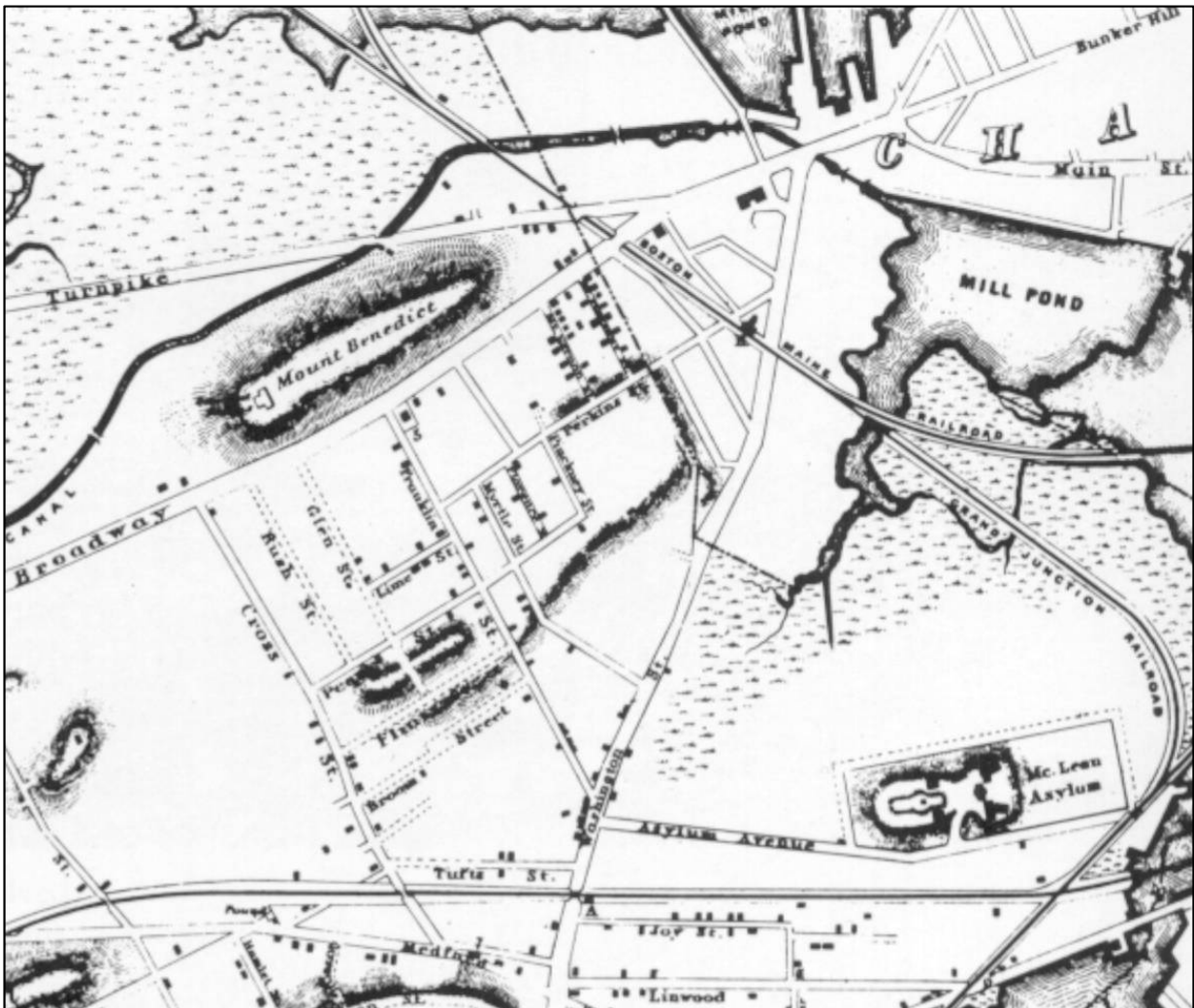


Hidden in Plain Sight: Eyes on Historic East Somerville

Meeting Place: In front of the Mt. Vernon Restaurant at 14 Broadway, on the Charlestown-Somerville border. The tour will take approximately two hours. At the end participants are encouraged to continue their exploration of East Somerville and have a bite to eat and drink at one of the many culinary spots in the neighborhood, along Broadway.

East Somerville ranks among the oldest neighborhoods in Somerville, tracing its development back before the Town was incorporated independent of Charlestown in 1842. It is also among the City's largest neighborhoods -- bounded by the Sullivan Square section of Charlestown on the east, the Washington Street/B&M rail corridor on the south, the McGrath and O'Brien Highway on the west, and the Mystic River on the north. Its proximity to a major east-west highway--Broadway--as well as the construction of railroad stations at the periphery of the area during the 1830s and 1840s strongly influenced the initial development of this neighborhood. Because East Somerville has historically been a neighborhood for over 160 years, it has a multi-layered built environment that can be explored via a variety of tour routes. This particular tour will showcase the variety of housing options available to families of all income levels, from Greek Revival and Italianate residences of the 1840s and 1850s, to modest mid-nineteenth century cottages, to substantial post Civil War Mansard Style "trophy houses." We'll also view neighborhood



houses of worship, and discuss ongoing and proposed renovation projects of public buildings along Broadway.

The tour will focus on some of the most distinctive aspects of East Somerville architecture and history: 1) the sometimes unexpected architectural elements and outbuildings of the area between Broadway and Pearl Street; 2) the rich inventory of modest workers' housing bordering lower Franklin Street between Pearl and Washington Streets; 3) the evolution of the Washington Street area, where industry once thrived and McLean's Asylum existed on Cobble Hill, and where we can still view one of Somerville's few remaining eighteenth century houses, as well as a vintage diner that serves up hearty breakfasts and lunches; 4) the presence of several architecturally eclectic institutional buildings like Victorian era churches and a Georgian/Art Deco school; and 5) the historical development of Broadway, which has served as a major transportation corridor all the way back to the mid 1600s when it was known as the "Winter Hill Road" or the "Road to Medford," and hosted part of Paul Revere's famous "Midnight Ride" in the founding days of our nation.

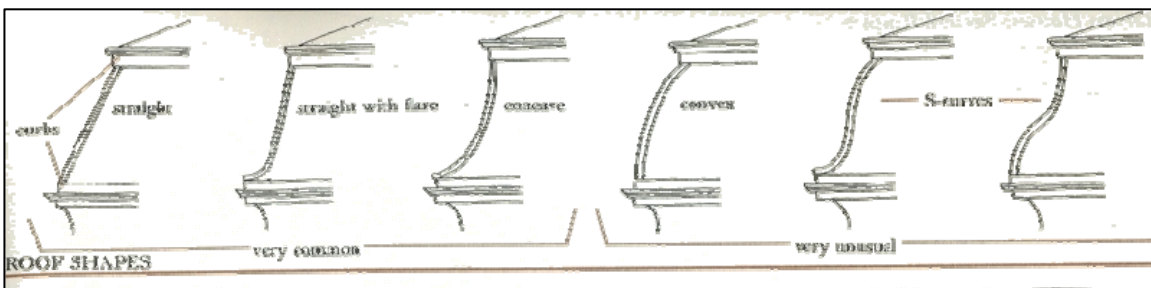
From our meeting place proceed westward to the intersection of Broadway and George Street.



Set out by surveyor Thomas Greaves as early as 1636, Broadway or the "Winter Hill Road" connected Charlestown with Medford. Initially bordered by farmsteads, Broadway came into its own as a commercial thoroughfare after horse-drawn trolleys were introduced to this venerable highway in 1858. We'll talk more about Broadway's development at the end of the tour. As early as 1750, a fairly substantial Georgian Style

farmhouse was located opposite the intersection of George Street with Broadway. Originally located on the site of 47 Broadway, the Stearn's farmhouse rose two-stories to a hip roof. The clapboard-clad, highly symmetrical, five-main facade featured a central entrance. The Stearns family was initially engaged in farming. By the 1830s they operated a distillery at Neck Village (Sullivan Square) and during the 1840s and 1850s they were actively selling off the family lands south of Broadway.

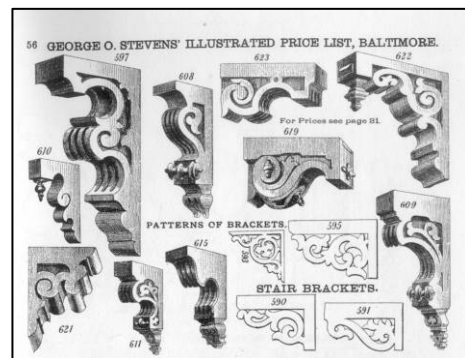
Continuing southward to Lincoln Avenue we'll stop to admire Mansard Style residences that were built right after the Civil War.



The first double-pitched mansard-roofed house in the United States was built as early as 1847 in Boston's South End neighborhood. Emanating from Napoleon III's Paris, the so-called "modern French roof" permitted more head room than a gable-roofed attic, and in fact, was represented a full top floor that was often used to accommodate servants, children and storage. The mansard-roofed houses of Lincoln Avenue were built for a prosperous middle-class representing "new money" made in coal dealing (**12-14 Lincoln Avenue**) or working the Boston waterfront as a wharf worker or stevedore (**20 Lincoln Avenue**).



Although most of the early 1870's houses on Lincoln Avenue have been altered to one degree or another, a closer look reveals some remaining original details, such as two-story polygonal bays and pedimented dormers on the double Mansard Style townhouse at #12-14, distinctive wheel-shaped brackets at the door hood of #19, and a saw-cut bracketed door hood, arched attic window, and return eaves at the end gable house at #20.



From Lincoln Avenue we'll turn left onto Lincoln Street and right onto Arlington Street.



Situated at the corner of Arlington and Lincoln Streets is one of the most architecturally and historically significant residences in East Somerville.



One Arlington Street (see historical photo to the left) was built ca.1858 by Nathan Tufts, a member of the prominent Somerville family of tavern owners, farmers, philanthropists, and brickyard operators. Its boxy L-shaped volume is host to two generations of distinctive architectural ornamentation-- the original Italianate molded window surrounds, center gable, and oculus attic window on the main facade (with some windows surmounted by cast iron cresting), and the Eastlake Style punched and cut gingerbread detail on the front porch and center gable that was added during the mid-to-late 1870s.

The second owner, Charles Williams Jr., rented laboratory space at 109 Court Street, Boston, to none other than Alexander Graham Bell. Here, Bell invented the telephone in 1875, and one year later Charles Williams' house at 1

Arlington Street was the western terminus for the world's first commercial telephone line.

Heading west along Arlington Street, we'll be able to take a quick peek inside St. Benedict's Roman Catholic Church at the corner of Arlington and Hathorn Street.

Built in 1911 for the Italian and Irish families of the neighborhood, **St. Benedict's Roman Catholic Church** was one of the first Spanish Mission Style churches built in the Boston area. The Archdiocese of Boston's architect Edward Sheehan provided the parish with a stucco-covered brick building with a distinctive corner tower. Sadly, the stucco and corner tower disappeared during a 1963 renovation, but in recent years the sanctuary of the church has been beautifully renovated.



St. Benedict's was named in honor of Mt. Benedict, a hill that was once located north of Broadway, in the section of East Somerville where streets were named for American states. Mount Benedict was once host to an Ursuline Convent that was burned to the ground during anti-Catholic riots in 1834. The church is celebrating its 100th anniversary this year.



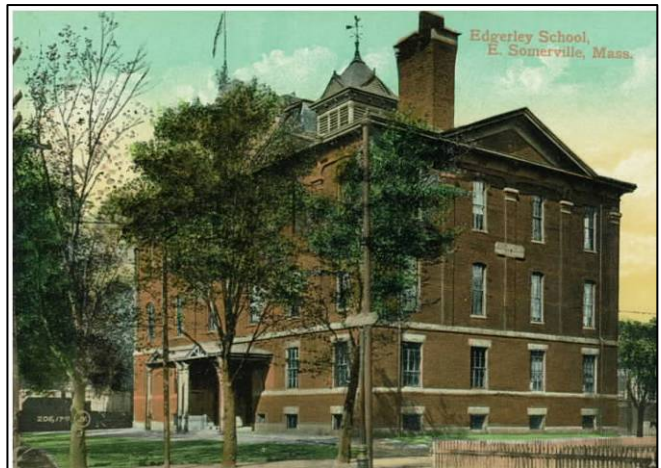
Next door to the church at **25 Arlington Street** is **St. Benedict's Rectory** which was built in 1934 on the site of an earlier rectory that was purchased by the church in 1912. This handsome, four square Tapestry brick residence memorably anchors the northeastern corner of Arlington and Franklin Streets.

Franklin Street and Cross Street (located several blocks to the west) are East Somerville's two "rangeways" that date back to the mid 1600s. These side streets served as interior roads that linked Broadway with Washington Street with interior farms every quarter mile. A total of ten rangeways run east-to-west across Somerville, from Franklin Street to North Street near current day Alewife Brook Parkway.



As we head south along Franklin Street, notice the buildings that form a distinctive node of religious buildings associated with St. Benedict's Roman Catholic Church, including the former convent (ca. 1910) and parochial school (c. 1923).

Our next stop is the **John Edgerly House** at **1 Webster Street**, at the corner of Franklin Street. Built during the early 1850s when the neighborhood was still very undeveloped, this house is a solid example of the Italianate Style, with an encircling verandah and molded entrance surrounds. During the 1890s, a Queen Anne oriel window was added to the second story of the main facade. John Edgerly, the original owner (1804-1872), was for many years the head of Somerville's School Committee; in fact, the Edgerly School on Cross Street was the second named in his honor. The third owner, Sanford Hanscomb, was a physician, who lived and worked there during the 1890s and early 1900s.



Presiding over the corner of Franklin and Perkins Streets at **157 Perkins Street** is an interesting Federal/Greek Revival residence built ca. 1850. During the late nineteenth century it was altered to accommodate commercial space that was known locally as Roger's Store. At some point during the 1980s, the storefronts and wood shingles on the first story were removed and replaced with clapboards that matched those of the second story. In addition, classicized door surrounds were reinstated around the recessed center entrance and the paneled pilasters at the building's corners were returned to their original two-story length.



From here, we'll proceed toward Pearl Street to view the Captain Edmund Burke House.

Built around 1870 as the home of a Boston sea captain, **70 Pearl Street** is a key component within Pearl Street's collection of substantial Mansard Style residences. After the Civil War, Pearl Street became East Somerville's most fashionable thoroughfare--a delightful, tree-shaded promenade bordered by the substantial residences of Somerville and Boston businessmen. This house retains many of its original features, including a boxy volume, charming porch with original chamfered posts, a pair of one-story polygonal bays at its main façade, and a straight-sided mansard roof with a bracketed cornice, single and double dormer windows, and slate shingles.



Captain Edmund Burke, the original owner of #70, was identified with the Boston-Azores citrus fruit trade, and is best remembered for a dramatic rescue at sea in 1863. Coming upon a ship, ironically named *Gratitude* that was in grave danger of sinking, he managed to save all of the passengers and crew by tossing overboard his valuable cargo to find a place for them on his own barque, the *Fredonia*. He brought them all back to safety in Boston Harbor where Captain Burke was given a hero's welcome by Mayor Lincoln and throngs of well wishers standing along the downtown waterfront.

Located near the crest of the unnamed ridge that is located just to the south of Pearl Street, **47 Franklin Street** was built ca.1869-1871 by and for Alonzo Bowers, a carpenter and housewright. Bowers was responsible for many of the large Mansard Style residences in East Somerville, especially along Pearl Street. It is always interesting to see houses designed as residences for their builders or architects, and Bowers was particularly skilled at building houses with pleasing proportions--both in terms of the volume of its main block and the mansard roof. Also note how he has carried the roof of the front porch across the main facade of the house to enclose the bay window on the first story. Bowers lived here until at least 1895 and members of his family are listed at this address until as late as the mid 1940s.



As is often the case, topography determined where East Somerville families, representative of various income levels, would live. As we descend the steep southern slope of the unnamed ridge of this neighborhood, we have a panoramic view of modest workers' houses. They are of historical interest primarily for their siting, form, and surviving architectural elements. First we will visit the newly created **Flint Street Local Historic District (LHD)**. The five houses that comprise this LHD represent the last bastion of a comfortable gentry before the lands falls away



dramatically behind these houses. They represent, in microcosm, architectural styles in East Somerville dating from the period of 1857-1883. For example **14 Flint Street** (1857-1858) is a good example of an end gable Italianate house that retains its original oculus attic window and gable roof with return eaves. The original owner of this house was a member of Somerville's prominent Davis family. Much of this small district's charm is dependent on the presence of the nearly identical, side-by-side double houses at **11-13** and **15-17 Flint Street**. Built between 1858 and 1862, these narrow side-gable houses are of interest for their full-length porches and especially for their six, rather

than five-bay main facades. **16-18 Flint Street** provides evidence that the mansard roof still made appearances here and there as late as the mid 1880s. Built for a John Nickerson, this double house probably represents the work of carpenter-builder Alonzo Bowers. **22 Flint Street** was built in 1857-1858 for Patrick Donohoe of Boston who may have been a fairly recent Irish immigrant whose success in business enabled him to buy this substantial Italianate residence. Still extant is the encircling verandah, paired brackets at the roof eaves, as well as arched attic windows. The second owner was a "goods dealer" named Charles Davis.



From Flint Street we'll return to Franklin Street to head south in the direction of Washington Street.

Built ca. 1855-58, **52 Franklin Street**, like most of the workers' cottages in the area bordering the north side of Washington Street, is of interest because of its distinctive gable-roofed form. This house is difficult to categorize stylistically, although its end gable orientation to the street and presumed side hall interior plan are typical of Greek Revival and Italianate vernacular houses. The pair of gable-roofed dormers on the south roof slope, however, would look more at home on much earlier Federal and Greek Revival dwellings. The original clapboards were removed in 1943 and replaced by wood shingles. The early owners of this house included an Edward Blake and Joshua B. Stearns, a descendent of the Colonial era family that lived on Broadway opposite George Street. In 1858, Stearns sold this house to Abigail M.H. Constantine of Bedford, MA for \$2500. She probably had this house constructed as a rental income property as there is no evidence that she ever lived in East Somerville.



74 and 80 Franklin Street are both five-bay-by-two bay workers' housing constructed in 1850 that are primarily of historical interest due to their preserved siting and form. They are typical of modest houses built in the area during the mid-nineteenth century when industries bordering nearby Washington Street began to expand. Indeed, Bartlett and Page's spike and



tack factory encompassed a building that once stood at 78 Franklin Street, as well as several other factory buildings located behind **74 and 80 Franklin Street**. Started in the 1840s, Bartlett and Page, later known as Bartlett and Wood, and as



John Sylvester & Co by 1864, produced railroad spikes for track construction. They responded to the exponential expansion of regional and national railroad building that began after 1840. Bartlett and Page were neighbors of Galletley's Twine Company which is credited with being the first of the new industries built along the Washington Street/Fitchburg Railroad corridor around 1840. The Galletley factory once stood on the site of the Holiday Inn, on the south side of Washington Street.

*Before strolling towards Washington Street pause to consider the **Capuano Early Education Center**. Completed in 2006, the design of the school is an unusually good fit with the domestic architecture of its surrounds, as it incorporates the forms and roof configurations of neighboring structures. Turning right from Franklin Street onto Washington Street, we'll consider three aspects of the area's history, including the pre-1800 agricultural period, the "lost world" of the Joseph Barrell Estate, and a 1929 diner that further underscores the long history of Washington Street as a major east-west commercial highway.*

Washington Street, along with Broadway, was laid out as early as the mid 1630s by the English surveyor Thomas Greaves. Greave's was responsible for the semi-circular pattern of streets atop Harvard Hill in Charlestown and was granted an estate by King Charles I in what is now East Cambridge, and was previously called Greave's End, and later Lechmere Point. In its earliest days in the 1630s, Washington Street was known as the Road to Newtowne (later to be known as Cambridge). During the 1700s and early 1800s, Washington Street, together with Somerville Avenue, comprised "Milk Row," a route favored by Middlesex County dairy farmers as the best way to get to the markets of Charlestown and Boston. During the early 1840s, around the time of Somerville's incorporation as a town separate from Charlestown, Washington Street began to be lined with industrial concerns, including factories that produced twine, spikes, iron products and glass.

Built shortly after the American Revolution during the 1780s, **The Samuel Ireland House at 117 Washington Street** is a survivor from the pre-1800 agricultural /Milk Row period. This modest, center entrance, cape retains original moldings at the windows and roof eaves. Samuel Ireland, the house's original owner, was a farmer. He was a brother of Jonathan Ireland who owned the late eighteenth century house at 461 Somerville Avenue, opposite Dane Street.



Looking south across Washington Street at the modern industrial park, it is interesting to consider that a Federal Style mansion designed by Charles Bulfinch was once the focal point of this area. Built in 1794 atop Cobble Hill, the **Joseph Barrell Mansion** was known for its beautifully landscaped grounds, as well as one of the first greenhouses in the Boston area. A remnant of this great estate survives in the form of a double Bulfinch-designed staircase which now resides at the Somerville Museum on Westwood Road and Central Street.

In 1816, doctors from Massachusetts General Hospital purchased the Barrell Estate from the Barrell's-in-law, Benjamin Joy, for whom Joy Street in East Somerville is named. Subsequently the Barrell Mansion became the first home of **McLean's Asylum**, a facility charged with the care of mentally unstable members of genteel Boston families. The story of McLean's is engagingly recounted in the recent book **Gracefully Insane** by Alex Beam, a *Boston Globe* columnist. Over time, more than 28 buildings were built on McLean's

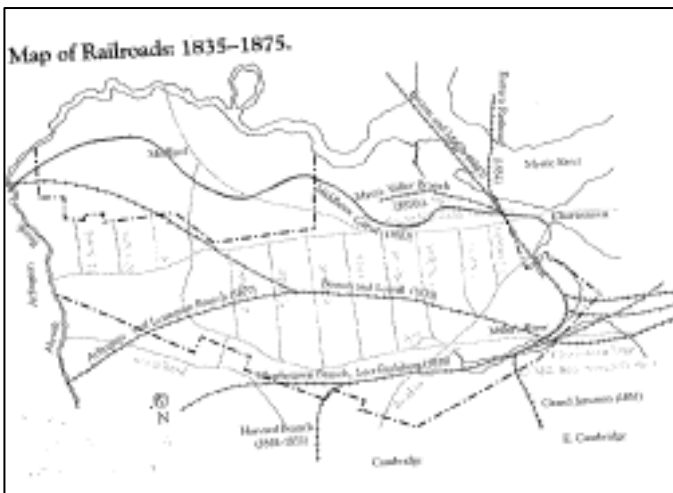


grounds. When McLean's moved to Belmont in 1896, its lovely East Somerville grounds were hemmed in by railroad tracks and the housing of the working poor. The Miller's River, which originally circumscribed the southern edge of the property, had recently been filled in to provide more square footage for rail yards and factories.

After trying to envision the lost leafy world of McLean's, we move onto Buddy's Truck Stop Diner.

Situated at **113 Washington Street**, **Buddy's Truck Stop** started its life as Sawin's Diner in Leominster, MA in 1929. A good example of a Worcester Lunch Company diner, it was moved to East Somerville during the early 1950s. With seating for twenty patrons, it still retains its sliding door at the main entrance, as well as its counter, abutting stools, and barrel-vaulted ceiling. Buddy's is one of three surviving diners in Somerville—the others worth visiting are Kelley's in Ball Square and the historically designated Rosebud in Davis Square.

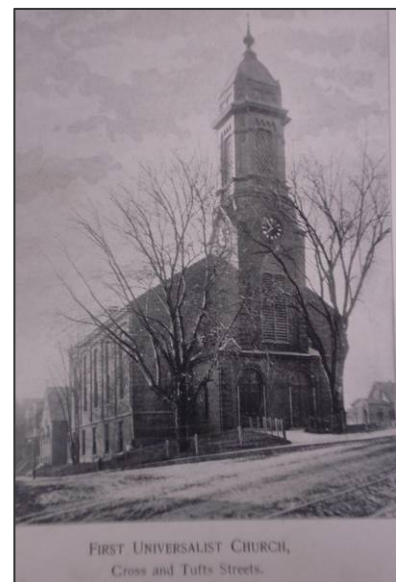
From Washington Street we'll follow Tufts Street to Cross Street. Named for one of the most influential families in the City's history, Tufts Street, as late as the mid 1870s, was lined on both sides by lots owned by Charles Tufts. From tavern owners and farmers dating back decades before the American Revolution, the Tufts family is perhaps best remembered for their mid-1800s brickyard west of Cedar Street, and especially for founding and funding Tufts University in West Somerville in 1852.



Notice to the west of Tufts Street is a rail corridor where the Boston and Lowell Railroad was introduced during the mid- 1830s. It currently contains a branch of the Boston & Maine Railroad, and most exciting, in the not too distant future, this corridor will also host the tracks that extend the Green Line subway from East Cambridge to Medford, with stops in four separate neighborhoods of Somerville, including Union Square.

As we walk along Tufts Street, please notice the sign in the front yard of 19 Tufts Street that reads: “Jerry’s Underground Bird Sanctuary.” The owner of this house applied for recognition as an avian-friendly property and received the coveted honorary status of “Certified Wildlife Habitat”—a high honor indeed, given that the house is situated in a densely built-up, urban neighborhood.

At **52 Tufts Street**, we'll pause to consider the former First Universalist Church. Although drastically altered to accommodate later commercial concerns, enough of its original red brick walls remain to identify this as an ecclesiastical edifice. Still visible at its Tufts Street



elevation is a granite water table, second story string courses, and rusticated brick piers which are interspersed between monumental window bays. The church's arched windows and elaborate corbelled cornice suggest a stylistic classification of Italianate/First Romanesque.

After the Civil War, Charles Tufts donated the land for the First Universalist Church which was completed in 1869. Seventeen years earlier, the same Charles Tufts had donated land for the Universalist College in West Somerville that later became known as Tufts University. The new church was well positioned to serve the Universalists of Prospect Hill and Winter Hill as well as East Somerville. Around 1915, this building ceased to function as a church, and from 1918 until the early 1940s it housed a local movie house called the Orpheum Theatre.

As we turn right onto Cross Street from Tufts Street look to the left at the vintage iron truss bridge that spans the B&M railroad corridor—a circa early twentieth century engineering feature that is well worth preserving.

Cross Street, like Franklin Street, is a very old rangeway set out during the early 1680s to link interior farms with Broadway and Washington Street.

The one-story concrete commercial structure at **76-78 Cross Street** provides visual evidence of the early automobile commerce occurring in East Somerville. Particularly startling is the way a circa 1860s Italianate house is perched atop the concrete building. Built in 1922, the design interest of this commercial building is limited to its pilasters, the molding over its entrance arch, and its elaborate cornice. Originally the two storefronts in the building contained a grocery and shoe shop, while by the 1930s, a restaurant was in business at this address.

The handsome brick and stone church at **59 Cross Street** was built in 1892 from designs provided by an unidentified architect with a talent for interpreting the Richardsonian Romanesque Style. The facades of the Grace Baptist Church rely on bold features for maximum visual impact—features that include a broad bowed, first story bay, a square, four-story corner tower, and a generously proportioned façade gable. Just as the Boston churches of architect Henry Hobson Richardson, such as Trinity Church at Copley Square, rely upon stone materials of contrasting dark and light hues, Grace Baptist Church is also characterized by walls enlivened by trim elements of a darker coloration than the light-colored stone materials of the main body of the church.

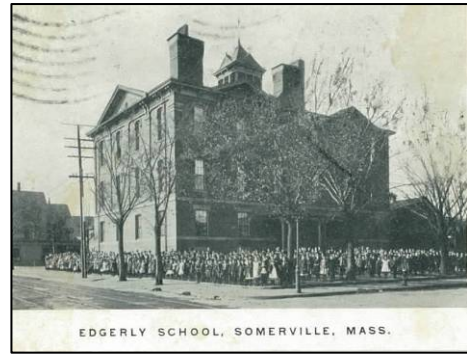
The congregation of this church traces its origins back to the mid-1840s in Neck Village, a community which straddled the Charlestown/Somerville line. Indeed, the church was called the Charlestown-Somerville Baptist Church until it was re-named the Perkins Street Baptist Church in 1853. The Perkins Street Church burned in 1866 and was subsequently re-built and then enlarged to accommodate 1,000 parishioners in 1873. During the early 1880s, an ideological schism tore the congregation apart, and the Grace Baptist congregation emerged from this split in 1881. When the present church was built in 1892 its resident members numbered 373. Grace Baptist Church is currently the spiritual home of a Hispanic Seventh Day Adventist congregation. The Somerville Homeless Coalition provides four-to-six units on the second floor for families in need of shelter.

As we head northward towards Broadway we'll walk by the **Edgerly School** (formerly the John A. Dickerman School) built in 1935. Stylistically, the Edgerly School is a restrained example of a Georgian/Art Deco public building, which are architectural styles not typically seen in combination with each other.

Turn east on Broadway.

165 Broadway, a.k.a. Somerville's Senior Center & former Fire Station.

This red brick building was built in 1895 as Fire House Engine No. 2. It is difficult to categorize stylistically this early Florentine Palace without the characteristic crenellated tower and other details. Designed as a fire station it provides evidence of the high density of the East Somerville neighborhood after 1890, which noticeably accelerated after the electric trolley was introduced around 1900. Towards the end of the twentieth century the building became a recreational home to the community's elders as a senior center, as well as to the youth of the City.



Row Houses at 8-16 Cross Street East. This group was built at the behest of Seman Klous, a brick maker and land developer. Currently in rough condition, these row houses were built around 1880 in the Mansard or Second Empire Style that at that time was nearing the end of its popularity.

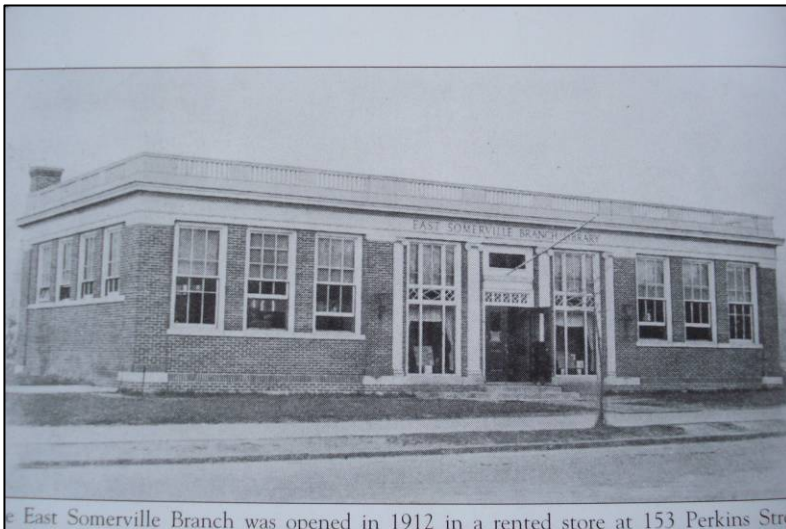
161 Broadway, Park Garage Company, 1914.

This building is typical of an early 20th century garage, which was primarily used for the storage of cars. It also features pick-up and delivery services, a gas pump, and waiting rooms. The original owners were Arthur N. Park and Fred R. Curtis. The building had space for 40 cars, a machine shop for repairs in the basement, two 500-gallon gas tanks, and also housed a car rental business and a showroom for Ford, Marmon, and Marathon cars. It even had a 1914 Packard limousine for rental!



149 Broadway—Mudflat Studios. Organized in East Cambridge in 1971, Mudflat is a non-profit organization dedicated to providing the facilities and instruction necessary for adults and children to produce pottery. During our visit, we will view the kiln, as well as the ceramics of the students. Mudflat is an important community resource that draws many people to East Somerville from the Greater Boston area to its classes. Note the last entry on this brochure at 79-83 Broadway shows the new building they have long been fundraising for and are currently renovating to become their new home.

The East Somerville Branch Library, at the corner of Broadway and Illinois Avenue. Built in 1918, this **Branch Library** is a satellite of the Central Library atop Central Hill. Somerville’s public library system began in 1871, the year the community incorporated as a city. This branch was organized in 1912 in commercial space located at 153 Perkins Street and its more formal establishment as the East Somerville Branch Library was linked to the explosive residential growth that occurred during the World War I era. Here, two-family houses were built in great numbers along streets named for American states. The establishment of this library may also be seen as a by-product of the early Automobile Age when people began to rely on cars to perform errands, such as dropping off library books



The East Somerville Branch was opened in 1912 in a rented store at 153 Perkins Street.

combined with quick stops to stores. Architecturally, this library is noteworthy for the simplicity of its rectangular masonry form, as well as its Classical Revival ornamentation that includes Ionic and Doric pilasters and a heavy entablature below the flat roof’s cornice.

The Library building has the distinction of being funded by Andrew Carnegie, the Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania steel magnate. A native of Scotland, Carnegie funded hundreds of fine libraries throughout Great Britain and the United States during the period of 1895-1930. Carnegie attributed his success in business to his early access to the private library of a wealthy family in his hometown.

North of Broadway, an elongated rise, variously called High Field, Mount Benedict, and Nunnery Hill, dominated the landscape until it was leveled during the late nineteenth century. Just to the north of Mt. Benedict, the old Middlesex Canal (completed in 1803) neared its southern terminus in the Sullivan Square area of Charlestown. The Canal Age ended in the 1840s as the railroad became the more popular mode of transportation for moving people and products.

Undoubtedly the most notorious chapter in the history of East Somerville was the destruction of the Ursuline Convent, north of Broadway, in 1834. Here ignorance and bigotry trumped reason and decency when an angry mob of Protestant locals stormed the hilltop convent in an effort to cast out Catholic nuns rumored to be filling their students’ minds with immoral and anti-American teachings. Luckily the nuns and their young students, Unitarian ladies, had enough warning to escape unscathed from the ensuing

chaos. The incident, however, was a low point in Protestant-Catholic relations in the Boston area that took decades to overcome.

By the mid 1800s, brickyards were key components of the landscape north of Broadway. Their prominence explains in part why residential development did not occur in East Somerville in any comprehensive manner until as late as the World War I era, when two-families were built in great numbers along streets named for American states, such as Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin.

Franklin Building. Built in 1919 from designs provided by an unknown architect, the Franklin Building is a brick and concrete commercial building with stylistic references to the Classical Revival, as well as elements that anticipate the Art Deco Style. Originally this building was associated with banking—more specifically with the Winter Hill Cooperative Bank and the Somerville Institute for Savings.



Columbia Building at 84-86 Broadway.

This yellow brick structure was constructed in 1902 by the Columbia Associates, a fraternal organization composed of fifty members whose president was J. S. Newcomb, a Somerville realtor. Designed in the Colonial Revival Style by E.L. Clark, it was built to house 5 stores on the ground floor, with a club room, club offices, and other club-related rooms on the second floor. The construction in yellow brick is interesting because it shows that the vogue for lighter-hued bricks had reached Somerville by the early 1900s. The monochromatic, gleaming white Boston Public Library by McKim Mead and White of 1888-1896 is a prime example of this sea change in American design. Building materials other than dark red brick or brownstone began to figure significantly in the construction of American public buildings after the Chicago World's Fair or Columbian Exposition of 1893. Dubbed "the white City" because all of its pavilions were constructed of white building materials, the appearance of the Fair had a profound effect on architects and other tastemakers of the day.



The commercial concerns of the Columbia Building during the early 20th century included a real estate company, drug store, beauty shop, dentist, and the like. Other fraternal organizations that used this building included the Paul Revere Lodge, Home Circle and the Knights of Honor.

Hurst's Broadway Theatre at 79-83 Broadway.

The original structure was built in 1915. By the late 1920s, Somerville had as many as six theatres, while today there is only one still in operation as a theatrical venue, at the Somerville Theatre in Davis Square. Hurst's was built for the Star Theatres Incorporated by the Somerville Home Building Association. The theatre had a capacity of 1,850 seats and continued to be in operation until the late 1940s. In 1933, Arthur N. Viano, who built the Teele Square Theatre, owned the Broadway under the name of "Viano's Broadway." The theatre was located behind a façade of storefronts, an arrangement that then was fairly typical. The building will soon be the new home of the Mudflat Studios.



Thank you for taking this tour! Should you need additional information, contact the staff to the Somerville Historic Preservation Commission within the Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development, via www.somervillema.gov/historicpreservation or 617-625-6600, extension 2525.