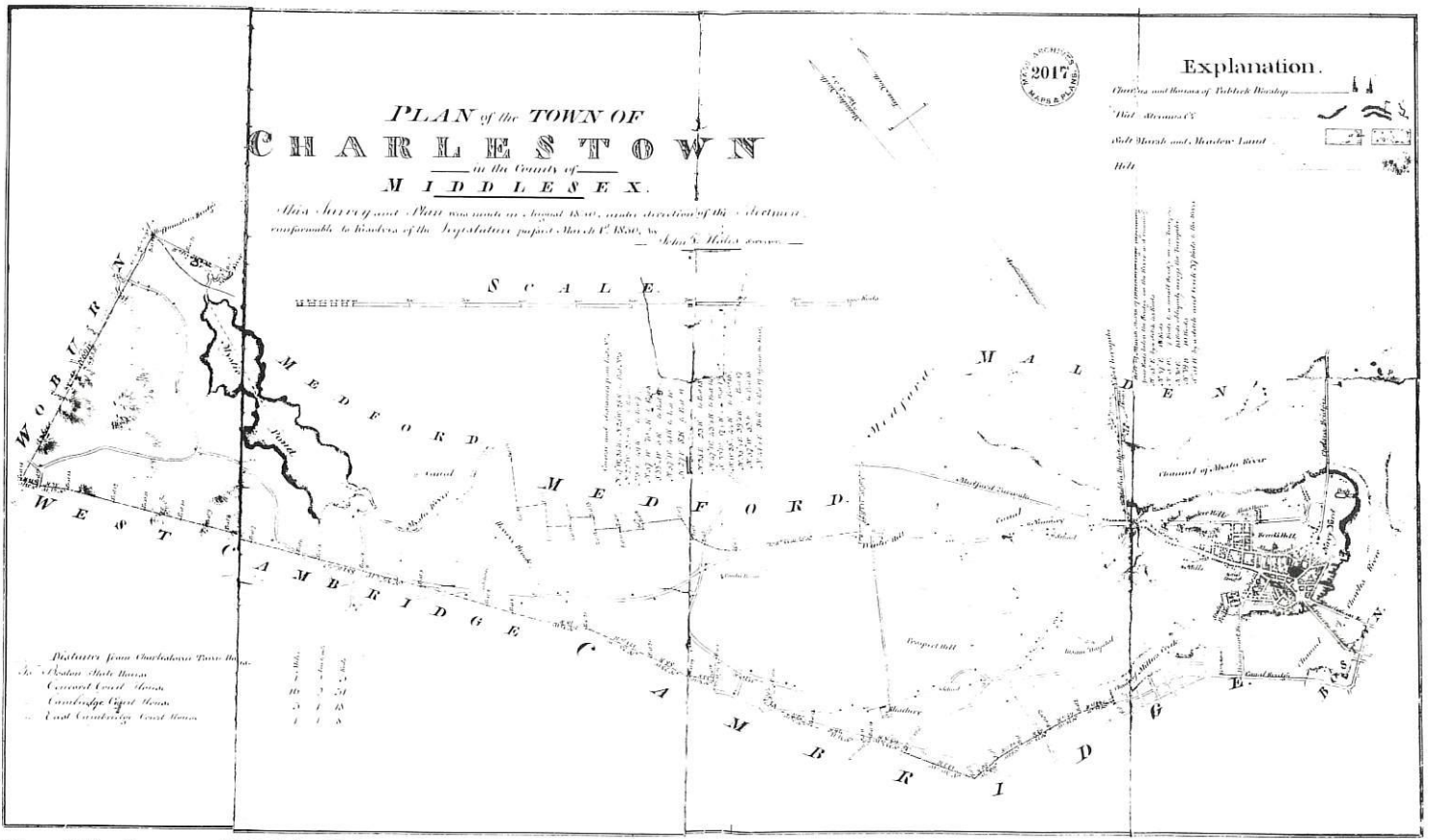
The Middlesex Canal. In 1793 the "Proprietors of the Middlesex Canal" were incorporated to build a canal connecting the Merrimack River in Lowell with the Mystic River in Medford. In 1795, the canal was authorized as far as Boston. Colonel Loammi Baldwin was the engineer for the undertaking, which was completed as far as Charlestown (now Somerville) on December 31, 1803. The canal was twenty-seven and one-half miles long, thirty feet across, and four feet deep, could be navigated about eight months per year, and carried freight and passengers. It was abandoned in the 1830s, after the expansion of the railroad network.

Orchard, Belmont Street. This Spring Hill orchard evokes the character of many small orchards which were located throughout Somerville in the nineteenth century.



In the decades after the Revolution, the Charlestown beyond the Neck experienced industrial, rather than agricultural growth. New industries such as the Charlestown (later Middlesex) Bleachery were established on Milk Row, and brickyards began operation near the shores of the Mystic River and in the lowlands of Ward II. After the Revolution, private entrepreneurs from centers such as Boston, Lowell, and Charlestown rather than town governments planned and financed a series of toll roads, bridges, and a canal linking Boston and Charlestown with the region. The 1786 Charles River Bridge, 1787 Malden Bridge, 1793 West Boston Bridge, 1803 Middlesex Canal, 1804 Medford Andover Turnpike (Mystic Street), 1807 Craigie Bridge, and 1813 Middlesex Turnpike (Beacon Street), increased agricultural and commercial traffic through the mainland of Charlestown, particularly at the transportation junctions of Charlestown Neck and Union Square. The toll roads were usually poorly built and often ended in financial disaster for their investors, and the 27 mile-long Middlesex Canal succumbed in the 1840s to the railroad. However, the roads, canal, and bridges established a radiating system of routes through northern Middlesex County. They facilitated moving agricultural products as well as manufactured goods, and drew the Charlestown mainland closer to Boston. Although farm products continued to be shipped through mainland Charlestown, in the 1820s and 1830s, Lexington's milk farms began to dominate the position formerly held by farms in mainland Charlestown and Cambridge. Lexington's richer soil and more productive dairy herds, coupled with an expanding system of roads, provided the competitive advantage. By 1840, there was a gradual shift by mainland Charlestown farmers to the growing of market garden crops and the raising of fruit. Mid-nineteenth century horticulturists such as George Ireland and Philemon Russell were noted for their success in raising of apples and pears on Spring Hill and near present-day Davis Square.

Railroad construction commenced beyond the Neck in 1835 with the Boston and Lowell Railroad, despite opposition by brick carriers and brickyard owners who feared that railroads would destroy their trade by opening up competitive new territory. The Boston and Lowell cut a diagonal path through the eastern section of the mainland, skirting the northern slope of Prospect Hill and the southern slope of Winter Hill. The Charlestown Branch, later the Fitchburg Railroad, was built between Boston and Fresh Pond in Cambridge in 1841. Its route followed the Miller's River and Milk Row, and created a corridor which subsequently attracted a variety of industries. In 1843, the Fitchburg began passenger service, and consequently opened the southern slopes of Prospect and Spring Hill to residential development. The Boston and Lowell and the Fitchburg were the only railroads in the area prior to the incor-



Map of Charlestown, 1830. John Hales.

Stone Wall, Curtis Street. Land divisions were often marked with stone walls. This mid-nineteenth century farmhouse on Curtis Street, a former rangeway, retains a fragment of an original wall.



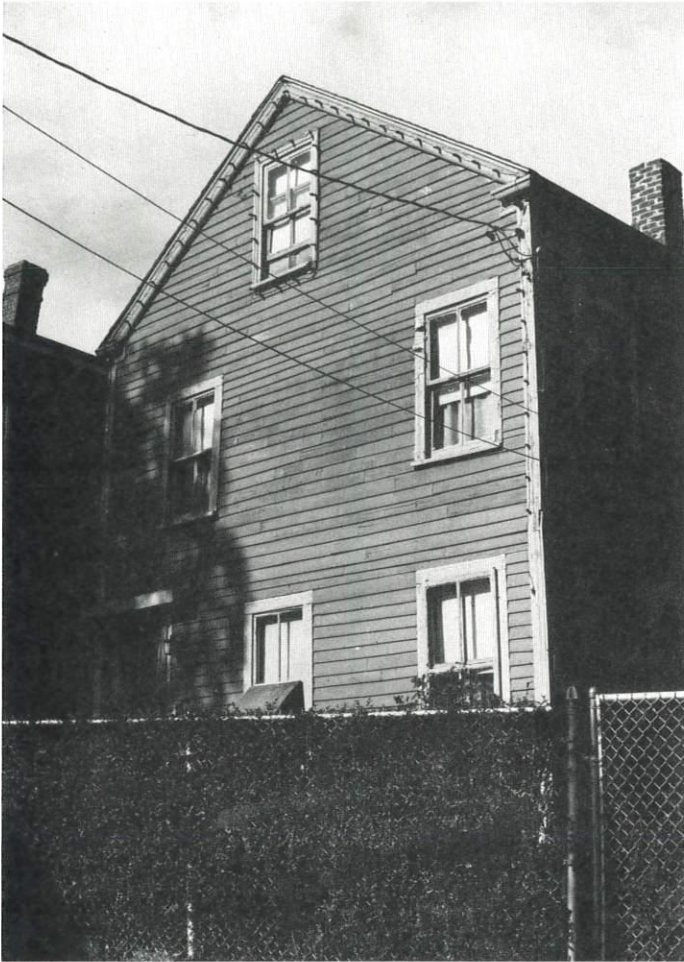
OSGOOD B. DANE,
DEALER IN
Stone & Blue Granite,
— ALSO —
SURVEYOR OF STONE WORK,
HOUSE MILK STREET - - - NEAR SCHOOL.
SOMERVILLE, Mass.

poration of Somerville as a town in 1842.

Despite the style-consciousness of the builders of a handful of buildings, early nineteenth century buildings were usually simple structures. Between 1800 and 1842, the small population of brickmakers, farmers, and shopkeepers were housed in dwellings constructed by the previous generations of farmers and laborers, and in a few new houses. Gable roofs, with short returns at the eaves, are characteristic of the modest houses constructed during this period. Exterior decorative trim, when present, was usually confined to a simple pedimented entry derivative of the Federal style trim of more stylish examples. These early nineteenth century houses were often “made-over” in the nineteenth century, but their short returns and six over six sash are keys to their early date of construction.



Osgood Dane House, 461 Somerville Avenue, ca. 1825. Quarry-owner Osgood Dane worked the granite ledge behind his residence (near Granite Street). The Dane House is the oldest house still standing on Somerville Avenue.



34 Fountain Avenue. Among the earliest extant houses in East Somerville, this example has the short returns at the eaves associated with the Federal Style. It is situated at the edge of former nineteenth-century brickyards, now the Glen Street playground.

74 Franklin Street, ca. 1820.



Charles Gilman House, 108 Gilman Street, ca. 1820.

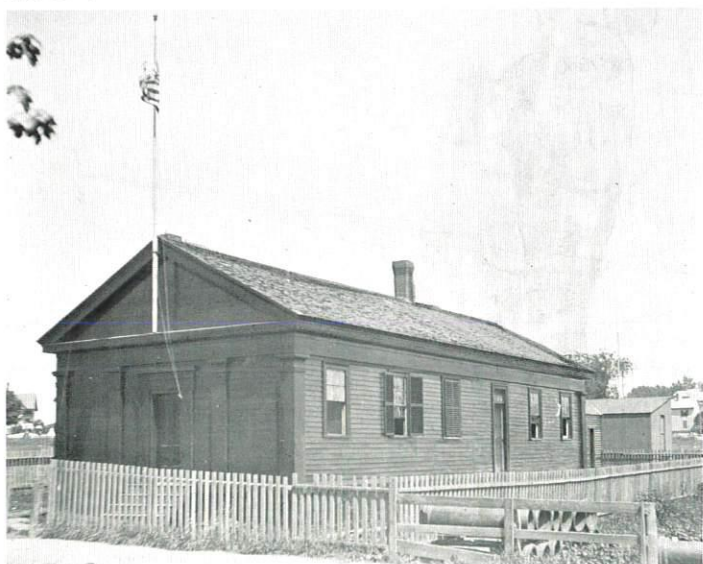


The Suburban Town and Industrial Center: 1842–1872



Cemetery, 1804. Somerville Avenue near Dane Street. When Somerville became a town it had four one-story schoolhouses, a few town ledges, a pound for stray animals, an engine house, one fire engine, and one cemetery. The cemetery, founded in 1804, was situated on land donated by Samuel Tufts. The Milk Row Primary School stood at the eastern corner of the cemetery lot from 1796 to 1849. The Prospect Hill School stood near Cross and Medford Streets; the Winter Hill Primary near Broadway and Franklin Street, and the Upper Winter Hill Primary near Broadway and Central. The 1842 attendance in all these schools was 226 pupils.

Walnut Hill School, Broadway near Cedar Street, 1843. This Greek Revival School was the first built after Somerville became a town.



In 1842, inhabitants “beyond the Neck” finally succeeded in separating from Charlestown. The new town was first to be called Warren (after a Bunker Hill hero) but the name Somerville was later decided upon. An unsuccessful attempt at separation was first made in 1824 and was led by local farmers who protested the taxation of their rural settlement for the improvement of peninsular Charlestown. The second attempt in 1842 represented a new coalition of farmers and a sprinkling of new “suburbanites.” The second group of separatist-farmers were actively engaged in providing the expanding urban areas with their farm products, rather than maintaining isolation from the growing center of activity. The new group of suburban businessmen, often merchants, were encouraged by the economic opportunities of the railroad and transportation improvements. In the next decades, long-time resident farmers and new merchants and commuters lobbied together, urging the town government to install services such as water and gas. Together, they encouraged the development of transit between Somerville and Boston, and both groups participated in the subdivision of land for speculative sale. In 1842, there were 1013 residents in Somerville. Most males were engaged in farming or brickmaking, but a variety of professionals, merchants, clerks, artisans, produce dealers, teamsters, blacksmiths and those in building trades were also represented in small numbers. Among the supporters of separation from Charlestown were James Hill, Jr., a Faneuil Hall marketman; John S. Edgerly, a grain dealer; Francis Bowman, a real estate dealer; and Guy Hawkins, a farmer who grew market crops near Milk Row. Men engaged in wholesale produce dealing and real estate formed a small but important new migration into Somerville, reflecting the increasing orientation of the once-agricultural village to a city economy.

A small industrial district of brickyards, ropewalks, blacksmith shops and a bleachery was concentrated along the Fitchburg Railroad corridor and the Miller’s River, contrasting with the still-pastoral character of the well-landscaped McLean Asylum grounds on nearby Cobble Hill. Civic minded pump manufacturer Sanford Adams reportedly made efforts to attract more industries and workers by advertising Somerville in the Boston papers.

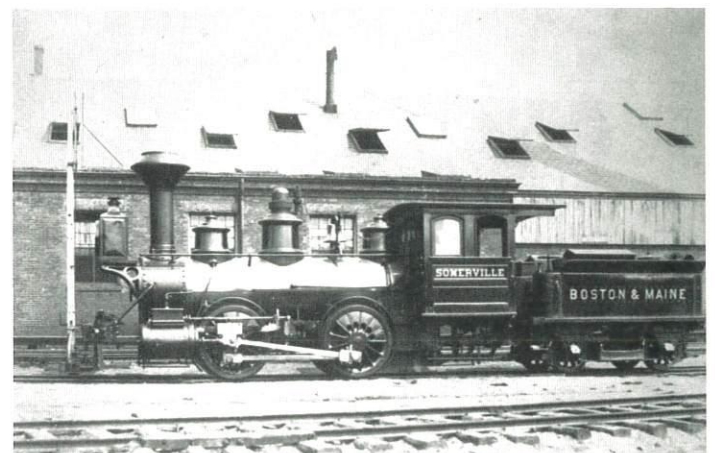
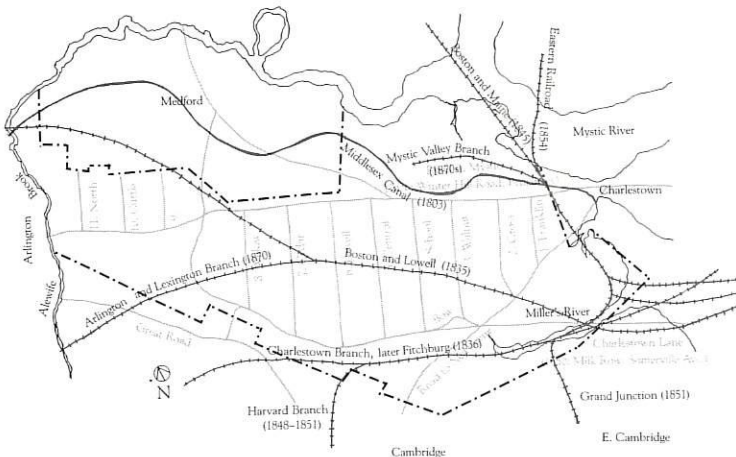
Despite the construction of numerous toll roads and bridges, and the introduction of passenger rail and horse-car service to Boston, rail and horse car service was not available to many residents because of the high cost. Walking remained the primary method of travel between Somerville and Boston until the Civil War. Although Somerville was increasingly well-served with transportation opportunities, only the wealthiest members of the community used them on a regular basis, and true “commuting” did not begin for several decades. One early resident, Quincy A. Vinal, remembered that there were only



Milk Row at Garden Street, ca. 1910. At right is the ca. 1790 Samuel Kent House; at left is a row built in the 1820s to house Middlesex Bleachery workers. The Bleachery was the first major industry which located along Milk Row, now Somerville Avenue.

Boston and Maine Engine, date of photograph unknown. The Boston and Maine Railroad owned eight stations in Somerville at the turn of the century, and the railroad greatly assisted in the development of Somerville's residential areas and industries. "The city of Somerville," Edward A. Samuels noted in 1897, "without the Boston and Maine Railroad, bisecting it and linking it with the great world without, is simply an unimaginable community." (*Somerville Past and Present*, p. 465.)

Map of Railroads: 1835-1875.



“about 20” residents who went to Boston daily in the 1840s and 1850s. The merchants who moved to Somerville were motivated by other than convenience. The suburban location and cheaper land (often purchased directly from farmers) provided the opportunity for the construction of a substantial residence in a picturesque setting, one that might not have been affordable in Boston. Those with employment in Boston which did not demand regular or prompt attendance were best-suited to residence in the first subdivisions on the hills of Somerville.

The subdivision of land into house lots began in the early 1840s, after the construction of the first passenger rail lines. By 1845, Cambridge and Charlestown land speculators surveyed sections of Winter Hill, Spring Hill, East Somerville, and a small district near the Porter Square cattle market in Cambridge. Clusters of substantial houses soon appeared, although many of the lots remained unbuilt until after the Civil War. Land valued at fifty to one hundred dollars an acre in 1842 increased to two to three thousand dollars per acre by 1855.

Architectural Styles after 1842

In the years immediately before and after Somerville became a town (1842), a variety of Greek Revival, Gothic Revival, and early Italianate style houses were built in both agricultural settings and in the new, speculatively platted subdivisions. Along the rangeways in West Somerville, simple five-bay houses were built by a few farmers whose houses adjoined their potato crops and orchards in similar fashion to those of the previous generation. At the same time, however, in portions of East Somerville and on Winter and Spring Hills, stylish Greek Revival houses were constructed by a handful of Boston businessmen who travelled via foot, horsecar or passenger train to the “suburb” of Somerville. Representative of these early neighborhoods is the Mt. Vernon-Perkins Street area in East Somerville. Subdivided shortly after Somerville became a town in 1842, it has an important concentration of three-bay, Doric-columned Greek Revival houses built for Boston and Charlestown businessmen. Houses were sited on relatively small lots (80 × 100) within the first subdivision of East Somerville, beginning the town’s dense pattern of residential development. The narrow three-bay house type first appeared in substantial number in East Somerville; the narrow width recognized the confines of the urban lot.

The Greek Revival Style

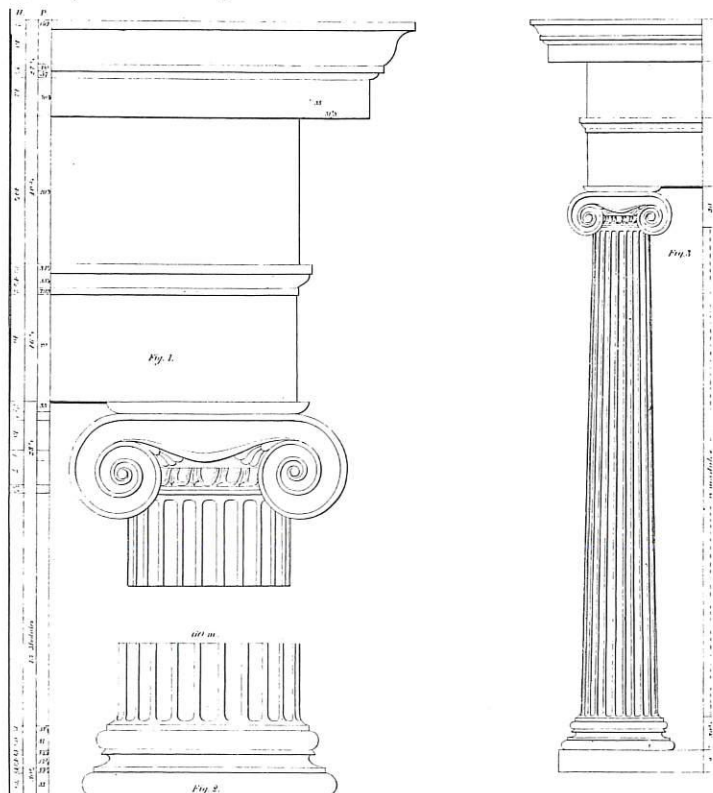
The construction of clapboard-covered Greek Revival houses on speculatively platted lots signified both a new era of residential development and the introduction of a new method of construction. In the 1840s and 1850s, the stud wall, comprised of lightweight, dimensional timbers held together with wire nails, gradually replaced the heavy timber frame of the previous two centuries.

The stud wall and the use of prefabricated parts—from roof trusses to the decorative trim—permitted the rapid construction of blocks of houses. By the time of the Civil War, the “balloon frame” (as it was known) largely replaced the laboriously hewn frame for urban domestic construction, although builders in rural areas continued to use hand-hewn timber frames until the early 1870s. Manuals such as **Homes for the People in Suburb and Country** by Gervase Wheeler (1855) provided builders with construction details for the balloon framing system. The use of builder’s books or manuals was a well-established practice in New England by the time the balloon frame appeared, however. These practical books also illustrated details such as moldings, windows, staircases and columns, and provided plans and facade elevations. The earliest American

Mt. Vernon Street Greek Revival houses, ca. 1843.



Nicolson’s New Carpenter’s Guide: Being a complete Book of Lines for Carpenter, Joiners, Cabinet-Makers, and Workmen in General. John Hay, London, 1860. Nicolson’s was among a number of English books used by American carpenters.





books, such as the seven manuals written between 1798 and 1814 by Asher Benjamin (1771–1845) showed classical architectural details representative of the Federal Style. Later books, such as **The Modern Builder's Guide** (1833) by New York architect Minard Lafever (1798–1854), illustrated plates of Greek Revival facades and details.

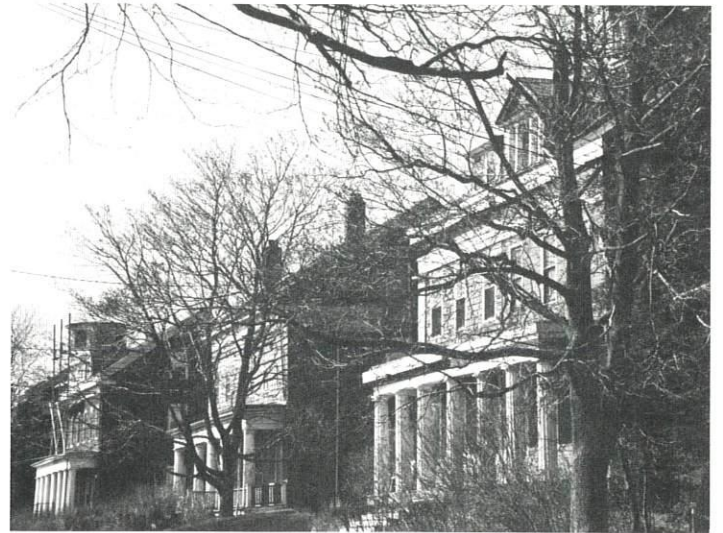
Another early subdivision of double Greek Revival houses survives on Spring Hill off Harvard Street and contrasts to the lot sizes allowed by the developer of the contemporary East Somerville subdivision. Five double Greek Revival houses built ca. 1843 are distinguished by Doric-columned porches; several originally had octagonal cupolas atop the ridgepole of the gable roof. Developer George O. Brastow, assisted by surveyor Alexander Wadsworth, allowed ample room for grounds; some of the lots were 100' × 160'.

Although there is a good record of the appearance of mid-nineteenth century houses in Somerville, there are no documented pre-Civil War shops or stores still extant. Somerville's early trade centers on Winter Hill Road near "The Neck," and along the Cambridge Road (Washington Street in Union Square, were originally composed of undistinguished small frame buildings. One extant Greek Revival building in Union Square, probably built to serve as a combination dwelling and store, indicates the simplicity of mid-nineteenth century commercial buildings.

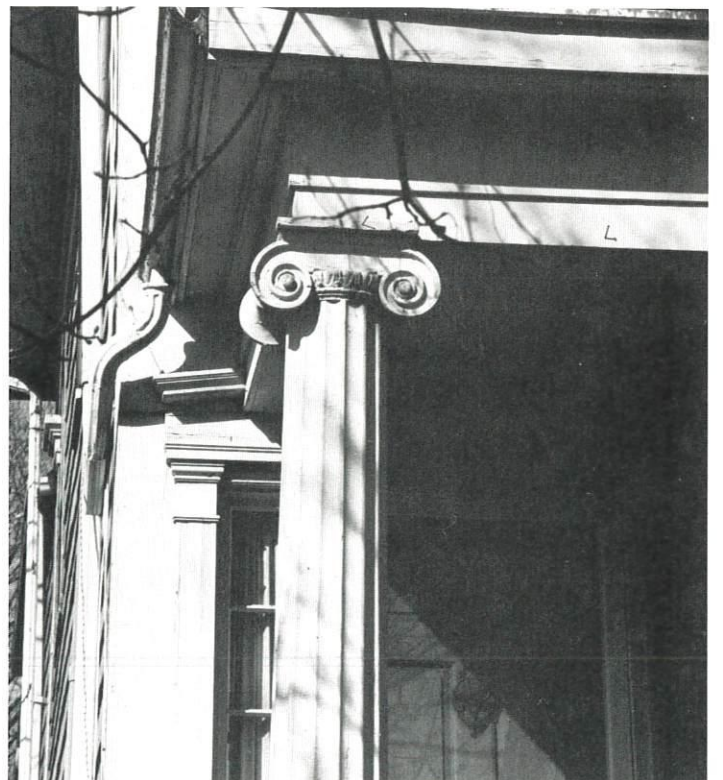
The Greek Revival Style, like all of Somerville's architectural styles which would filter through the housing of various income groups, appeared in Somerville in the form of both costly mansions and inexpensive workers' houses. Both shared the temple form, with a gable roof, and classical ornament based on the Greek and Roman orders. Columns, capitals, friezes and moldings followed classical precedent. On the simplest houses, returns at the eaves and an entrance framed with pilasters and sidelights were the only Greek Revival details.

The Greek Revival Style achieved national prominence during a time of great nationalistic spirit and European travel and discovery. American popular opinion identified with the struggles of the Greeks against the Turks in the great war of 1821–28, and the style was chosen for the design of numerous public and private buildings. Somerville's first high school (and later city hall), constructed in 1852, was of Greek Revival Style, as was the gatehouse of the town's first large factory, the Middlesex Bleachery and Dye Works.

Forster-Sawyer House, 16 Browning Road, ca. 1845. This high-styled Greek Revival house formerly stood near the corner of Broadway and Sycamore Street. It was moved to Browning Road at the turn of the century. Charles Forster was a cabinet-dealer with offices in Charlestown.



Monmouth Street and Harvard Place Greek Revival houses, ca. 1843.





The Gothic Revival Style

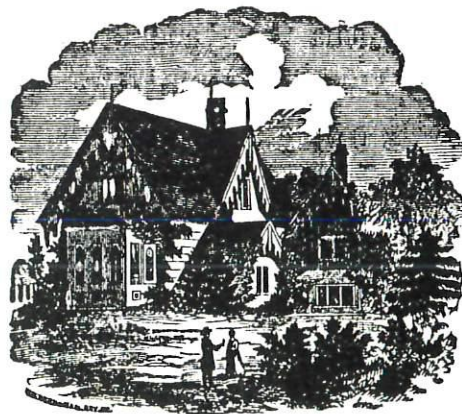
Another residential style achieved some importance in the first twenty years of the new town's existence. Between 1845 and 1860 a generation of new Somerville residents built the picturesque, steeply-roofed cottages associated with the Gothic Revival Style. The Gothic combination of cusped bargeboards and pointed or lancet windows is best represented by a brick dwelling situated on a ledge at 197 Morrison Street, near Davis Square but other earlier, pre-Civil War frame examples are found on Spring Hill. The porches of the Spring Hill examples were carefully designed to take advantage of views of the Millers River, Charlestown and Cambridge, all visible from the sloping site. This small but special group of houses is a good visual record of the period when Somerville was a true suburban destination for individuals desiring a rustic retreat. The Gothic Revival Style and the well-landscaped setting advocated by the mid-nineteenth century books of landscape gardener Andrew Jackson Downing also flourished briefly in other towns in the surrounding area, including Cambridge, Medford, and the Highlands of Roxbury and Newton.

15 Spring Street. ca. 1845. Possibly built by H. P. Osgood, an upholsterer, this gable-roofed house with cusped bargeboards is one of several Gothic Revival houses built on Spring Hill before the Civil War. It should be noted that this and other Spring Hill houses were oriented to views of Cambridge; two south-facing porches are obscured by later buildings.

22 Porter Street, ca. 1855. Originally, the eaves of this Spring Hill house were trimmed with cusped bargeboards, a Gothic Revival feature. Label moldings at the rear windows are intact. This house was sited toward a view of Cambridge, rather than the street. The large landscaped lot is evocative of the original appearance of the site. An early owner, Enoch Emerson, was a carriage manufacturer in Union Square.



**JAMES S. BRAZILLIAN,
Carpenter and Builder,**



BROADWAY, near TEMPLE St. - - - SOMERVILLE, Mass.

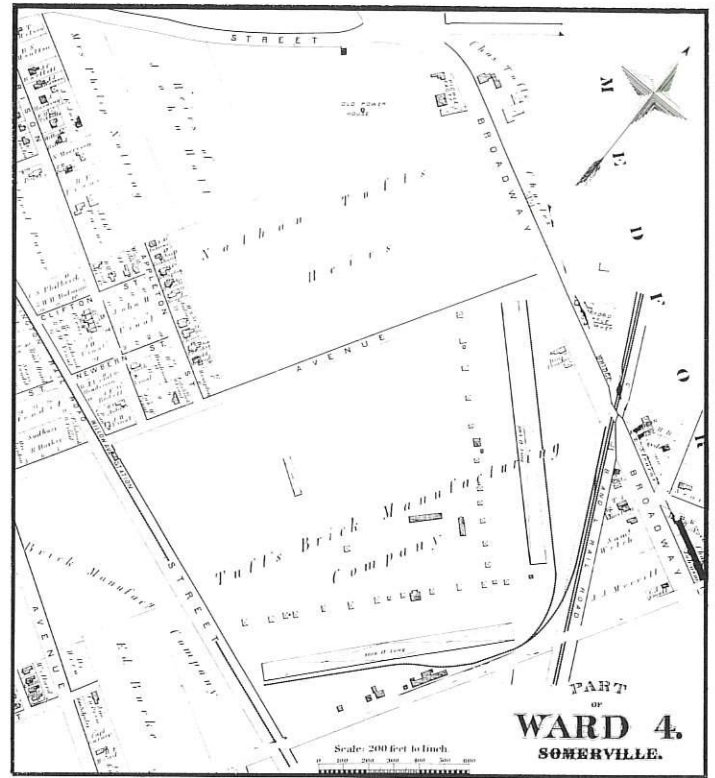
Brickyards and Brickworker's Houses

I have stood on Prospect Hill and counted 30 kilns of brick burning at one time in the fall in the direction over towards Cambridge, on Mr. Hawkins land, which was largely a bed of clay . . . (brickmakers) used to not only dig up the land they owned but they dug great pits of 12 or 14 feet in the street, until the town had to protest and drive them off . . . they were so eager to get to the clay that they barely left enough roadway to travel on. . . .

Quincy A. Vinal, *Somerville Journal*, January 25, 1890

Brickmaking was a major Somerville industry in the mid-nineteenth century, and some of the small houses built near the brickyards for yard workers survive today. One notable collection is situated on Clyde and Murdock Streets, near the former site of the yards of the Tufts Brick Manufacturing Company. A high brick foundation, three-bay central entry facade, and simple Greek Revival details are characteristic of these structures. Comparable buildings are found in the former brick-making areas of Northwest Cambridge. Brickworkers houses are also found at Ten Hills near Temple Street, near the yards which lined the Medford Turnpike (Mystic Avenue), and in Ward II.

Despite the large-scale production of brick in Somerville, brick was never a popular building material for residential construction in the town. The New England woodbuilding tradition flourished in Somerville, with brick generally reserved for the construction of chimneys and foundations, and for large apartment houses and commercial and public buildings.



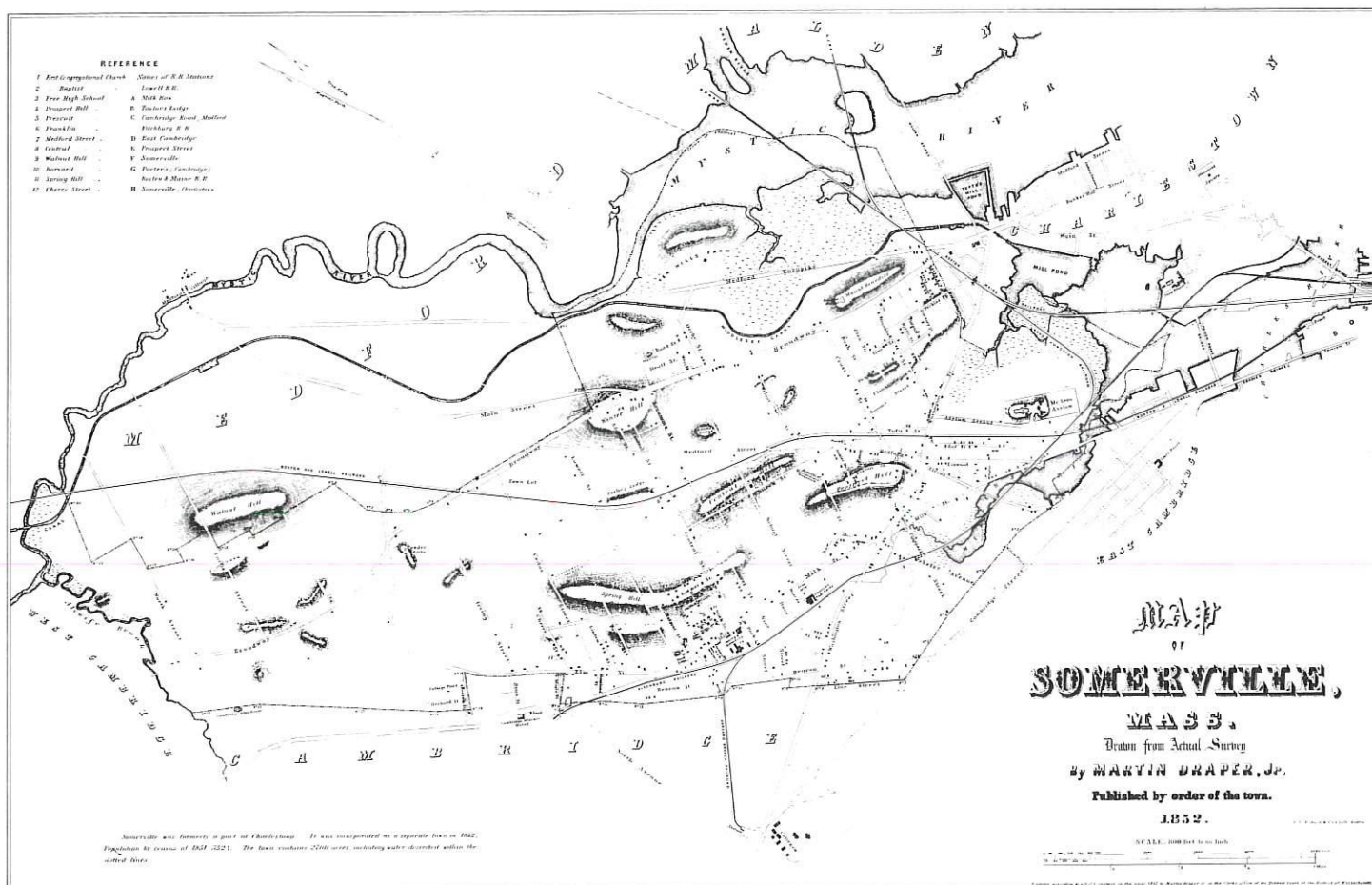
Tufts Brick Manufacturing Company Yards, 1874. Brickworker's houses of the Clyde and Murdock Street area were in close proximity to the large yards of the Tufts firm.

25 Clyde Street, ca. 1850. Good example of a mid-nineteenth century brickworker's house in the Clyde-Murdock Street area.



27 Fremont Avenue, 1850. Brickworker's house near Wyatt's Pit in Ward II.





Map of the Town of Somerville, 1852. Martin Draper.

Industry diversified greatly between 1850 and 1870. Food processing shops, packing houses, glassworks, ice houses and foundries were built, primarily in the low, marshy areas south of Milk Row near Union Square. Somerville's land use pattern was determined at mid-century as industry claimed and filled swamp land adjacent to railroad corridors at the southern, western, and northern edges; the higher, well-drained elevations were usually chosen for the construction of houses. Brickyard production declined from 27,576,000 bricks in 1845 to 17,000,000 in 1855, and yards were abandoned and eventually surveyed for extensive tracts of streets and houselots. Financial panics were frequent between 1850 and the early 1880s, and many of the new tracts remained bare for years after being surveyed. Most striking about the first brickyard tracts (and a few farmland tracts) was their large scale. Hundreds of lots were created across tracts still isolated from town services and improved roads.

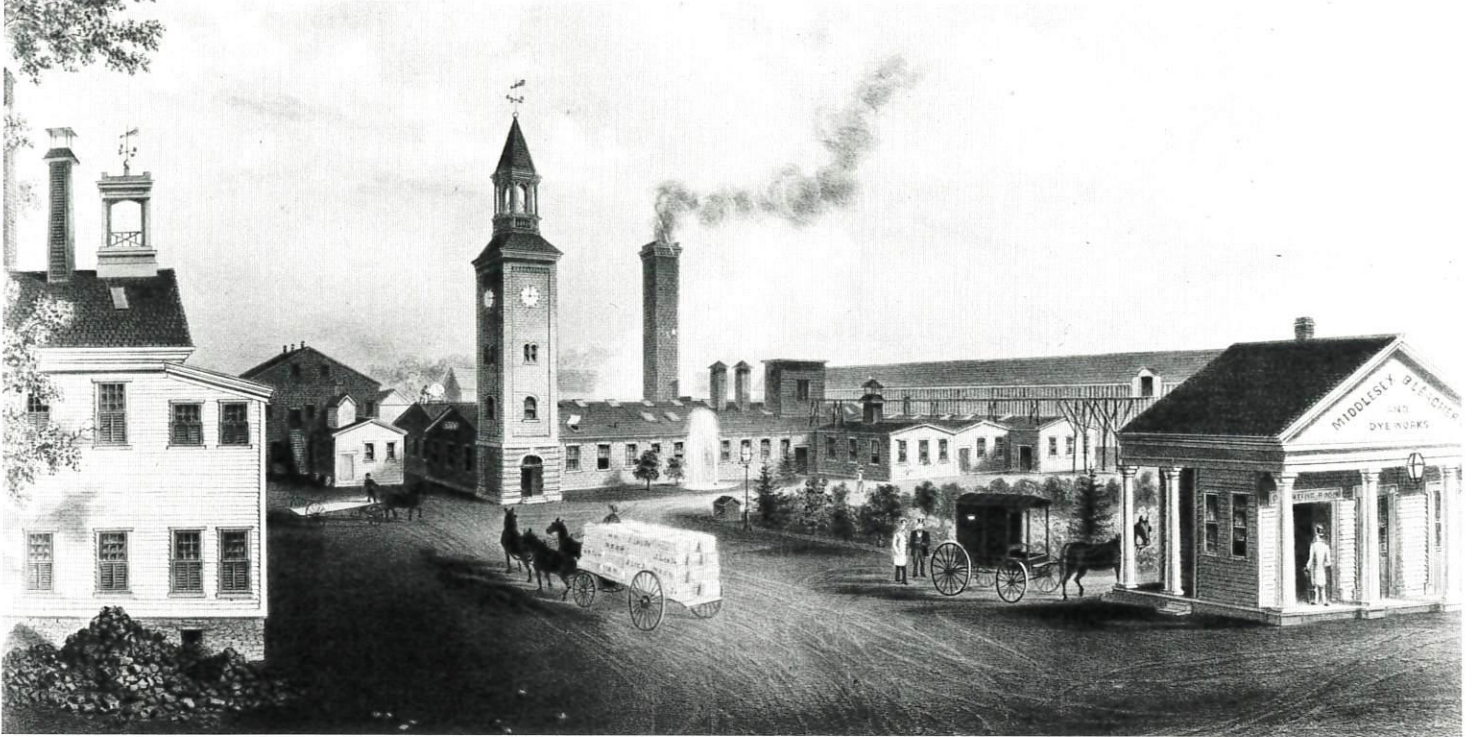
Beginning in the 1850s, Somerville's new town government struggled with the acceptance of new roads and streets, and the cost of constructing sewers, drains, and bridges. The 1859 Town Reports called attention to land speculators' practice of opening streets and courts "with exclusive reference to (their) sale, with no regard whatever to the general improvement of the town." The town officers urged speculators to lay out

streets which were well-graded and acceptable to the town surveyor.

Several far-sighted but unrealized schemes for street layout were discussed by town officers, including the construction of a central avenue, beginning in Charlestown, crossing Washington Street, and connecting to Church Street, the original section on Highland Avenue. Such an avenue, they argued, "would afford innumerable delightful sites for private residences and open the center of the town to a direct communication with the city of Boston, leading also to an increase in population and wealth."

Between 1850 and 1860, Somerville's population more than doubled, growing from 3524 to 8025. Most of the residents were of English, Irish, Scottish, or French Canadian ancestry, and many had migrated from Maine, Vermont, or New Hampshire. Somerville's recorded Black population was small, 20 persons in 1850 and 28 in 1860.

As noted, residential development in the 1850s and 1860s was stimulated by the introduction of regularly-scheduled transportation. Steam rail service provided by the Boston and Maine and Fitchburg Railroads was improved, and in 1858 two horse car lines were established, linking Winter Hill and West Somerville to Charlestown and Boston. In 1864, a horse-powered street railway was installed from Union Square to Boston,

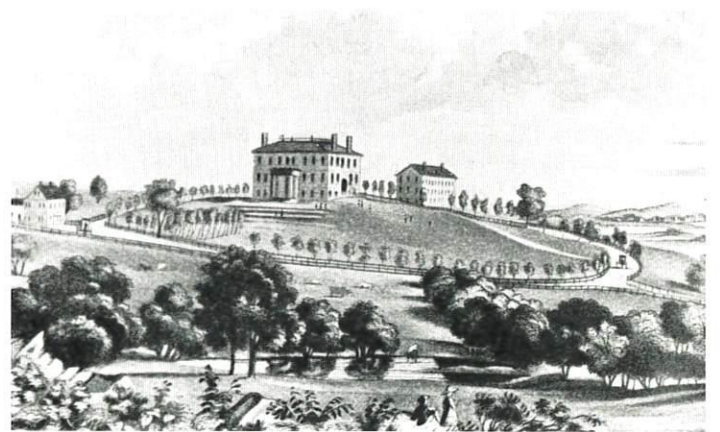


Milk Row, later Middlesex Dye and Bleachery, Somerville Avenue, 1864 engraving.

and in 1871 it was extended further to West Somerville. Residential areas around Union Square and sections of East Somerville, Asylum Hill, Spring Hill, and Winter Hill consequently continued to expand. West Somerville was “colonized” primarily as a site for workingmen’s homes only after the tracks of the horsecar lines (1871) and Arlington Branch Railroad (1870–1) reached the area around Davis Square.

In 1853 the first building at Tufts College was dedicated. Tufts College was situated on Walnut Tree Hill (later known as College Hill), on a tract which straddled Medford and Somerville. Although most of the college buildings are located in Medford, an early block of faculty housing dating from the 1850s and 1860s, known as “Professor’s Row” was built on former Somerville farmland.

While the town made urban improvements in the eastern section, farmers, particularly market gardeners and fruit raisers, carried on profitable businesses in the western section. Tufts College was surrounded with the fields of the Teele, Curtis, Dow, and Russell farms. In 1865 there were twenty-two farms in operation, most of them small-scale. Farming declined sharply in the decades after the Civil War, and West Somerville farmers often turned to land speculation.



Tufts and Walnut Hill, ca. 1860.

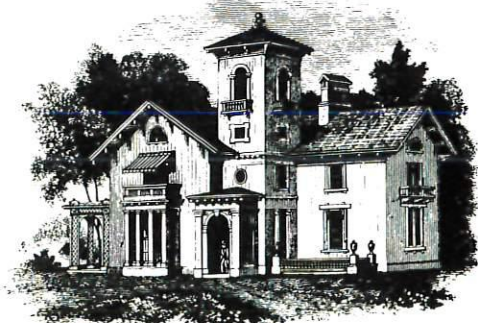


Norris-Gulliver House, Broadway and Adams Street, ca. 1870. Lemuel Gulliver's Italian Villa was situated on a knoll above Broadway. The fine details of this house indicate the craftsmanship which characterized many of Somerville' nineteenth century houses. Razed 1939.

I wish to inspire all persons with a love of beautiful forms, and a desire to assemble them around their daily walks of life. . .

Andrew Jackson Downing, *Cottage Residences*, 1842.

A Villa in the Italian Style, Bracketed. Andrew Jackson Downing's *Cottage Residences* was one of the most widely used books in American architectural literature, and provided plans for the detached house in a non-urban setting.



DESIGN VI.

A VILLA IN THE ITALIAN STYLE, BRACKETED.

Fig. 48.

The Italianate Style

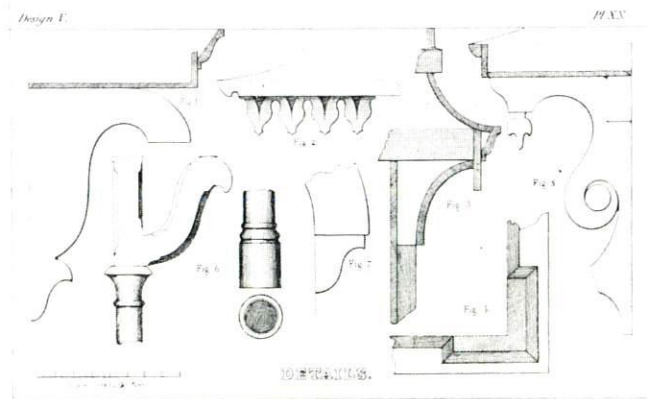
Somerville's hills were well-suited for the construction of "Gothic" cottages as well as "Italian" villas. Andrew Jackson Downing's publications, such as *Cottage Residences* (1842), and a number of plan books provided architects and builders with plans and elevations for the asymmetrical, square-towered house modelled on the country residences of rural Italy. Round-arched windows and bracketed eaves and window hoods were characteristic trim details. In 1850 Alexander Foster, a lumber dealer, was among the first to build an Italian Villa on the southern slope of Spring Hill. Broad eaves with heavy brackets capped many of the other square or L-plan Italianate houses of Somerville. Versions of the Italianate Style were popular between ca. 1855 and 1875, and merged well with the Second Empire or "Mansard" Style popular after the Civil War.

Simpler Italianate houses with cross-gable roofs and round windows (or oculi) are still found in various locations throughout the city, particularly along early routes or former range-ways. At least one West Somerville farmer built an Italianate house with a prominent Palladian window in the central gable.

By 1865 the population reached 9353; Irish immigrants numbered 1729, or about 18 percent of the population, and many of the new immigrants were employed at the brickyards, bleachery, or at American Tube Works. Also represented in the population were 207 natives of England, 49 Scotch, 41 German, 1 Italian, 2 Portuguese, 8 French, and 12 persons born in Sweden or Norway. The American-born population included a large number of natives of New Hampshire, Vermont, and Maine.

The post-Civil war demand for workers' housing was met by the construction of both rowhouses and single family dwellings, most built speculatively for rent to laborers. Newspapers urged potential investors to build inexpensive houses for rent or sale. Workers' houses, like their more costly counterparts, evidenced an Italianate architectural vocabulary. The inexpensive house of the period 1860-1880 was usually one and one half or two and one half stories with a gable roof and sidehall plan, and projecting one or two-story oriel or bay. Paired or single brackets at eaves and bracketed door hoods were also common. The worker's house of the period was often closely built in a uniform row or on a "court" laid out perpendicular to the street. Although most of these buildings were produced cheaply and with stock ornament, some evidence interesting craftsmanship.

Sloan's Constructive Architecture, A Guide to the Practical Builder and Mechanic, 1866.





Alexander Foster House, 45 Laurel Street, ca. 1860. The Foster House is an excellent example of the Italianate Style; of note is the square bracketed tower and an ornate porch.



Charles Williams House, 108 Cross, ca. 1848. One of the best conserved early Italianate houses in Somerville. The Palladian window motif and glazed transom and sidelights of the projecting pavilion are features of the original design. Williams was a Boston hat dealer.

105 Prospect Avenue, ca. 1870. Ward II Italianate house has round-arched windows in the gable end.



Ellsworth Street, ca. 1870. The three-bay "urban" Italianate workers house had most decorative details confined to the front facade; the picturesque silhouette of the Italian Villa was sacrificed to the narrow lot.





61, 63 Columbus Avenue, ca. 1870.

Mansard Style

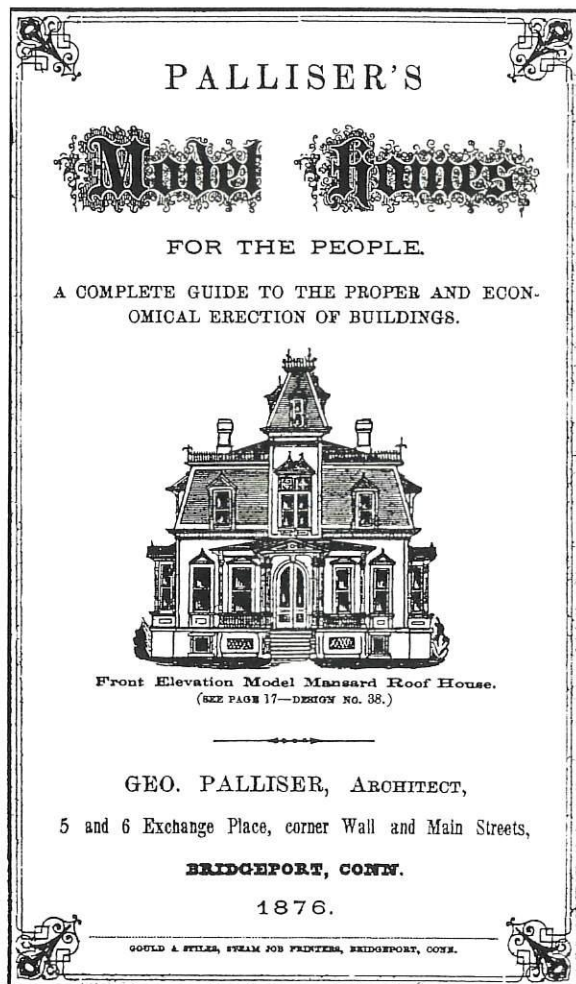
America's mid-century buildings were influenced by the rebuilding of the Paris Louvre between 1852 and 1857. In Somerville, French Second Empire, or in the vernacular, "Mansard," houses were translated into workers' rows and cottages as well as grand houses and apartment rows. Brick, previously used infrequently, also entered the architectural picture at this time. Many substantial Second Empire houses of frame construction were built throughout Somerville between 1865 and 1880. Broadway, on Winter Hill, was the site of at least twelve elaborate mansard-roofed houses built by men such as Charlestown spice manufacturer John R. Poor. The double-pitched hip roof, or "mansard" is the hallmark of the style.

In the 1870s mansard-roofed brick apartment rows were built for commuters on Prospect, Spring and Winter Hills, and particularly in East Somerville. The best examples have patterned slate roofs, carved stone lintels, and bracketed door hoods. One-and-a-half story mansard cottages were also built throughout the city after the Civil War, often as inexpensive workers' homes. Some are well-crafted, with slate-covered roofs and elaborate dormers and window enframements.

By 1870, Somerville's population reached 14,685. The village-like character of formerly isolated sections of the town began to dissolve as new streets connected all sections, particularly those near West Somerville. Gas was introduced into the town in 1867, and a public water supply in 1868.

Mystic Water Works, Alewife Brook Parkway, 1864–65. The Mystic Water Works was Somerville's first public water supply. The system was originally built and owned by the City of Charlestown, as a water supply from Mystic Lake. In 1868, the State Legislature authorized Somerville to connect its lines with those of Charlestown. The availability of this water supply, together with a later (1889–90) high service plant, made Somerville's tremendous late nineteenth century growth possible.





Model Homes for the People, 1876. George Palliser. Between 1876 and 1908, Bridgeport, Connecticut architects George and Charles Palliser made customized, mail-order plans available to builders. Among their popular designs were many ornate Italianate and Mansard homes, many with the pointed arches of the Victorian Gothic style. Somerville architects and builders were able to use Palliser's and other plan books of the late nineteenth century in fashioning their architecturally-eclectic houses.

201 School Street, ca. 1870. One of several fine mansard houses on Winter Hill, this School Street example has a distinctive projecting bay with four rectangular, pedimented windows. Wooden blocks or quoins at the corners emulate stone.

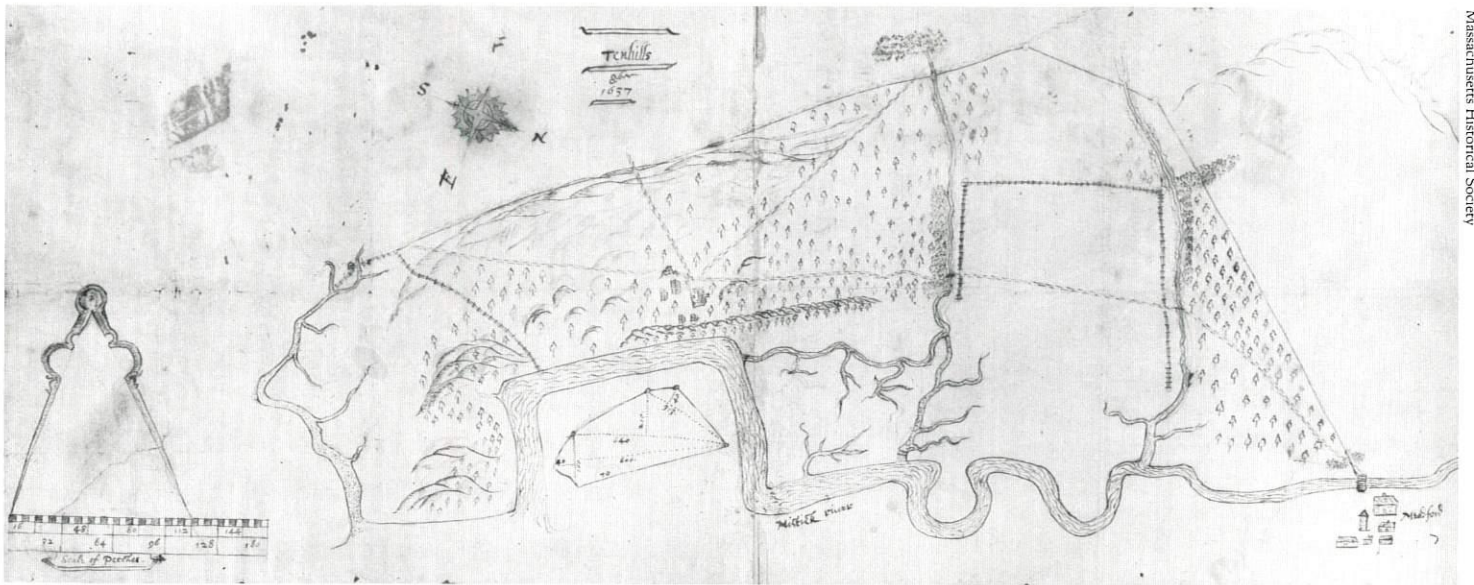


439-441 Somerville Avenue, ca. 1880. This mansard-roofed apartment row included stores and shops at the ground level, a common practice well into the twentieth century.



Charlestown Beyond the Neck and its Buildings

This chapter provides an overview of the development of Somerville—between settlement in the seventeenth century and the early twentieth century—as understood through its architecture. A discussion of architectural styles and building types accompanies the historical narrative. Historical photographs assist in understanding the chronology of styles and building types, particularly because many of Somerville's important early buildings have been razed. In this chapter, the city is discussed as a whole. In Chapter Three, ten distinct areas of the city are analyzed in more detail. (The Index is useful for locating a particular building by address; the Glossary provides definitions of unfamiliar architectural terms.)



Map of Ten Hills Farm, 1637. One of the earliest maps made in New England described the land of Governor John Winthrop in present-day Somerville and Medford, along the Mystic River.

The Land



Marsh grass at Mystic River, Shore Drive.

. . . very beautiful in open lands, mixed with goodly woods, and again open plains, in some places 500 acres, some places more, some less, not much troublesome for to clear for the plough to go in; no place barren but on the tops of the hills. The grass and weeds grow up to a man's face in the lowlands, and by fresh river abundance of grass and large meadows, without any tree or shrub to hinder the sycthe. . . .

Charlestown surveyor Thomas Greaves, 1629

. . . Somerville is perhaps more finely situated for pleasant and healthy residence than any city in the neighborhood of Boston. It contains more high ground than any other suburb. . . .

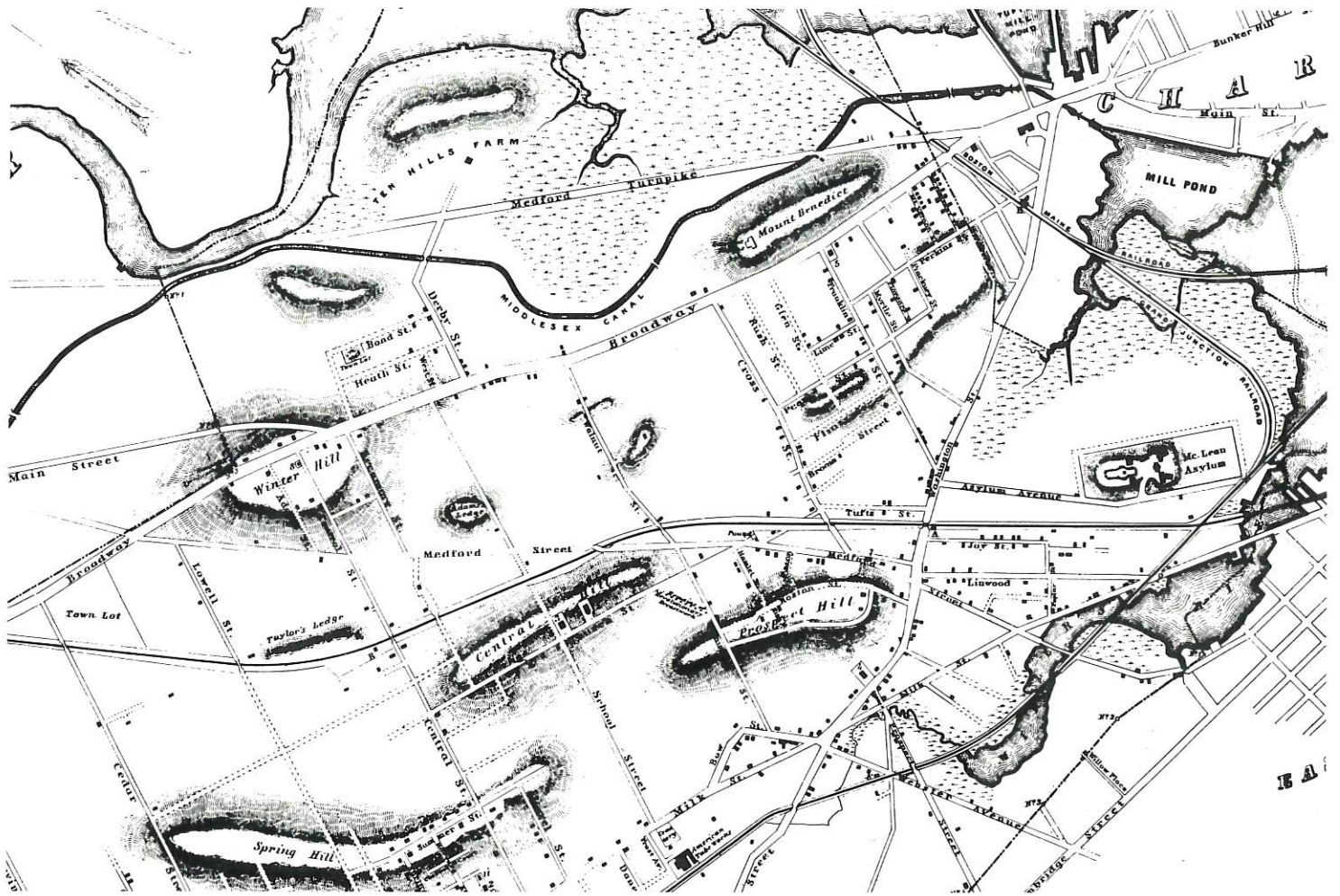
Boston Post, 1882

Somerville's 2800 acres (approximately 4.1 square miles) are located in one of the oldest settled areas of Massachusetts, two miles from Boston. A part of the geological region known as the Boston Basin, Somerville's topography is largely the result of the action of glacial ice sheets and floods 14,000 to 15,000 years ago.

Somerville is situated on bedrock formed during the Pre-Cambrian period about 600 million years ago. The earliest geological maps made of the Somerville area (by S. L. and J. F. Dana) in 1818 identified the bedrock as argillite. Outcroppings of this blue or brownish gray bedrock (also known as Cambridge Mudstone or Somerville Slate) are evident throughout the city. In addition to many small ledges visible in backyards and along major routes such as Broadway and Somerville Avenue, there are two major outcroppings at Mystic Street near the Mystic Housing Project, and at Quarry Hill, the site of the Powderhouse. Somerville has thousands of dikes, or igneous intrusions, which cut across surrounding rocks. These dikes were once molten lava flows, and range in width from fractions of an inch to many feet. Quarry Hill is on a 500-foot wide dike of diabase which extends three miles from the Middlesex Fells into Somerville. Another outcropping of this diabase exists at the prominent ledge on Granite Street. In the 1890s, the Granite Street quarry also was a source of specimens of prehnite, a rare mineral. Gold and silver were found in minute quantities in some veins of Somerville dikes. A "Gold Mine" was established at Willow Avenue and Fosket Street for a brief time in the late nineteenth century.

Medford diabase outcropping, Quarry Hill, Nathan Tufts Park.





Drumlins and the Miller's River. From the 1852 Draper Map of Somerville.

A series of smooth hills, or drumlins, of ground moraine or subglacial till are situated along the prominent ridge between Quarry Hill and the Charlestown peninsula. Formed by the movement of glacial ice or as a result of melting waters from the Wisconsin glacier, they mark the division between the watersheds of the Mystic River at the north and the Charles River at the south. The highest is 140' Walnut Tree or College Hill, bordering Medford. Other prominent drumlins are 135' Winter Hill, 105' Central Hill and 130' Spring Hill. The smaller drumlins of Winthrop Hill, Cobble Hill, and Mount Benedict were cut down and used to fill marshes and the Miller's River in 1874. Prospect Hill, now 115 feet, was cut down from an elevation of approximately 125 feet and also used to fill the Miller's River in Ward II.

Somerville's soils range from well-drained sandy loam in the western upland section to dense claylands in the Mystic River watershed (Ten Hills) and near the former swamps of Ward II. Ward II is part of the Cambridge plain, a great flood plain of glacial age which fills the lower valley of the Charles River from Watertown to the Back Bay.

Somerville's Boston Blue clay deposits were formed 14,000-15,000 years ago and contain fossilized shells of the salt-water *Leda* clam. The extensive beds were formed with the retreat of the glacier, when 25 feet of water covered the Boston Basin. When the waters receded, the claylands rebounded with forest, which later turned into a layer of peat. When Somerville was settled by white men, the clay was exposed only near streams or tidal creeks. It was covered by a thin layer of soil, and was easily excavated. Settlers found marshes at the eastern, southern, and northern edges of the Charlestown main-

land, and meadowland and grassland interrupted by marsh and western edge bordered by Alewife Brook. The entire tract between the Neck and Alewife Brook was largely unforested.

Two rivers border Somerville, and create the narrow neck between Charlestown and Somerville. The Mystic River at the north forms a portion of the city's northern boundary with Medford. The Miller's River, a tributary of the Charles, formerly cut a deep inlet and drained Somerville's marshes at the south. The first settlers found at least seven streams, most originating from the Mystic River.

Topography and natural resources such as clay deposits and outcroppings of bedrock have determined the location of industries and residential districts. The majority of manufacturing and processing establishments located in the lowlands near the Mystic River, and the residential sections adhered to the slopes of the hills.

Eighteenth and early nineteenth century dairy farms are documented on Prospect, Winter, and Spring Hills, and in West Somerville near Alewife Brook. The upland soil of West Somerville was well-suited for grazing, and later in the nineteenth century, for market gardening. In Ward II, Ten Hills, and the Powderhouse area, glacial clay deposits were extensively excavated for the manufacture of bricks and pottery. Beginning in the seventeenth century, outcroppings of bedrock were quarried for foundation stone, fenceposts, and headstones. Somerville stone was used for the next two centuries for walls and foundations, and in a few cases, for the construction of buildings. A stone-crushing industry developed in the late nineteenth century to supply gravel for road-building.

Large-scale filling and the subsequent construction of build-

**Quarrymen!
Contractors!**

The well-known quarry of Somerville blue-stone, situated off Mystic Avenue, near Temple Street, for many years past operated by Messrs. McCarthy & Burtinier, is for rent. The ledge has been worked for fifty years and is inexhaustible. It has a good face-wall from fifty to one hundred feet high. Besides the bluestone for building purposes, there are quantities of hard rock suitable for roads. Only responsible parties need apply.

ELLSWORTH FISKE,
41 Heath Street, - - - Somerville, -
my13-3t

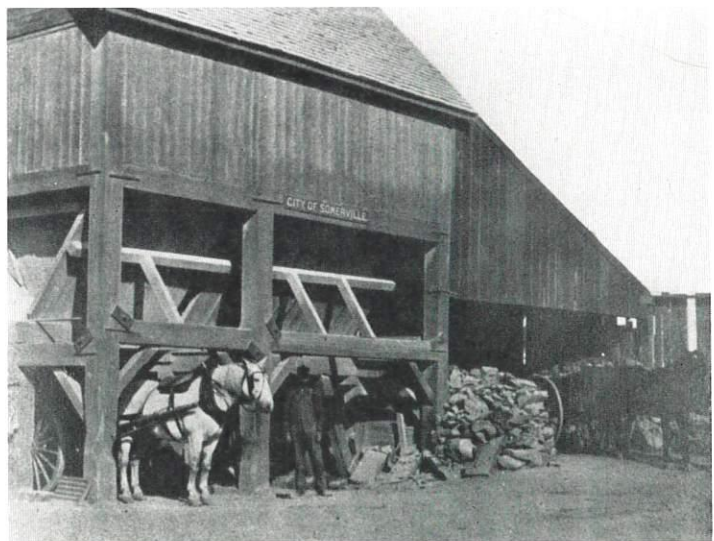
ings have changed this early nineteenth century land use pattern. In the 1840s, farmers sold some of their pasture land to be stripped for brickyards. Later, with the decline of the brick industry, this land was filled and used for building lots. Similarly marshes in the Ward II and Ten Hills areas were filled, often for the construction of tenements. It is not surprising that today residents of the former "Polly Swamp" or the Tufts Brick Manufacturing yards near Kidder Avenue are plagued by wet cellars and a variety of drainage problems.

As will be noted throughout this book, brickyards had a dramatic effect on the landscape of the town and later, the city. In 1871 the Report of the Committee on Highways noted the impact of clay pits on the appearance of the town, and compared the value of brickyard land versus land used for building purposes:

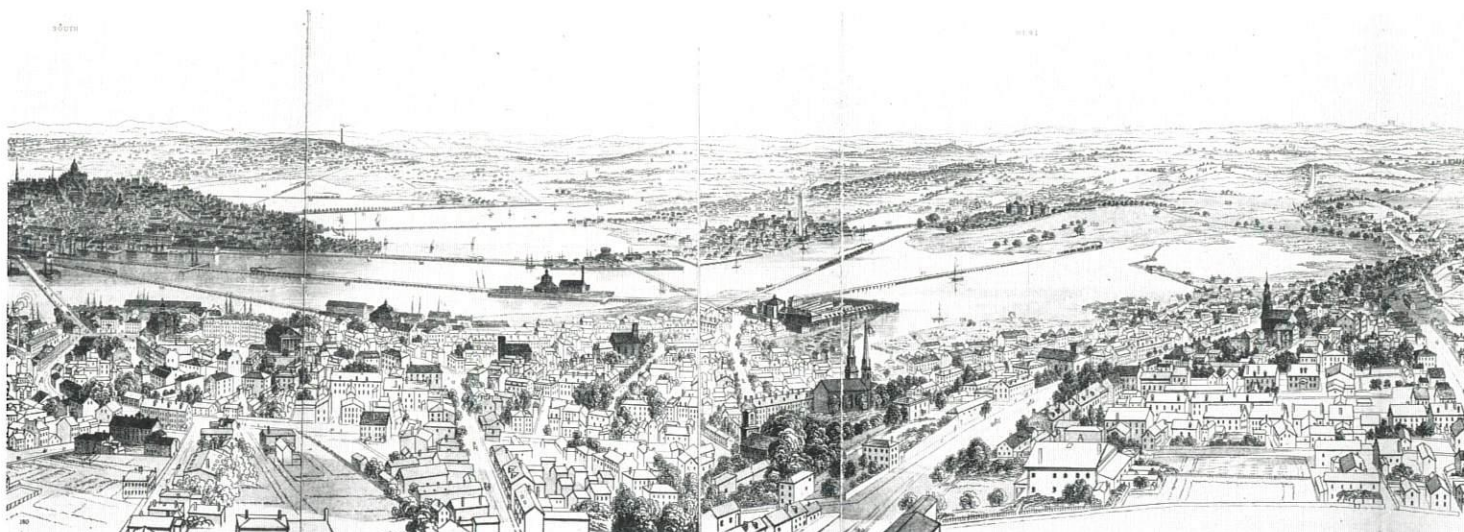
. . . the existence of large clay beds in the soil of Somerville has induced brickmakers to dig up some of the finest lands in the town, and after using the clay in the manufacture of brick, which are drawn to market over our streets to their great injury, these lands are left in a shapeless and uninviting condition, paying but small tax compared with what they would have paid had they remained in their natural condition. An acre of land with a bed of clay averaging 8' deep over its entire surface is valued at \$6,000 for making brick. By laying Highland Avenue through clayland suitable for building first class residences, these lands are worth \$8,000-\$10,000 per acre...



City Ledge, Holland Avenue, ca. 1898.



City Stone Crusher, ca. 1898.



Panorama from Bunker Hill and Charlestown, ca. 1850. Engraved view by James Smillie, Boston. Cobble Hill, Spring Hill, Winter Hill, Prospect Hill, and the Miller's River are shown in this early engraving. The Lowell, Fitchburg, and Maine Railroads are also visible. Somerville appears at the upper-central portion of the engraving.

Aerial View, 1925. Brickyards and the Mystic River marshes were still a major part of the landscape when this aerial view was made.





Munroe Street, Prospect Hill. Named for Edwin Munroe, a grain merchant and early resident of Prospect Hill.

Place Names

Hills and natural features dominated the nomenclature of places in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Winter Hill appears on eighteenth century maps and land records, and it was one of few specific locations mentioned in nineteenth century Charlestown directories. Residents of peninsular Charlestown assigned few place names to the mainland and deeds and directories usually refer to the area as only “without the Peninsula”, “Beyond the Neck” or “Outside the Neck”. A number of popular nineteenth century place names such as “Strawberry Hill” (Ward II) and “Wildcat Hill” (West Somerville) are no longer used, but many Somerville land features and locales are described by names which originated in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. Street names also commemorate early settlers (Adams, Mallet, Winthrop, Russell, or Derby) trees (Willow, Cedar, Elm) and particularly the nineteenth century businessmen, town officials and land speculators who often wore all three hats. Brastow, Simpson, Tower, Holland, Stickney, Gilman, Dimick and Vinal are named for these individuals, although some of those with the greatest impact on the city’s development notably mayor and realtor Z.E. Cliff and businessman Ira Hill are missing. Lost natural features and old routes are still evident in street names: Granite Street was the road leading to the slate quarry of Osgood B. Dane, and Canal Road at Ten Hills abutted a portion of the Middlesex Canal.

Lost Street Names in Somerville. Street names were frequently changed as the city expanded within its borders. Often, two streets at opposite ends of the city shared the same name, and this is still the case in some instances (Summit Street, Summit Avenue). Old directories and maps reveal that many street names have been changed or abandoned as land use changed. Glass House Court, for example, housed many workers at the Union Glass Company but the site has been completely razed. Asylum Avenue, once the tree-lined lane to the McLean’s Asylum, is indistinguishable since an industrial park was developed on the site. Lost names include:

- Asylum Avenue, from Washington to Cobble Hill and McLean’s Asylum Distillhouse, from Miller’s River to the Cambridge Line
- Fruit Street, from Broadway to Medford (now Dartmouth)
- Glass House Court, near Webster Avenue
- Jenny Lind Avenue, from Medford to Vernon (now Glenwood Rd.)
- New Street, from Beacon to Park Street
- New Walnut, from Broadway opposite Walnut Street
- Records Place, from 304 Broadway
- Shawmut, from Washington to Medford Street
- Tiger Court, from 101 Beacon, between Calvin and Washington
- Tube Works Court, from 422 Somerville Avenue





Map of Place Names and Natural Features. This composite map shows the succession of place names for a variety of locations in Somerville. Natural features shown on the map were present at settlement, but may have subsequently been removed.

Annexation and Boundary Changes

Most of Somerville lies between two and three miles of Boston City Hall. Annexation to Boston was debated in the 1860s and 1870s. Supporters of annexation argued that the interests of Somerville were more closely allied to Suffolk County than Middlesex, and that the majority of Somerville residents were employed in Boston. As Somerville's population grew and its municipal expenditures increased from \$593,349 in 1873 to \$1,571,854 in 1876, the prospect of annexation became increasingly attractive to some city officials. In 1879, opponents of annexation argued that Somerville was a "snug little city" whose residents were "abundantly able to manage it". Although Somerville would remain a separate city, the debate was re-kindled several times. There was some precedent for annexation. At the Cambridge line, several small tracts were set off to Cambridge from Charlestown in 1802, 1818, and 1820. One tract was set off from Somerville to Cambridge in 1856. Boundary disputes with Cambridge and Medford resulted in the irregular boundary line evident on contemporary maps.

Boundary Marker 19, Boston Avenue.



Charlestown Beyond the Neck: 1630–1800



Map of Charlestown, William Wood, 1634. Somerville is part of a tract granted to the Massachusetts Bay Company by the Plymouth Council in 1628. The first white settlers found only a small number of Indians at Mishawum, the Indian name for Charlestown; the banks of the Mystic River and mouth of the Charles were their fishing and gathering places. The Indians were Pawtuckets, ruled by Nanepashemit, or New Moon, and later by the Squaw Sachem. The Squaw formally deeded Charlestown, Cambridge, and Watertown in 1639.

... on the North Side of the Charles River is Charlestown, which is another neck of land, on whose North side runs the Misticke River. This towne for all things may be well parale'd with her neighbor, Boston, being in the same fashion with her bare necke and constrained to borrow conveniences from the Maine, and to provide for themselves farmes in the cuntry for there better subsistence . . .

William Wood, New England Prospect, 1634

Settler William Wood's description of the peninsular town of Charlestown and its outlying territory on the mainland (or Maine) indicates the dependence of the early settlement on the agricultural hinterland, including the lands now in Somerville. Somerville was originally among the mainland holdings of Charlestown, settled in 1629. Malden, Woburn, Stoneham, Burlington, and parts of Medford, Cambridge, West Cambridge (Arlington) and Reading were included in the original tract. Woburn was created in 1642, and in 1842, Somerville was the last to be set off as an independent town. The early Charlestown settlement of 1600 persons was concentrated on the 1¼ mile long, oval peninsula whose chief land forms were Breed, Bunker, and Town Hills. The first inhabitants of Charlestown were occupied with division and fencing of the mainland. In the first decades of settlement, the land division system followed the open field system of medieval England, with house lots granted in town (the Charlestown peninsula) and grazing and plowing land granted on the mainland and elsewhere on the peninsula. Large tracts on the mainland were held in common for grazing. In 1629, the town voted that each inhabitant "should have two acres for planting ground and to fence in common;" in 1630, it was voted that "each dwelling within the neck should have two acres of land for a house plots, and two acres for every male that is able to plant." Over the next decades, land on the mainland was divided into parcels of ten to two hundred acres. In 1631, however, Governor John Winthrop was granted 600 acres of land in present-day Medford and Somerville. Winthrop's Ten Hills farm, as he called it, was the largest tract granted by Charlestown to an individual.

In 1637 the land between the Winter Hill Road (Broadway) and Charlestown Lane (Somerville Avenue) was divided into rights of pasturage, the land being reserved as common land for "milk cows, working cattle, goats, and calves." Until grants of land were made to individuals in 1681, the mainland area beyond the narrow neck of Charlestown, including this cow commons, was largely uninhabited. John Wolrich, an Indian trader and Representative to the General Court in 1634, who located near Washington and Dane Streets in the vicinity of "Strawberry Hill", and Massachusetts Bay Colony Governor John Winthrop at Ten Hills were among the few original set-

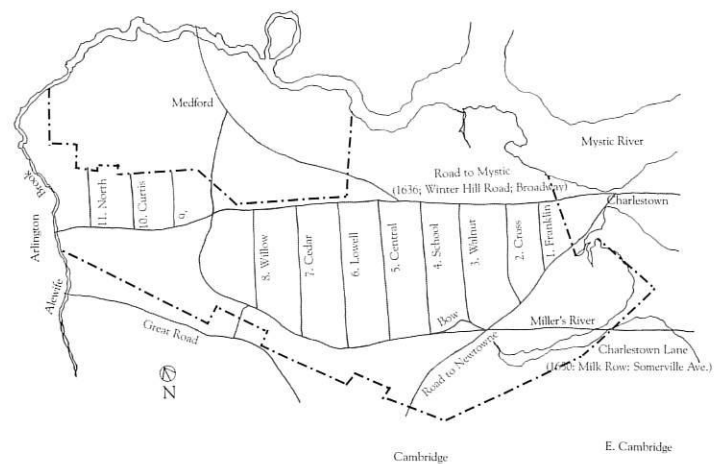
tlers. Two roads, The Road to Newtowne (Washington Street) and the Winter Hill Road (Broadway) were laid out in the 1630s by surveyor Thomas Greaves and radiated from the peninsular Charlestown settlement near City Square through Somerville, skirting the marshes. The Road to Newtowne ran to Harvard Square; the Winter Hill Road originally ran to Medford, later connecting to Menotomy, or Arlington. Seventeenth century Charlestown Lane (Milk Row, and later Somerville Avenue) extended from Washington Street to Medford via the route of present-day Bow Street, Elm Street and College Avenue. Main Street, from Winter Hill, went to Medford over Craddock's Bridge, the first bridge over the Mystic between Medford and the Charlestown mainland. Two ferries connected Charlestown with Boston. The first was established near the Charles River Bridge in 1631, another in 1640 near the Malden Bridge.

An estimated ten to fifteen houses were constructed within the borders of present-day Somerville in the first seventy years of settlement, most of them situated along or near Charlestown Neck on Broadway, Washington Street, or Somerville Avenue. Although there is no record of the appearance of these early dwellings, it is likely that they followed medieval English precedent, and were constructed of hand-hewn timber frames and sided with weatherboards or "clapboards." A two-story, two-room, central-chimney house plan was the standard of the Massachusetts Bay Colony.

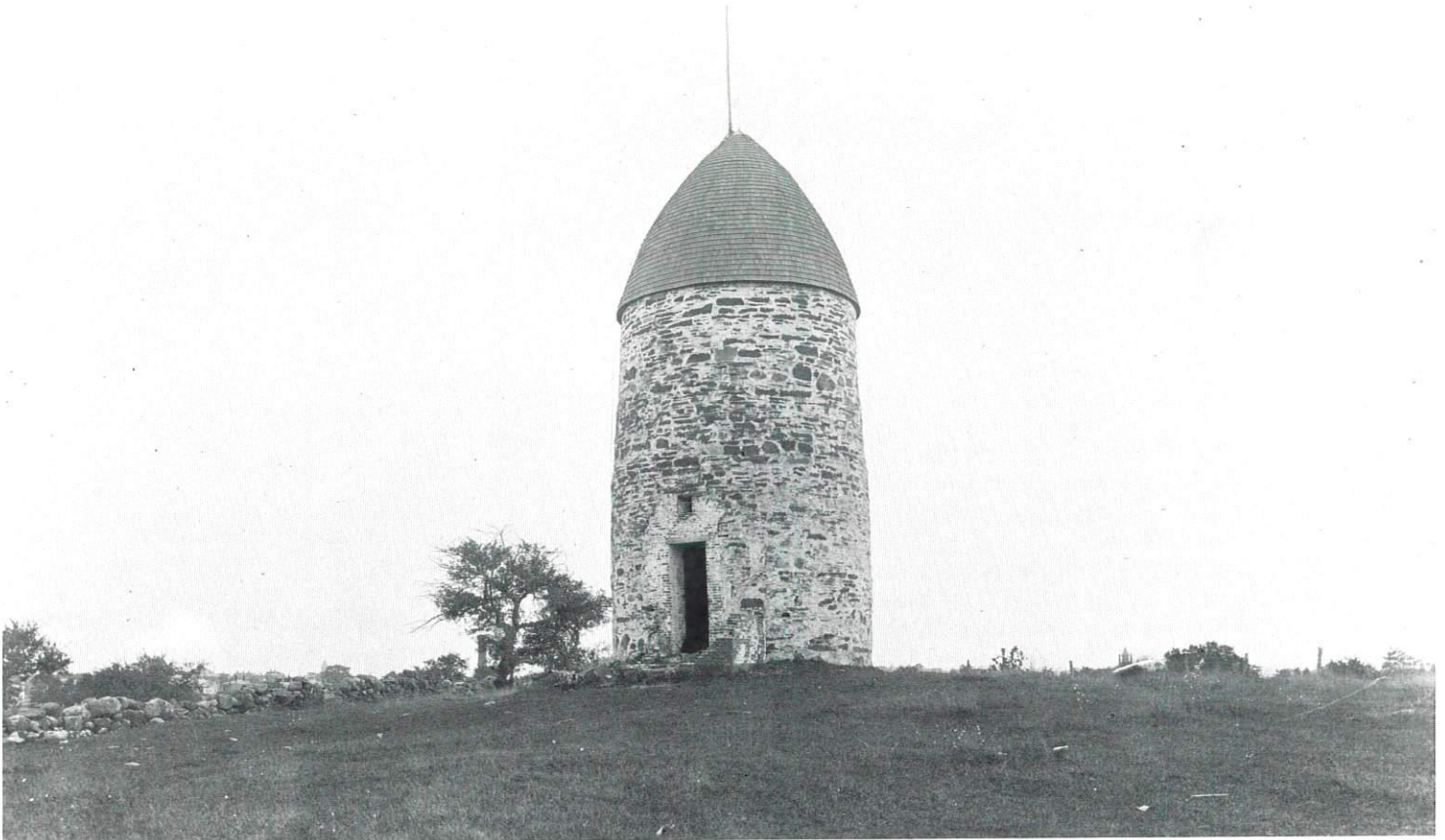
One writer described the homesteads of the early inhabitants of Charlestown as "humble places indeed; with rough walls, thatched roofs, and catted chimneys . . ." Thatched roofs were soon replaced with wood and shingle roofs, due to the danger of fire.

Tailors, coopers, ropemakers, glaziers, tilemakers, collar makers, anchor smiths, charcoal burners, joiners, wheelwrights and blacksmiths were among the first settlers of the Charlestown peninsula farming and related agricultural pursuits occupied the majority of inhabitants beyond the Neck.

The cow commons became the "Stinted Pasture" in 1681 when it was apportioned among Charlestown residents and the pattern of collectively-held fields was changed to individual family homesteads. In 1681 and again in 1685 the lands between Washington Street, Somerville Avenue, Broadway and Alewife Brook were divided into one and one quarter mile wide lots, separated by numbered rangeways corresponding to the streets or avenues of present-day Franklin, Cross, Walnut, School, Central, Lowell, Cedar, Willow, Curtis and North. Many of the rangeways were only rutted paths closed by private fences and were not improved as public roads or streets until the 1850s and 1860s. Some, at the west, were unimproved until after 1890. Today, these streets are highly visible indications of the early agricultural land division pattern. Winthrop's farm at Ten Hills, the most extensive tract held by an individ-



Map of Early Roads. The north-south rangeways were created in 1681 and 1685, and connected with the few early roads of the Charlestown mainland.



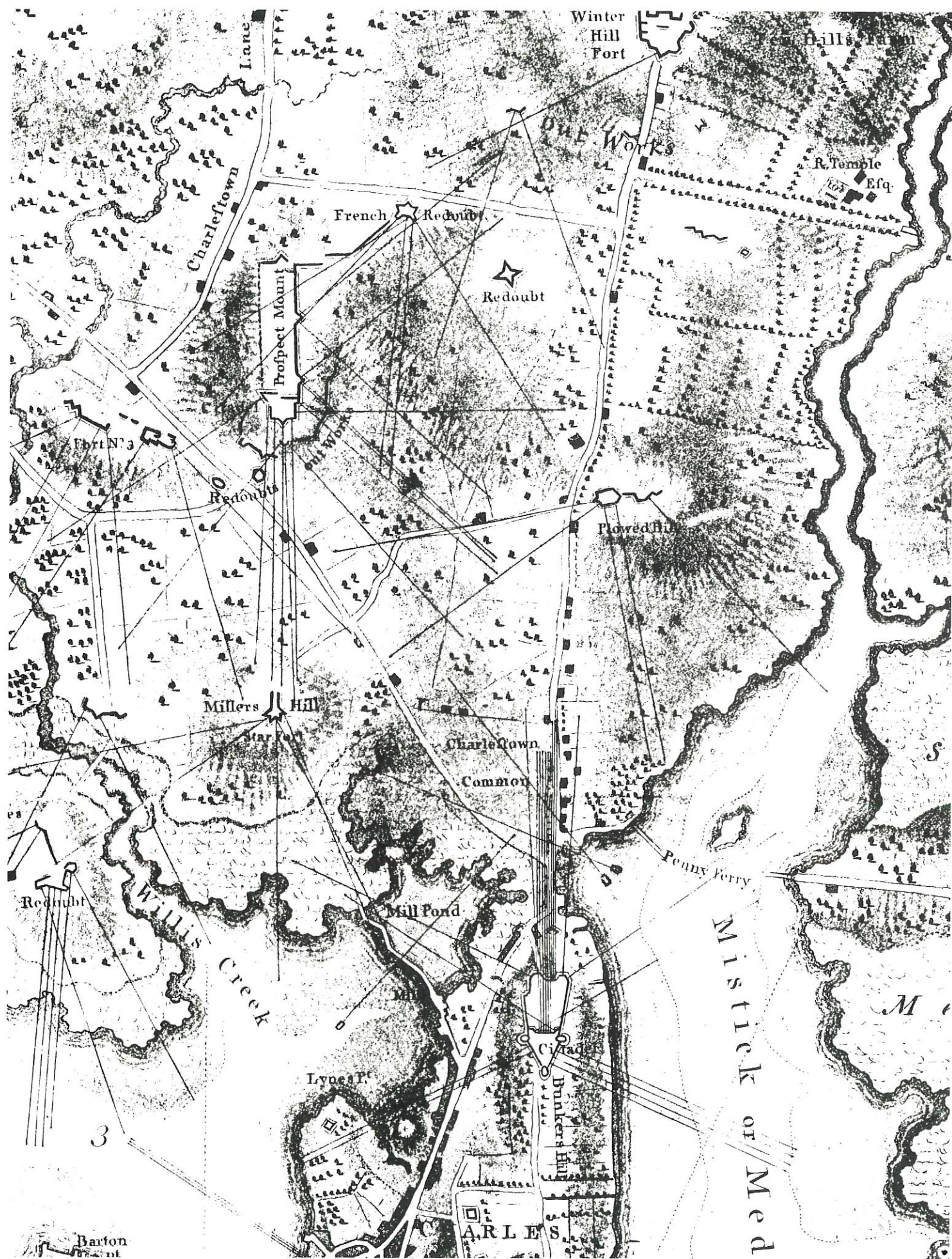
The Powderhouse, ca. 1703. Photograph ca. 1895. This granite and slate-walled gristmill on Quarry Hill was built by Jean Mallet between 1703 and 1725. Thirty feet high and nineteen feet in diameter with a conical roof, it was a landmark for the few eighteenth and early nineteenth century travelers in the western section of Somerville, then Charlestown. The structure served as a gristmill until 1747, when it was sold by Mallet's son to the Province of Massachusetts. Shortly thereafter it was remodeled into a magazine for holding gunpowder. On September 1, 1774, 250 half-barrels of powder were seized by General Gage in one of the first hostile actions of the Revolution. This photograph was made over a century later, after Nathan Tufts donated the site to the City of Somerville for a park. City Engineer Horace Eaton's design conserved the natural ledge, and maintained the topographical character of the area surrounding the unique structure.

ual, lay outside the rangeways, as did most of Ward II.

Dairy farms within the Stinted Pasture supplied milk and cheese to Charlestown and the north end of Boston. Milk products were laboriously brought on horseback and in carts through Charlestown and across the ferry to Boston. Milk Row, as Charlestown Lane became known, abutted several of the largest farms, and was the main route through Somerville for the transport of farm products from West Cambridge (now Arlington) and the territory beyond. Milk Row is now Somerville Avenue.

Although settlers of the Charlestown mainland established sawmills, gristmills, lime kilns, and fish weirs, the exact location of these early industries is not well-documented. But still standing, is a slate-walled gristmill built between 1703 and 1715 on the knob of the dike of the Medford diabase. This site, called Quarry Hill by early settlers, is situated at the intersection of two early routes, the Winter Hill Road and Charlestown Lane. The gray stone, locally referred to as slate, was quarried at this site by seventeenth and eighteenth century settlers for foundations and gravestones and several generations brought their corn and grain to the mill for grinding.

Somerville's river location and prominent hills gave it strategic importance during the defense against the British. Hostile action north of Boston began in 1774 with the seizure of powder from the gristmill at Quarry Hill. British soldiers skirmished in Somerville in April of 1775, and several were killed in the retreat from Concord along Elm Street and Somerville Avenue. Ten Hills, Ploughed Hill (Mt. Benedict), Prospect Hill, Cobble Hill, and Winter Hill were fortified during the Revolution, and remnants of some of the wooden breastworks existed well into the twentieth century.



Winter Hill Fort

Hills

R. Temple Esq.

French Redoubt

Redoubt

Charlestown Lane

Prospect Mount

Fort N^o 1

Redoubt

Plowed Hill

Millers Hill

Star Fort

Charlestown

Common

Penny Ferry

Redoubt

Willis Creek

Mill Pond

Misticke or Med

Lynes Pt

Bunker Hill

3

Barton

CHARLES



Oliver Tufts House, 78 Sycamore Street, 1714.

Samuel Ireland House, 117 Washington, 1792. The five bay facade of this small eighteenth century house reflects the original arrangement of windows and doors. Narrow strips of original moldings are still evident at the eaves and window enframements. Built by Samuel Ireland, a farmer, and son of early settler Jonathan Ireland.



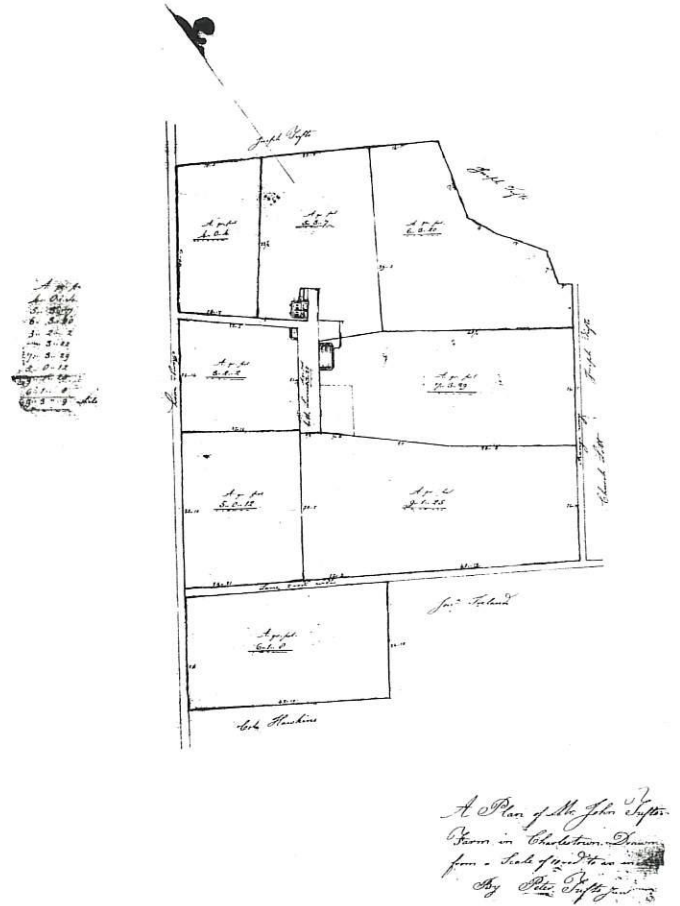
Colonial and Georgian Styles

Eighteenth century dwellings, in the form of a few farmhouses near the rangeways and along the Winter Hill Road, the Road to Newtowne and Milk Row, were simple structures of heavy-timbered construction. Photographs of now-razed houses indicate that the central entry, five-bay facade with a gable or hipped roof was characteristic. Slate for foundations and chimneys came from the local ledges; some lime for mortar and lumber could also be had nearby. On a modest scale in keeping with the hinterland location, the style characteristics of Georgian architecture appeared on only a few houses built along the main roads of mainland Charlestown. The double-pitched hip or gambrel roof appeared by 1750. Other Georgian style features included cornices and pedimented entrances.

The gambrel-roofed Oliver Tufts House, built in 1714 on a large agricultural tract on Winter Hill, has been altered, but photographs indicate the earlier appearance of Somerville's oldest extant house. Two late-eighteenth century gable roofed houses also survive: the Samuel Ireland House (1792) at 117 Washington Street, and a small dwelling (ca. 1790) at the rear of 72 Dane Street near Washington Street.

Although the eighteenth century dwellings of the Charlestown mainland were built primarily by farmers, by 1770 the area "beyond the Neck" was chosen as the site for the houses of several prominent individuals from Boston and a small number of Charlestown merchants. These men made the journey to Boston or Charlestown by private coach, or by walking the poor roads of the day.

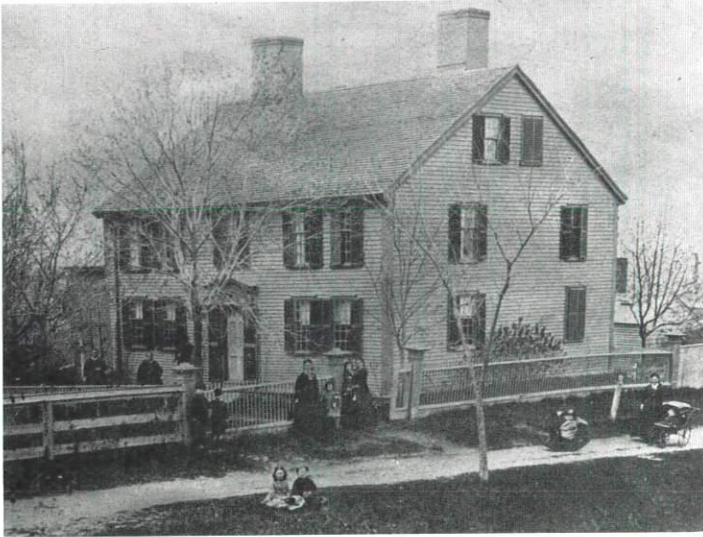
In the 1770s, Sir Robert Temple purchased the Ten Hills farm of Governor John Winthrop and built a handsome mansion with a pedimented Georgian entry near present-day Temple Street. The hip-roofed Temple House (destroyed in 1877) was among the first of several eighteenth century buildings beyond the Neck which reflected the architectural influence of nearby Boston.



Tufts Land Plan, ca. 1813.



Stearnes House, 47 Broadway, ca. 1750, razed. Situated at the foot of Mt. Benedict opposite George Street (where Broadway Brake is today), the Stearnes House was one of the fine eighteenth century farmhouses of Broadway or Winter Hill Road. One of the family, Joshua Stearnes, ran a distillery at Neck Village in Charlestown in the 1830's.



Adams-Magoun House, 438 Broadway, 1783. Photograph 1890. The only remaining eighteenth century house on the Old Winter Hill Road (Broadway), the Adams-Magoun house has a Federal period fanlight in the central entry.

The Federal Style

The Neo-classical details of the Adams-Magoun House (1783) situated at the top of Winter Hill show the influence of the Federal Style which was popular into the 1820s. This five bay, gable-roofed house has a leaded three-part fanlight, reportedly one of the earliest in the Boston area. The finest Federal house built within the limits of present-day Somerville was the 1793 Joseph Barrell House, at Cobble Hill, designed by Boston's leading architect, Charles Bulfinch. The three-story brick mansion, built for a wealthy merchant, had the rounded projecting central bay characteristic of high-styled Federal houses of the period. When the Barrell House and landscaped grounds were acquired by the Massachusetts General Hospital for the McLean's Asylum in 1816, Bulfinch was again commissioned to design the wings of the new hospital. At least one other stylish Federal house was built within Somerville's present borders, that of Edward Cutter on Broadway in East Somerville. This five-bay, three-story brick house had the flat balustraded roof and the carefully modulated fenestration associated with the Federal Style work of Charles Bulfinch, although there is no record of the architect or builder.





Joseph Barrell House, 1793. Photo ca. 1885. The Barrell House had an elliptical salon on axis with the vestibule and stair hall, which served as the focus for a secondary suite running at right angles along the garden front. Bulfinch's design showed the influence of English Neoclassicists in the elevations and interior details such as a 32-foot flying staircase, probably modeled on a 1776 staircase at Doddington Hall, Cheshire. When the Barrell house was razed in 1896, Frederick Shaw purchased the staircase and two soapstone mantels for his country house at Wayland. In 1942, when the Shaw house was demolished, the staircase and mantels were presented to the Somerville Historical Society.

Edward Cutter House, Broadway at Cross Street East, ca. 1815. This three story, Federal Style brick house belonged to a farmer and businessman. Razed.

SOMERVILLE

PRESERVATION COMMISSION
CITY HALL - 93 HIGHLAND AVENUE
SOMERVILLE, MA 02143

Beyond the Neck

The Architecture and Development of Somerville, Massachusetts

Updated Edition



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Prepared for the City of Somerville

Michael E. Capuano, Mayor

by

Landscape Research

St. Paul, Minnesota

Carole Zellie, Author and Project Director

Peter Stott, Industrial Archaeologist

Randy Garber, Editor

Photographs: Carole Zellie

Stephen Wheeler

Additional photographs for the updated edition

by Margen Kelsey, Gretchen Schuler, and Brandon Wilson

Office of Housing and Community Development

93 Highland Avenue, Somerville, Massachusetts

James J. Bretta, Executive Director

Stephen Post, former Executive Director

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Cover: View of Winter Hill from Hudson and Central Streets, ca. 1869, looking north. A pear orchard is in the foreground; the large houses of Broadway are at the top of the view.

Title Page: Charlestown Neck as it appeared on the 1852 *Map of Somerville* by Martin Draper. Somerville lies "beyond the Neck," as early settlers described the Charlestown mainland.

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Updated Edition, 1990

Many people assisted the project staff during the preparation of the first edition of *Beyond the Neck*, and their help is gratefully acknowledged. E. Thomas Pelham, former Director of the Office of Planning and Community Development (now the Office of Housing and Community Development), and former staff members Michael Campbell and Stephen Post gave their long-term support to this project. We would also like to thank Laura Barrett and the Somerville Journal staff; Isobel Cheney and Doris Donovan, Somerville Historical Commission; Fred Gould, Somerville City Engineer; James Hume, Professor of Geology, Tufts University; Linda Kopp; Fred Lund, Planning Department; Brandon Wilson and Peg Read, O.P.C.D.; Stephen Mackey, The Somerville Museum; and Ellie Reichlin, Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities.

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The occasion of the second printing of *Beyond the Neck* presented an opportunity to make corrections and to add material to the original text. It also provided an opportunity to reflect on new developments over the past eight years. Since 1982, the City of Somerville has passed an Historic District Ordinance, established a Historic Preservation Commission, and created a part-time staff position to administer its city-wide preservation program. Many properties have been added to the National Register and local historic districts.

Although many properties included in the first printing of this book have been greatly improved over the past eight years, the modern photographs used in Chapters I-III remain the record of how the city looked in 1982. Where new or replacement photographs have been used, they are identified in the text. Chapter IV includes updated listings for preservation resources as well as Somerville's National Register and local historic district properties. A selection of "before and after" views illustrate preservation achievements in neighborhoods across the city.

Historic photographs, unless noted, are from the collections of The Somerville Museum.



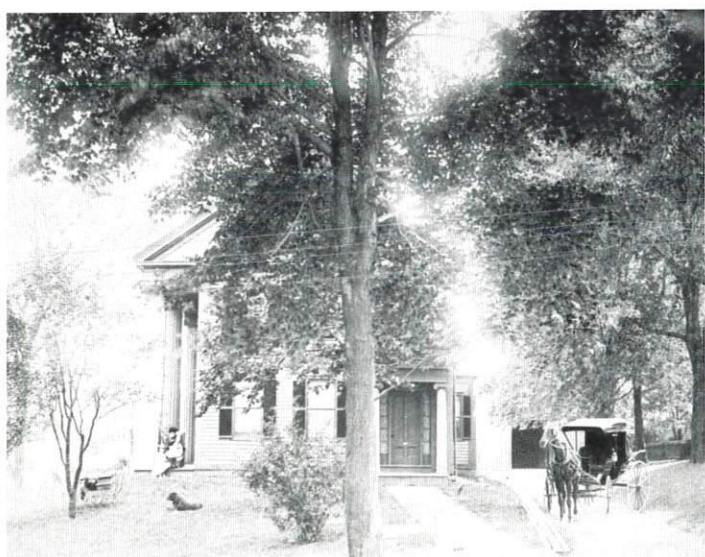
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Introduction



The Spring Hill residence of Mayor George O. Brastow on the south side of Summer Street, 1838. Brastow (1811–1878) settled on Spring Hill in 1838, and served as Somerville's first mayor. He sold real estate, particularly on Spring Hill, and built a number of houses in the city. Another real estate dealer and politician, Solomon S. Higgins, was a later owner of this handsome Greek Revival house. (Razed; now the site of the Somerset Chambers apartments).

In 1980, Landscape Research and the Somerville Office of Planning and Community Development, assisted by a grant from the Massachusetts Historical Commission, conducted a city-wide inventory of architecturally and historically significant sites in Somerville. Over 1000 buildings were inventoried, and 100 were nominated to the National Register of Historic Places. Each building was studied for date of construction, builders and early owners, and architectural or historical significance. Although building permit records are not available until after 1898, tax records, deeds, maps, directories and newspaper articles provided information on the construction of residential, commercial, and industrial buildings. Somerville has distinct residential areas which were built up with the same house type and style, usually the two-family house, and these blocks and subdivisions were researched for information about land developers and builders. With this information it was possible to reconstruct—in mosaic fashion—the architectural development of the city through all of its periods of growth.

Because of its crowded streets, Somerville has often been assumed to be of monotonous or uniform character. However, the glacial landscape of clayland, marsh and ledge, seventeenth century land division patterns, intense nineteenth century industrial development and ambitious, unrestricted period of residential expansion at the turn of the century are still-vivid visual keys to the city's past.

Architecturally, the inventory revealed that although three deckers and a variety of multiple family houses built for a growing population filled in many of Somerville's streets at the turn of the century and have become a dominant presence, there are many other interesting chapters of the city's building history. Gambrel-roofed Colonial houses on Winter Hill, porticoed Greek Revival businessmen's cottages, slate-roofed Second Empire rowhouses and Queen Anne mansions built for suburbanites constitute another part of its residential heritage. A fine collection of churches and public and commercial buildings also mark Somerville's nineteenth century development from a farm and brickyard center to an industrial city.

This book is a beginning. It can inspire more research about Somerville, including insight into the generations of people who built the city and the people who live here now. Social history, the story of the Somerville residents who laid out streets and built houses and worked in factories and businesses, remains largely unchronicled. The focus of *Beyond the Neck* is on buildings and the still-changing landscape. It is intended to inspire an awareness, appreciation and a spirit of conservation for the urban environment which is uniquely Somerville's.




Somerville is distinctly a city of homes. This is radically different from a city of wealth or a manufacturing city. Such a city requires unusual effort to make it beautiful, convenient and comfortable. It must also have an unusually active local sentiment. In a manufacturing city, families live there because they must be there for their work. Men of large wealth seek places peculiarly congenial and removed from the masses. The majority of those who reside in Somerville might as well live in any one of twenty other cities and towns, so far as their business is concerned. If they come and stay here it will be because it is healthy, morally clean, comfortable and convenient and because sentiment inclines them to come and stay.

Mayor Edward Glines, 1902 Inaugural Address

Growth and Change in the Early Twentieth Century

Winchester 502, or Winchester (Hous.) 814-7. sept 12-14
BEAUTIFUL ESTATE FOR SALE

 Located at 134 Highland Avenue; Central Hill, overlooking Cambridge, Everett and other surrounding suburbs; estate of 12,000 square feet with residence of 17 rooms and 2 baths, hardwood floors and other modern improvements; garage in rear with accommodations for several automobiles. Apply to
A. M. THOMPSON, Owner - 6 Quincy Row, Boston Mass.
Jan 16-21

THIS HOUSE FOR SALE

 Not needing now so large a house, I offer my residence,
NO. 25 PRESTON ROAD
 Off Summer Street, Spring Hill
 at its assessed value. Built in 1890, by the day, from plans of George F. Loring, Architect, under my personal supervision, resting on a granite foundation, with an extra heavy frame, it is worthy of inspection by any one desiring a good home, or for the purpose of investment, as it can be easily altered into a two or three-apartment house. There are sixteen large, high-studded rooms, with two bathrooms and shower bath in basement. The windows are plate glass, the roof of slate with copper flashings. The house is finished in cherry and oak, with hardwood floors; open fireplaces; heated by two Magee wrought-iron furnaces. The lot contains 8,500 feet of land, with fine lawn, fruit and shade trees. The price I am asking for this property would not begin to cover the cost of the house above the foundation. Everything in perfect repair. Apply on premises.
A. A. ELSTON, 25 Preston Road

An outmigration of the Yankee and long-established Irish population began in the late nineteenth century, followed by the arrival of a new working class population of Eastern Europeans, Greeks, and Italians. In 1895, the population was 52,200. Of the 15,211 foreign-born residents, 5249 were native-born Irish, and 2654 Canadian. The next significant wave of immigrants were Portuguese and Italian, but in 1895 these groups were still represented in relatively small number: only 255 Portuguese and 352 Italians were included in the 1895 census. No persons of Greek birth were recorded. Many of the first Italian and Portuguese immigrants, like the later Greek arrivals, settled in East Somerville, Ward II, and the Brick Bottom, or Asylum Hill areas, places where inexpensive rental housing could be found. At about the same time, many prominent and affluent residents departed for less-crowded Boston suburbs, particularly Newton Highlands. In 1888, foreshadowing this gradual outmigration, the **Somerville Journal** reported the loss of one of the city's wealthiest long time citizens:

... C.H. Guild, Esq. has bought a fine estate in Newton Highlands and will move there soon. Somerville will part company with Mr. Guild with feelings of deep regret. . . .

Somerville Journal, March 3, 1888

This gradual outmigration of wealthy residents continued throughout the turn of the century. In many cases, the grounds of former estates were built over and the mansion houses converted to multiple family use. It is important to note that large single-family homes were still being built in the 1890s but by 1906 the **Journal** could criticize:

... Somerville has some fine old houses, but for the most part their broad domains of former days have been encroached on until, in many places, they look cramped without the elbow room and breathing space which aristocratic respectability requires. . . .

Somerville Journal, May 4, 1906

Between 1897 and 1907, 2,136 houses were built in the city at a rate of approximately 213 per year. By 1907, the western section of the city was largely platted or built, and realtors began to cast their attention to the last remaining land in the city: the brickyard-scarred land of Ten Hills along Mystic River, and the partially excavated grounds of Mount Benedict. Architecturally, residential construction after the turn of the century continued the conservative Queen Anne and Classical Revival tradition. Entire sections were often developed with the same two-family house type, particularly in the Ten Hills and Mount Benedict areas. Few single family houses were built



S.P.N.E.A.

View of Broadway, 1905. Looking east from Sycamore Street. Bunker Hill monument is in the distance; electric streetcars, horse-drawn carriages, automobiles, and bicyclists shared the elm-lined avenue. Langmaid Terrace is at left.

Hill-Michie Company Garage, 93 Medford Street at Walnut. Photograph ca. 1915. By 1908, the **Somerville Journal** regularly published lists of new automobile owners. One or two story repair garages of concrete block or brick were built along main thoroughfares to serve the new clientele of automobile drivers. Often, livery stables were converted to automobile garages, and served both trades for a time.

Concrete Block Automobile Garage, 1915.



Somerville Historical Society





Gridley Apartments, 291 Highland Avenue, 1906.

SINEA.



Ball Square, photograph ca. 1910.

after 1910, with two family houses and apartment buildings constituting the primary residential building type.

A few masonry apartment buildings were constructed for the growing numbers of commuters along main arteries before the first World War. The 1906 Gridley Apartments at 291 Highland, designed by architect Frank Dillaby, combined shops and apartments, continuing a nineteenth century practice. Alderman John Locatelli and ex-Mayor Z.E. Cliff were among the city's foremost developers of large-scale apartment buildings organized around central courtyards. Among Locatelli's apartments were the Bradford Court, Spring Hill, and Somerset Chambers on Summer Street. Advertisements for the apartment houses of the period usually emphasized the building's good transportation connections to Boston. "Carlines in Front of Building" boasted a 1928 advertisement for the Highland Avenue Hillcrest Apartments.

The character of Somerville's small commercial districts, or squares, was stabilized during the period 1900-1925 as masonry business blocks were constructed in Davis and Gilman Squares and a variety of one-story commercial blocks developed in Teele, Ball, and Magoun Squares. Businesses in the squares catered to trolley-car and later, automobile shoppers. Businessmen's Associations organized by merchants promoted shopping opportunities and electricity helped in the advertising effort. In 1916, a large electrified sign was placed at 26 Union Square. It declared: "Boost Somerville, Do Your Shopping at Home." Cambridge, Waltham, Chelsea and Malden businessmen invested in similar promotions. In the 1920s, Broadway and Davis Square merchants held night-time "Great White Way" openings, with the streets illuminated by Boston Electric's brightest outdoor lights, and motion pictures projected outdoors against the buildings of the shopping district.

In 1916, the first American zoning ordinance was introduced in New York City to control land use and set building standards. In the 1920s, Somerville, like many towns and cities in Massachusetts, studied the concept. In 1923, the Planning Board hired the Technical Advisory Corporation of New York City to make a survey of Somerville for the purpose of dividing the city into six use zones, and the Corporation's plan was adopted in 1925. The corridor from the Mystic flats to Ward II was zoned industrial; business districts followed the linear pattern previously established, and three residential categories were overlaid on the remainder of the city.

Between 1895 and 1925, various proposals for a cross-town boulevard were proposed, continuing a debate begun in the 1850s. In 1911, the Cambridge-Somerville Boulevard was discussed by town officials. As proposed, it was to link Cambridge and Somerville from Massachusetts Avenue and the Harvard Bridge to Broadway Park, via Webster Avenue, Prospect Hill Avenue, Cross Street, skirting Broadway Park and linking with the Fellsway. Originally conceived as a pleasure drive for carriage traffic, the final realization of the cross-town boulevard was the Northern Artery, designed for automobiles and completed in 1925. The Northern Artery (later named the McGrath Highway) extended from the Charles River Basin at Lechmere Square to Broadway Park and the Fellsway via a portion of Medford Street. It provided a direct route into Boston from the north. Many houses were moved or razed for the construction of the Artery. East Somerville and Winter Hill were divided; "Brick Bottom" near the 1907 incinerator was bisected. Eventually, all of Brick Bottom's houses were removed for the redevelopment of the area into an industrial park.

Somerville's finest remaining group of commercial buildings were constructed between 1912 and 1935, including several examples of the Art Deco and Streamlined Moderne, commercial styles popular between World War I and II. Numerous



Socony Gasoline Station, Mystic Street and the Fellsway, 1925. Broadway (Foss) Park is at right.



Somerville Public Library, 1914. Edward Lippincott Tilton, architect. Edward L. Tilton (1861-1933) was a noted designer of modern public libraries and was commissioned for the 1914 Somerville Public Library. Born in New York, Tilton studied at the Paris Ecole des Beaux Arts and worked for the New York firm of McKim, Mead and White, prior to establishing his own practice. In addition to his many library commissions, his partnership with William A. Boring (Boring and Tilton) produced the Ellis Island Immigrant Station in 1900. The Somerville and Springfield, Massachusetts libraries are considered characteristic examples of his work.



West Somerville Branch Library, 40 College Avenue, 1909. Renaissance Revival and Neo-classical motifs were favored by the designers of early twentieth century public and commercial buildings. Round-arched windows grouped in arcades and broad, overhanging roofs characterized the Renaissance Revival designs often chosen for firehouses and schools; classical motifs such as over-scaled columns carrying a classical pediment are evident on the Neo-classical West Somerville Branch Library. McLean and Wright of Boston were the architects.



Somerville Theatre, Davis Square, 1912.

SOMERVILLE'S MOST LUXURIOUS



CAPITOL THEATRE
BROADWAY SOMERVILLE WINTER HILL

MATINEE DAILY AT 2.15 SOMERSET 2700
EVENING PERFORMANCES CONTINUOUS FROM 7.15

MONDAY, TUESDAY, WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 22, 23, 24

'THE COP' with William Boyd
Don't miss this picture! Wm. Boyd's biggest and best

— AND —

'ROMANCE OF A ROGUE'
H. B. WARNER, star of "SORRELL & SON"
A glamorous romance of prison lives and hearts of gold!

THURSDAY, FRIDAY, and SATURDAY, OCTOBER 25, 26, 27

'SHOW GIRL' starring Alice White
Film exponent of charm and pep
Where, how and when Show Girls are made

ALSO

HOOT GIBSON in 'Clearing the Trail'
Added Attraction Saturday Matinee and Evening
The greatest serial of the year

"TARZAN THE MIGHTY"

— AND —

4 BIG ACTS OF STANDARD VAUDEVILLE 4

nineteenth century storefronts were “modernized” in the 1920s and 1930s with glass block, metal or terra cotta Art Deco treatments, but few examples survive in original condition. Gasoline service stations were built along Somerville’s major arteries between 1910 and 1930 to cater to the first generations of truck and automobile owners. Neo-Classical and Colonial Revival were the favored styles for gasoline service station construction. Vaudeville and motion picture theatres were built in several Somerville squares and along Highland and Broadway Avenues after the turn of the century: the 1912 Somerville Theatre in Davis Square, designed by F. Wilcox as a vaudeville and motion picture theatre is the best-conserved of at least six theatres which were built in the city after 1900.

Somerville’s industrial growth continued after the turn of the century: of 145 manufacturing establishments in 1930, 75 percent had located in the city since 1900. Among Middlesex County manufacturers, Somerville ranked third (behind Cambridge and Lowell) in the manufacture of carriages, food products, furniture, and metal and metallic products. Slaughtering and meat packing was still the leading industry in 1930. The Ford Motor Company Assembly Plant and the First National Stores and A and P Food Warehouses built on the filled flats of the Mystic River were the last large-scale industrial installations to be constructed in the city and employed many of the city’s new immigrants.

Somerville’s population reached 103,908 in 1930 and peaked at 105,813 during World War II. In 1930, the foreign born population totalled 29,548. Among well represented new groups were 553 Russians, 421 Greeks, 5039 Italians, 1240 Portuguese, and 115 persons born in Armenia, Palestine, Syria, or Turkey. Irish immigrants totalled 5800, and 10,069 Canadians (including 905 persons from Quebec) were the largest foreign-born group. Somerville’s small Black population had grown slightly, to 328 by 1920, but dropped to 274 in 1930.

In 1930, Somerville reached a population density of 25,365 persons per square mile, becoming the most densely-settled community in Massachusetts and one of the most densely settled in the country. Past Somerville builders’ adherence to the subdivision practice of small lots, closely-sited streets, terraces, and courts, and the popular two and three family house, coupled with the city’s cautious open space acquisitions had made such density inevitable.



23 Curtis Avenue, ca. 1920. A few small one-family houses were still being built near Alewife Brook in the 'teens and 'twenties, but two-family houses and apartment houses were the predominant housing type.



Somerset Bank, 371 Summer Street, 1933.

Broadway, 1982.



Architects and Builders in Somerville



Barrell House Drawing. Charles Bulfinch, architect.

1873 Somerville City Directory.

R. F. FILES,

Architect,

WARREN BLOCK,
UNION SQUARE, - - SOMERVILLE.



Mr. FILES would respectfully announce that he is prepared to furnish Plans for Houses, Stores and Churches, and to superintend the erection of the same.

Having been for many years a practical mechanic, he feels confident that he can give satisfaction to all who may favor him with a call.

Plans furnished at short notice. Terms moderate.

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LIVERUS HULL, Ex-Mayor of Charlestown, C. E. LYON, Charlestown,
GEORGE W. WHITE, Charlestown, ROBERT VOSE, JR., P. M., Dorchester, Mass., IRA HILL, Somerville, O. P. ROGERS, Somerville,
DANIEL E. CHASE and G. W. TREFREN, Somerville.

Between 1890 and 1915, the architects of Somerville's prominent buildings were often residents of the city. These architects were also involved in a variety of organizations and clubs, and held city offices. Several men combined a real estate or contracting business with the practice of architecture. Most of Somerville's early architects were not academically trained, but learned their profession through careers as carpenters or builders, or as apprentices to established architects. By the turn of the century, however, men like Edwin Blaikie were graduates of schools such as the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

The first and best-known architect to design a building in Somerville was the influential Charles Bulfinch (1763-1844). The 1792 Joseph Barrell House at Cobble Hill, with a characteristic round projecting bay, was an excellent example of the Boston architect's Federal Style. Between 1817 and 1826, after the Barrell House was purchased by the McLean Asylum, Bulfinch designed two new wings flanking the original building. Among Bulfinch's other accomplishments were the 1795-97 Boston State House, the 1805 rebuilding of Faneuil Hall, and the 1814-16 Middlesex County Courthouse (demolished 1966).

No other architects are documented in the design of Somerville's buildings until the 1870s. However, several housewrights including Joshua Fernald of Brookline are credited with the construction of houses; Fernald is noted for a collection of Gothic Revival houses on White Place. A single builder-designer is also suggested by a collection of similar Greek Revival houses on the southern slopes of Spring and Winter Hills and in East Somerville. Likely, the buildings of Somerville's first two decades as a town were the work of a relatively small group of builders. In 1850, Somerville's first directory listed 68 persons in the building trades, including carpenters, masons, painters, and sash and blind makers. Plan books, showing construction and ornamental details, aided them in their work.

Although no buildings are credited to them, two architects are recorded as residents in the 1851 directory: George W. Gray, son of Broadway carpenter John Gray, and William Willard of Cross Street. By 1869, and the date of publication of the next directory, Shepard S. Woodcock of Pearl Street and Walter Wood of Cherry Street were added to the list. All of these men maintained offices or were employed in Boston. Woodcock was the best-known of the group, and the first architect credited with the design of public buildings in Somerville.

Born in 1824 in Sidney Maine, Woodcock practiced both architecture and landscape architecture. Woodcock designed estate grounds in Boston and Lowell, and was landscape designer for the Boston Public Garden. He is credited with the design of over 140 churches, the Pacific Mill in Lawrence, the Howard Seminary at Bridgewater, and soldier's monuments in

Lowell, Natick, and Danvers. Locally, Woodcock was the designer of the 1871 Italianate Edgerly School, the first high-styled school in Somerville, and the Victorian Gothic Engine House atop Central Hill, also built in 1871. It is likely that he was the designer of the equally handsome Luther Bell School on Vinal Street, constructed in 1874. Woodcock also designed several Somerville residences, including the Queen Anne Style house of milk can manufacturer Henry E. Wright at 31 Pearl Street.

One of the first architects to maintain an office in Somerville was R. F. Files, a Charlestown resident. His advertisement in the 1873 Directory announced his Union Square office and his willingness to furnish plans for stores, houses, and churches. G.A. Clough, City Architect of Boston, was chosen as the architect of the Somerville Police Station, completed in 1875, and Samuel J. F. Thayer, a well-known Boston architect, was commissioned for the 1875 Somerville Latin School. The Victorian Gothic design complemented the architecture of the Engine House on the same Central Hill site, as well as the Police Station and commercial buildings then being completed in Union Square.

Among prominent builder-designers of the 1870s was Thomas B. Blaikie, a native of Nova Scotia. Blaikie was trained as a carpenter and became associated with the Union Square real estate projects of Somerville investor Ira Hill. The ca. 1870 Second Empire Style Hotel Warren and the Hill Building (1874) were products of this collaboration. Various Grandview Avenue and Warren Avenue houses are among the many Second Empire Style houses Blaikie constructed on Prospect Hill in the 1870s. Blaikie's sons, architects Edwin D. and William also were active in residential and commercial construction in Somerville, and designed many large houses on Prospect Hill in the 1890s, usually in the Queen Anne Style.

Somerville architects with Boston offices dominated public building commissions in the 1890s, particularly Aaron Gould (50 Columbus Avenue) and George F. Loring (76 Highland Avenue). Although church commissions went to Boston firms such as H. S. McKay (Prospect Hill Congregational, 1887) and Hartwell, Richardson and Driver (Winter Hill Congregational, 1891), many commissions for city buildings were captured by Gould or Loring.

Aaron Gould was born in Nova Scotia in 1865, where he learned the carpenter's trade. He later worked on large hotel and residential projects in Maine and in the South.

Gould received several commissions for public buildings in Somerville, including the 1895 Central Fire Station, 1898 City Stables and Water Department, and schools such as the Martin Carr School of 1898. His public commissions in Cambridge and Somerville were usually based on Renaissance architecture, but several drawings submitted to the City of Somerville show his command of the Romanesque Revival. Gould's Armory plan of 1896 featured two crenellated towers flanking a central drill hall. His picturesque concept contrasted dramatically with the City's final selection, the streamlined, stucco-covered design of architect George A. Moore of Boston.

Gould also submitted a plan for Union Square in 1903, which included a plan for a firehouse and a public plaza at the intersection of Somerville Avenue and Washington Street. The Romanesque Revival firehouse design was rejected in favor of a Georgian design by Walter T. Littlefield. Gould is also noted for a number of Cambridge school and firehouse designs.

George A. Loring (1851-1918) was born in Boston. He first worked in the Boston City Engineer's Office, and received his architectural training with G. A. Clough, Boston City Architect and designer of the Somerville Police Station. In 1883, he began to practice independently. In 1889, he entered partner-

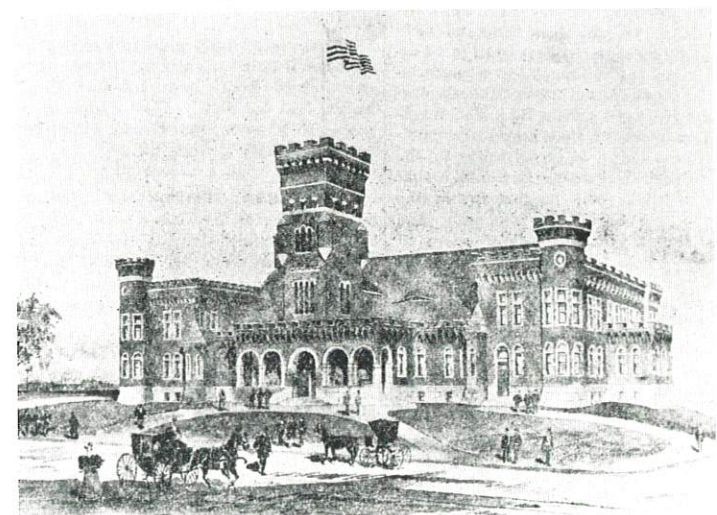


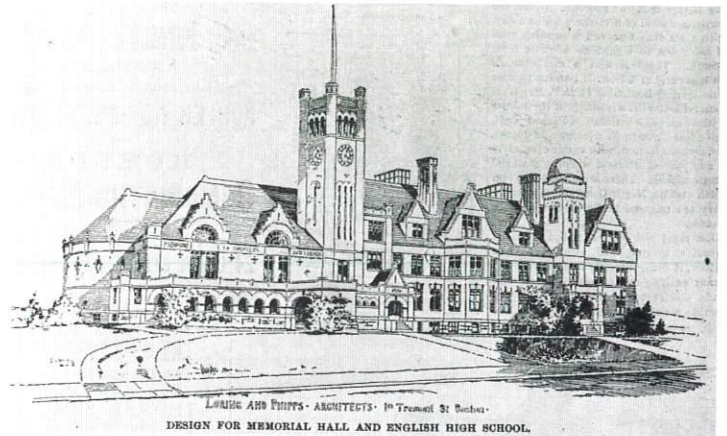
Luther V. Bell School. Vinal Avenue, 1874. Shephard S. Woodcock, architect(?). Razed.



Central Engine House, Central Hill, 1871. Shepard S. Woodcock, architect. Later used as an annex to City Hall. Photo ca. 1890. Razed.

Armory Plan, 1896. Aaron Gould, architect. The first proposal for an armory was for this Romanesque brick structure on Central Hill which would have reused a portion of the 1871 Central Engine House.





Plan for Memorial Hall, Central Hill, 1891. George F. Loring, architect.



George F. Loring House, 76 Highland, 1895.

John Haigh House, 151 Summer Street, 1891. George F. Loring, architect.



ship with Sanford Phipps of Watertown. The firm of Loring and Phipps designed schools, warehouses, apartment buildings and houses across the state and were noted for their elegant residential designs in Somerville, Winthrop, Brookline, Newton, and Wellesley. Much of the Somerville work is attributed solely to Loring, including the 1884 Somerville Public Library which was one of his first commissions after establishing his own practice. He is also credited with the Odd Fellows Building (1885) Masonic Building (1888) and the Glines and (first) Pope Schools. Loring's notable Romanesque design for Memorial Hall was submitted in 1891, but never built. Divinity (Miner) Hall at Tufts University is also Loring's work.

Loring was the designer of approximately one hundred houses in Somerville, most of them situated on Winter, Spring, and Prospect Hills. Among his earliest work is the 1884 Charles Bradshaw House at 175 Summer Street. The slate-covered mansard roof with rear French turret shows the architect's debt to Boston architects G. A. Clough and H. H. Richardson. Unfortunately, many of Loring's other grand designs have been altered or razed, but his preferences for materials such as terra-cotta, brick, stone, and shingle are still evident on some remaining examples. Loring did not have a particular "signature" of style: his residential work ranged from carefully detailed Georgian and Federal Revival styles to English-inspired Queen Anne.

At least one of his residential designs in Somerville was published in a national architectural magazine. The John Haigh House at 151 Summer Street appeared in **American Architect and Building News**, January 23, 1892. The Georgian Revival design was commissioned by a partner in the Middlesex Bleachery and Dye Works.

Reportedly, Loring made a special study of fraternal organization architecture. In Somerville, he is credited with the first design of the Central Club (now Elks Club) at Highland Avenue and Central Street. Loring's original Shingle Style design was later remodeled into the present Neo-classical facade. Loring was on the Executive Committee of the Central Club, a member of the Masonic Order, Odd Fellows, United Order of American Workmen, and other secret societies and fraternal organizations.

Despite the influence of architects such as Gould and Loring, builders or carpenter-contractors were responsible for the majority of Somerville's nineteenth century houses. To encourage sales, some builders or real estate dealers offered home buyers a payment plan. In 1890, for example, George W. Lake offered eight houses on Carleton Street for ten percent down with the balance in monthly payments. It was reported that Lake sold 72 houses between 1887 and 1890 in this manner.

Among other prominent builder-real estate dealers were Arthur Berry, William Jones, Thomas Farrington, Z. E. Cliff, H. D. McGray, O. H. Beldrey, H.W.P. Colson, Channing Hazeltine and W. P. Rice. Most of these men began their careers as carpenters, and turned to real estate and contracting as their business expanded. A large contingent of masons, roofers, paper hangers, painters, plasterers, glaziers, and cabinet-makers provided finishwork for builders. Ornamental ironwork, plasterwork, and stained glass were among specialties provided by local craftsmen.



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