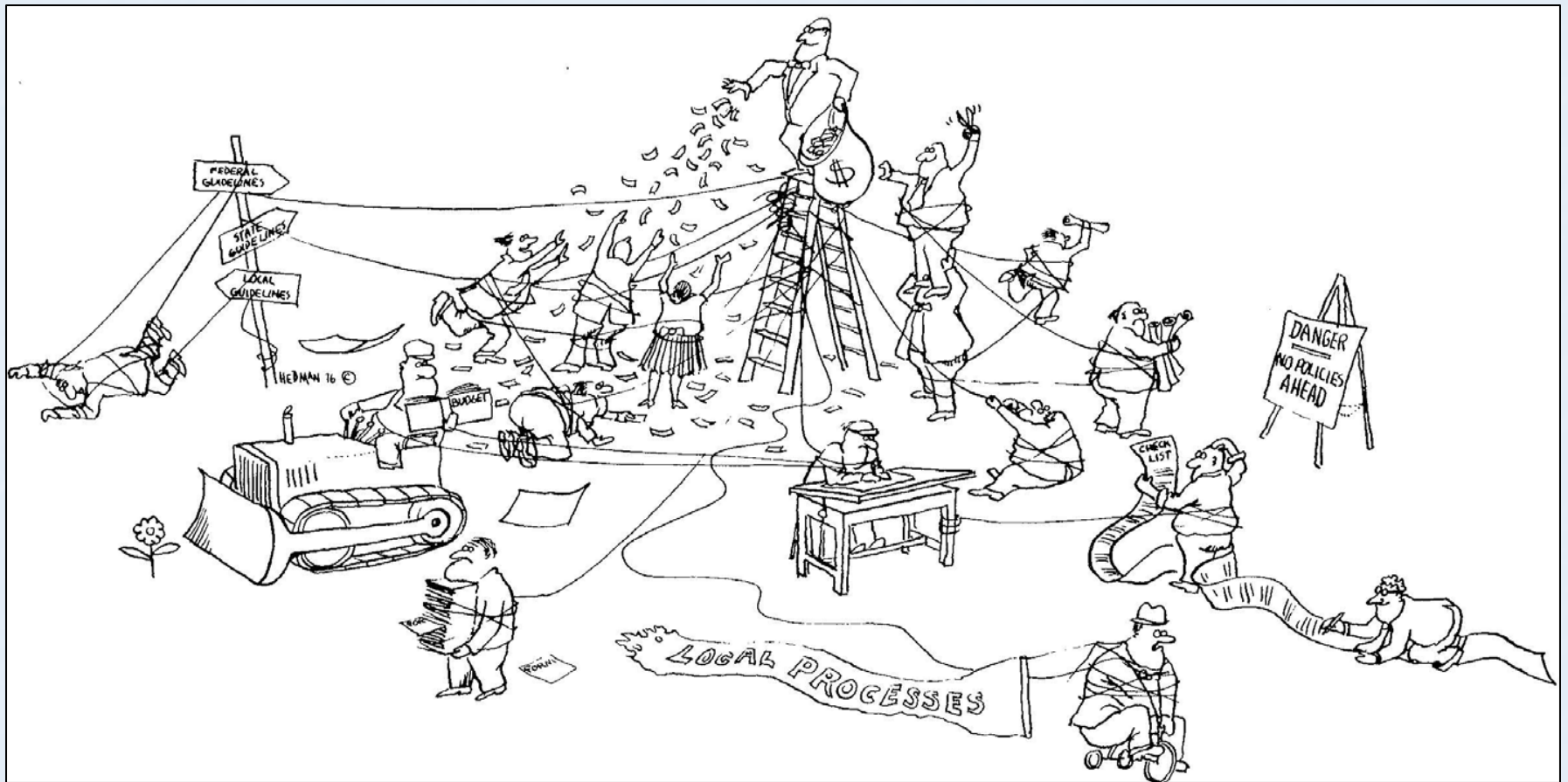


# Historic Properties Real Estate Course



**City of Somerville  
October 18, 2012**

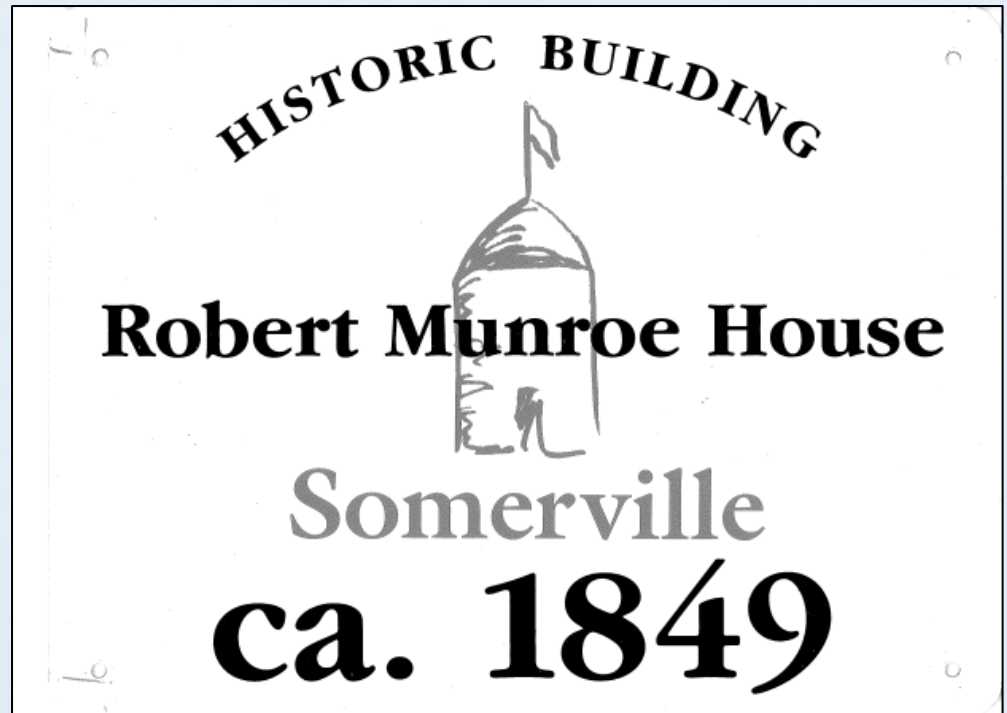
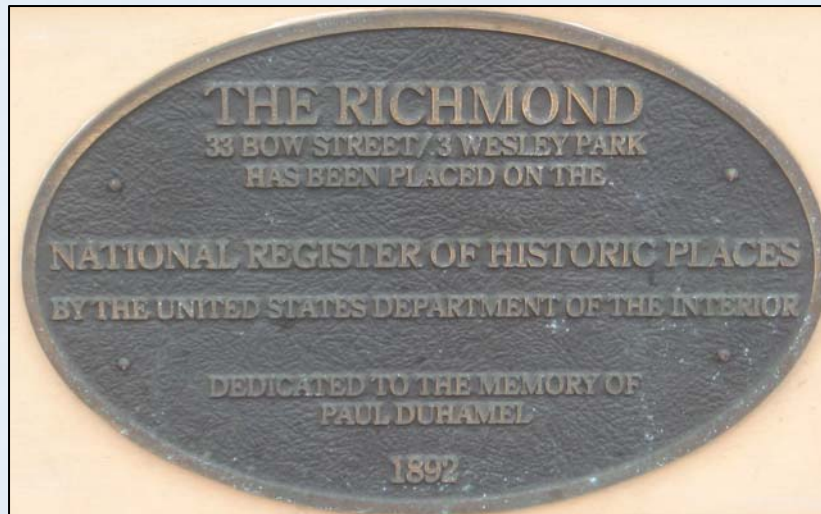
# Historic Property Reviews – NOT!



# What is a "Historic Property?"

## Two Types:

- National Register District
- Local Historic District





# What is a National Register (NR) District?

- Recognizes property or area important to history of community, state, or nation
- Allows federal tax credits to owners of **income-producing properties** for major rehabilitation
- Provides for review and limited protection of properties that require federal or state licenses, permits or funding



# What is a Local Historic District (LHD)?

## Area of Significance to Local Government –

- Special character based on:  
historical, cultural or streetscape value
- Represents specific time period, massing or architectural style
- Visually stands apart as unique or distinctive
- Association with important event or prominent figure



# Difference Between These Districts ?

## **NATIONAL REGISTER**

- Federal designation – National Park Service
- Administered by Dept of Interior, with Standards
- No local review except if public \$ or permits involved
- Opportunity for 20% tax credits for large projects
- Has contributing & non-contributing properties
- Strict criteria for designation - National significance & integrity retained

## **LOCAL DISTRICT**

- Local designation - town or city decision-makers
- Administered by local preservation commission
- Local review & assistance provided
- More property protection over long-term
- All properties in district covered
- Less stringent criteria for designation – local significance

# Value of Local Historic Districts



- Preserve & Enhance Community's Cultural & Historical Resources
- Protect Unique Character of Community's Built Environment
- Create Strong Economic Benefits for Community through:
  - Increase in Property Values
  - Rise in Neighborhood Stability Over Time
  - Quality Reinvestment in Properties
  - Greater Tourist Appeal and Spending
- Integrate Community's Smart Growth & Sustainability Goals by:
  - Promotes Reinvestment in Existing Building Stock
  - Reduces Material Waste
  - Reuses Finite Resources
  - Capitalizes on Existing Rich Architectural Heritage



# Benefits of LHD to Owners

- **Higher Value** – historic designation attracts buyers who tend to pay higher sale prices
- **Exemptions** – historic properties are NOT subject to all new regulations of Mass. State Building Code
- **Special Treatment** – owners receive free technical assistance from HPC Staff and the professional advice of Commission members
- **Unique Uses** – some communities allow additional uses for historically designated buildings (Bed 'N Breakfast & Carriage Houses in Somerville)
- **Protection** – designation ensures your restoration work will be preserved for future generations
- **Prestige** – Like the National Register, local designation can be viewed as a prestigious symbol, distinguishing property in competitive market



# Who Administers a LHD?

- LHD Commissions usually appointed by city mayors, city managers, or town board of selectmen
- Composition is typically 3-7 regular members, with often same number of alternates
- All serve terms of 3 years, staggered
- All serve without compensation
- Annually elect Chair, Vice-Chair & Secretary
- Members typically represent a variety of different fields, and backgrounds, e.g. architect, lawyer, real estate agent, planner, contractor, historian, landscape architect, and historic district residents

# What Does the Preservation Commission Review?

- Alterations or changes to **exterior** architectural features **visible from public way**
- Staff determines if application involves:
  - Maintenance/In-Kind Repairs;
  - Alterations, Modifications;
  - New Construction; or
  - Combination of above



# What Types of Work is Exempt?

- Any changes to interior of property
  - unless interior changes also affect exterior
- Maintenance or repair of exterior architectural feature with in-kind material, size or appearance
- Reconstruction of building or architectural feature that is damaged or destroyed by natural disaster with substantially same design and materials
- Other items by local ordinance, e.g.
  - paint color, storm windows & doors, lighting fixtures, window A/C, antennae, lawn statuary

# Case Study Example



Somerville Historic Preservation  
Commission (SHPC)



# SHPC Composition & Assistance

- 14 members: 7 Regular; 7 Alternates
- Current Backgrounds: Architects (2); Architectural Historians (3); Real Estate Agents (3); Lawyer (1); Contractors (2); Landscape Architect (1); Urban Studies (1); Citizen Member (1)
- (4) above are also Local Historic District residents
- Technical assistance: (2) Staff - *one full-time and two part-time*
- Financial assistance: For low-moderate income owners or CDBG-eligible areas only

# Overview of Somerville LHD's

- Over 200 LHDs and in the midst of adopting more
- These LHDs encompass over 350 properties
- Distributed throughout the City, with concentration in East Somerville, Prospect Hill, and Spring Hill
- Many are currently single-building LHDs
- Recent additions: 50 properties in 13 new LHDs
- Another 100+ properties surveyed and determined to be eligible for a LHD and hope to propose designation of most of them over the next year

# SHPC Meeting Schedule, Format, Public Notice

- Preservation Planner determines if “Certificate of Appropriateness” (C/A) is necessary
- If needed, Applicant meets with Historic Commission at a public hearing
- Legal notices re: hearing are mailed to Applicant, direct abutters, and other interested parties
- SHPC regularly meets on third Tuesday of each month throughout the year

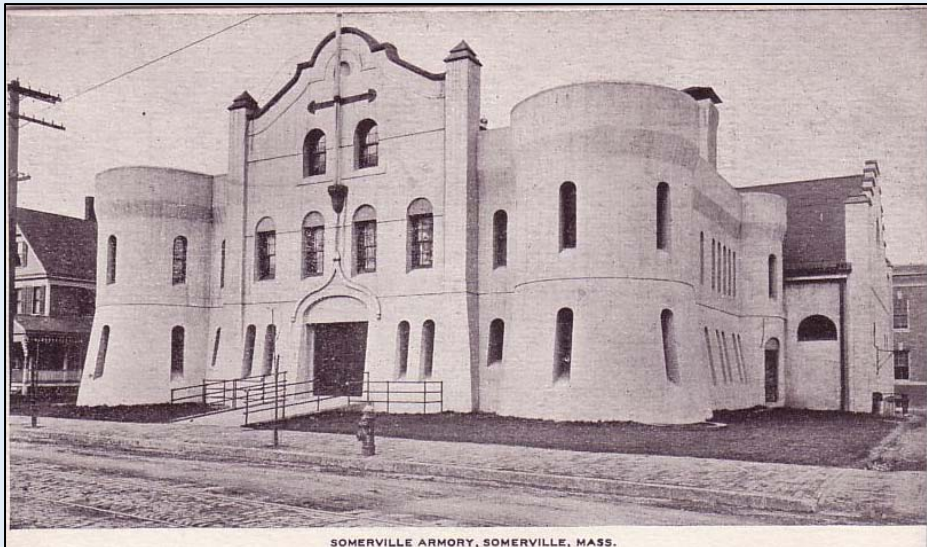
# SHPC Typical Application

- Applicant (owner or designee) explains project at meeting
- Commission discusses project with Applicant and makes decision same night, unless Applicant chooses to continue
  - Commission issues "Certificate of Appropriateness"
  - Applicant proceeds to Inspectional Services for a building permit
- or
- Preservation Commission denies the certificate and recommends how to modify so can approve it
- Applicant modifies project according to the recommendations and obtains the certificate
- Applicant can decide to appeal the denial within 20 days, and then the case goes to Superior Court



# Maintenance and In-Kind Repairs

- Preservation Planner Issues a "Certificate of Non-Applicability" (C/NA)
- Applicant Proceeds with Project and Obtains Building Permit Application
  - Include C/NA with Building Permit Application
  - Must Obtain C/NA Before Building Permit



SOMERVILLE ARMORY, SOMERVILLE, MASS.

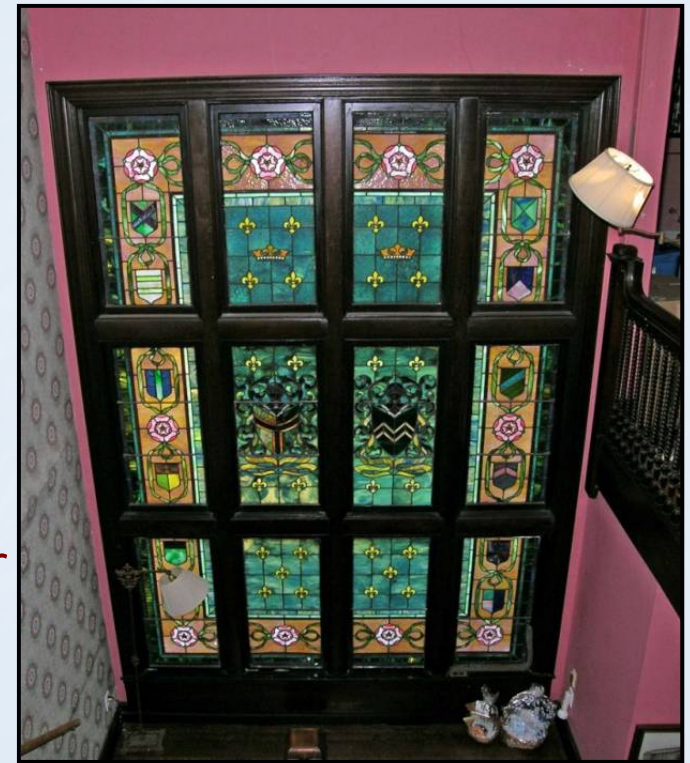


# SHPC Criteria for Property Designation

- Rarity in Somerville
- Good examples of architectural style or type
- Form and massing that contributes toward the streetscape
- Respectful rehabilitation or restoration
- Potential danger of community loss
- Association with important national or local events and/or prominent figures
- Location

# Missed Opportunities & Lessons Learned

- Without designation, special properties may be irretrievably altered or demolished
- Notable losses in recent past
  - 1 Benton Road
  - 46 Pearl Street
  - Saint Polycarp's Church
- Near losses over time
  - Somerville Theatre, 1990's
  - Somerville Armory, 2004
  - First Methodist Church, 1 Summer





# Missed Opportunities & Lessons Learned



1 Benton Road – Benton-Corwin House





# Missed Opportunities & Lessons Learned



46 Pearl Street – Ezra Conant House





# Missed Opportunities & Lessons Learned



St. Polycarp's Church – 100 Temple St.

# Realized Opportunity Working with SHPC



2 Benton Road – Benton- Hood House  
2009 – SHPC Director's Award



# Realized Opportunity Working with SHPC



- Somerville Zoning Amendment enabling larger Bed & Breakfast Inns in historic properties
  - 221 Morrison Avenue - Warren-Sparrow House





# Union Square Opportunities

American Tube Works,  
24 Dane Street



Eberle Building,  
31-34 Union Square

# Union Square Opportunities

Post Office,  
237 Washington St.



Somerville District  
Courthouse,  
19 Walnut Street

# Other Preservation Projects – In Progress and Upcoming

- Docent Program & Ghosts Event at Milk Row Cemetery
- First Flag Raising at Prospect Hill – January 1<sup>st</sup>
- Re-Initiation of Historic Plaque Program
- Enhancement of Design Review Guidelines
- 18<sup>th</sup> Annual Preservation Awards Program  
in collaboration with Somerville High School
- Additional Surveying: Along Broadway; Union Square
- Interactive Walking & Bike Tour Self-Guided Brochures
- Adoption of Community Preservation Act (CPA) ??

# How to Research a Historic House

- Property Deeds
- Wills & Probate Records
- Local Building Permits
- City & Town Census Directories
- Historic Maps and Atlases
- Property Surveys by Local Commissions



# Form B - Building Survey

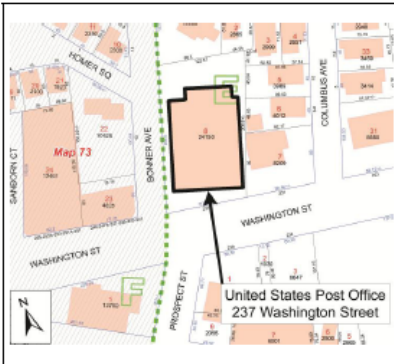
## FORM B - BUILDING

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
 MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES BUILDING  
 220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD  
 BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

### Photograph



### Topographic or Assessor's Map



Recorded by: Virginia H. Adams, Carey L. Jones, and Quinn R. Stuart

Organization: PAL, Inc.

Date: May 2010

Follow Massachusetts Historical Commission Survey Manual instructions for completing this form.

Assessor's Number USGS Quad Area(s) Form Number

81-E-6 Boston North SMV.G SMV.10

Town: Somerville

Place (neighborhood or village): Union Square

Address: 237 Washington Street

Historic Name: United States Post Office/Somerville Main Post Office

Uses: Present: Post Office

Original: Post Office, Government Office

Date of Construction: 1935-1936

Source: Building Plans

Style/Form: Colonial Revival

Architect/Builder: Louis Adolf Simon, Maurice P. Meade

### Exterior Material

Foundation: Brick

Wall/Trim: Brick, stone, wood

Roof: Slate

### Outbuildings/Secondary Structures

None

### Major Alterations (with dates)

None

Condition: Excellent

Moved:  no  yes Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Acreage: 24,150 S.F.

Setting: The Somerville Post Office is located on the northeast corner of Washington Street and Bonner Avenue and is surrounded by a mix of other institutional buildings, including the Somerville Police Station, modern commercial buildings, and mid- to late nineteenth-century residences.

## INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

SOMERVILLE

237 Washington Street

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
 220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Area(s) Form No.  
 SMV.G SMV.10

### National Register of Historic Places Criteria Statement Form

Check all that apply:

Individually eligible  Eligible only in a historic district

Contributing to a potential historic district  Potential historic district

Criteria:  A  B  C  D

Criteria Considerations:  A  B  C  D  E  F  G

Statement of Significance by: Virginia H. Adams and Carey L. Jones, PAL Inc. May 2010  
 The criteria that are checked in the above sections must be justified here.

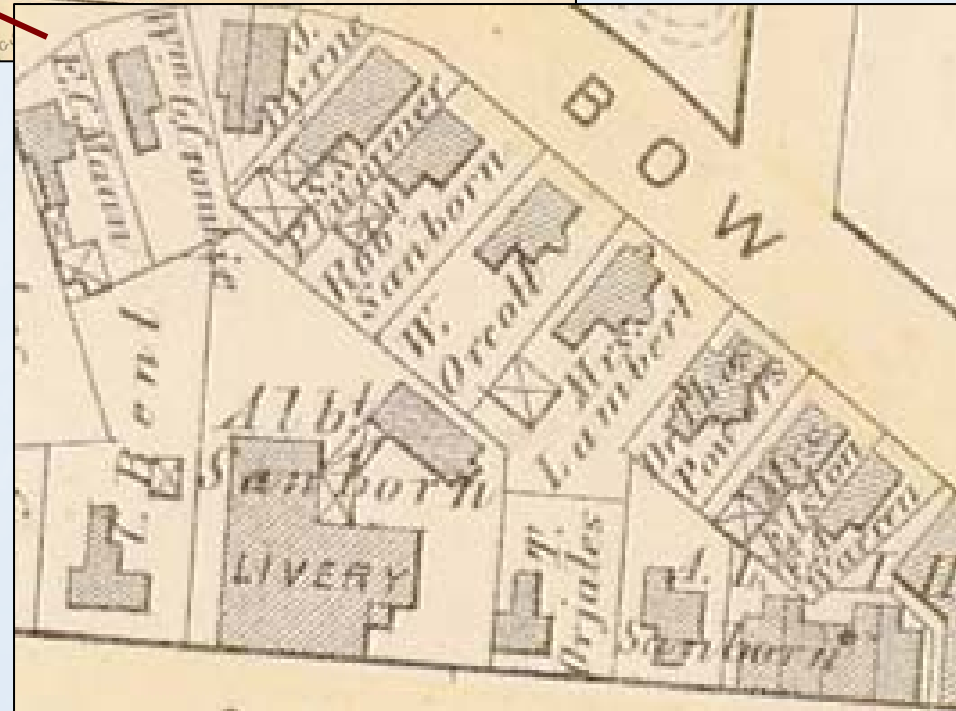
The Somerville Main Post Office has been listed in the National Register of Historic Places since 1985. As stated in the nomination, it is eligible for listing in the National Register under Criteria A and C at the local level in the areas of Politics/Government, Community Planning and Development, Architecture and Art. Under Criterion A the building possesses significance in the area of Politics/Government as an example of the type of buildings produced by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal programs, namely the Public Works Administration (PWA) and the Treasury Department's Section of Painting and Sculpture. The New Deal program, as administered by Roosevelt, sought to stimulate the economy by providing jobs for the multitude of unemployed Americans during the Depression. The focus of the PWA was on the construction of both large- and small-scale municipal projects, such as post offices. The interior of the building houses a mural painted by Ross Moffett, who was hired under the Treasury Department's Section of Painting and Sculpture, another important New Deal program. The Somerville Main Post Office is one of three civic buildings in Union Square and, as such, possesses significant associations with the physical growth and design of the area.

The Somerville Main Post Office is also significant under Criterion C as an intact example of a Colonial Revival civic building. Designed by local architect Maurice P. Meade, with Louis A. Simon, the Supervisory Architect for the Public Works Administration, the building features strong Colonial Revival detailing characterized by its hipped roof, brick cladding, central entryway, arched windows, and stone window surrounds and quoins.

The Somerville Main Post Office also contributes to the Union Square Commercial District potential historic district.

Continuation sheet 12

# 1874 Hopkins Atlas



- Property Ownership
- Building Footprint

# Information Sources

- Registry of Deeds
- Local Building Departments
- Local Library – esp. Reference Room
- University Libraries
- Local Historical Societies
- Private Vendors
- Massachusetts Archives at JFK Library
- MACRIS file via Massachusetts Historical Commission

# One Final Note ...

