

BRIEF HISTORY OF SOMERVILLE:

1600-1942

*Collected from a variety
of sources and compiled
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England, by right of discovery, acquired possession of a large part of the land in North America and the government gave this land to those of its citizens who were venturesome enough to settle in the practically unexplored wilderness. This priority, however gave the English citizens no right to the soil over the independent natives who might be inhabiting this land until it was acquired from the possessors.

In 1606, King James I. divided the land into two parts. One half was given to a London company the other half to a company established at Plymouth, England.

Captain John Smith sailed up the Charles River in 1614 and made a map of the country through which he passed. This map was the first on which the name New England appeared. He gave the river its name and spoke of the Indians in this vicinity as being "very kind, but in their fury, no less valiant"; while another writer said that: "The Indians may be rather comported to live richly, wanting nothing that is needful; and to be commended for living a contented life, the younger being ruled by the elder, and the elder ruled by the Powahs, and the Powahs ruled by the Devil, and then you may imagine what good rule there is like to be amongst them". It was a common belief among the early settlers that the Indians and the devil were in league.

The Prince of Wales, who later became Charles I. of England, gave English names to many points on the New England coast, three of which are well known to all of us: Plymouth, Cape Ann, and Charles River, although the latter was really given this name by Captain Smith.

In March, 1628, the Plymouth Council gave a grant of land, including the territory occupied by Somerville, to the Massachusetts Bay Company. In the same year some settlers from Salem, settled on the north side of Charles River, which was occupied by many Indians, built their houses and called their settlement "Charlestown".

Previous to the settlement by white men, Charlestown and the territory near it was the "Mushawomuk" of the Indians, and was controlled by the Pawtuckets, who also lorded it over the smaller tribes at Concord, Ipswich, Salem and other places.

A devastating epidemic spread among the Indians in this vicinity about the year 1613, lasted several years and aided to a great extent by the battles among themselves, greatly reduced the tribes, so that but a small Indian population was left in Eastern Massachusetts at the time of the arrival of the white men. One writer recorded that the plague "in some places utterly consumed man, woman, and child, so that there is no person left to lay claim to the soyle which they possessed".

Previous to the great mortality the Pawtucket tribe is said to have had three thousand warriors. Their chief was Nanepasbemit, or "New Moon". He was almost continually at war with the Tarrantines, a predatory tribe living in Maine, and at the same time he preyed on most of the other tribes. His queen, Squa Sachem, succeeded him in governing the tribe, and married Webcowit, also called Wappacowet, who was the

“powwow, priest, witch, and sorcerer, or chirurgeon” of the tribe. From her, Somerville holds an aboriginal title to its territory.

At the time of its early settlement, the tides daily ebbed and flowed through the Charles, Miller’s, Mystic Rivers and through Alewife Brook, Mill Pond, Winthrop and other creeks, covered the meadow lands and marshes between what is now Mystic Avenue and East Cambridge, and northwestward to Washington Street, and probably flowed across Charlestown Neck. The lowlands and marshes to Union Square and beyond were also overflowed daily by the tide, and much of the land west of Union Square, nearly to the present line of Cambridge, as well as most of the present park on Broadway, all northeast of it, and perhaps some on the southerly side of Broadway received a daily submerging.

Several sparkling streams wound through the lower parts of Somerville and finally mingled with the waters of the Charles and Mystic Rivers. Alewife Brook is the only one to survive.

Without a doubt there were some clearings in the uplands, but generally speaking, it was a wilderness, overgrown with timber. However, one early settler, in speaking of the country, said: “The form of the earth here...is neither too flat in the plain lands, nor too high in the hills but partakes of both in a mediocrity, and fit for pasture or for plough or meadow ground, as men please to employ it. Through all the country be a thick wood for the general, yet in divers places there is much ground cleared by the Indians.” Another settler, writing home to England, said: “I never came in a more goodly country in all my life. The grass and weeds grow up to a man’s face in the lowlands, and by fresh rivers, abundance of grass and large meadows, without any tree or shrub to hinder the scythes.”

The writers of the early days expressed great admiration for the abundance of fruits, nuts and flowers everywhere to be found. Alewife Brook, teemed with the fish from which it receive its name, and the Mystic River were plentifully supplied with smelts. Governor Dudley, in a letter to the Countess of Lincoln, mentions the partridges “as big as our hens,” and great wild turkeys, “exceeding fat, sweet and fleshy”. Wild pigeons were often seen in enormous flocks. Deer, bear, wolves, and other animals roamed the woods, and rattlesnakes were something to be reckoned with.

One of the early writers said: “The fertility of the soil is much to be admired at. The abundant increase of corn proves this country to be a wonderment...Yea, Joseph’s increase in Egypt is outstripped here with us...Here are also stores of pumpion, cowcumpers, and other things of that nature, which I know not. Also divers excellent pot-herbs grow abundantly...sweet herbs delightful to smell...plenty of single damask roses, very sweet, and other flowers, as well as various fruits and vines.”

Somerville was originally a part of the old colony of Charlestown, which was one of the first of the early settlements. Standish wandered over its hills in 1621, but the first settlement was made only a short time before Winthrop secured his farm. Complying

with orders received from London, the early settlers of Charlestown, as well as of other towns in New England, purchased and took deeds of their territory from the Indians, in addition to the grants from the king. The deed from Squa Sachem to the town of Charlestown, which includes Somerville, reads as follows: -

“The 15th of the 2d Mo. 1639

“Wee-Web Cowet, & Squaw Sachem do sell unto the Inhabitants of the Towne of Charlestowne, all the land within the lines granted them by the court,” etc.

After describing the territory deeded, it ends thus: -

“We acknowledge to have received in full satisfaction, twenty and one coates, nineteen fathoms of wampum, three bushels of corne. In witness whereof we have hereunto sett our hands the day and years above named.

“the marke of Squa Sachem

“the marke of Web Cowet

“Subscribed in the presence off

“Jno. Humphrey

“Robert ffeake.”

In a short time, the settlers, feeling the need of more land for planting, and desiring to trade with the Indians, pushed out farther into the country and laid out roads in all directions. The earliest highway was probably what is now Washington Street, from Charlestown Neck to Harvard Square, for when Boston was settled in 1630, this highway was already in existence. It was known as the “Highway to Newtowne”. Bow Street, Somerville Avenue, and Elm Street were one street, known as “Charlestown Lane,” and led to Medford. Broadway was early known as “Menotomie’s Road,” and led to the settlement at Menotomy, the Indian name for Arlington. Main Street at the top Winter Hill is one of the oldest roads in Somerville. It led to Medford over Craddock’s Bridge, the first bridge built in these parts. Eight lanes, called range ways, a quarter of a mile apart, were laid out by the inhabitants of Charlestown, undoubtedly as early as 1681, leading from Washington and Bow Streets, Somerville Avenue, and Elm Street, over the hills to Broadway. These were called by numbers. The first would correspond to Franklin Street; the second to Cross Street; the third to Walnut Street; the fourth to School Street; the fifth to Central Street; the sixth to Lowell Street; the seventh to Cedar Street; and the eighth to Willow Avenue. In addition to these range ways, there were three others from Broadway into Medford, two of them corresponding to North and Curtis Streets; the other one is not in existence now, having been cultivated by the owners of the land through which it passed.

The first white settler in Somerville of whom there is any record, was John Woolrich, or Wolrich, who came in 1630 from the Charlestown Peninsula. The record states: “1630 – John Woolrich, by reason of his trade with the Indians, built and fenced a mile and a half without the necke of land in ye maine, on ye right hand of ye way to New Towne (Cambridge), on the s.w. side of ye hill”. This site would be near the tablet, placed in 1890 on Washington Street near Dane Street. Richard Palmgrave and Edward Jones soon followed, settling not far from Union Square; and a year later, John Winthrop,

then Governor of the Massachusetts Colony, was granted 600 acres of what is now Somerville, and lived on this property which he called Ten Hills Farm, overlooking Mystic River. For over 300 years this name has clung to his acres and Somerville is often referred to as the city of hills. These hills have each some characteristic or were the scene of some event which makes them notable. Quarry Hill was the location of an old powder house, where munitions were stored at the time of the Revolutionary War. Forts were built on some of the other hills, including Prospect Hill, from which General Putnam unfurled his flag, and from which on January 1, 1776, The Great Union flag was flung to the breeze. This was the flag of the United Colonies and the first American flag of truly national import that ever waved in the face of a foe. In 1777, Burgoyne and his soldiers were held prisoners on Winter Hill. Ploughed Hill was the seat of the Ursuline Convent, destroyed by a mob in 1834. Central Hill, a part of Prospect Hill, was connected to the latter by a rampart in the Revolution. The City Hall, Library, and High School are now located on Central Hill.

The first years of the Colonists were years of hardship, peril, disease, and death. It was necessary to fell forests to obtain suitable clearings and lumber for houses. Land had to be prepared for farms and churches, and schools provided. The nearby Indians were a constant menace, the food was scarce, and there were no adequate means to combat sickness, but despite these hardships in a strange land, the satisfaction of knowing that they were accomplishing something worthwhile added to the simple joys of their quiet life, compensating for their sorrows.

The land between Washington Street and Broadway, from the present Charlestown line to the Old Powder House, was known to the first inhabitants as the "Stinted Pasture", or "Cow Commons", each inhabitant of Charlestown having the right to pasture a certain number of cows thereon. An hour after sunrise, a herdsman blew his horn to collect the cattle, and drove them to the best grazing places on the common.

Cattle-raising, farming, fishing, bartering with the Indians, hunting, brick making, and quarrying were among the early occupations of the Colonists. Oysters were plentiful, and because of the large quantities of fish available, weirs were built across Alewife Brook. Alewives were used as fertilizer for the cornfields, because they were to be had in such abundance.

In the home, the housewife cooked the food, carded wool, spun the yarn, and in most cases wove the cloth and fashioned the garments needed for her family. The children worked almost as hard as their parents. The family life in those homes was simple and sweet. As a rule there was a morning and evening service of scripture reading and prayer at the humble family altar and the members of the household worked and rested with the serenity of true Christians.

In this manner, for more than a century, the settlers and their descendants went on, with soil and sea furnishing years of plenty and years of privation. This period, though unmarked by events of unusual importance to Somerville, was not without excitement. Witchcraft, claimed one victim at least, who was executed in Charlestown

about 1645, and forty-two years later, shook the whole of pious New England; King Philip's war, in 1675 – 1676; the revocation of the state charter, and Andros' rule, from 1686 to 1689; King William's War, from 1690 to 1697, Queen Anne's War, from 1702 to 1713; and King George's War, from 1744 to 1748; during which Louisburg was captured by Massachusetts and other colonial troops; and later, the French and Indian War, resulting in the capture of Montreal and Quebec, - without a doubt each brought their glories and their grieves to the early inhabitants of Somerville.

The fetters of England's rule were gradually tightening around the New England men who aspired to be absolutely free, and the treatment by King George and his ministers grew continually more autocratic and oppressive. In 1774 a long series of restrictions on the part of the British Government culminated in the enactment of the Boston Port Bill, which placed a disastrous embargo on Boston and Charlestown, amounting to a complete blockade of the port upon which the welfare of the people depended.

The British sent over strong military and naval forces to intimidate the colonists. On Somerville soil one of the first hostile acts on the part of the British occurred, when on September 1, 1774, they came up the Mystic River from Boston, landed at Ten Hills Farm, crossed to Broadway, and thence to the Powder House, from which they took two hundred and fifty casks of powder belonging to towns in the vicinity. From there they went to Cambridge, and seized the cannon that they found on the Common.

The loss of the powder was serious and the Colonists were alarmed. The next day hundreds of minutemen were marching toward Boston from all directions; and had further seizures been attempted, an army of many thousands would have been assembled to oppose them.

After the British raid on the Powder House and Cambridge Common, the colonists removed their remaining guns and war material to Concord and other distant towns. But English officers in disguise soon discovered the hiding places, so that the patriots were in constant suspense, feeling that other seizures would be attempted. Watch was kept on all ways out of Boston by land or by water, so as to detect instantly any movement of the King's troops, to promptly alarm the country, and call together the minutemen. Thirty men organized a company, and took turns, "two and two", at this watch. One of these men was Paul Revere.

Several days before the march to Concord, the preparations observed aboard the transports and other boats in the harbor caused a suspicion that some formidable expedition was intended; and "the town watches at Boston, Charlestown, and Cambridge, were ordered to look well to the landing places". About this time a lady in Boston sent word to Samuel Adams and John Hancock, who were at Lexington, that within a few days troops would leave the town; but that their destination was unknown. On the 18th of April, 1775, Dr. Warren learned that the soldiers were moving toward Back Bay. He believed their object was to capture Adams and Hancock, and at once sent William Dawes, by way of Roxbury, and Paul Revere, by way of Charlestown to Lexington.

Revere arranged for signals to be displayed from the steeple of the North Church – two lanterns if the British went by water; one, if by land. He had already displayed a lantern from Christ’s Church to warn Charlestown that the troops had begun their march. He was rowed across the river, past the man-of-war “Somerset”, only a few minutes before her sentinels were ordered to stop all boats. He landed in Charlestown where a good horse awaited him, and set out on his midnight errand.

Soon after passing Charlestown Neck he saw, beneath a tree, two horsemen whom he discovered to be British officers. One tried to get ahead of him, and the other to take him. He turned his horse quickly and galloped towards Charlestown Neck, escaping by way of Broadway. The officer who followed endeavoring to cut him off, got into a clay pit, and Revere eluding him, continued through Somerville, over Broadway and Main Street, to Medford and to Arlington. It is said that on his way Revere galloped over to Ten Hills Farm and signaled back to Charlestown from the barn there.

While Dawes and Revere were setting out on their night alarm, Lieutenant-Colonel Smith, of the tenth British, with eight hundred men, marched to the foot of the Common, and at about 10 P.M., crossed Charles River and landed at East Cambridge, near the site of the Court House. As it was nearly high tide, East Cambridge was an island and the troops, skirting the marshes, were obliged to wade “thigh deep” to reach Somerville. They probably came through Prospect Street into Washington Street, and through Union Square, to Lexington and Concord, where a warm welcome awaited them, and they were to suffer ignominious defeat in an engagement with valiant Minute Men and the rudely-armed farmers, who fired the shot heard “round the world”.

After their repulse at Concord, the retreating British, at Lexington, met Lord Percy, who had been sent by way of Brighton and Cambridge with reinforcements. They continued their retreat, constantly harassed by the Americans, through Menotomy (Arlington), North Avenue and Beech Street in Cambridge, and entered Elm Street, Somerville on the run, receiving as they came, a hot fire from the Minute-Men, who were stationed in the woods nearby. Most of the people living on the line of retreat fled to Medford on the approach of the British. Lord Percy planted his artillery on the northwesterly spur of Spring Hill, and continued, and, in confusion, hot and exhausted, his troops hurried down Milk Row. In the words of one of the officers “We were attacked on all sides, from woods, orchards, stone walls, and every house”.

Some of the hottest fighting occurred along the base of Prospect Hill, and here the troops had recourse to their cannon again, with little effect, however. As they passed the house owned by Samuel Shedd, a soldier entered and began ransacking a bureau. He was shot in the act by a Minute Man. A little beyond, on the side of a hill, James Miller and another Minute Man were firing on the British from behind a stone wall when they were suddenly cut off and fire upon by a flanking party of the enemy. Miller, when urged to escape, made the heroic reply, “I am too old to run”, and continued firing at the approaching foe until he fell, pierced by thirteen bullets. It was nearly night when the troops passed down this part of Washington Street, and eight o’clock in the evening when they reached Charlestown Neck, their course down Washington Street being visible in

Boston by the flashes of their guns. Meanwhile, some several hundred Minute Men were hurrying over Broadway to intercept them, but were unsuccessful. The killing of Edward Barber, near the Neck, and the capture of an officer of the Sixty-fourth Regiment closed the day.

Shortly after the battle of Lexington the Provincial Congress voted to raise troops, and soon fifteen thousand men were assembled near Boston, under command of General Artemus Ward, a veteran of former wars. Meanwhile the British had removed to Boston, and the peninsular of Charlestown became neutral ground. The Americans, fearing the destruction of the town if they occupied it, placed a guard near the "Neck" to prevent communication with the enemy, and shortly after, Colonel Patterson, with a regiment of about 400 men, was stationed at the foot of Prospect Hill. The guard house was on top of the hill, and earthworks were begun near Union Square, by suggestion of the committee of safety, who recommended also that Prospect, Winter and Bunker Hills be fortified.

On the 16th of June, 1775, Colonel Prescott was ordered to occupy Bunker Hill, and in the evening, with a force of about a thousand men, and their entrenching tools, he marched silently through Washington Street and Union Square to Charlestown, where at a council of war it was determined to fortify Breed's Hill in place of Bunker Hill. In the morning Colonel Prescott sent for reinforcements, and troops from Medford and Somerville were sent forward. A little later, the news that the British had landed reached Cambridge, and bells were rung and drums beat "to arms". Patterson's position at the foot of Prospect Hill was strengthened, and additional forces were sent to Prescott, few of which at that time succeeded in reaching him, as the English frigates in the Mystic and Charles Rivers rained an incessant fire of shot and shell across Charlestown Neck and into Somerville. At the beginning of the bombardment, the remaining inhabitants of the peninsula fled across the Neck into or through Somerville to places of safety.

During the battle which followed, all reserves were formed in Somerville, and through here all reinforcements were sent. The wounded were also brought here. Some of the reinforcements, instead of pressing forward to the field of battle, took a position on Cobble Hill, from which they opened an ineffectual artillery fire on the British boats. For this and other disobedience of orders, several officers were court-martialed. After the battle the Americans withdrew to Prospect and Winter Hills, which they immediately began to fortify.

In the memorable siege which followed this battle, Somerville held perhaps the most prominent place. Its heights were of the greatest strategic importance, and were a most formidable flank for the American lines. On Prospect, Central, Winter, Convent, and Cobble Hills were built the Citadel and other invincible works of the besieging army, which commanded the Mystic and Charles Rivers and the road over Charlestown Neck, and effectually hemmed in the British in that direction. From some of these eminences the bombardment on the enemy's shipping and lines was incessant, and was as fiercely returned and these works bore the brunt of the nine month's siege, which began with the battle of Bunker Hill, and ended with the evacuation of Boston,. It was during this siege, that the Great Union Flag, bearing thirteen stripes, was first unfurled in the face of a foe,

January 1, 1776, and there it continued to fly till the end of the siege, when it was transferred to the forts which had been surrendered by the British.

From the evacuation of Boston, in March, 1776, to the surrender of Burgoyne in October, 1777, no event of military importance took place here. After his surrender, Burgoyne's troops were marched to Somerville, and remained as prisoners of war until the fall of 1778. The English soldiers were encamped on Prospect Hill and vicinity, and the Hessians on Winter Hill, and were guarded by Massachusetts troops, under the command of General Heath. By the terms of surrender the prisoners were to be allowed "free passage" to Great Britain from Boston; but Congress failed to ratify this promise, and the prisoners became very unruly and insolent, and as they had been allowed to keep their side arms and horses it required the utmost vigilance to keep them under subjection. They remained here until the fall of 1778, when they were removed to Rutland, and later to Virginia.

The War of the Revolution over, the residents of Somerville were again able to devote their energies wholeheartedly to the business of making a living. Many new industries sprung up, the most important from a monetary standpoint being the manufacture of bricks. Brick yards were to be found in several localities, and long after the manufacture of this commodity was given up in Somerville, unsightly and dangerous clay pits remained, many of them filled with water, a serious menace to the children of the community. Lincoln Park and Broadway Park are located on spots where the pits once stood. Stone quarrying was also carried on, while dairy farming assumed such proportions that the main thoroughfare across Somerville, from Charlestown to North Cambridge, was called Milk Row.

Middlesex Canal, the first canal of any considerable length in this country, passed through the northern part of Somerville. It connected the Merrimac River at Lowell with the Charles River at Charlestown. In 1793 a corporation was formed, and the canal was pushed to completion by Governor James Sullivan. It was completed in 1803. The difference in level between the two rivers was one hundred and four feet, and it required twenty locks in the twenty-seven miles. The canal was about four feet deep and thirty feet wide. The boats for freight were of twenty-four tons burden, and plied between Concord, N.H. and Boston, a distance of seventy-five miles. The cost of the canal was \$1,164,200. It took about twelve hours to go from Boston to Lowell, and from seven to ten days to go from Concord to Boston. The business of the canal was the transportation of freight and passengers. Many of the boats were owned by private individuals, but paid a certain tax to the company. Before the Lowell railroad was built, the canal did a large business, carrying cotton for the mills and merchandise for all the northern country, and bringing back cargoes of up-river products, and large rafts of lumber from the upper Merrimac to Boston.

Now came a period of growth. Not only was there an increase in the population, but in the prosperity of the section. Besides the above mentioned industries, there were also established a bleachery and dye works, rope walks, a pottery, grist mill, distillery, glass factory, saw mills, and a later date, slaughtering and rendering establishments. The

Bleachery, incorporated in 1821, was the only one of these early works that survived to this century and went out of Somerville only a few years ago.

A growing discontent in the minds of those living outside the "Neck" was steadily increasing. There were no churches and hardly any school facilities. Roads were impassable and living conditions very poor. The distance from the seat of government was also a source of annoyance to the people of Somerville, especially to those who lived in the northern section. In fact, the latter repeatedly petitioned the General Court to be annexed to Cambridge and West Cambridge, to which they were nearer, and with which their interests were more in common. Nathaniel Prentiss and four of his neighbors were taken into Cambridge, forming a small rectangular projection into the present western boundary of the city, but the rest of the inhabitants were ignored. By the time Somerville became a town, however, the residents of Charlestown beyond Alewife Brook had already been received into the fold of West Cambridge.

Other causes, more powerful than those already mentioned, operated in the founding of the town of Somerville. The section paid taxes but received little benefit from them. Somerville was merely a district of Charlestown where farmers lived and needs were seldom considered. The people of Charlestown were not satisfied with existing conditions either. For many years after the Revolution the two parts of Charlestown styled "within" and "without the neck" were nearly equal in population; the former had by this time completely outstripped the latter. With this growth of population and trade came the need of city institutions, and consequently greater expenses were involved. Therefore, the rural part of Charlestown found herself contributing to the paving of the streets, the maintenance of a night watch, to the building of engine houses, and reservoirs, and various other improvements from which she derived little benefit. Hence it was that these two parts of the town, which had been gradually growing apart and unlike, finally, in 1842, fell asunder.

While some discussion had been held in the summer, and more interest had been manifested in the matter of a separation than for several years before, an incident that immediately led up to the petition for the incorporation of a new town named Somerville, took place on a certain November day in the year 1841. Colonel Asa Pritchard, who lived on Washington Street, between Medford and Boston Streets, rushed into the railroad office where Charles E. Gilman and Hiram Hacett were employed, said he was disgusted at living in such a neglected and undesirable part of Charlestown, and declared he would pay no more taxes in the town. Mr. Gilman jokingly proposed that they should form a new town, where affairs could be conducted to their liking, and from this seed the tree took root. They thereupon prepared and posted notices for a meeting of the people, to be held on November 22 at the Prospect Hill schoolhouse, to consider the question of founding a new town.

At this meeting a committee was appointed to learn the minds of the residents of the district regarding the proposed step. At a later meeting a committee was appointed to ascertain the amount of money annually expended outside the "Neck". This committee reported that in their opinion, a new town might be maintained for a somewhat smaller

sum than had usually been raised from the district. A petition was accordingly drawn up and signed by Guy C. Hawkins and 151 others, and a committee deputed to further its passage through the Legislature, then in session. The inhabitants of Charlestown were at first favorably disposed to the petition, but after some objections from the "Neck Village" they declared their opposition to any division that should not fix the boundaries at the line of the Lowell Railroad. At a late hour of the discussion in the Legislature, with the prospect of a postponement to another session, a compromise was effected, by which the easterly limits were defined as they now exist, and that part of Charlestown extending from Alewife Brook to the old Woburn line was annexed to West Cambridge. Thus modified, the act passed the Legislature, and was approved by the Governor March 3, 1842.

The people of the new town were overjoyed at becoming independent. One hundred guns were fired from Prospect Hill, and a grand ball was held on the evening of the sixteenth, at Murdock's Hotel, which 300 ladies and gentlemen attended, including delegations from the neighboring towns. Dancing "with great spirit till eleven o'clock", the company then sat down to supper, after which the dancing was resumed till "some hours after the witching time of night".

The town, when incorporated, was rather small, having a population of 1,013, two hundred houses, no store (John Ireland's grocery in Milk Row was burned in December, 1841), and while at one time there had been three taverns, there were none now. Four one-storied wooden schoolhouses, a few ledges of rock, a pound, and an engine house housing a feeble tub engine, the whole having a value of \$6,655, constituted the public property of the new town. No church then or ever had existed within her limits. There were, however, a bleaching establishment, the two twine and rope factories of Geddes on Washington Street, and of Allen, where Allen Street now runs, and Runey's Pottery. The pound was used as a jail, and the schools, only one of which had been in existence twenty years, were attended by 293 pupils, and were located as follows: The Prospect Hill Grammar and Primary, each occupied a room in a long, low structure at the junction of Shawmut and Medford Streets, at the approximate location of the present Central Square, where the Central Fire Station is now located. The building was afterwards moved to the corner of Somerville Avenue and Prospect Street. The lower Winter Hill Primary, at the westerly corner of Broadway and Franklin Street, the upper Winter Hill Primary, on the westerly side of Central Street, near the corner of Broadway, the Milk Row Primary, in the eastern corner of the cemetery lot. As the schoolhouse of the Walnut Hill district was within the limits of the territory annexed to West Cambridge, that district was temporarily without a school building.

The houses were scattered along the main highways and were not close enough in any part to form a village. The inhabitants were engaged in various pursuits, mostly within the town itself and those who had an established business in Boston were very few. Brickmaking was the town's most important industry and was carried on by many of the residents, and furnished employment for many men from Maine and New Hampshire also. Somerville, however, was essentially an agricultural district, and by far the principal occupation of her people was farming in its various branches.

But few streets had been built in the preceding century and a half and the farms extended almost without interruption over the central region lying between the Winter Hill road on the one side and the Cambridge and Milk Row roads on the other. Three-pole Lane, corresponding to Shawmut and Cross Streets, had always been maintained as a thorough-fare, and the Rangeway, now Central Street, had been but little encroached on, but the range ways, generally, were fenced in, and had been more or less improved by the owners of the adjoining farms and where there was an open way it was merely a rough inlet for the field carts, impassable for light vehicles. Middle Lane, from a point on Cross Street opposite Tufts Street to Central Street, pursued a devious way, the middle path of which is the present Highland Avenue.

Medford and Prospect Streets, and that section of Somerville Avenue now between Union Square and Medford Street had been built many years; but Linwood Street and the remainder of Somerville Avenue to the East Cambridge line, - the latter "a miserable apology for a road" were just coming into being. Beacon Street existed, but still under the name of the old Middlesex Turnpike. West Somerville had only a few houses dotted over its territory, and East Somerville had but a few along its edges. Spring Hill had just been named and was being laid out in house lots and streets, largely through the enterprise of a then nonresident, George O. Brastow.

The first business of the new municipality was to organize a government, and that was done at a town meeting held in the Prospect Hill Schoolhouse on the 14th of March. Such officers as had been previously nominated in caucus were elected. Nathan Tufts, chairman; John S. Edgerly, Caleb W. Leland, Luther Mitchell and Francis Bowman constituted the first Board of Selectmen; and Charles E. Gilman and Edmund Tufts were chosen the first town clerk and the first treasurer and collector, respectively. At a meeting on April 4th, the following appropriations were voted: For the support of schools, \$1,800; maintenance of highways, \$2,000; county tax, \$450; support of the poor, \$200; contingencies, \$300; a total of \$4,700.

After the town was organized, the people gave their attention to the establishment of Christian worship, and a Sunday School was started in the Medford Street Schoolhouse, by Miss Elizabeth P. Whitredge, a teacher in the public schools. Around this school was formed the First Congregational Society, which worshipped in the old engine house on Washington Street from March, 1844, till a church edifice was erected the following year.

Nothing worthy of note occurred in the first decade of the new town's life. Little was done in the way of improvement and few public works were attempted. It was a problem to keep the poorly constructed roads in repair and to provide proper school accommodations, for by the year 1850 the population had more than trebled, having reached 3,540. The annual expenditures had correspondingly increased, and a town debt of \$20,000 had been incurred, equal to one-half the value of the public property. The schools, whose attendance had more than doubled, were receiving an annual

appropriation of between five and six thousand dollars. Land advanced in price and continued to advance until the financial crisis of 1857.

The growth of Somerville can be attributed to the form of transportation which was coming into use throughout the country, the railroad. By the year 1842 the horn of the canal boat could no longer be heard.

The days of staging were also fast passing away and a new era was dawning. The work of transforming this farming district into a city of homes for the business people of Boston had begun. In the year 1850 a patron of the railroad traveled to Boston for less than it would cost today.

The next ten years saw great progress in Somerville and many institutions of various kinds were established. Highland Avenue was extended from Ireland's Rangeway, or School Street, to Central Street and several houses were erected on it. East Somerville had many more streets and houses and was fast becoming a populous and important part of the town. During this period five church organizations were formed. In 1852, a long desired high school was established, and the present City Hall built for its accommodation. The lower story of this building was fitted up for town purposes, and after ten years of meeting in different places, - now at the Medford Street schoolhouse, again at the engine house, and later in the vestry of the first church, - the town had, for the first time in its history, an appropriate public hall.

In 1851 the first Somerville directory was issued, a pamphlet of thirty-two pages, which contained 590 names, mostly the heads of families. It was printed by Edmund Tufts, the town printer, in the old Tufts house at the corner of Broadway and Central Street. Six hundred copies were issued, costing the town \$63.50.

In 1853 the Somerville Light Infantry was organized, and George O. Brastow became its first captain. From the year 1854 until Somerville became a city, criminal cases were tried by Francis Tufts, at first in his office on Washington Street, at the corner of Medford Street, and later, in 1861, in the old Medford Street school building, which had been removed to Prospect Street. Gas came to Somerville in 1853 and six years later street lamps were installed, and about this time, a uniform plan for sidewalks was adopted.

The year 1858 witnessed the advent of horse-cars which some of our citizens predicted would "add to the future prosperity of the town", one line through Broadway and another through Elm, Milk and Washington Streets, through Charlestown to Boston. In 1863, tracks were laid from Union Square to East Cambridge, and a line was operated from West Somerville direct to Boston.

By the year 1860 the population had become 8,025, and the number of houses 1,282. The taxable property was valued at \$5,760.00 and the debt was \$90,924. There were 1,707 pupils in the twenty-four schools presided over by five male and twenty-four female teachers.

The few remaining years of the town's life were very active. The population was rapidly increasing, business was good, land was advancing in value, and large public and private enterprises were entered upon. In 1866 the fire department was reorganized; in 1867 the first public sewers were laid; and in the following year, Mystic water took the place of wells, cisterns, and fire reservoirs. A grand ball and supper with appropriate exercises were held on March 21, 1867, to commemorate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the incorporation of the town. It was also the occasion of the dedication of the Town Hall in the new Forster School building.

In 1870, Post 139, G.A.R. was organized, while in the same year the police department was reorganized, and a regular day and night patrol placed on duty. The Lexington and Arlington Branch railroad was constructed, and the West Somerville section began to grow very rapidly.

At the close of 1870, the population had become 14,685 and the number of dwellings 3,061. Two years later the valuation was estimated at \$15,775,000, and the debt \$593,349, against a public property valuation of nearly \$700,000. The schools now numbered fifty-two, sixty-five teachers were employed, and the town spent upwards of \$50,000 annually on this department.

The time had at last come when the public affairs of the town had become too important and complex for the old town machinery and a delegated form of government was demanded. Sentiment in favor of annexation to Boston was strong in some quarters, but it was voted to ask for a city charter. A petition was presented to the Legislature early in 1871, and on the fourteenth of April, 1871, the charter was granted. It was accepted by the people at a town meeting held April 21. By the provisions of the charter, on the first day of January, 1872, Somerville became a city.

When the news of the fall of Fort Sumter came, Somerville, then a town of about nine thousand inhabitants, promptly responded to the demands of patriotism. Many war meetings were held and enlistments went on amid great enthusiasm. Committees were formed for recruiting, for raising funds, and for sending supplies.

On April 15, 1861, President Lincoln issued his first call for troops, and on the 19th the Somerville Light Artillery, under command of Captain George O. Brastow and Lieutenants Frederick R. Kinsley and William E. Robinson, left Faneuil Hall on their way as Company I, Fifth Regiment. In the Battle of Bull Run, the Fifth took an active part, and at the close of its three months' term of enlistment it was mustered out and returned home.

In the spring of 1862, Company I, now under command of Captain William E. Robinson, again tendered its services to the governor, but they were not required.

In June, 1862, the call for three-years' men was issued, and a company known as the Somerville Guards was formed, under the command of Captain Frederick R. Kinsley.

The company encamped on Prospect Hill, and once more that summit was thronged with men armed in the cause of liberty. They were ordered to Boxford, and September 6, 1862, as Company E, Thirty-ninth Regiment, left for Washington; from there they went to Arlington Heights, and thence into winter quarters at Poolesville, Maryland. In the spring of 1863, after three months' service at Washington, the company was transferred to the Army of the Potomac, and served throughout that terrible campaign from Mine Run to Appomattox, including the battles of the Wilderness, Spotsylvania, North Anna, Toloptymy, Bethesda Church, Petersburg, Weldon Railroad, Debney's Mills, Gravelly Run, and Five Forks; and, with diminished ranks, it returned to Somerville at the close of the war. At Gravelly Run, Captain Willard C. Kinsley, in whose memory the G.A.R. Post in Somerville was named, was mortally wounded.

The Somerville Light Infantry, with Captain Benjamin F. Parker in command, was again mustered in for nine months on September 19, 1862, and after encamping on Prospect Hill and at Camp Lander, the company sailed October 22 for Newburn, North Carolina. It was now Company B, Fifth Regiment. Two days later the regiment was ordered to Washington. On the 21st of November, 1862, it set out for Williamstown, a march of over one hundred and sixty miles, and on December 10th, the regiment took part in the expedition against Weldon Railroad.

July 25, 1864, the Light Infantry was mustered into service for the third time, with Captain John Coffin commanding, and July 28th, the company left once more for the South, pledged for one hundred days' service. Part of the regiment to which the company belonged was sent to Fort McHenry, and part of Fort Marshall, at which places and in Baltimore it did effective duty in guarding prisoners and cutting off supplies until the expiration of its term of enlistment. As a part of the Eighth Army Corps, it was sent to reinforce Sheridan in the Shenandoah Valley.

The regularly organized companies did not account for all of the Somerville men who took part in this war. The names of hundreds are to be found on the rolls of the volunteer infantry, cavalry, and artillery organizations of Massachusetts and other states and many more joined the engineer service, the regular army, and the navy. The town, in all, supplied 1,135 men for the army, of whom forty were commissioned officers, and of these, 250 were wounded, and ninety-eight killed in battle or died from sickness or injuries. The people at home were not idle while their men were away; \$200,000 or more were raised toward the support of the Union cause, and everything possible was done to lessen the hardships of the men in camps and hospitals.

The man chosen to be the first mayor of the newly made city was George O. Brastow, who had taken a leading part in Somerville affairs for many years. Aaron Sargent became City Treasurer, and Charles E. Gilman, City Clerk. The following comprised the Board of Aldermen: William H. Furber, Daniel E. Chase, Jacob T. Glines, Clark Bennett, John G. Hall, Horace Haskins, Parson Davis, and John R. Poor; Selwyn Z. Bowman was the City Solicitor.

Trunk sewers from Cambridge through Somerville was one of the important accomplishments of the first administrations. In 1874, the first of the parts was constructed from sixteen acres of land between the Winter Hill and Mount Benedict sections of the city. Bridges on Washington, Medford, and other streets were built between 1878 and 1880. A police signal system and electric street lighting were introduced in 1878. a water service for the higher parts of the city was established in 1890. The heirs of Nathan Tufts donated the property with the old Powder House to the city in 1890, and the following year land was secured around it to make a park, which was opened in 1893. The English High School, more fire stations, additional parks, parkways, and bridges, extension of the sewer system and many more improvements marked the closing years of the century.

The nineteenth century was not to close however, until the young men of Somerville were put to another test of loyalty and valor. To quote from an address given by the Honorable Albion A. Perry, Mayor of Somerville in 1896, '97, and '98, on July 3, 1922: " I need not tell you that there was no faltering when the call of country again sounded in their ears. Cheerfully they put on the uniform and embarked for the fair Cuban Isle to end the torture and butchery which Spanish soldiers were engaged in at our very doors. More than this: To them was assigned the righteous task of avenging the unprovoked act of perfidy on the part of Spain, by which an American warship was destroyed in the harbor of Havana, and the mangled bodies of hundreds of our gallant sailors and marines were buried in the waters of the sea. Every duty demanded of our soldier boys in that short but important war was performed with courage and alacrity. Our Spanish War veterans are worthy sons of the sires whose valiant deeds were recorded in blood on the fields of Shiloh, Antietam, and Gettysburg".

Somerville has grown steadily since it was first settled, as can be seen from the following census figures:

1842	1,013
1850	3,540
1860	8,025
1870	14,685
1880	24,933
1890	40,152
1900	61,643
1910	77,236
1920	93,091
1930	103,908
1940	102,304

The latter figure constitutes a tremendous number of people occupying a territory of only 4.2 square miles, in fact, Somerville is said to have a greater population for its size than any other city in the country.

There are about 126 industries in the city, which employ almost 6,000 people, while 31,752 actually find employment here. We have eight financial institutions with resources of about \$57,000,000. The retail business comprises over six miles of store frontage, scattered along the principal streets, and in the following squares: Davis, Union, Teele, Powder House, Cutter, Ball Wilson, Magoun, Gerrior and Gilman.

Transportation service is excellent. The Boston and Maine Railroad has stations in Somerville, and the Boston Elevated has lines to or connecting with other lines to all surrounding cities. The trackless trolley has, in this year of 1942, replaced most of the street cars and is proving to be quicker, less noisy, and more comfortable. The Boston & Albany Railroad and the New York Central Lines are within the Boston switching lines and take care of a portion our freight, the remainder being handled by motor truck service. There are main highways in all directions, and a channel in the Mystic River leading to Boston Harbor.