

Tucked Away Treasures: East Somerville's Rich History and Architectural Legacy

Walking Tour with Ed Gordon, in concert with East Somerville Main Streets – Sunday, June 17, 2019

INTRODUCTION

This year's walking tour is focused primarily on residential buildings located between Broadway and Washington Street on the north and south, along the Somerville/Charlestown border, and Myrtle Street on the east and west. East Somerville, together with Prospect Hill and Spring Hill, were among the first sections of Somerville to experience residential development in a more or less comprehensive manner. Due to the vision and calculated risk-taking of local businessmen, suburban subdivisions made the leap from plans on paper to three dimensional reality in what had been Charlestown's remote "land beyond the Neck." This land later separated to become the City of Somerville.

A primary goal is to showcase the architecturally, and generally historically, significant private residences that have remained largely intact in this easternmost part of Somerville. The buildings will reflect the variety of architectural styles popular during the Victorian era (1837-1901). The tour will highlight the characteristic features of these different architectural styles and tell the "back stories" of the properties that explain how these styles captured the imaginations of builders and homeowners. The intent is to make historic architectural design more accessible, as well as share the sometimes colorful stories of the buildings' earliest owners.



Part of Paul Revere's ride to Lexington in 1775 followed a segment of Broadway in present day Somerville.

Broadway is an "ancient" highway that dates back to the 1630s. Originally its path did not extend as it does today up and over Winter Hill, but instead intersected with Main Street, following it to the center of Medford. The segment of Broadway between Winter Hill and Arlington Center (originally Menotomy) was set out during the 1790s. Broadway was originally connected to Washington Street to the south, by a series of range ways that provided access to interior upland pasture and a few scattered farms. Eventually ten range ways were set out from east to west, starting with Franklin Street and ending with North Street, near Alewife Brook.

Fast forwarding to the middle of April 1775, Broadway was part of the route Paul Revere followed on his way west to Lexington to warn locals of the British Redcoats' imminent appearance and mission to confiscate weapons of war and other supplies that could be used to implement a rebellion. Revere's ride began not far away on the Charlestown waterfront where Paul's comrades, including Deacon John Larkin, were waiting with a horse named Brown Beauty. Based on the secret signal lanterns in the steeple of Old North Church, Larkin and company knew where they were needed, so Revere rowed at great peril to his life from the North End to Charlestown. As seen at the end of the tour, Washington Street was critical in Paul's trajectory out into the hinterlands on that fateful night.



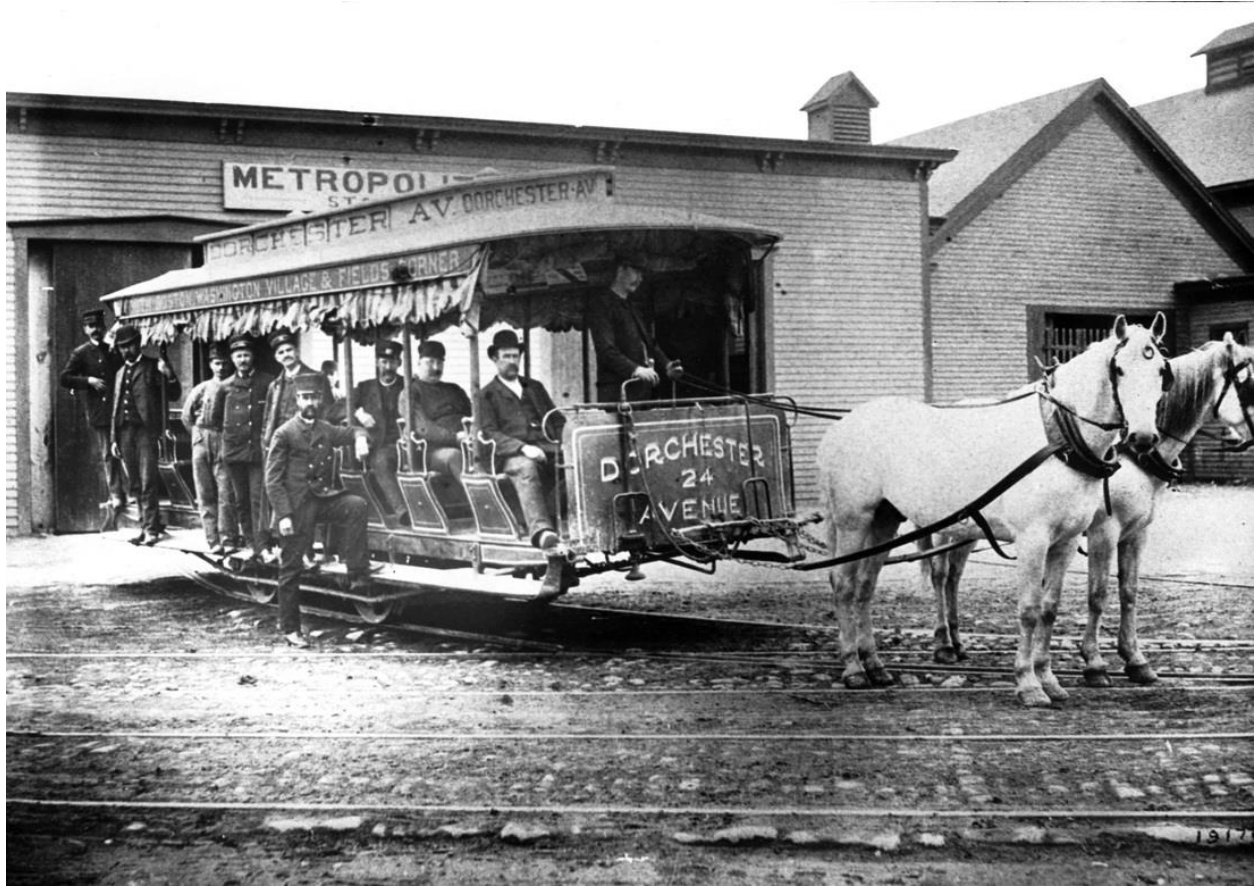
Detail of East Somerville, Martin Draper Map of Somerville, 1852.

The map above provides a clear view of East Somerville’s early street system. By that time the majority of the neighborhood streets were located between Mt. Pleasant Street on the east, Broadway on the north, Cross Street on the west, and Washington Street on the south.

Small subdivisions containing two or three streets were eventually connected with other subdivisions to form a street system whose charm lies in falling just short of being a unified grid pattern. Between Cross Street and the current McGrath and O’Brien Highway, East Somerville was almost completely devoid of buildings, except those bordering Washington Street.

East Somerville’s Beginnings as a Residential Neighborhood

East Somerville’s beginnings as a neighborhood coincided with Somerville’s incorporation as a town separate from Charlestown in 1842. The reason for East Somerville’s development had everything to do with a maxim of real estate sales: location, location, location. Around 1840, as the local economy began to recover from the financial Panic of 1837, East Somerville became a desirable new frontier for upscale residential construction. This was due to its proximity to Boston businesses and the new lines for the Boston and Lowell and Fitchburg Railroads. For most local captains of industry and middle managers, the substantial residences of Pearl, Mt. Vernon, and Perkins Streets were located within an easy walking distance of commercial concerns on Broadway. Then beginning in the late 1850s, the horse drawn trolley line connected Boston with Somerville and points west.



Horse-drawn trolley in Dorchester. MA. ca.1880s.

In addition to proximity to Boston and public transportation, the realities of topography favored East Somerville's development. Here, level terrain between Broadway and Pearl Street was perfect for house building. Beyond Pearl Street to the south, the land dropped off precipitously in the direction of Washington Street. This "drop off" served as a natural line of demarcation between the area of substantial residences north of Pearl Street and the more modest workers' cottages located on the incline that sloped down to the industrial corridor bordering Washington Street.

East Somerville also has fine soil for drainage and clay for brick and pottery making. Indeed, industry in the area was located at the periphery, i.e. to the east in the Sullivan Square section of Charlestown (brewing, varnish-making, manufacture of rubber products) and to the south along and near Washington Street (brickmaking, spike manufacturing, potteries, etc.). In the beginning (1840s-to-early1870s) most homeowners were Boston businessmen. East Somerville remained a fashionable residential enclave until the turn-of-the-20th century. After 1900, some houses were subdivided and triple-deckers were built in the side and back yards of existing houses, as well as on the few undeveloped parcels.

On Broadway: East Somerville's Commercial Architectural Design Legacy

The handsome turn of the 20th century commercial blocks lining Broadway, particularly at the intersection of its intersection with Franklin Street, provide a fine introduction to the City of Somerville at its eastern gateway.

Hurst's Broadway Theatre, now Mudflat Studios, 79-83 Broadway. (photo below).

The original structure was built in 1915. By the late 1920s, Somerville had as many as six theatres, while today there is only one still in operation as a theatrical venue, the Somerville Theatre in Davis Square. Hurst's was built for the Star Theatres Incorporated by the Somerville Home Building Association. The theatre had a capacity of 1,850 seats and continued to be in operation until the late 1940s. In 1933, Arthur N. Viano, who built the Teele Square Theatre, owned the Broadway under the name of "Viano's Broadway." The theatre was located behind a façade of storefronts, a fairly typical arrangement at that time. The building was totally renovated in 2011 to accommodate the current Mudflat Studios, first organized in East Cambridge in 1971. It is a non-profit organization dedicated to providing space and instruction for adults and children to produce pottery. Mudflat serves as an important community resource whose classes draw many people to East Somerville from the Greater Boston area.



Franklin Building, NW corner of Franklin and Broadway.

Built in 1919 from designs provided by an unknown architect, the **Franklin Building** is a brick and concrete commercial building with stylistic references to the Classical Revival, as well as elements that anticipate the Art Deco Style. Originally this building was associated with banking—more specifically with the Winter Hill Cooperative Bank and the Somerville Institute for Savings. In the 1950s and 1960s, Royal Furniture was a real top notch furniture store that sold only the best quality. The first floor was the showroom. Prior to the construction of the Franklin Building its lot was occupied by a large brick livery stable.

Columbia Building, 84-86 Broadway.



This yellow brick structure was constructed in 1902 by the Columbia Associates, a fraternal organization composed of fifty members whose president was J. S. Newcomb, a Somerville realtor. Designed in the Colonial Revival Style by E.L. Clark, it was built to house 5 stores on the ground floor, with a club room, club offices, and other club-related rooms on the second floor. The construction in yellow brick is interesting because it shows that the vogue for lighter-hued bricks had reached Somerville by the early 1900s.

The monochromatic, gleaming white Boston Public Library by McKim Mead and White of 1888-1896 is a prime example of this sea change in American design. Building materials other than dark red brick or brownstone began to figure significantly in the construction of American public buildings after the Chicago World's Fair or Columbian Exposition of 1893. Dubbed "the white City" because all of its pavilions were constructed of white building materials, the appearance of the Fair had a profound effect on architects and other tastemakers of the day. The commercial concerns of the Columbia Building during the early 20th century included a real estate company, drug store, beauty shop, dentist, and the like. Other fraternal organizations to use this building included the Paul Revere Lodge, Home Circle, and the Knights of Honor.

Built during the first quarter of the 20th century as a private residence, **67 Broadway** later became the Kelleher Funeral Home (1940s). The Kelleher 'K' is still visible above the interesting, multi-unit garage structure. The funeral home era was followed by the Boston Spinal Clinic. Very recently it became known as Revolutionary Clinics which the website notes is more than a medical marijuana dispensary because it's "a community of people that believe in the medicinal power of cannabis to help people lead happier, healthier lives. From classes and events to our blog and killer loyalty program, RevNation invites you to connect with people who share your vision for better living through cannabis."

Continue east on Broadway to look to the left (north) up a steep hill that is traversed by Austen Street. This street began to develop ca.1865 and by 1874 it was lined with Italianate and Mansard houses. The northern half of Austen Street was destroyed during the 1960s to accommodate the construction of I-93.

Look northeast from Broadway to see the tower of the former Schrafft's Candy Company factory (1920s) that marks the site of Charlestown Neck. The Neck's primary claim to fame is it was once the southern terminus of the 27 mile-long Middlesex Canal that linked the Merrimac Valley with the Charles River and Boston Harbor. Completed during the early 1800s after nearly a decade in the making, the Canal made it possible to move building materials, such as Chelmsford Granite, faster and more efficiently to Boston. Over time a village sprang up on and near Charlestown Neck, and the well-to-do investors in the Canal bought up land in East Somerville as well as in western Charlestown. The Middlesex Canal began to decline around 1840 as railroads superseded canals as faster and more efficient means of transporting passengers as well as goods for sale. By the early 1840s, the descendants of early 1800s Massachusetts Governor and major Canal investor James Sullivan began to sell real estate bordering and near to the Canal. Undeveloped Sullivan-owned parcels in East Somerville extended from Mt. Pleasant Street to at least Cross St. In addition, families in the area, like the Stearnes, who had deep roots stretching back before the Revolution, began to subdivide their land.

For example, Mt. Vernon Street and Mt. Pleasant Street (on the south side of Broadway) and their adjacent house lots were set out over land that had been part of the Stearnes family farm. The Stearnes farmstead (demolished) was located on Broadway, between Union and Austen Streets. This mid-18th century Georgian house had a center hall plan, symmetrical five-bay main façade, and a hipped roof from which rose two substantial chimneys. During the second quarter of the 19th century, Joshua Stearnes figured prominently in Charlestown's Neck Village, now Sullivan Square, as the owner of a distillery.

Located between Mt. Vernon and Mt. Pleasant Streets is the Mt. Vernon Restaurant which is known for its classic American dishes and extensive Sunday brunch buffets, as well as the

owner's generosity to local non-profit organizations. Prior to ca. 1910, much of the Mount Vernon Restaurant land was occupied by a house owned by Nathan Tufts.

From Broadway turn right onto Mt. Pleasant Street. 6 Mt. Pleasant Street is a handsome new (2018) multi-unit residential property which encompasses the Carpenter Gothic cottage next door at **8 Mt. Pleasant Street**. Built ca.1850, this charming end gable, side hall plan house retains its original curving barge boards which are both decorative and shield the roof eaves from the elements. The Carpenter Gothic style never enjoyed the popularity of the contemporaneous Greek Revival and Italianate styles. This is one of only a handful of houses in this style in Somerville.

Continue south on Mt. Pleasant Street to pause at its intersection with Perkins Street and view the ca. 1840 Gustavus G. Prescott House at **63-67 Perkins Street**. Noteworthy for its intact, complicated form and handsome columned Greek Revival front porch, this clapboard-clad residence was considered to be a “country” house. Mr. Prescott was a Charlestown merchant.

79-85 Perkins Street is a rare East Somerville example of a row of red brick Queen Anne houses. Built ca. 1880-1883, these four attached houses appear on the 1884 Hopkins Atlas with the owner as R.H. Lockwood. By 1880 the Queen Anne style had begun to assert itself, as seen in area streetscapes with a few red brick row houses exhibiting angled bays and corbelled cornices. Wooden versions of the Queen Anne were more numerous with asymmetrically massed forms enlivened by bay and oriel windows and complex, multi-gable roofs. The term Queen Anne refers to the British monarch who ruled during the early 1700s when architecture, particularly in brick, was self-consciously picturesque and influenced by Dutch design trends. Mid-19th century British architects, and later their American colleagues, saw fit to revisit the original Queen Anne style, adding their own elements, such as stained glass windows, finely carved wood ornamentation, terra cotta tiles, and chimney pots.

At the intersection of Perkins and Mt. Vernon Streets, note that the segment of Mt. Vernon Street between Perkins Street and Broadway is often referred to as “Greek Revival Land,” due to the numerous intact examples of Greek Revival houses built between 1845-1860. Turn left onto the segment of Mt. Vernon Street where residences exemplify late 1800s designs.

EAST SOMERVILLE LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICT (LHD)

This multi-building historic district encompasses stylish and substantial examples of houses dating back to the second half of the 19th century. It is possible that street names in East Somerville, such as Pinckney, Myrtle, Pearl and Franklin, as well as Mt. Vernon, were chosen to evoke the same names as those in the Boston neighborhoods of Beacon Hill and the old South End. This would be due to the predominance of homeowners being Boston businessmen in the 1840s to early 1870s. East Somerville remained a fashionable residential enclave until the turn-of-the-20th century. After 1900, some houses were subdivided and three-deckers were built in the side and back yards of existing houses, as well as on the few parcels that were still undeveloped.



84 Perkins Street. Built circa 1870-1871, this house introduces a well-represented domestic style of architecture in East Somerville. This Mansard residence is substantial and well-proportioned. The original owner, Charles A. Dole, was a foreman for Stickney and Poor, and then Spice and Pickles of Charlestown. The Dole family was residents until the early 1900s.



46 Mt. Vernon Street. Circa 1885, this structure ranks among the best detailed Queen Anne residences in Somerville. For many years, this house was the residence of George S. Poole, Secretary of the Warren Institute of Savings.

47 Mt. Vernon Street. As late as 1885, the Italianate style was alive and well in the eastern portion of the City. The Fred Coburn House, whose original owner was a stationer, illustrates the Italianate style through arched windows, wooden brackets, and a distinctive central portico.

50 Mt. Vernon Street. Circa 1895, this building is noteworthy for its front porch, with paired Doric columns and bold scroll brackets beneath the overhang of the gable. Frederick Hosmer was a poultry dealer among many Somerville business owners who had space at Faneuil Hall Market. He hired an unknown architect to design this dwelling in 1892.

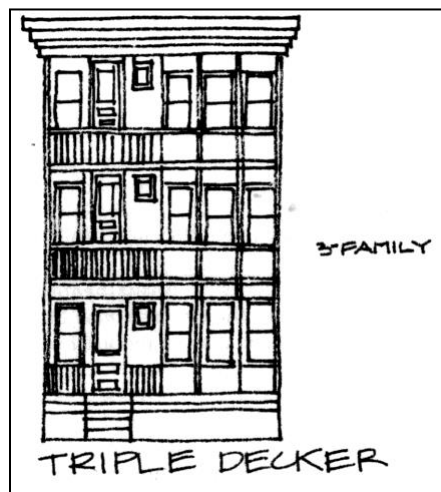
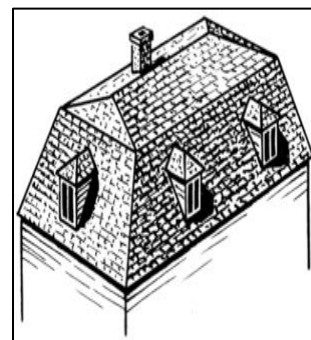
51 Mt. Vernon Street. This center-hall house is an excellent example of a gable-end building with a blend of Queen Anne and Colonial Revival style elements. It provides evidence that East Somerville was still a fashionable address at the close of the 19th century. This well-preserved residence could be called the “House That Burlap Built” as the first owner, Thomas L. Davis, was a burlap dealer in Boston.



Faneuil Hall, circa 1890's.

From Mt. Vernon Street, turn right onto Wheeler Street. Proceed to the Pinckney Street intersection.

20 Wheeler Street. Constructed as six units for Mr. Littlefield in 1899, this dwelling is a fascinating and rare variation of the common triple-decker. Typically rectangular in form with three tiers of porches at both the front and back of the building, this house has a three-story porch nestled in the corner, from the north and west wings, that are each three stories in height. The slender columns of the first and second story porches, window frames, broad string courses, and molded cornices all demonstrate the Colonial Revival style.



The triple-decker was introduced to both Boston and Worcester around 1880 and was instantly recognized by developers as a fast and efficient way to house the less affluent. This building type recommended interior features such as Colonial Revival style mantelpieces and built-in china cupboards. The popularity of the triple-decker rose exponentially after the introduction of the electric trolley to Boston neighborhoods, circa 1890, and it proliferated in areas such as Dorchester and South Boston. The triple-decker persisted in popularity until 1915, and in some areas even later, such as Jamaica Plain where this multi-family housing type was still being built as late as 1930. In Somerville, triple-deckers are primarily found in the eastern portion of the City, while two-family dwellings remained more common in western Somerville. The noteworthy exception to this rule is the States Avenues section of East Somerville.

Turn right onto Pinckney Street and then left onto Perkins Street.

Mansard Roof

Prominently situated at the southwest corner of Pinckney and Perkins Streets is the substantial Mansard style residence at **110 Perkins Street**. It is noteworthy for its boxy, well-proportioned form and low-slung Mansard roof. Of particular interest on its original front porch is a saw-cut quatrefoil detail that is not immediately visible from the street. The house was built around 1870 for Erastus E. Cole, a businessman who was one of the incorporators of Somerville's First Universalist Church in 1854.

*Continue westward on Perkins Street to the substantial Greek Revival house at **132 Perkins Street**.*

Recent restoration work has rendered this house a stunning gift to its streetscape and its new east ell is sympathetic to the main block's Greek Revival vernacular form and details. The extensive work has earned it a *2019 Preservation Award* from the City's Historic Preservation Commission. The house holds an important place in Somerville Women's History as the former residence of Miss Elizabeth Arrowsmith Waters. She was the founder of the Somerville Samaritan Society which was organized in this house on November 13, 1871. The mission of Miss Waters' Society was to help the working poor in Somerville by establishing a children's home and day nursery that evidently anticipated our modern day care centers.



Retrace steps eastward from 132 Perkins St. and turn right onto Florence Street. Northern Florence Street falls within the area bounded by Pearl, Pinckney, Perkins, and Franklin Streets that were developed by Charles Pierce. In 1845 he hired surveyors to lay out 69 house lots within this rectangular area. Pierce let it be known that his new subdivision was "only 1090 feet from the depot," meaning the Boston and Lowell train station located near the intersection of Joy and Washington Streets. As was frequently the case with 1840s subdivisions in Somerville, house construction lagged for a decade or more within the Pierce subdivision.

67 Florence Street. This early suburban house was built in 1857-1858 for merchant Isaac Hardy. The second owner, John Dalton, was a Boston book salesman. This house is a solid example of an Italianate end gable house that retains its original three-bay-by-four-bay main block and fairly substantial kitchen ell. Italianate elements are evident in the short return gable cornices and in the original porch posts with chamfered corners and saw cut bracing.

The ornate ca.1885 six-family wooden building next door at 69-71 Florence Street represents the work of contractor and bridge builder Herbert Asa Cole who designed similar buildings at 46-48 and 50-52 Florence Street.

75 Florence Street. Built right after the Civil War, 75 Florence Street was originally owned by Thomas J. Buffam who was a Boston dry goods agent. He probably commuted to downtown Boston via the Broadway horse cars that became available in 1858. By the early 1900s, this was the residence of Dr. Herbert B. Buffum. Then from ca.1925 to the early 1940s, Richard P. Howard, a U.S. Navy storekeeper in Charlestown, is listed at this address.

This is an end gable Italianate house that rests on a brick foundation. The location of the front door suggests a side hall interior plan. Italianate features include the two-story polygonal bay and the return eaves at the gable roof. Originally open, the front porch was enclosed at an undetermined date and updated with Colonial Revival elements.

Pearl Street. This street was set out before 1852. Between ca.1865 and 1872 it evolved as a thoroughfare lined with some of the neighborhoods most stylish and substantial Mansard style residences. Pearl Street, in a sense, surpassed Perkins Street, one block to the north, as the focus for fashionable living in East Somerville. Contractor Alonzo Bowers has been credited with the design and construction of numerous mansard-roofed residences located on or near Pearl Street. Bower's houses are noted for pleasing proportions and handsome front porches, and many still stand, with one noteworthy exception.



Until a decade ago, the lot at the southeast corner of Pearl and Florence Streets, now occupied by **Symphony Park**, was the location of a ca.1870 Mansard residence numbered **46 Pearl Street**. Probably built by Bowers, the original owner was Ezra D. Conant, a Boston wholesale grocer. From 1891 until at least the early 1940s, the house was owned by the S. Henry Hadley family. Ezra D. Conant's daughter married S. Henry Hadley, resulting in over 70 years of Conant-Hadley family members living in the "lost" house. S. Henry Hadley was a music teacher in the local public schools, and he taught his son Henry piano, violin and music composition from an early age.

Henry Hadley (1871-1937) became a composer and conductor of international renown, studying in Europe with preeminent musicologists. During the early 1900s, he taught music at the St. Paul School in Garden City Long Island. During his career he was the conductor of the Seattle and San Francisco Symphony Orchestras and composed music for silent films. In 1933 he was the founder and first president of the National Association for American Composers and Conductors (NAACC). After his death in 1937, his widow continued to oversee a foundation that he started with royalties from his music to support young composers until her death in 1971.



After years of benign and then intentional neglect by a more recent owner, the Conant-Hadley House suffered from a suspicious fire and was demolished ~ 2008. Although one of East Somerville's most handsome Mansard Style houses was lost, the City took the property by eminent domain, and in response to residents' input, created a quiet neighborhood space for intergenerational users. Benefitting from both State and Federal grants, the small park now offers a small water feature, performance space, and accessible community gardens. It was dedicated in November 2015. Given the Hadley family's strong connection with composing and conducting music it has been aptly named **Symphony Park**.

FLORENCE STREET LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICT: 39-43, 42-44, 45-47, 46-48 and 50-52

A combination of variable terrain and decidedly urbane architecture accounts for much of this area's interest. The flat, elevated plane of Pearl Street quickly shifts to a steep hillside that descends to

Washington Street. The Florence Street properties constitute a kind of urban oasis within a suburban housing context. Here, brick row houses that would look at home in Boston neighborhoods and wooden multi-family Queen Anne residences of unique design were built from 1870-1885.

39-43 Florence are brick Mansard row houses that were built in 1874-1875. James Wood of Lewiston, Maine was the original owner. By the early 1900s these houses were occupied by a laborer, two firemen, widows and others. **The Conant Row Houses at 45-47 Florence Street** date to 1878 and are handsome examples of the Mansard/Panel Brick style that is frequently seen in Back Bay row houses of the 1870s. The houses represented investment properties for Ezra Conant of 46 Pearl Street (now Symphony Park). By 1905, an “ice man” and a “rubber man” are listed at this address. No doubt Henry Upton, the rubber man, worked at the Davidson Rubber Company located just a few blocks to the east in Charlestown.

The Mansard style brick row at **42-44 Florence Street**, built ca.1874-1878, represents a rare example of residential construction taking place right after the nation-wide financial downturn of 1873. Charles Higgins of Melrose was the original owner. By the early 1900s, an agent, railroad “brakeman,” and a widow lived in these houses. The wooden apartments at **46-48 and 50-52 Florence Street** were built in 1885 by and for Herbert Asa Cole. They feature steep front steps and A-shaped, typically Queen Anne gable facades displaying raised sun-burst motifs. **46-48 Florence Street** was the home during the early 1900s of a carpenter, tinsmith, teamster and others, while **50-52 Florence Street** was owned by 1905 by a Boston salesman and a streetcar electrician.

Herbert Asa Cole, also the contractor for **46-48 and 57-59 Myrtle Street**, was born in Somerville in 1849. He was a bridge builder who worked on projects with his father Ezra. Herbert’s wife Anna Betsy Taylor Cole (1852-1937) figured significantly in the annals of homeopathic medicine in Charlestown and Somerville. Born in Sugar Hill, New Hampshire she became interested in medicine after tending to a gravely ill family friend, and coping with her own medical issues. She graduated with honors from Boston University in 1884 and set up a gynecological practice in Charlestown during the 1880s. Married to Herbert in 1894, she was active in the Universalist Church, those organizations which were focused on women’s health issues, and the New Hampshire Club of Somerville.



View the multi-family buildings on Florence Street and then return to Pearl Street to turn left onto Myrtle Street.

53-55 and 57-59 Myrtle Street. Myrtle Street is of interest topographically for the way its path bends and descends dramatically just beyond these double cottages. At the bottom of this incline is the commercial/ industrial Washington Street corridor. Shown on the 1852 Martin Draper Map of Somerville, Myrtle Street is one of East Somerville’s oldest side streets. Since both **53-55 and 57-59 Myrtle Street** are shown on the 1857 Walling Map, it suggests a construction date of ca. 1855-1856. These houses represent the center gable variety of the Italianate house, complete with deep eaves at the side gables and lunette or half-moon center gable windows. Center gable Italianate houses are scattered about the City and are mostly seen as single-family residences. They rarely take the form of a double house. Both houses were built for Seth Stevens whose family lived at # **53-55** until the mid-1880s. By the early 1900s, a Boston & Maine Railroad

engineer occupied #53-55. He was among the many bread winners in the neighborhood who toiled on the trains, and later, the trolleys.

37-39 Myrtle Street. Here the Mansard style is applied to a two-family that was built for John and Thomas Mullay in 1870-1871. The Mullays were an Irish family (no occupations listed) who moved from Charlestown to East Somerville. Early 20th century occupants included a foreman and a plumber. One half of the house is in near original condition, while the other half exhibits modern siding. Original elements include the projecting oriel windows of the second story and the bracketed entry hood of the inset entrance. The house is enclosed by a straight-sided Mansard roof with lintel-capped dormers.

Follow Myrtle Street's steep incline southward, walking through a ca. 1960s subdivision of single-family residences, to reach Washington Street.

Washington Street was set out as early as the mid-1630s by the English surveyor Thomas Greaves. He was responsible for the semi-circular pattern of streets atop Harvard Hill in Charlestown, and was granted an estate by King Charles I in what was called Greaves End, later to be known as Lechmere Point and East Cambridge. In the beginning Washington Street was called the Road to Newtowne (later to be known as Cambridge). During the 1700s and early 1800s, Washington Street, together with Somerville Avenue further to the west, comprised Milk Row, a major artery for hauling farm produce and dairy products to the markets of Charlestown's City Square and Boston's Faneuil Hall. The industrialization of the south side of Washington Street began as early as the 1840s, and by 1860 factories producing spice, glass, spikes, bricks, and twine were located along its length.

Look across to the south side of Washington Street to see a modern industrial park that was once the site of Cobble Hill. Beginning in 1792, the summit of this hill was host to the Joseph Barrell Mansion which once housed McLean's Asylum from 1817-1896. Wealthy Boston merchant Joseph Barrell sited his handsome mansion here to take full advantage of views of the Miller's River, which is no longer visible. The Barrell Mansion was designed by none other than Charles Bulfinch, the man who almost single-handedly transformed Boston from a provincial town of wooden buildings to a more sophisticated urban experience that encompassed brick and stone buildings of his own design.



The Joseph Barrell Mansion ca.1900 after the removal of the McLean's Asylum.

In 1816, Massachusetts General Hospital purchased the estate for the purposes of creating an institutional complex for "the gracefully insane" (as described by *Boston Globe* columnist Alex Beam in his history of the same name). McLean's Asylum housed decidedly upper crust patients and was among the first of its kind in the world where "lunatics" were treated with kindness, rather than thrown into prisons where they were forced to share cells with common criminals.

By the late 1800s, these genteel folks and their families undoubtedly became alarmed when the surrounding area became increasingly industrialized and surrounded by substandard housing. The solution was for McLean's Asylum to move in 1896 to the leafy grounds bordering Trapelo Road in suburban Belmont. All that remains of the Barrell Mansion today is the graceful double stairway that is housed in the Somerville Museum within the Westwood-Benton Road LHD.

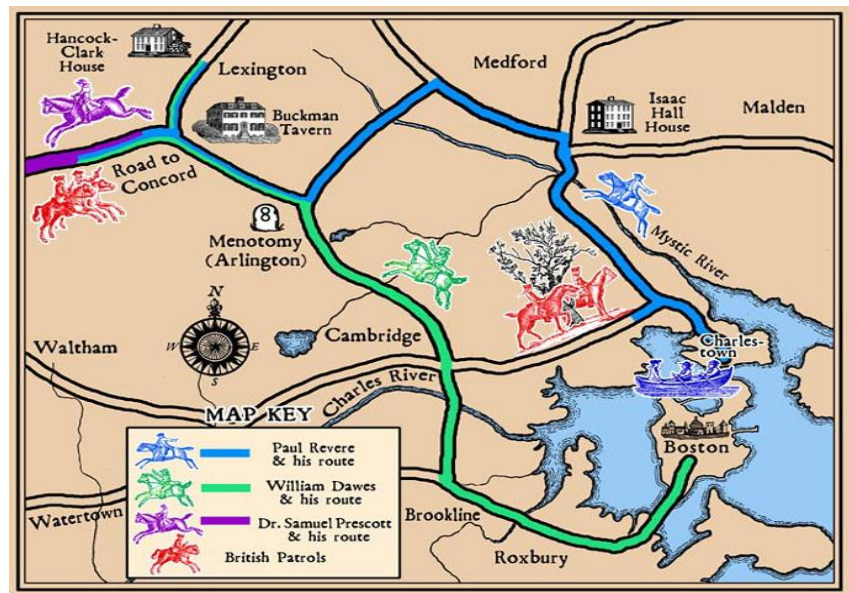
Turn left onto Washington Street to head over to the Holiday Inn for a view of a recently installed statue of Paul Revere.

On November 19th, 2018, the Boston-Bunker Hill Holiday Inn, located at 30 Washington Street in East Somerville, unveiled a 2,000 pound bronze statue of patriot Paul Revere. Privately funded by the Holiday Inn, the statue marks the location where Paul Revere was almost prevented from conveying his message that British troops were marching out to Lexington to confiscate the guns and ammunition that were being hidden in the hinterlands, twenty miles west of Boston proper.



Dedication of the Paul Revere Statue outside the Holiday Inn. November 19, 2018.

In a 1798 letter to Jeremy Belknap of the Massachusetts Historical Society Revere recalled that he bid farewell to his friends on the Charlestown waterfront, passed Charlestown Neck (now the Sullivan Square area) and headed west on Washington Street in East Somerville, but then part of Charlestown. A short time later he saw two men who were British officers but was able to escape their efforts to subdue him by managing to turn his horse around, and galloping up today's Crescent Street to the Medford Road, later known as Broadway. Revere then followed Broadway and Main Street to the center of Medford and ultimately to Lexington. As luck would have it, that same night of April 18-19,



1775, Revere encountered British soldiers for a second time on the road between Lexington and Concord. Questioned and released by a small group of Redcoats, Revere was forced to head back to Lexington. However, he had already completed the bulk of his mission, to alert the folks in the countryside and the Lexington Minutemen that the British were on their way—reportedly 700 strong.

Thank you for participating on this tour! For more information, please contact the SHPC staff via 617-625-6600, x.2500, or the Commission's website www.somervillema.gov/historicpreservation to find many more brochures, videos and materials to peruse about Historic Somerville, plus memorabilia to show your pride.