

HASKELL'S  
HISTORICAL GUIDE BOOK  
OF  
SOMERVILLE,  
MASSACHUSETTS

ILLUSTRATED

Composed and Published By  
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INTRODUCTION

Somerville occupies an important and conspicuous place in the history of the Nation, for upon its soil transpired a number of the most stirring events of the Revolutionary period.

Lovers of their country may find enough to enkindle their zeal and arouse their enthusiasm, and can witness with much satisfaction the ardent desire of the people to perpetuate the memory of the noble deeds, self sacrificing heroism and valiant achievements of their patriot sires.

The emotions quicken, the eyes glow with new inspiration, and the step becomes buoyant as, walking the streets and avenues of the city, one realizes he is passing along the same road-ways, over hill and slope, where once men of 1775-6 trod or Paul Revere drove his fiery steed

Within these borders Liberty found her first, fullest expression when on Prospect Hill, amid cheers, the patriots with faces indicating strong determination flung to the breeze the first flag of the united colonies, the

“Union Flag, with its thirteen stripes”

and bade defiance to an enemy.

This book is intended as a guide to points of historical interest in the city and is published to meet a demand for a concise, comprehensive description of places and incidents that are inestimable value to the student of history, and which cannot fail to further increase the admiration of a patriotic people for the unbounded devotion of freedom and justice that characterized the founders of this republic.

## THE OLD POWDER HOUSE

The object of the most historic interest in Somerville is the “Old Powder House” at the junction of Broadway and College Avenue. This structure is cone-shaped, thirty feet high, two feet thick, and composed of brick and stone. On the inside are three lofts, supported by beams of oak.

It was built about 1703 or 1704.

The building is considered to be the most distinct antique ruin in the State of Massachusetts.

For a number of years following its construction, the early settlers used the building as a mill. In 1747, the Province of the Massachusetts Bay Colony of New England secured it for a magazine. During the Indian war the colony's ammunition was stored in this building, and at the beginning of the Revolution it contained two hundred and fifty barrels of powder. September 1, 1774, General Gage sent an expedition, consisting of two hundred soldiers, in thirteen boats, up the Mystic River. The expedition landed at Ten Hills Farm, proceeded to the Powder House and seized the powder therein and transported it to the Castle in Boston Harbor.

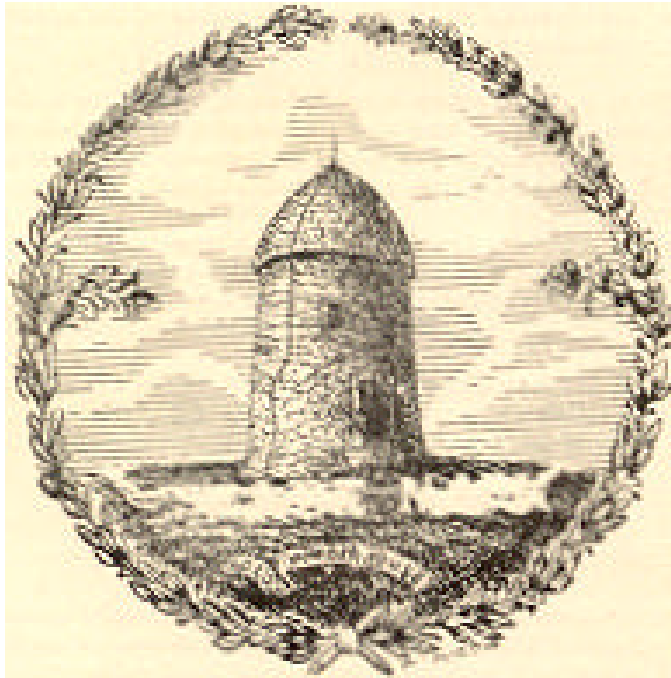
This movement was the first hostile demonstration made by the British troops and led to the mustering-in-arms of the Middlesex yeomanry on September 2, 1774. During 1775 it became the magazine of the American army besieging Boston.

The Powder House is the property of the City of Somerville, having been presented to the city in 1890 by the descendents of Nathan Tufts. The land surrounding the building is laid out as a public park, and known as Nathan Tufts Park.

A tablet, thirty by forty-two inches, on the northerly side of the old structure reads:

“This Old Mill, built by John Mallett on a site purchased in 1703-04, was deeded in 1747 to the ‘province of Massachusetts Bay Colony of New England’ and for many years used as a Powder House. On September 1, 1774, General Gage seized the 250 half barrels of gunpowder stored within it and thereby provoked the great assembly of the following day on Cambridge Common, the first occasion on which our patriotic fore-fathers met in arms to oppose the tyranny of King George III; in 1775 it became the magazine of the American army besieging Boston.

This tablet was placed by the Massachusetts Society of Sons of the Revolution.  
September 1, 1892”



## THE RIDE OF PAUL REVERE

After the seizure from the Powder House, September 1, 1774, the colonist stored their ammunition at Concord and elsewhere. British scouts, however, soon found out where these storehouses were located, and information came to the colonists that a raid by the patriots in different sections of the neighboring towns to watch the movements of the British and to give an alarm when troops were seen approaching. One of these sentinels was Paul Revere, whose famous ride has been told so often in prose and verse that has become familiar the world over.

With much sagacity and bravery Paul Revere eluded British officers stationed on Washington Street, near Charlestown line, to intercept him and hurried over the hill, displaying the signal; then riding through Medford and Arlington.

The story of that midnight ride is inseparably connected with the history of Somerville, for it was through Broadway and Main Street that Paul Revere galloped on the night of April 18<sup>th</sup>, 1775, arousing the farmers to oppose the British on their way to Concord.

The following tablet is placed at the junction of Broadway and Main Street, Paul Revere Square.

“Paul Revere passed over this road, in his midnight ride to Lexington and Concord, April 18, 1775, - Site of the ‘Winter Hill Fort’, a stronghold built by the American forces while besieging Boston, 1775-6.”

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Of this famous ride the poet chants:

“ He silently rode to the Charlestown Shore,  
Just as the moon rose over the bay,  
Where swinging wide at her moorings lay  
The Somerset, British man-of-war,  
A phantom ship, with each mast and spar  
Across the moon like a prison bar,  
And a huge black hulk, that was magnified  
By its own reflection in the tide.

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The fate of the Nation was riding that night  
And the spark struck out by that seed, in his flight,  
Kindled the land into flame with its heat.”



MEMORIAL TOWER    PROSPECT HILL

## TO CONCORD AND RETURN

While Paul Revere was warning the inhabitants along Broadway on the night of April 18, Lieutenant Colonel Smith and eighteen hundred British soldiers were making their way from Boston across the Charles River. They landed near the Court House in East Cambridge, then waded Willis creek, traversed the marshes that lay beyond, and entered Somerville in the vicinity of Prospect street, passing through to Washington street and Union Square, then up Bow street to Wesley Square, where a halt was made. Here the thirsty soldiers drank water from a near-by well. After a short rest, they resumed their march along Somerville avenue (Milk Row) passing the Samuel Tufts house, opposite Loring street, afterwards, General Nathaniel Green's headquarters.

A tablet on the house reads as follows:

"Headquarters of Brigadier-General Nathaniel Greene,  
in command of the Rhode Island troops during the siege of  
Boston. - 1775-6"

Mr. Tufts was at the rear of his house busily engaged making bullets and did not hear the troops go by, but inmates of several farm-houses peered from unlighted windows upon the scarlet coats of the soldiers and saw the guns glisten in the light of the rising moon. Among those looking out from the windows was Mrs. Rand, living at the corner of Central street, who hastily ran and informed Mr. Tufts, who immediately mounted a horse crossed his farm and notified the people of Cambridge.

The platoons continued their silent march up Elm street, halted for a few minutes near Willow avenue and then turned into Beech street, passed through to Massachusetts avenue, (North avenue) on to Lexington and Concord.

After the battle at Concord, where the British suffered defeat at the hands of the yeomanry of Middlesex, they retreated through Lexington and Arlington and down Massachusetts avenue to Beech street, stubbornly contesting all along the route. Passing through Beech street the troops crossed the Somerville line where they met a "warm reception" a company of minutemen stationed in the adjoining woods. Having been reinforced by detachments from Boston, the British made an attack on the American forces at the junction of Elm street and Willow avenue, where a sharp encounter took place, the British being repulsed with serious loss, both of men and arms.

A tablet marks the spot, as follows:

"A sharp fight occurred here, between the Patriots and the  
British, April 19, 1775. This marks British graves."

The British forced to retire, hurried back in wild confusion and much dispirited, going over the same route they had marched the night previous, until Union Square was reached. Meanwhile they were harassed by shots coming from the muskets of Patriots concealed in orchards and behind stone walls. One red coat was killed near Park Street and another mortally wounded at Bow street.

Reaching Union Square, the British marched down Washington street as far as the base of Prospect Hill where a skirmish took place, both sides losing a number of men. Here James Miller, a heroic minute-man, urged by a comrade to run for his life, as they were being surrounded by the enemy, replied; "I am too old to run" and remained at his post of duty until he fell, pierced by thirteen bullets.

It was growing dark as the British withdrew from the scene of this last engagement, and proceeding on a quick march soon reached Charlestown Neck, just escaping from a company of six hundred colonists who were hurrying over Winter Hill to intercept them. Under cover of their gun-boats the British, weary from their long march and dispirited on account of defeat, stopped for a short rest. Then, resuming their march, joined the main army.

Thus ended the 19<sup>th</sup> day of April, 1775, one of the most important in American history, with victory for the colonists, who had manifested undaunted courage in the midst of discouraging circumstances.



On Washington street, opposite Rossmore street, a tablet has been erected, inscribed as follows:

"On this hillside James Miller, minute-man,  
aged 65m was slain by the British, April 19,  
1775."

"I am too old to run."

## **PROSPECT HILL**

With surprising rapidity the news of the battles of Lexington and Concord became known throughout the country arousing an intense feeling of indignation and resentment against the British for attempting to seize property belonging to one of the colonies, and to force the people into subjection, by the use of arbitrary measures, to unjust and obnoxious laws. It was declared that personal rights and possession had been assailed and that the time had come to make an emphatic protest. The victory achieved by the Americans created great enthusiasm and delight. The several colonies endorsed the action of Massachusetts and hastened to her assistance. In a short time the first volunteers arrived and, soon after, an army of about twenty thousand men were encamped in the towns around Boston.

Somerville occupied a conspicuous position during the entire siege of Boston, which lasted nine months, and was a most important strategic point. Her streets reverberated with the tread of a soldiery, marching and counter-marching, while the air was resonant with the shrill music of the drum and fife.

Prospect Hill, because of its central and prominent location, was early taken possession of by the Continental Army. From the summit of the hill an extensive view of the surrounding country could be obtained, thus affording an excellent opportunity to note movements of the opposing forces.

Immediate preparations were made to erect fortifications, beginning at a point near Union square and extending over the hill, across the adjoining territory, to the top of Central Hill, where they ended with a strong redoubt. A guard was stationed near the base of the hill. Upon the hill-top a citadel was built. From this eminence George Washington surveyed the field of operations, and here held interviews with his officers. After the battle of Bunker Hill the Americans withdrew to this hill, taking shelter behind the earthworks.

July 18<sup>th</sup>, 1775, General Putnam hoisted on Prospect Hill his Connecticut flag, bearing the motto, "An Appeal to Heaven".

On January 1, 1776, the centralization of colonial interests was publicly declared by the raising of the first "Flag of the United Colonies" from the summit of Prospect Hill. As the banner, with its thirteen stripes, alternating red and white, floated to the breeze, it was greeted with cheers, and a salute of thirteen guns. After the evacuation of Boston, the flag was transferred to one of the forts in the harbor that had been vacated by the British.

After the defeat of Burgoyne, his troopers were quartered during the winter of 1777-1778, as prisoners of war, on Prospect Hill.

A tablet bears this inscription:

"On this hill the Union Flag, with its thirteen stripes – the emblem of the United Colonies – first bade defiance to an enemy January 1, 1776. Here was the citadel, the most formidable work in the American lines during the siege of Boston, June 17, 1775 to March 17, 1776.

Historical evidence corroborates the statement that the Union Flag was first displayed on this hill, and should be known as the "Prospect Hill Flag".

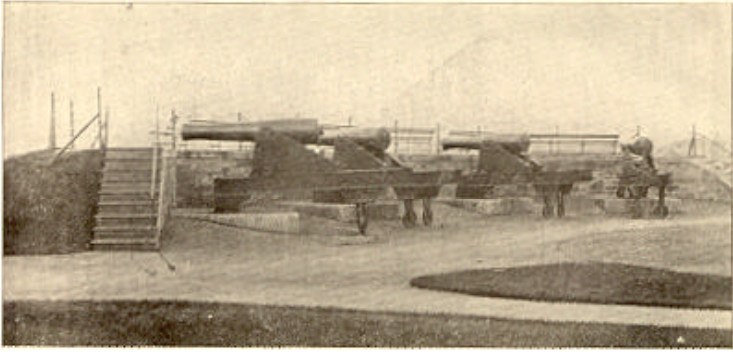
## **CENTRAL HILL**

Central Hill includes the territory between Highland avenue, School, Walnut, and Medford streets, and is the property of the city. Here are located City Hall, the Public Library and the High School Buildings. About one-third of the land is tastefully laid out as a public resort and designated as "Central Hill Park." From this hill, on either side, a beautiful and picturesque panorama is presented to view. Looking toward the east, Bunker Hill Monument is seen towering in air to a distance of two hundred and twenty five feet, bringing to mind that loyalty to freedom which animated the patriots of 1775 in their struggle for independence. In a northerly direction, thickly settled and prosperous communities appear nestling among the hills, while Mystic river silently wends its way, in a snake-like fashion, to the sea. Westward, the stately buildings of Tufts College and Harvard University stand out in bold relief. To the south, the famous "blue hills" stretch along the horizon.

Midway of the park is the site of the "French Redoubt", used during the campaign of 1775. Near this site the City of Somerville has erected a memorial, or Battery as it is termed, to commemorate the eventful days of the Revolutionary period. The Battery is semi-circular in form, built of granite. With the enclosure are four cannons, mounted on substantial iron trucks, which range at proper angles with the wall. The guns were in service during the war of 1861-65 and donated by the National Government for this special object. Running diagonally across this land, from north to south, the patriots erected fortifications, behind which they took refuge when retreating from Bunker Hill, and which afforded protection from the enemy's guns. These earthworks remained intact over one hundred years, the last portion removed about 1887.

On the stonework of the battery is lettered the following:

"This Battery was erected by the city in 1885, and is within the lines the "French Redoubt" built by the Revolutionary Army in 1775, as a part of the besieging lines of Boston. The guns were donated by Congress, and were in service during the late civil war."



## **COBBLE HILL**

Standing on Washington street, near Franklin street, and looking toward the south the traveler will see Cobble, or Asylum Hill, about one quarter of a mile distant. During the siege of Boston this hill was strongly fortified, the most skillful military engineers directing construction. It was so compact and bullet-proof that it became known as "Putnam's Impregnable Fortress." It guarded the entrances to Charles river and Charlestown Ferry.

## **TEN HILLS FARM**

Somerville enjoys the distinction of once having a resident the first governor of the Commonwealth, John Winthrop, who lived on Middlesex avenue, near the Malden bridge. Here he had built a bark of thirty-six tons, named the "Blessing of the Bay" which was launched from the old wharf on Mystic river, July 4<sup>th</sup>, 1631. This was the first vessel built in Massachusetts.

September 6, 1631, the Court of Massachusetts Bay Colony granted Governor Winthrop six hundred acres of land, which included all the territory between Broadway and Mystic river. There were ten elevations on this land, because of this fact, it was given the name "Ten Hills Farm." This part of Somerville was covered with a forest and inhabited by wild animals that often killed swine and calves belonging to the governor. It is said among the wild animals preying about this territory could be found the lion, bear, moose, deer, porcupine and raccoon. In 1643, Governor Winthrop deeded the property to his son John, reserving for himself and wife one-third of the fruit raised thereon. Elizabeth Lidgett bought the farm in 1677 for £ 3,300. In 1700 it was transferred to D. Jeffrey's, whose heirs sold it to Robert Temple in 1740. It became the property of Nathaniel Tracy, Esq. of Newburyport in 1780. In 1785 Thomas Russell, a wealthy merchant of Boston, purchased the farm, retaining it for about twenty years, when it was sold to Elias Derby. Colonel Jacques was the next proprietor of Ten Hills Farm, coming into possession in 1830. Meanwhile the farm had been extended, and included the tract of country from Cross street to the Medford line and between Broadway and the Mystic river. The old mansion on the farm known as "Temple House" was torn down in 1877.

A tablet at the old wharf, south shore Mystic river, reads as follows:

"Ancient wharf. Here Governor Winthrop launched the "Blessing of the Bay" the first ship built in Massachusetts, July 4, 1631. The British landed here in their raid on the Powder House, September 1, 1774."



## **PLOWED HILL**

Plowed Hill, or Mount Benedict, is located east of Broadway Park. Upon this hill was a detachment of soldiers under the direction of General Sullivan, who had command of the forces on Winter Hill, and also several pieces of artillery. An attempt by the British to send armed vessels up the Mystic river proved unsuccessful as the cannonading from a battery on this hill was so effective that the vessels became disabled and were obliged to retire. A second endeavor being equally futile, the task was abandoned.

## **THE OLD CEMETERY**

For many years the early inhabitants of this part of Charlestown had expressed the desire of having a suitable burial place for their "sacred dead" within the limits of the district. After much delay, it was decided to secure a lot of land for that purpose, and a committee was appointed to take charge of the matter. A parcel of land on Milk Row (Somerville avenue) opposite School street, was agreed upon. It contained about one hundred square rods. This land was apportioned by lot among the residents of this section of the town.

The property belonged to Samuel Tufts, and was transferred by deed in 1804 to Timothy Tufts, esq., Nathaniel Hawkins, esq., Samuel Kent, Samuel Shed, John Stone, and their associates, for one dollar and other considerations. The conditions provided that the land be used only as a burying place and that it be always fenced without cost to Mr. Tufts or his heirs. The deed was record at the Middlesex Registry of Deeds, May 31, 1808.

In 1893, a petition was presented to the Massachusetts Legislature asking that the city be given control of this property and an act passed granting the same.

An ornamental iron fence extends along the front of the cemetery. The drive ways and walk ways are graded, trees and shrubbery trimmed, and in many other ways the place has been improved.

The cemetery is used but little at present. Many of the lots are in possession of descendents of the original owners, some of whom are living away from the city.

A portion of the property was used for a while for schoolhouse purposes, but the school building having been burned down, the land was included in the cemetery proper.

This is the only cemetery in Somerville.



## **THE SOLDIERS' MONUMENT**

In the central part of the cemetery on Somerville avenue, on a slight elevation of land, stands a soldiers monument, fifteen feet in height, resting upon a base forty-five inches square.

Much of historic interest is associated with this monument, the claim being that it is the first memorial shaft erected by citizens as a public tribute to those "fallen heroes" who gave their lives in the service of their country during the civil war.

The monument was placed in position during the summer of 1863.

At the apex of the shaft is a representation of an American eagle, with outspread wings. On the top stone is wrought military emblems surmounted by the letter B, the enlisted men of the town forming Co. B, 5<sup>th</sup> Regiment.

Inscribed on the base is the following:

S.L.I.

Incorporated A.D. 1853

There are tablets on three sides, bearing the names of Somerville soldiers who died or were killed in the war.

On the front is a tablet with this inscription:

" Their warfare is over, they sleep well."

Erected by the Somerville light infantry with the balance of a fund generously contributed by their fellow citizens in aid of the company on entering the United States service for three months, April 19<sup>th</sup>, 1861, in memory of all from the town who have fallen in the service of their country.

## **SOLDIERS AND SAILORS MEMORIAL**

A handsome memorial in commemoration of the soldiers and sailors who fought in the civil war was erected by the city on Central hill at a cost of \$20,000. Dedication services were held Memorial Day, 1909.

The design is artistic, and the replete with suggestions of patriotism, devotion and sacrifice. It represents the Nation's protection and encouragement to her noble defenders on the land and sea.

The chief figures of the statue are of heroic size, emblematic of vigor, determination and valor. They are durable bronze metal, and erected upon a solid base of granite about ten feet in height. A granite wall, two feet high, surrounds the monument, which is approached by three granite steps.

The monument is suitably inscribed.

## **PLACES OF INTEREST**

Oliver Tufts House, Sycamore street:

Headquarters of Major General Lee, commanding left wing of American army during siege of Boston 1775-6

At Broadway Park:

Route of Middlesex Canal Chartered 1793; Opened 1803

Broadway, junction Main street:

Old Fort. Extreme Left of American Army, 1775-6

Command Mystic river

Paul Revere Park

Union Square at Washington street: (West side)

Site of Recruiting Stand for Union Soldiers in Civil War.  
1861-1865

Somerville avenue, opposite Loring street:

Headquarters for Nathaniel Greene. 1775

Commanding Rhode Island troops.

Nathan Tufts Park:

Old Mill, used as a Powder House. 1774

Prospect Hill:

Colonial Tower and Park.

Union Flag first unfurled on Hill.

Near North street:

The Alewife Brook

Central Hill:

Site of Redoubt and Fortifications.

Washington Street, near Dane street:

Location of first White Settler in Somerville.

Elm street, at Willow avenue:

Sharp Encounter with British, April 19, 1775.

South of Mystic River:

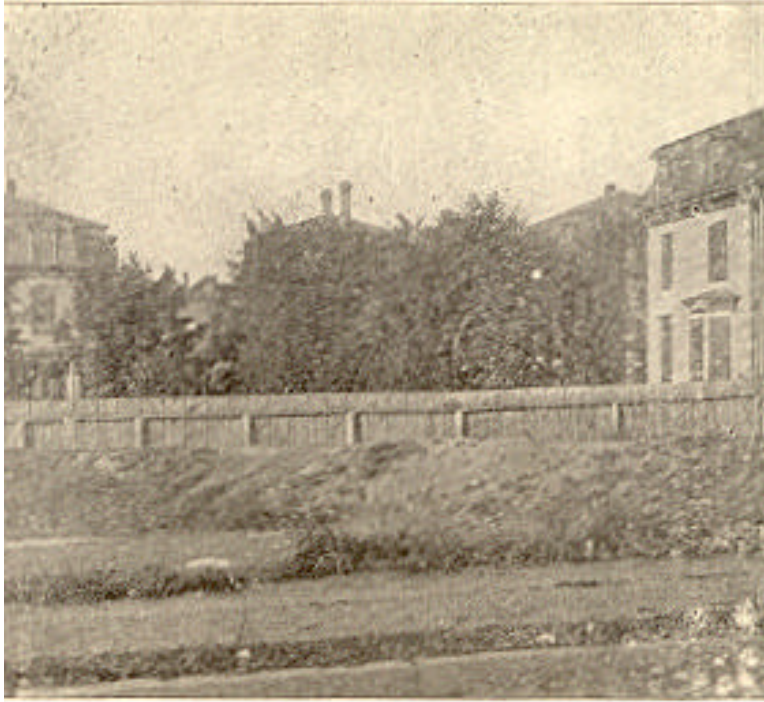
Ancient Wharf. Launching of First Ship built in Massachusetts.

Washington street near Prospect street:

Site of Birthplace of First Child Born in the Town of Somerville. 1842.



## **SOMERVILLE: WHY SO NAMED.**



When the act of the Legislature of the year 1842 a portion of Charlestown was set apart as a separate town, it had been with some difficulty that a name was selected for the new community thus called into existence, and since that time have been various reasons expressed why the final choicer of Somerville was made.

The following statement is authentic:

At a meeting of residents interested in forming a new town, a committee of ten members was appointed to attend to the details relating to the separation. When this committee convened, the first item of business considered was a name for the town. After some discussion the name of Walford was chosen, in honor of the first white settler of Charlestown.

After the meeting adjourned, it appears that Charles Miller, a member of the committee, not fully satisfied with the name Walford, invited some friends and neighbors to meet and talk the matter over.

How the name was suggested, whether by combination of circumstances or by perusal of names of cities and towns located in other parts of the country is not certain, but as soon as the word Somerville was mentioned it was favorably received. Mr. Miller presented the name at a meeting of the committee, which rescinded the previous vote to call the town Walford, and decide on the new name, and reported a recommendation to this effect to a town meeting, when the name Somerville was adopted and ordered inserted in the petition for incorporation.

Endeavors have been made to associate the name with some noted personage, but Mr. Miller's family and intimate acquaintances are positive that the town was not named for any person.

The Somerville Historical Society appointed a committee to ascertain if possible why Somerville was so called. This committee submitted a full report which was accepted, and it was voted that it is the belief of the Society that the name Somerville was selected as a purely fanciful name.

The house in which the name Somerville originated was located on the easterly corner of Medford street, about half-way from the school house to Washington street.

The Prospect Hill school-house, where the inhabitants of the district met to consider the formation of the new town, was on the site of the resent Central square. Besides the school-room, it contained a smaller room which was used by the selectman for their meetings after the incorporation of the town. The building was removed to the southerly corner of Somerville avenue and Prospect street.

## WAR TIME ACTIVITIES

In all the war periods of the Nation, Somerville has been an active participant. During the Revolution, the war of 1812, and the Mexican conflict of 1848, men from this section rendered valiant service and many lives were sacrificed for humanity's cause. Money was freely given to aid the government and help soldiers.

Somerville's loyalty to the Union during the civil war of 1861-65 was characterized by great enthusiasm and earnestness. In addition to the local military companies, hundreds of citizens enlisted for service and were assigned duty in the army or navy. According to records, 1085 men and forty commissioned officers went from the town. Of this list, 250 were wounded and 98 killed in battle or died from disease or injuries, while others suffered severe hardship in prisons. The sympathy of the people found expression in the numerous packages of clothing, etc. sent to the "boys in blue". More than \$200,000 was also contributed.

In the Spring of 1898, Congress resolved that the cause of humanity demanded that the government of Spain should cease using inhuman methods towards the people of her colonies in the West Indies, and soon after declared war with that country. President McKinley issued a call for volunteers. The Somerville military company, known as Company M, Eighth Regiment, promptly responded, and recruited to one hundred and one men as required by the national standard. May 5, the company proceeded to camp at Framingham, Mass. May 10<sup>th</sup>, the Eighth regiment was mustered into the United States Service. May 15, the regiment started to Chickamauga, where it remained for three months. The regiment next encamped near Lexington, Ky. afterwards moving to Americus, Ga from which place it was carried in transports to Cuba, Jan. 6, 1899, stationed at Matanzas, and assigned to garrison duty, rendering important and efficient service. April 4<sup>th</sup>, the regiment embarked on board transport Meade for Boston, where it was mustered out of service. Somerville furnished men to recruit other companies in the State, and was well represented in the regular army and navy. A number of Somerville men enlisted for service in the Philippine Islands. The woman of the city organized a Volunteer Aid Society, and sent supplies and useful articles to soldiers.

In August, 1914, there was a declaration of war in Europe, involving Germany and Austria-Hungary in conflict with France, England and Belgium. The intensity of the contest spread to other countries until millions of men were engaged in the death-dealing struggle for supremacy. German intrigue and barbaric methods of warfare were proving a menace to civilization and a strong feeling of resentment was manifested throughout all lands. With patience and Christian fortitude the United States of America endeavored to pacify the belligerent spirit, yet viewed with horror the merciless and wanton destruction of lives and property by Teuton undersea boats and overhead machines. No longer able to bear the indignities perpetrated and willful violation of human rights and

international law, the President addressed Congress on the subject of intervention. April 6, 1917, Congress formally declared war with Germany. Into the mighty world struggle the United States poured its resources of men, mind and money. With resistless energy it pressed forward that victory might ensue for "freedom and equality for all". Several millions of men were enlisted in the army and navy. The woman nobly entered in Red Cross and other helpful work. Somerville contributed largely, financially, in the purchase of liberty bonds, war savings stamps, etc. In a little more than a year's time nearly five thousand men responded to the call, - "to arms." Y.M.C.A. and Red Cross workers and hospital nurses entered vigorously into various departments of active service. The people as a whole rendered willing assistance "to win the war".



Following is a copy of an Ordinance to establish a Seal for the City of Somerville.

A representation of Washington standing on Prospect Hill with a Union Flag unfurled. On the right, a view of a portion of Boston, with the State House. On the left, a view of a portion of Charlestown, with Bunker Hill Monument. Within a circle around the same, the inscription:

Somerville. Founded 1842, Established a City 1872.

On the outer circle around the above, as the City motto, the words:

Municipal Freedom Gives National Strength.

The whole to be arranged according to the impression of Seal hereunto annexed.

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## **SOMERVILLE: AS IT WAS AND IS.**

The date of the settlement of Somerville Corresponds with that of Boston, viz: 1630, although the territory comprising Somerville, then uninhabited, formed part of Charlestown, which place had been settled some years previous. As early as 1628 a road had been laid out from Charlestown Neck to Harvard Square, called the "Highway to Newtowne." This highway is now Washington street, and is probably the oldest thoroughfare in the city.

In 1630, John Woolrich came from Charlestown proper and, journeying over the highway, located about one and a half miles above the Neck, near what is now Dane street. Woolrich was the first white settler in Somerville. After fencing in a tract of land and erecting a rude home, he began trading with the Indians. Others followed Woolrich, locating in the vicinity of Union Square. The settlement continued to slowly increase until the year 1775 there were thirty houses and about two hundred and fifty inhabitants.

John Winthrop, the first governor of Massachusetts built a residence at Winter Hill, near the Mystic river, about 1636, and in the year following he had built and launched a vessel, called the "Blessing of the Bay". On September 6, 1631, the Colony granted him six hundred acres of land near his house at Mystic, to which he gave the name "Ten Hills Farm".

In 1639, the territory of Charlestown, including the present limits of Somerville, was deeded to the early settlers by the Indian Queen "Squaw Sachem and her husband Webcowet". The purchase price was twenty and one coats, nineteen fathom of wampum, three bushels of corne. A few years later the land was divided among the inhabitants for the purpose of pasturage, each inhabitant being given the right to pasture a certain number of cows on the property thus allotted. This tract of country became known as "Cow Commons."

The early settlers were industrious, enterprising and frugal, devoting their energies and time almost exclusively to farming, fishing, and kindred pursuits. Peaceful relations were maintained among themselves, for the interests of all were considered mutual. Additional roadways were constructed leading to Medford, Arlington and adjoining towns.

This condition of affairs continued for nearly a century. Then gradually came the events which ultimately led to the war of the Revolution, in which Somerville occupied a most conspicuous part.

In 1803, the Middlesex Canal, the most extensive work of its kind in the country was built. It connected the Merrimac river at Lowell with the Charles river at Charlestown, was thirty feet wide and about four feet deep. It ran through the northerly and easterly sections of Somerville beyond Winter Hill, and its course can be traced at present.

In 1804 Samuel Tufts deeded a portion of his farm on Milk Row for a neighborhood burying ground.

In 1820 three school houses served the educational needs of this part of town, as follows: Milk Row, on the corner of the cemetery lot; Medford Street, near the junction of Medford, Shawmut and Cross streets; Broadway, at West Somerville.

In 1828, a petition was presented to the Legislature asking that a part of Charlestown (now Somerville) be set off as a separate town, to be known as Warren. This petition was subsequently withdrawn. The desire for a separate township pervaded the minds of the people. In 1841 becoming impatient at the neglect of the government to adequately provide for their needs, the inhabitants again agitated a division of the town, and a meeting in reference to the matter was held November 22 in the Prospect Hill Schoolhouse. December 3 a second meeting was held when final action was taken, and it was voted to call the new town Walford, in honor of the first white settler of Charlestown. At a meeting held December 13 it was voted to change the name to Somerville. The act incorporating the new town was passed by the Legislature, and approved by the Governor March 3, 1842. At a meeting March 14 the first town officers were chosen.

The population of Somerville in 1842 was 1, 013 and there were about two hundred dwellings.

Caleb W. Leland was chosen to represent the town in the legislature for the year 1842.

The first regular town meeting was held April 4, 1842, when the following appropriations were made: Support of schools, \$1,800, highways \$2,000, county tax, \$450, support of the poor, \$200, contingences, \$300. total appropriation, \$4,750, Town valuation, \$ 988,513.

Soon after the town's formation the desire for religious worship near their home led to the starting of a Sunday school, and later a church organization, with meetings in a hall on Washington street, near Prospect street.

In 1851 a directory of families was published. The book consisted of thirty-two pages with about six hundred names.

April, 1851, the town voted to erect a high school building on Highland avenue, corner School street, (City Hall). The corner stone was laid September 9, and dedication exercises were held on April 28, 1852. Sixty-six pupils attended the first session of the school.

In 1853 the Somerville Light Infantry was organized.

1853, Gas was first used in town.

In 1854 a Court for the trial of criminal cases was held in a building on Washington street, corner of Medford street..

Horse cars were put into service in 1858, one line running through Elm street, Milk Row and Washington street, via Charlestown to Boston; the other line went along Broadway. In 1863 cars began running from Union square, through East Cambridge, to Boston.

Lamps for lighting the streets were used during 1859.

1861-65 included the civil war period, in which time Somerville was an active participant in the preservation of the Union, furnishing men, money and supplies.

1867, the first sewers were built, about two miles in length.

Mystic water, for drinking purposes, was introduced in 1868.

A petition for annexation to Boston, in 1869 failed to pass legislature.

In 1870, Willard C. Kinsley Post 139, G.A.R. was organized..

In 1871, Highland avenue was extended from Central street to Davis square.

Street watering was tried for the first time in 1871.

April 14, 1871, an act establishing the City of Somerville passed the Legislature, and was accepted by the people at a town meeting held April 27, the vote being 336 in favor and 170 opposed.

The first city election occurred December 4, 1871.

Hon. George O. Brastow was the first Mayor of Somerville.

Inaugural exercises were held in the Town hall, Sycamore street, January 1, 1872.

The Latin High School building on Highland avenue was commenced in April 1871 and completed the following February.

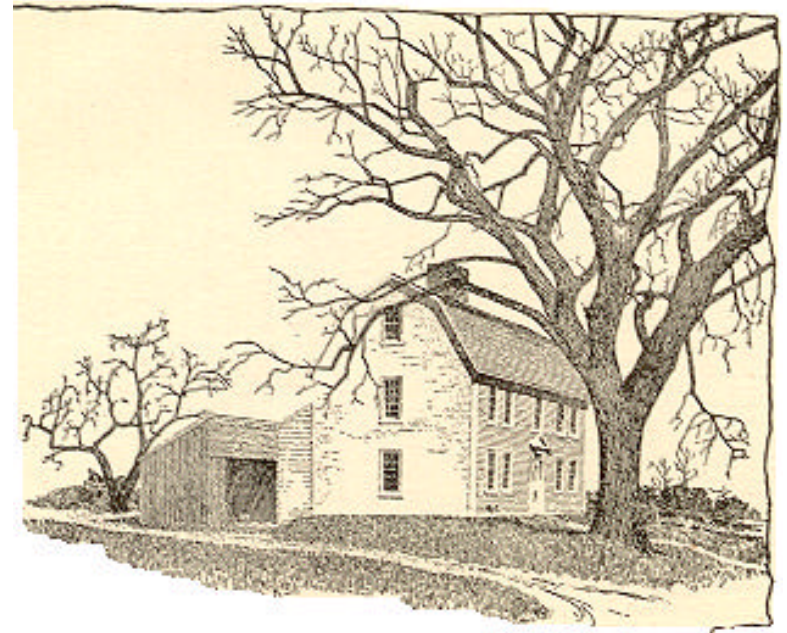
In 1872, a Police Court was established..

The Public Library was first opened May 1873, and contained 2, 389 volumes.

In 1873, Somerville avenue was widened, making it the principal thoroughfare of the city.

The first Alarm Telegraph System was used for the first time in 1874.

In 1874, the Police Building on Bow Street was erected, and apartments furnished for the Police department and Municipal Court, and later for Co. M, 8<sup>th</sup> Regt., M.V.M. as an armory.



*Rand House, 1775 Somerville Avenue opposite Park Street*

June 18, 1876, the Broadway Park was dedicated. The cost of construction was \$212,900.

The Park on Central Hill was laid out in 1876.

During the period from 1878 to 1882 the work of constructing new streets, erection of public buildings and private dwellings, development of vacant land, together with the increasing demands of a growing city made it an era of great activity.

In 1883 Davis Square received its name by a vote of the City Council.

In 1888 the Signal and Patrol system was first used in the Police department..

In 1889 a High-water system, costing \$62,560 was introduced. A pumping station with apparatus for supplying two million gallons of water every twenty-four hours was erected on City Farm, and a stand pipe, 100 feet high and 30 feet diameter, holding 525,000 gallons, built on Spring Hill, between Belmont and Lowell streets, above Summer street..

In 1891 the Somerville Hospital was incorporated, and buildings were erected in the following year.



May 1891, the Young Men's Christian Association was incorporated..

In 1893 the City purchased the Unitarian church property on Highland avenue, opposite Prescott street, at a cost of \$45,000.

Dec. 5, 1893, work was commenced on English High school, on Central Hill, and the building was complete Sept. 1895.

During 1894 the Central Fire Station at the junction of Highland Avenue and Medford street, was erected and equipped..

During 1896 the City Hall building was enlarged at the expense of \$20,000.

The Somerville Historical Society was incorporated November 1898.

In 1898 a committee of citizens was selected to draft a new charter for the city. A number of meetings were held at which various plans and suggestions were presented. A document was prepared setting forth the views of the committee as to what was needed as a governing policy for the municipality. A public meeting was held to discuss the merits of the bill. Hearings were given at the State House. April 10, 1899, "An act to revise the charter of the City of Somerville" was approved by the Legislature, and at a special election held Tuesday, September 26, it was accepted by the citizens. The charter calls for a division of the city into seven wards, and a government consisting of a mayor, and three aldermen from each ward. The administration of affairs is vested in an executive and legislative department..

March 1, 1899, the Somerville Board of Trade was organized..

The inauguration of the first city government under the new charter took place January 1, 1900. The occasion was one of importance. There was a large attendance of citizens, who evinced great interest in the proceedings. The inaugural address of the mayor was a presentation of the duties and responsibilities which the new charter imposed, and also a summary of the work performed by the various departments of the city during the previous year.

During the summer, Davis square was paved with brick..

A bill for the extension of the metropolitan Park System, which included an appropriation for a boulevard across Somerville, after being approved by the Senate and the House of Representatives, at the session of 1899-1900, was vetoed by the Governor.

In 1900 a wide avenue, know as Powder House Boulevard, one and one-quarter miles in length and eighty feet in width, was laid out, extending from Nathan Tufts Park to North street, thence along Alewife brook to Medford boundary line.

Lincoln Park, off Washington street, near Union square, was completed in 1900, at a cost of \$15,000.00.

November, 1900, a lot of land on the northeasterly side of Highland avenue, near School street, was purchased by the Young Men's Christian Association as a site for a new building.

A "Curfew Law" prohibiting children under 16 years of age being on the streets after nine o'clock, p.m., went into effect December 7, 1900.

One of the most important events commemorated of the Revolutionary period took place in the autumn of 1903. It not only related to the earlier history of Somerville, but that of the original thirteen colonies, of which Massachusetts bore a leading part. On the twenty-ninth day of October, the new Prospect Hill Park and Memorial Tower were formally dedicated. A large gathering of people listened to interesting exercises, which were held on the hill-top. Mayor Edward Glines presided. Addresses of a historic and patriotic nature were made by John L. Bates, Lieut-Governor Curtis Guild, Jr., John F. Ayer, President of Somerville Historical Society; and a poem read by Sam Walter Foss. Music was furnished by the Eighth Regiment Band. Pupils of the high schools rendered patriotic selections. At two o'clock in the afternoon, to the music of the band and a salute from a gun of the Naval Brigade, and amid cheers from the vast assemblage, there was unfurled from the top of the Memorial Tower a large American flag, presented to the city by the Prospect Hill Chapter, Daughters of the Revolution, of Somerville.

In 1903, the Wilson Fountain, erected from a bequest of Joseph F. Wilson, a former resident of the city, was placed in position on Central Hill Park, near the Battery.

The abolition of grade crossings on the Fitchburg Division, Boston and Maine Railroad, commenced September, 1908.

1909, Opening of Lowell street as a continuous thoroughfare.

Visit and reception of Hon. William H. Taft, president of the United States, Governor Eben S. Draper, and other distinguished guests, July 4<sup>th</sup>, 1910.

Dec. 1910, Board of Aldermen passes an order creating a committee to consider a revision of the city charter. The committee consisted of twenty-six members, two city officials, twenty-four citizens.

1911, Alewife Brook territory improved at an expense of \$1500.

August, 1913, the Kent House on Somerville avenue corner Garden Court demolished. This house was nearly 200 years old and during the Revolutionary period was the scene of many eventful occasions.

New Public Library building erected on Central Hill in 1914, at a cost of \$125,000.

1916, the establishment of Junior High schools in different sections of the city commenced..

In 1917 two companies of the Massachusetts State Guard were organized for home duty, with headquarters at the armory on Highland avenue.

New Branch Library on Broadway, East Somerville, opened in 1918.

During the period of 1917-1919, the scene of the European world-war, the people of Somerville rendered patriotic service to the cause of human liberty by military enlistments, Red Cross employment, financial contributions, hospital assistance, and acts of loyalty and sacrifice.