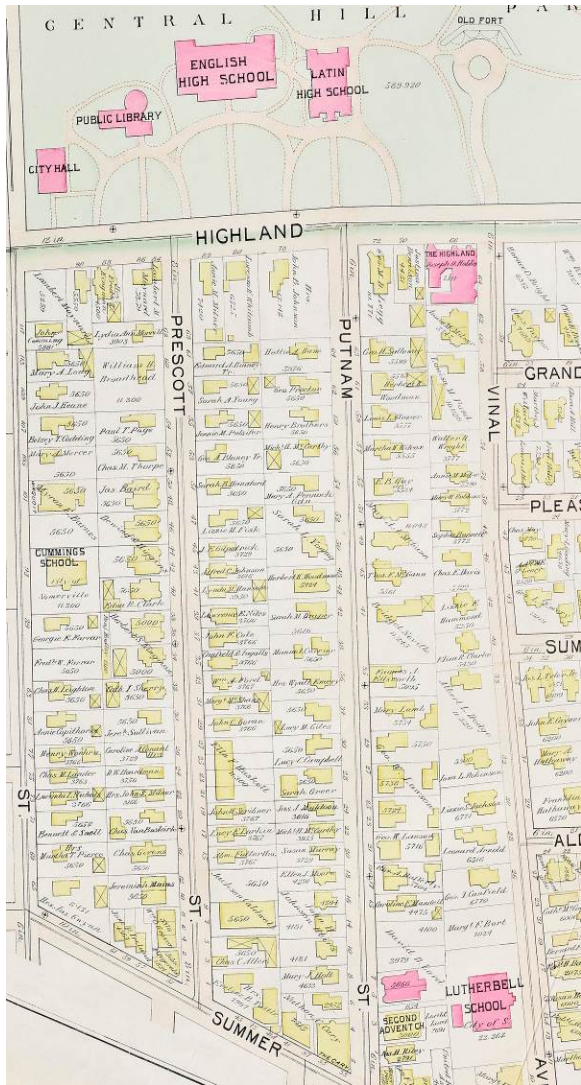


“Union Square: An Intermixing of Industry, Immigration and Innovation”

An Architectural and Historical Walking Tour – September 2014

Led by Edward Gordon, President, Victorian Society in America, NE Chapter

The Innovative Industries and Industrious Immigrants of Union Square and Vicinity - 1830-1930



Although primarily concerned with the industries and immigrant communities that thrived along the Somerville Avenue transportation corridor at the western edge of Union Square, this tour will begin at the seat of its municipal prominence, appropriately sited atop Central Hill. The route goes down Central Hill’s southern slope via Putnam, Summer and Quincy Streets, to enjoy residences depicting architectural styles popular in the late 19th century, including Italianate, Mansard and Queen Anne. You will see clear evidence that these houses are inhabited by avid gardeners of compact spaces, likely an activity encouraged by Somerville’s density (one of the most built-up cities in the nation), the older age of its housing stock (over half built 1890-1910 before zoning was adopted in 1925) and the community’s prior history of not reserving much land for public open space and parks. In addition, Somerville has traditionally been home to folks immigrating from the Old Country where fresh food from the garden was a staple at mealtime.

After the descent the route explores the largely industrial corridor between Somerville Avenue and the railroad tracks and focuses on buildings associated with the former American Tube Works and the later day Ames Safety Envelope Company. The tour ends at the western edge of the Union Square core, near an architecturally notable and significant intersection of the City.

The Municipal Civic Center within Central Hill Park. The Central Hill campus is bound by Medford Street on the north, Walnut on the east, Highland

Avenue on the south, and School Street on the west. Set out during the early 1870s, it is the community’s oldest public green space. It also represents the civic center of the City for over 150 years, where one finds a park-like campus encompassing key municipal functions -- the main City Hall, a comprehensive High School, significant war memorials, a recreational playground, and the Central Library. During the late 1700s, this hilltop land was called “the Church lots” because it was owned by the First Church of Charlestown. It was purchased in 1870 from Jacob Sleeper of Boston, one of the founders of Boston University. Sleeper sold the land destined to become Central Park to the Town for \$38,000. Over time Central Hill has evolved significantly, with many alterations, demolitions and changes of use to the buildings atop it.



A viewing of old photographs, for example, depicts a high school, library and fire station that predate their modern counterparts. The north side of this civic campus has an outstanding panoramic view of Winter Hill over the rooftops of Gilman Square edifices. The middle of the park represents the site of the **French Redoubt** where troops gathered at the onset of the American Revolution, determined to overthrow their British oppressors. A redoubt is a fort or fort system usually consisting of an enclosure composed of earth, brick or stone which is usually located outside a larger fort. A redoubt is designed to protect soldiers outside the main defensive line and can be a permanent structure or a hastily-constructed temporary fortification. Central Hill's redoubt was part of a defense line punctuated by strategically placed redoubts running from the Mystic River through the Ten Hills section to Prospect Hill.

Somerville High School encompasses an 1896 central tripartite building that represents the work of the important Boston architectural firm of Hartwell and Richardson. They are also well-known for their design of the former Exeter Street Theatre in Boston's Back Bay in 1886 and Cambridge's City Hall in 1889. The sprawling three-story brick building is enlivened by terra cotta and brownstone trimmings, and the 1896 structural component of the building was originally enclosed by a massive hip roof that was destroyed by fire during the 1960s. In 1928 Frank I. Cooper Contractors added to the High School's east and west wings a horizontal orientation amplified by brownstone sills and belt courses on the upper stories. The building blends elements of the Italian Renaissance and Classical Revival styles—the arched windows of the main blocks on the third story present a pleasing repetition of curved lines. The Romanesque Revival library of 1885 was demolished to make way for the west wing in 1928.



Somerville City Hall has been greatly altered and expanded over time. The nucleus of this pressed brick building is a high school built in 1852 in the Greek Revival style. By then the style was nearing the end of its popularity, and was characterized by references to ancient Greek structural forms and elements, such as columns and fully framed attics. An early example of this style in the Boston area would be the center columned building at Quincy Market, built in the mid-1820s. In 1866, six years before Somerville was incorporated as a City, Town officials moved their offices from a building on Forster Street to the second

floor of this high school atop Central Hill. In 1873 the Police Court moved out of City Hall into a new headquarters on Bow Street, and a public library took over its former space, until it moved in 1885 to its own building, located between City Hall and a Latin School.

The first major enlargement occurred in 1896 when a rear wing designed by Thomas T. M. Sargent was added behind the Highland Avenue side of the building. In 1924 the Boston architectural firm Ritchie, Parsons and Taylor designed a second, more radical addition -- a large north wing to house a chamber for the Board of Aldermen on the second floor. This changed the entire orientation and size of the building, resulting in symmetrical east and west facades, and a generally more imposing appearance. The gable end pediment of the original building was removed, a third story was added, and the entrance was relocated to the original main block where it still remains. Key elements include Classical Revival details such as the two colossal Ionic columns set *in antis* (standing between square piers called *anta*), the broad wood spandrels between the first and second story windows, and the addition of a clock tower, spire and weather vane.

Before leaving the Central Hill campus and crossing Highland Avenue to reach Putnam St. consider a house that ranks among the most sophisticated residential designs in the City during the late 19th century.

The George Loring House at **76 Highland Avenue** was designed by and for George A. Loring (1851-1918) who was mentored by George Clough, a City of Boston architect who



designed the old Somerville Police Station on Bow Street in 1874. It is a striking example of a wood shingle clad house of considerable substance that references English Medieval design, complete with an overhanging second floor, diamond-shaped window panes, and terra cotta chimney pots. Loring's work in Somerville dates back to 1884 when he designed the Somerville Public Library, a Romanesque Revival building that is no longer extant. He could be seen as the City's "starchitect" in the late 1800s, talented at designing picturesque Queen Anne and Shingle Style houses on Prospect and Spring Hills. Loring is credited with designing approximately 100 houses in Somerville, both on his own (1884-1889) and under the aegis of the firm, Loring and Phipps.



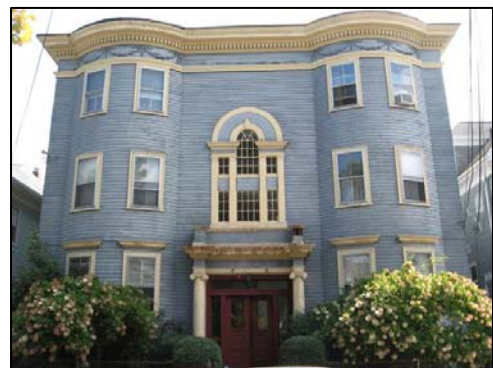
As you round the corner of Highland Avenue and Putnam Street consider the three identically massed houses at #59, 61 and 63 Putnam Street. Built in 1867, they symbolize Somerville's post-Civil War prosperity. Designated a single-building Local Historic District, the **Dyer-Woodman House at 61 Putnam Street** exemplifies the center gable Italianate house type that was built in virtually every neighborhood of Somerville. The first two owners of this house earned livings as a pension agent and a milkman. The barn at the rear dates to the late 1860s, and was restored and converted to living space in the 1990's, and was struck by lightning in 2012, forcing yet another restoration effort.

Continue south on Putnam Street passing by several noteworthy examples of post-Civil War design, including the Mansard style house at #55, an end gable Italianate at #52, the Mansard cottage set atop a rise at #35, and the double Italianate at #17-19. Putnam Street was named for Connecticut's Major General Israel Putnam who fought heroically at the Battle of Bunker Hill and commanded the encampment of patriotic troops atop Prospect Hill in 1775-1776.

At the bottom of the slope **9-11 Putnam Street** is a U-shaped, red brick, Queen Anne, multi-family building that dates to 1890. It exemplifies an early example of "a courtyard apartment" as coined by architectural historian Douglas Shand-Tucci. This apartment style became popular during the period of 1890-1920 because the courts' deep recesses enabled the windows of interior units to take advantage of natural light and air, and for builders to provide attractive landscaping. This property was part of the real estate portfolio of David Lord, a director of the Somerville National Bank, who lived at 18 Aldersey Street on Prospect Hill. One of Lord's neighbors was Quincy Adams Vinal who was the president of said bank. Next door to Lord's apartments was the Second Advent Church, a wooden rectangular, chapel-scale structure constructed during the late 1880s, but later demolished at an unknown date.

Continue southward to Summer Street and then turn right to reach Quincy Street. The street was named after Quincy Adams Vinal, who with his brother Robert Aldersey Vinal, was a major real estate developer during the second half of the 19th century, both on Prospect Hill and other parts of the City, which also explains the origin of Aldersey and Vinal Streets.

On Quincy Street consider **#46** whose charm derives from its diminutive scale. Built circa 1870, this house is a mini-Mansard villa that was recently rehabbed and won a 2013 Director's Award from the Somerville Preservation Commission for work restoring many of its original architectural details. Also note several exceptional front yard gardens, and the **Quincy Street Open Space** in the middle of the block, a great example of an early 21st century pocket park with extensive landscaping, a meandering path, and seating for quiet relaxation. The land was once the site of a house that was destroyed by fire in 1989.



Across the street is **15 Quincy Street** which was built in 1895, and is one of the best examples of a six-family triple

decker in Somerville. Designed in a robust rendition of the Colonial Revival style, this clapboard clad, double bowed front building is noteworthy for its ornate features, including the flanking Ionic columns at the center entrance, the tall Palladian window that probably illuminates a stair hall, and the swag and bellflower low relief detail beneath the roof's eaves. Its construction was financed by Antonio Sears whose occupation is listed as "tailor," and reportedly his tenants at the turn of the 20th century were "tradesmen and workers."

Continue south on Quincy Street to Somerville Avenue and note the handsome row of circa late 1870s brick and brownstone-trimmed row houses.

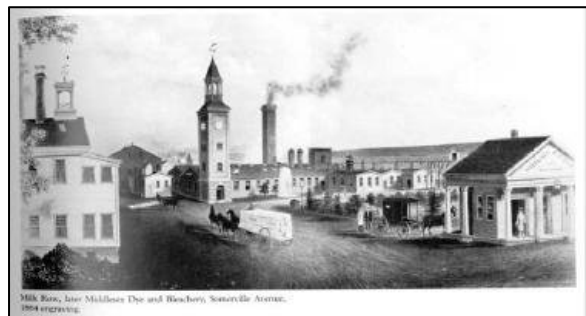


The houses at #4, 6 and 8 Quincy Street are a rare brick trio of attached units in a neighborhood of predominantly wood-frame structures. Built around 1880 for unidentified owners, this row represents an interesting example of the Panel Brick style introduced to the Back Bay in Boston during the mid-1870s, and that reached outlying areas like Somerville by 1880. Hallmarks of the style include recessed and projecting ornamental brickwork panels and stepped-out or corbelled cornices. Particularly pleasing are the bay windows of the main façade, which exhibit chamfered corners at the second story and surmounted polygonal dormers at the mansard roof.

The trio is topped by a mansard roof that was near to the end of its popularity as a roof type.

Referred to as "Milk Row" during the 18th and early 19th centuries, Somerville Avenue was part of a transportation corridor that included Elm and Washington Streets. It provided Middlesex County farmers with access to Charlestown and Boston markets. By the mid-1830s, the Fitchburg Railroad ran parallel to Somerville Avenue. Initially this rail line was devoted exclusively to the transportation of products, rather than people, but by the early 1840s commuter trains became available to affluent men commuting to work in Boston. The Fitchburg Railroad, as well as the Boston and Lowell Railroad (1835) on the north side of Somerville, made it possible for Somerville to separate from Charlestown in 1842. The rail lines encouraged the development of additional industry and related house construction on Prospect and Spring Hills, as well as worker housing bordering the cul-de-sacs that ran off of Somerville Avenue to the railroad tracks.

Even before the rail lines were introduced to Somerville in the mid-1830s, industrial firms were popping up, as seen with the Middlesex Bleachery and Dye Works on Somerville Avenue opposite Central Street. The south side of this enterprise bordered the Miller's River, which provided a source of water, as well as a natural outlet for the firm's waste liquids after it dyed cotton and woolen yard brought to them, and bleached and pressed cotton and linen goods. The company was innovative from the start, advertising as early as 1822 that they used steam power. Before closing in 1936, it was said to be the oldest textile finishing plant in the nation. A variety of other industries followed, including Galletley's twine works on Washington Street during the 1840s and the American Tube Works located a few blocks to the east of the Milk Row Bleachery. Two years later the Union Glass Company set up shop on the Fitchburg Railroad at Webster Avenue, and H. Brown Moulding Company represented a later addition to Milk Row's roster of industries when it moved from Cambridge to Union Square in 1886. The firm's products included cabinets for Harvard's Agassiz Museum, as well as other museums in the United States.



Industry attracted immigrant workers to Union Square and its environs. Irish workers associated with the Middlesex Bleachery settled along the residential cul-de-sacs on the south side of Somerville Avenue, and the less plentiful English immigrants applied their engineering talents at the American Tube Works, with at least one family settling on Dane Street. Then during the first quarter of the 20th century, Greek immigrants found employment in the meat packing concerns of Union Square, while Italian immigrants held jobs cleaning laboratory equipment at nearby M.I.T. and started small businesses, such as grocery

stores and barber shops. Italian families tended to cluster in areas bordering Somerville Avenue and the lower slopes of Spring Hill, and they were regular patrons of the Roman Catholic Church, St. Anthony of Padua, once it was built at Somerville Avenue and Properzi Way.

Before exploring the American Tube Works complex, view the nearby Milk Row Cemetery on the south side of Somerville Avenue.



The **Milk Row Cemetery** is the first and only pre-20th century burial ground in Somerville. It was established in 1804 on land sold by Samuel Tufts for \$1.00 to Timothy Tufts and others. Several members of the Tufts, Stone, and Rand Families reside here. Somerville's first school stood at the eastern corner of the lot from 1796 until 1849. A significant Civil War monument was erected in 1863 on an interior plot donated by Enoch Robinson, the eminent inventor and designer of Somerville's unique Round House on

Atherton Street in Spring Hill. The monument is reported to be the first in the nation erected by citizens to honor soldiers who died in the Civil War. Private burials in the Cemetery became less frequent after 1842 when Cambridge opened its Mount Auburn Cemetery and the town buried many of its paupers there in the mid 1800's.

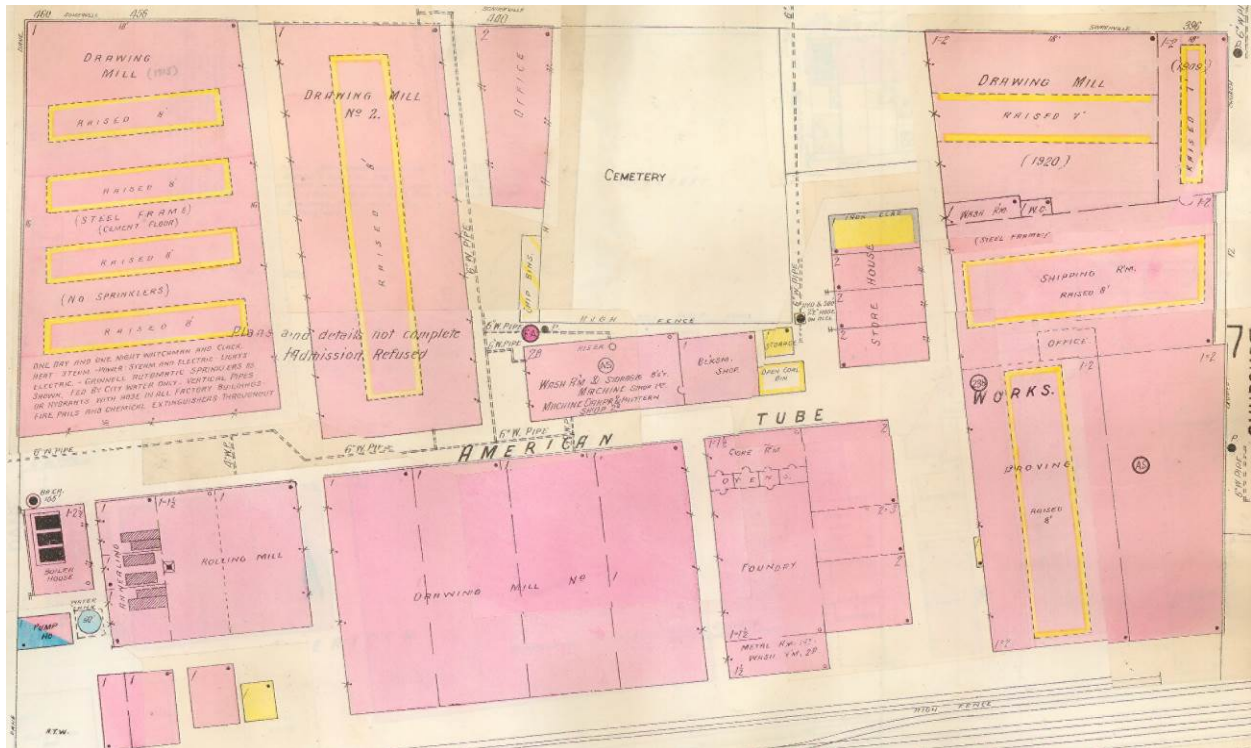
Listed in the National Register of Historic Places and designated a local historic district in 1985, the historic Cemetery has more recently benefitted from significant local attention, including two State grants, funds from the DeMoulas Foundation, and extensive care by Historic Somerville, Inc. a local non-profit working in concert with the City. Its rich history can be learned through a separate brochure and periodic public access during seasonal months by visiting the Preservation Commission's website.

The American Tube Works Company, located on Somerville Avenue at Dane Street, was incorporated in March of 1852 for the purpose of manufacturing seamless brass and copper tubes. The firm had obtained exclusive rights to manufacture "Green's Patent brass tubes," patented in England four years earlier. Freeborn Adams, a South Boston machinist, invented similar equipment to produce seamless copper tubes and was the first director of plant operations. Since the manufacturing process was unpatented, it was kept a closely guarded secret. American Tube was the first company in the nation to produce seamless boiler tubes for locomotive, marine, and stationary engines, in addition to tubes and piping for a variety of other purposes. Its products were exported to all corners of the world for over half a century.

The company appears to have been immediately successful, employing 175 men, second only to the Union Glass Works Company, and by 1875, it had produced \$1.2 million worth of brass and copper tubing. In the first decades of the 20th century, the company expanded and rebuilt the complex to include four large drawing mills, a rolling mill, foundry, and pattern and blacksmith shops, all arranged around three sides of the relatively tiny Milk Row Cemetery. Today, a variety of firms, several with a creative or innovative bent, are housed in the remaining complex of seven brick buildings on or near Somerville Avenue.

American Tube Works closed in the 1930s, and its cluster of buildings was used by the Whiting Milk Company and H. P. Welch Trucking Company. The oldest building still standing is the machine and pattern shop to the rear of the Cemetery, now housing an Indian market and liquor store. The boiler house on Dane Street has recently been converted to office use.

The first American Tube works building on the route is the **Administration Office** at **440 Somerville Avenue**, bordering the west side of the Cemetery. Built circa 1913, this rectangular five-bay by twelve-bay, two-story building has brick walls laid in common bond and a front gable roof with a shallow pitch. A significant feature is the metal hoist rail that runs between the Administrative Office and the Drawing Mill to the west. The classicized limestone trim of the front door represents the only formal design feature within the entire complex, aside from the copper canopy door hood atop the main entrance to the former Boiler House on Dane St.



Bordering the west wall of the Administration Offices is a passageway that runs between it and the former Drawing Mill of the American Tube Works complex.

The **Drawing Mill at 444 Somerville Avenue** is directly east of #460 and sits across another alley, originally known as Sherman Street. It was built between 1900 and 1933 after a block of residential buildings were demolished in order to expand the Tube Works. The Drawing Mill is a rectangular six-bay by twenty-eight bay building of one-and-one-half-stories with brick walls laid in common bond and a front gable roof with a shallow pitch and monitor. A brick smoke stack can be seen on its west elevation.

Head south on the former Sherman Street to view the oldest remaining portion of the complex at the intersection of the former Sherman Street and the alley once known as Frost Street.

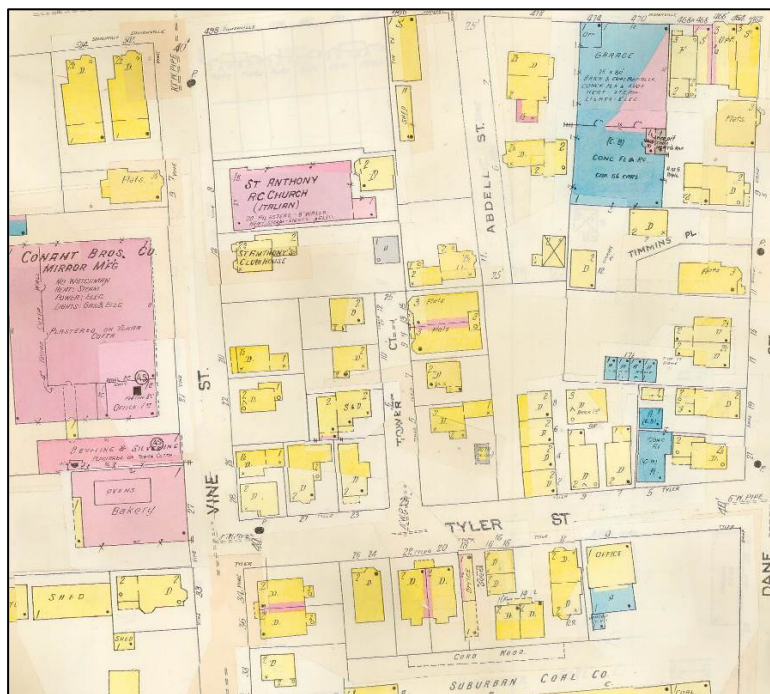
440R originally served as a **Machine and Pattern Shop** and **438R Somerville Avenue** as a **Blacksmith Shop**. The Blacksmith Shop is the oldest structure within the second wave of expansion, beginning construction in 1890, but not completed until almost thirty years later. The Machine and Pattern Shop, built circa 1900, is a rectangular thirteen-bay by seven-bay, two-and-one-half story building with walls laid up in common bond. The Pattern Shop, located on the second floor of the building, would have likely served as a storage and production area for patterns used to make fittings and other related hardware. Here, architectural interest lies in its gable roofed, straight-forward rectangular form with walls pierced by standard size windows that rise from rock faced sills to segmental arched lintels with several rows of header bricks.

The **Rolling/Drawing Mill at 460 Somerville Avenue**, on the north side of the Boiler House across the alley, originally known as Frost Avenue, is a rectangular, seventeen-bay by nineteen-bay, one-story building of brick and steel frame construction, built circa 1900.

The **Boiler House at 24 Dane Street**, was built circa 1915-1920, to produce heat and power for the entire Tube Works complex. It has brick walls laid in common bond and a side-gable roof, clad in asphalt. The roof also has a parapet, a tall and narrow wood shingle monitor, and copper flashing. A striking and interesting formal feature is the aforementioned copper canopy marking the Dane Street entry.



The Ames Safety Envelope Company was in business from 1919 until the early years of the 21st century. The Ames Company occupied buildings bordering Dane and the former Frost Street, as well as new buildings on nearby Tyler Street. The Ames Company was named after the Ames Building, built in 1892, and now the Ames Hotel in Boston's Financial District. One member of the construction crew was a part of the Fitzgerald family who founded the Ames Envelope Company. Reportedly, key reasons for choosing the Ames name was the advantage a fledgling envelope company could gain with a name beginning with the first letter of the alphabet, as well as its association with an industrious Brahmin family in the Back Bay. John W. Fitzgerald, a Boston postal worker, founded the company initially to create envelopes that would not tear or disintegrate during mail processing, and over time it became well-known for a wide range of specialized envelopes and color-coded files highly advantageous for medical practices. At its peak the Ames business occupied over 350,000 square feet, and outside the local government, it was reputed to be the second largest employer in the City with 600 workers. They were widely recognized for their generous support of local charities as well as many employee benefits, including windows in their plant, on-site day-care and ESL classes for their immigrant workers, and an employee newsletter, cafeteria and gymnasium. Digitization took its toll on the company's products and it was bought out by a Midwestern company in 2010.



Tyler Street was named for MacLean Hospital Superintendent Columbus Tyler, and was in existence by 1852. In 1873, **Tower Court** was set out on the north side of Tyler Street. This residential cul-de-sac was named for Levi Tower, a stationer on Devonshire Street in Boston, and a resident of Park Street in Somerville, near the Fitchburg Railroad. The three Bucknam brothers, Davis P., James A., and William E. were masons who owned the seven Italianate vernacular houses shown bordering Tower Court in 1874. All of them lived in houses bordering Tyler Street and Tyler Court. By the early 1900s, families of Irish, English, and French heritage lived on the Court, with 7 of the 12 people listed on Tower Court in 1910 listed as lab workers, while the

remaining heads of households included a tube moulder, driver, teamster and two widows. Tower Court illustrates the tendency for persons employed in the same occupation to live side by side on the cul-de-sacs along the industrial corridor between Milk Row and the Fitchburg Railroad. The mammoth modern structures built by Ames on or near the south side of Tyler Street are part of the "Ames Business Park" that now houses a variety of companies associated with the creative economy, such as Artisans Asylum, Brooklyn Boulders' multi-use facility, and Aeronaut Brewery with its allied local food start-ups.

The construction of **St. Anthony of Padua Church** at **12 Properzi Way** (originally Vine Street) represents an early success story for the growth of the Italian community in Somerville. Italians first came to Somerville around 1900, and they frequently opted to attend Roman Catholic services in Boston's North End, even though it meant walking long distances to save money. Italians were also compelled to go into Boston to worship as they were unwelcome in the Irish Church of St. Joseph's in Union Square. Father Nazareno Properzi performed his first mass in Somerville on June 6, 1915 in a storefront on



Somerville Avenue. In less than a year, he had purchased the land for a new church and broke ground a few months later. The church building was not completed until 1925, and will be celebrating its 100th anniversary in 2015!

In addition to tending to the congregation, fund-raising, and working on the design for the new church with the Cippollini brothers, Father Properzi offered other services wherever needed, including as a carpenter, electrician, plumber, painter and decorator. He served his church for 35 years until passing away in 1960. In recent years St. Anthony's has served a more diverse congregation, offering regular services in both English and Spanish. The church property was surveyed in 2005 and has been determined to be eligible for both local historic district designation and listing in the National Register of Historic Places, due to its significant historical associations with Somerville's early 20th century Italian community.

The **Ireland-Dane House at 461 Somerville Avenue** sits at the corner of Granite Street and is notable as the oldest dwelling still surviving on Somerville Avenue. Possibly built as early as 1791, the house harks back to the early days when Milk Row served as a major artery for transporting agricultural products. Jonathan Ireland, the original owner and ancestor of the aforementioned George Ireland, was a farmer. The Ireland family members undoubtedly witnessed from the comfort of their front parlor the rough and tumble farm hands hauling agricultural products eastward to the Charlestown and Boston markets. The first bridge to link Charlestown to Boston was constructed in 1786, facilitating this type of commerce and eliminating an inconvenient ferry ride from City Square in Charlestown to the North End in Boston. The name "Milk Row" may have superseded "old Charlestown Lane" as labeled on 1770s maps, when the bridge was completed.

The house exhibits elements of the late Georgian style, evident in the proportions of the Doric pilasters bordering the front door, and the Federal style, which is more visibly dominated by the partial hip roof configuration and the Flemish bond brickwork of the Granite Street elevation. The second owner of this early Somerville dwelling was Patrick Tracy Jackson, an Essex County entrepreneur and major figure in the beginning industrialization of the City of Lowell, MA.



Jackson purchased the Ireland farmhouse around 1830, thinking it could house workers from the Square's burgeoning industrial labor force, most likely the Middlesex Bleachery. Jackson's vast real estate portfolio also included for a brief moment the Ten Hills Farm, an estate in north Somerville built for John Winthrop, Puritan Governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. The estate survived well into the 19th century before it was demolished. During the early 1840s Osgood B. Dane, "Dealer in Stone and Blue Granite," purchased 461 Somerville Avenue. Listed in the 1870s directories as "surveyor of stone work," Dane owned a granite quarry known as Dane's Ledge, located about a block north. Although Dane did not disturb the late Georgian and Federal style interior elements, leaving chair rails and mantelpieces intact, he did replace the original stair elements with a modern Victorian newel post, balusters, and railing. This house remained in the Dane family until circa 1900, but the family name lives on, evident in the names of the nearby Dane and Osgood streets.

From the Ireland House continue walking east on Somerville Avenue to a mini-village of modest dwellings at the northwest corner of Somerville Avenue and School Street. They are noteworthy for their siting, as well as simplistic form and detail. In the 1870s, they were part of the George Ireland farm that extended along the west side of School Street from Somerville Avenue to Summer Street, and around 1880 the land was subdivided into house lots.

The humble Greek Revival cottage at **437 Somerville Avenue** is one of the oldest and best-preserved pre-



Civil War houses along Somerville Avenue. Probably built circa 1830, it is three bays wide and one bay deep. This wood-frame building retains the original classicized surrounds of the center entry, but needs further research to determine both the original owner and location, as it may have been constructed elsewhere.

441 Somerville Avenue is an Italianate two-family house whose paired entries are flanked with polygonal bays. It is reported to have been built around 1880, which corresponds with the timing of the Ireland farm subdivision. **439-441R Somerville Avenue** is tucked behind 439-441 Somerville Avenue. Built circa 1840,

this well-preserved Greek Revival cottage exhibits a double entry emphasized by sidelights, Doric pilasters, and a molded entablature. Generously proportioned corner boards enliven the corners of the house. One of the earliest occupants was Robert Hollingsworth, a Boston letter carrier. It was later owned by George W. Ireland, a prominent realtor (circa 1874).

The Mansard row houses across Somerville Avenue from the Market Basket site were once considered to be the latest style when constructed in the 1870's for middle-class commuters into Boston. This Market Basket is part of a supermarket chain founded by the DeMoulas family. From there walk a few blocks to the east to end the tour in Gerrior Square.

Situated at the intersection of Somerville Avenue, Bow Street and Carlton Street, **Gerrior Square** was named for two World War I veterans, Arnold Benjamin who died in battle in France and his brother Elroy Francis.

Dominating the intersection of Somerville Avenue and Bow Street is the massive **Drouet Block at 58-68 Bow Street**, otherwise known as the *Condominiums at Gerrior Square*. Built in 1898, the Drouet Block is the largest of a trio of wooden commercial/residential buildings all standing in close proximity to each other at the western edge of Union Square. All three of the blocks, the Richmond, Bennett and Drouet, are characterized by multiple original and intact storefronts, ornate window trim, and undulating wall surfaces. The Drouet and Richmond blocks were designed by architect Aaron Gould who may also have inspired the facade of the Bennett Block. Gould was born in 1865 in Nova Scotia where he learned the carpentry trade. His later career brought him to Maine and to the southern states where he built hotels. Union Square is quite fortunate to retain two, possibly three, substantial and highly ornamented wood-frame buildings of both this type and high caliber design.



Anchoring one corner of the intersection is the **Bennett Block at 380 Somerville Avenue**. Of wood-frame construction, this remarkably intact Queen Anne commercial and residential block was built in 1892-1893 and owes its existence in part to the electric trolley. A significant transportation improvement introduced around 1890, the electric trolley encouraged buildings such as the Bennett Block to establish commercial use at street level and residential use on the upper stories. The lot containing the Bennett Block was originally carved from the old Hawkins estate. The building was initially constructed for William F. Bennett, whose heating and plumbing business

was located at what is now 7 Carlton Street. During the early 20th century the upper floors were occupied by Irish and Italian families employed in the shoe and tube factories, as well as carpenters, clerks and lab workers. Amazingly, the original late Victorian molding that surrounds the display windows remains intact. The upper stories of the Bennett Block retain both the original bowed windows and the polygonal oriel ones. The oriels are unusual in that they are crowned by pediments.

Constructed in 1908, **374 Somerville Avenue** has been extensively altered since its heyday as the **Star Theatre**. It is currently obscured by a mesh metal screen, often applied during the 1950s and 1960s to modernize buildings. The Star Theatre is reported to be the second purposely built movie theatre in the nation. Unlike numerous pre-1930 theatres originally designed to showcase vaudeville acts, the Star was built to show silent movies. It was one of fourteen theatres located in Somerville during the first half of the 20th century. The Somerville Theatre in Davis Square (1914) is the only one still operating as a movie theatre and performance venue in the City. By 1908, the primary audience for the "silents" shown at the Star was a growing population of Italian and Greek immigrants that resided in Ward 2. The building is currently occupied by a training center for coffee brewing, with architectural offices above, with no remaining evidence of the Star's lobby or auditorium.

Nestled at the intersection of western Bow Street and Somerville Avenue, the former **Metropolitan Gas Station** at **69 Bow Street**, is a rare survivor of its type, once seen throughout the Boston metropolitan area. This concrete and brick Colonial Revival structure, built circa 1915, is embellished with a fanlight above the front door and a hip roof crowned with a miniature belvedere. It provides a physical link to the early Automobile Age in Somerville when garages, auto body shops, and gas stations dotted the local landscape.



This brochure was produced by the Somerville Historic Preservation Commission, in concert with Edward Gordon, historian and tour leader, as part of the 2014 ArtsUnion Grant Program. The program is designed to boost the cultural economic development of Union Square, Somerville. Managed by the Somerville Arts Council, ArtsUnion works in collaboration with numerous local organizations, artists, businesses, and community members to spark community-wide excitement about the Square, and create new economic opportunities for local artists. ArtsUnion is funded by the Massachusetts Cultural Council and its John and Abigail Adams Art Program.

Established in 1985, the Somerville Historic Preservation Commission (SHPC) administers historic districts, advises homeowners, provides historic and technical information, and is an arm of City government. The Commission also sponsors events and develops programs and written materials as part of its public outreach and educational mission. Its Staff can be reached via www.somervillema.gov/historicpreservation or 617-625-6600, extension 2500.