

## “Columns, Cornices and Clapboards: Cherished Designs of East Somerville”

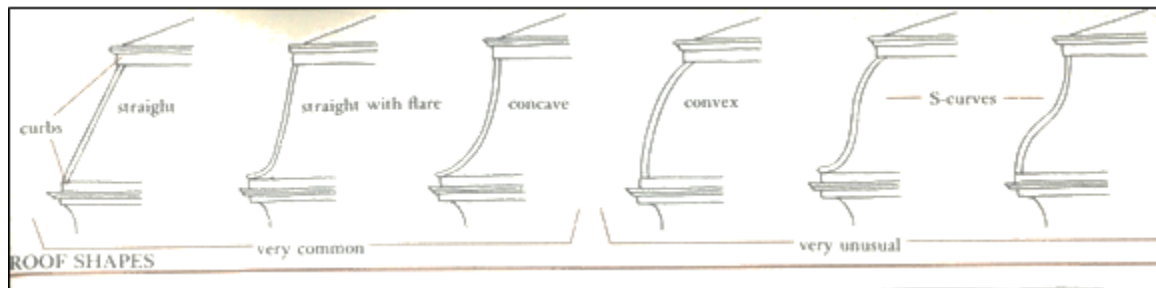
*Tour led by Ed Gordon, President of the Victorian Society in America, New England Chapter  
Sunday, May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2015*

Co-Sponsored by the Somerville Historic Preservation Commission and East Somerville Main Streets

*Start in the parking lot across from the Mount Vernon Restaurant at 14 Broadway.*

Let’s begin with a broad overview of the route. The tour will focus on three primary architectural styles of prominence within the East Somerville neighborhood: **Greek Revival, Italianate, and Mansard styles.**

Examples of the Greek Revival style can be found south of Broadway, especially in the houses bordering Mt Vernon Street, between Broadway and Perkins Street. Here, end gable houses display characteristics drawn from Classical designs such as corner pilasters and pedimented attics. In contrast, the Italianate style is identified by deep return eaves enlivened by saw cut brackets—in fact, the Italianate is sometimes called the Bracketed Style. Italianate details such as cornice headed lintels and arched attic windows are also frequently found on the Mansard Style which is also characterized by distinctive double-pitched mansard roofs that essentially create a full third floor. The Mansard style is perhaps best seen on Pearl Street where substantial trophy houses were constructed for retired sea captains, lumber dealers, master builders, and the like.



During the mid-to-late 1800s, East Somerville was one of the most densely settled parts of the City. The 1852 Map of Somerville provides a very clear picture of how the neighborhood developed. Streets, such as Mt. Pleasant, Mt. Vernon, and Perkins were set out near Somerville’s border with Charlestown. One major asset of this neighborhood was its topography – the level terrain of the area between Broadway and Pearl Street was perfect for house building. Beyond Pearl Street, to the south, the land dropped off dramatically in the direction of Washington Street which became host to a variety of industries, including brick-making, potteries and spike and tack manufacturing. Similarly, Sullivan Square to the east in Charlestown became a center for the manufacture of rubber products, beer and varnish.

During the 1840’s, East Somerville experienced more extensive subdivision activity than other areas of the community. In contrast to Spring Hill and portions of Prospect Hill and Winter Hill where large lots were created for spacious residences, the eastern part of the town was set out in a more urban development scheme, with a modified grid system of narrow streets and less ample house lots.

From its earliest days during the period of the 1840’s to early 1870, East Somerville was settled by a comfortable middle-class that commuted to businesses in Boston. Their commute was made possible by the introduction of the Boston and Maine Railroad through Charlestown’s Sullivan Station located just to the north. For example, in 1845, Charles Pierce laid out 69 lots between Pearl, Perkins, Franklin, and

Pinckney Streets. A plan of the lots clearly shows their proximity to public transportation, only 1,090 feet from the railway depot. East Somerville remained a fashionable residential enclave until the turn of the twentieth century. After 1900, some houses were subdivided, and three-deckers were built on the few remaining undeveloped parcels.

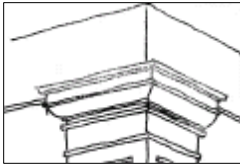
The tour route will take us through the Greek Revival subdivision bordering Mt. Vernon Street between Broadway and Perkins Street. Here classicized architectural elements show how the ancient world inspired American residential design during the decades preceding the Civil War. Turn right onto Perkins Street, and notice the greater variety of residential architectural styles, most notably the Italianate and Mansard styles. From Perkins Street turn left onto Franklin and then right onto Pearl Street to see evidence of the post-Civil War glory years -- a thoroughfare bordered by stylish and substantial Mansard mansions. From Pearl Street turn right onto Cross Street, which is one of the eleven original 17<sup>th</sup> century range ways that linked Broadway with Washington Street/Somerville Avenue/Elm Street, and provided access to interior farms. Follow Cross Street to Broadway and then head east to view this historic thoroughfare with multiple commercial and municipal buildings.

As readily apparent Broadway is a major thoroughfare that serves as the gateway to Somerville when approaching from Charlestown and the City of Boston. Going back as far as the 1600s, Broadway was an important highway. Indeed, it figured as part of the famous "Midnight Ride" that Paul Revere took on horseback to reach Lexington and Concord on April 18, 1775. Significant commerce then commenced along this street in the 1850s when the horse drawn trolley was first introduced.

*Before heading south along Mt. Vernon Street, note the building at 14 Broadway which once housed the photography studio of B. F. Freeman. The structure had large plate glass windows and a prominent conservatory on the upper floors. Mr. Freeman was known as an innovator, selling pillows, cabinets and other furnishings with cyanotype photos on them.*

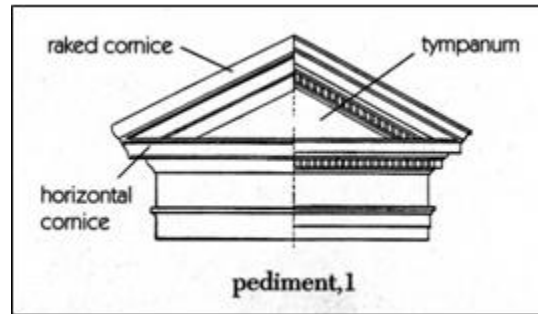


**MT. VERNON STREET NATIONAL REGISTER (NR)  
AND LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICT (LHD)**



The possibility remains that several of the street names in East Somerville, such as Pinckney, Myrtle and Mt. Vernon Streets, were chosen to echo those of the fashionable

south slope of Beacon Hill in Boston. Initial house construction along Mt. Vernon Street coincided with Somerville's incorporation as a town separate from the "mother town" of Charlestown in 1842. At that time Charlestown extended all the way from the docks of Boston Harbor across Somerville and northern Arlington, until terminating in Lexington.



**8 Mt. Vernon Street (NR) (LHD), left photo**

The Ebenezer Davis House is an excellent example of a 2½ story Greek Revival style dwelling configured with a side-hall plan. Note the paneled pilasters and Doric columns on the porch. Ebenezer Davis was a Boston marine inspector whose name appears on the 1852 Draper map of Somerville, signifying Davis as one of the earliest members of the East Somerville community.

**16 Mt. Vernon Street (NR) (LHD), right photo**

The Harrison Hutchins House was built circa 1850 and remained in the family until 1984. Harrison Hutchins is listed in City directories as a "whitener" which means an employee of a bleachery.



**20 Mt. Vernon Street (NR) (LHD), photo below**



This dwelling is unique for Somerville as the entire façade is finished with horizontal clapboards that lie flush to each other. This design is a direct reference to the stone construction of Greek temples which were both a model and an inspiration to this style in America.

**26 Mt. Vernon Street**

Although this building has been altered significantly over time, the present owners are currently in the process of restoring it back to its former glory. The most recent project has involved rehabilitating the original windows.

**29 Mt. Vernon Street (LHD)**

This is one of the few houses in Somerville and Cambridge that has full-length, triple-hung Greek Revival style windows. Note how much more ornate these Ionic columns are compared to the neighboring houses.



## EAST SOMERVILLE LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICT

This multi-building historic district encompasses stylish and substantial examples of houses that date from the second half of the nineteenth century.

### 84 Perkins Street (LHD), corner of Mt. Vernon Street, *photo below*



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

*From Mt. Vernon Street, turn left, briefly noting the Romanesque Revival apartment building at 91 Perkins Street.*

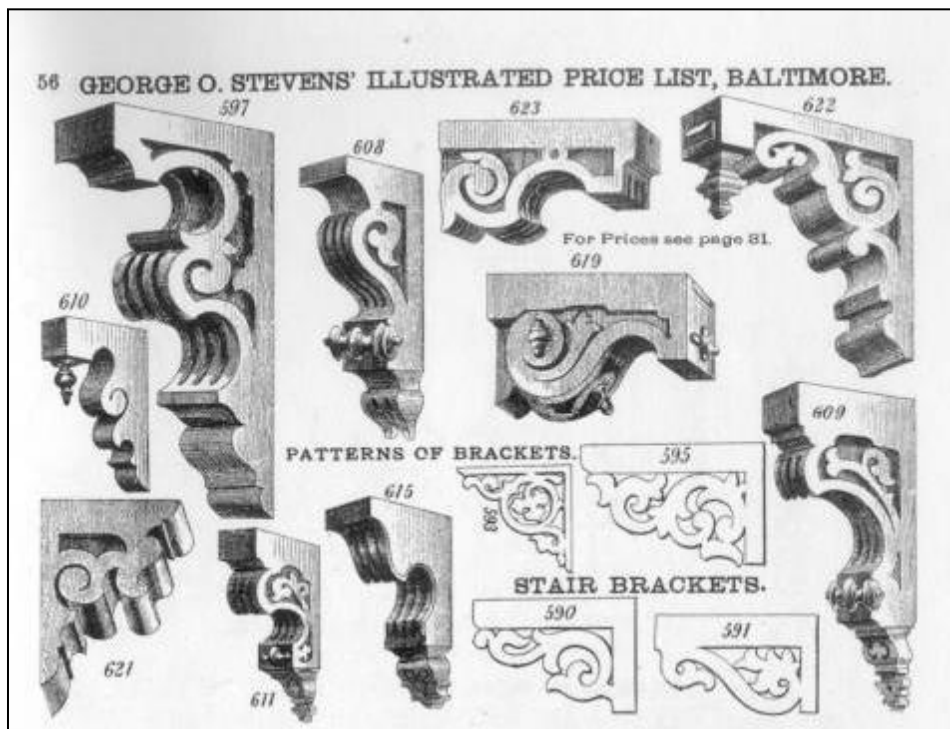
### 91 Perkins Street

Built ca. 1890, this multi-unit masonry building at #91 Perkins is noteworthy for the broad Romanesque arch with low relief foliate detail at its main entrance. The house of vinegar dealer Amos Haynes was torn down to accommodate this apartment building. Also note the double house at 92-94 Perkins Street which exhibits handsome Queen Anne paneled doors.

### 110 Perkins Street

Next observe the substantial Mansard style residence at 110 Perkins Street at the intersection of Pinckney and Perkins Streets. It is noteworthy for its basic, boxy form, low-slung Mansard roof, and the intact front porch with saw-cut quatrefoil detail that is not immediately visible from the street.

The house was built around 1870 for Erastus E. Cole, a businessman and one of the incorporators of Somerville's First Universalist Church in 1854.



Continue westward on Perkins Street to see the Italianate side gable house at **129 Perkins Street** and the substantial Greek Revival house at **132 Perkins Street**.

### 132 Perkins Street

During the late 1800s, 132 Perkins Street was the 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 purpose of Miss Waters's 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.

### 136 Perkins Street, photo below



During the 1880s, the *circa* 1860s Italianate house at 136 Perkins Street was owned by John F. Cole, who was apparently the son of Erastus E. Cole of 110 Perkins Street. He was also at one time the Treasurer of the City of Somerville, with an office at Somerville City Hall, as well as the treasurer of Hospital Sunday when each Church in Somerville took up a collection for the Somerville Hospital. This house exemplifies the center gable Italianate house that was built with considerable frequency in Somerville during the period of 1855-1870.

### 143-145 Perkins Street

The more recently designated double Mansard style house at 143-145 Perkins Street may be quite weathered, but its original clapboards and Italianate detail are clearly visible and ready for sensitive restoration work and new paint. From the 1870s until his death in 1896 the house was owned by a prominent Somerville doctor –A. P. Hemenway. Born in Rochester, Vermont on November 17, 1831, he was a graduate of Harvard Medical School. He was active in the Massachusetts Homeopathic Medical Society, the local Masonic order, as well as the Somerville School Board.

### 157 Perkins Street

Presiding over the corner of Perkins and Franklin Streets is a Greek Revival at 157 Perkins Street. Built *circa* 1850, the first floor of the house was altered during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century for use by a commercial concern called Rogers Store. By the early 1910s the part of the store numbered 153 contained the East Branch of the Somerville Public Library, until its present home on Broadway was completed in 1915. At some point in the 1980s the house caught fire, but luckily it was spared destruction (*pictured to the right*). During the post fire rehabilitation the first floor was returned to residential use, with a center entrance set off by generously proportioned, classicized surrounds. The paneled corner boards were also returned to their original two story height.





**1 Webster Street, photo left**

Our next stop is the **John Edgerly House** at 1 Webster Street, at the corner of Franklin

Street. Built during the early 1850s when the neighborhood was still much undeveloped, this house is a solid example of the Italianate

Style, with an encircling verandah and molded entrance surrounds. During the 1890s, a Queen Anne oriel window was added to the second story of the main facade. John Edgerly, the original owner (1804-1872), was for many years the head of Somerville's School Committee; in fact, the Edgerly School on Cross Street was the second school to be named in his honor. The third owner, Sanford Hanscomb, was a physician, who

lived and worked there during the 1890s and early 1900s.

*From here, proceed toward Pearl Street to view the Captain Edmund Burke House at 70 Pearl Street..*

**70 Pearl Street**



Built around 1870 as the home of a Boston sea captain, 70 Pearl Street is a key component within Pearl Street's collection of substantial Mansard Style residences. After the Civil War, Pearl Street became East Somerville's most fashionable thoroughfare--a delightful, tree shaded promenade bordered by the substantial residences of Somerville and Boston businessmen. This house retains many of its original features, including a boxy volume, charming porch with original chamfered posts, a pair of one-story polygonal bays at its main façade, and a straight-sided mansard roof with a bracketed cornice, single and double dormer windows, and slate shingles. Captain Edmund Burke, the original owner of #70, was identified with the Boston-Azores citrus fruit trade, and is best remembered for a dramatic rescue at sea in 1863. Coming upon a ship, ironically named *Gratitude* that was in grave danger of sinking, he managed to save all of the passengers and crew by tossing overboard his valuable cargo to find a place for them on his own barque, the *Fredonia*. He brought them all back to safety in Boston

Harbor where Captain Burke was given a hero's welcome by Mayor Lincoln and throngs of well-wishers standing along the downtown waterfront.

**47 Franklin Street, photo right**

Located near the crest of the unnamed ridge that is located just to the south of Pearl Street, 47 Franklin Street was built ca.1869-1871 by and for Alonzo Bowers, a carpenter and housewright. Bowers was responsible for many of the large Mansard Style residences in East Somerville, especially along Pearl Street. It is always interesting to see houses designed as residences for their builders or architects, and Bowers was particularly skilled at building houses with pleasing proportions--both in terms of the volume of its main block



and the mansard roof. Also note how he has carried the roof of the front porch across the main facade of the house to enclose the bay window on the first story. Bowers lived here until at least 1895 and members of his family are listed at this address until as late as the mid-1940s.

**75, 77 and 81 Pearl Street, photo below**



*Before heading west along Pearl Street, take a look at three side-by-side residences at 75, 77 and 81 Pearl Street. Their charm derives from their vernacular elements, especially the saw-cut bargeboards and the columns of the front porch. Continuing west along Pearl Street note more examples of substantial Mansard style residences of the type characterized by generously proportioned main blocks, door hoods with fancy saw cut detail, and substantial double pitched or "modern French roofs."*

**94 Pearl Street**

Situated at the corner of Pearl Street and Hillside, the substantial Italianate Mansard house at 94 Pearl Street, boasts an ample side yard. Particularly noteworthy are the saw-cut, wheel-shaped brackets of the door hood, as well as the pleasing proportions of the main block and its rear ell. This house was built ca.1869-1870 by Oliver J. Davis, who is variously listed in the 1870s Somerville business directories' as a dealer in "round lumber" and "spruce piling." Davis' business was located at the corner of Federal and Hawley Streets in Boston. Davis purchased the lot for this house on February 13, 1869 from Frances C. Perkins of Somerville. The possibility remains that Davis' "round lumber" was used in the construction of his house. By 1890 Charles S. Davis, a student at Tufts College, lived here, while O. J. Davis is listed as living in Littleton, Colorado. By the early 1900s Charles S. Davis, electrician, is listed as the owner of 94 Pearl Street. Charles S. Davis is listed as the District Manager of the Westington House Lamp Company and lived at 94 Pearl Street until at least the early 1940s, along with his wife, Lillian.



*At the corner of Pearl and Cross Streets, it is appropriate to consider this very old rangeway set out during the early 1680s to link interior farms with Broadway and Washington Street.*

**76-78 Cross Street**

The one-story concrete commercial structure at 76-78 Cross Street provides visual evidence of the early automobile commerce occurring in East Somerville. Particularly startling is the way two circa 1860s Italianate houses are perched atop the concrete building. Originally numbered 124 Pearl Street and 76 Cross Street, these end gable Italianate houses were hoisted atop a one-story Roaring 20s commercial building whose businesses were frequented by local families, as well as automobile owners from further afield.



**72-78 Cross Street and 124 Pearl Street, photo right**

The story of 72-78 Cross Street and 124 Pearl Street may be traced back to the early 1860s, when Richard Sullivan, a descendant of the early 19th century Massachusetts Governor James Sullivan, began to divest of the families' extensive landholdings in western Charlestown and East Somerville. As President of the Middlesex Canal Company, James Sullivan and his sons had ample opportunity to become engaged in real estate transactions in the area on and around Charlestown Neck which was also the southern terminus of the 27 mile-long Middlesex Canal. A large parcel at the southeast corner of Cross and Pearl Streets was subdivided into three lots which by 1870 contained three end gable houses at 122 and 124 Pearl Street and 76 Cross Street. Fast-forwarding to 1922, 124 Pearl and 76 Cross Street were hoisted atop a one story, multi-storied commercial structure which was intended to serve the nascent automobile trade, as well as local families.



Richard S. Perkins of New York, broker, owned the future lots of 122 and 122 Pearl Street and 76 Pearl Street between 1861-1867. A Middlesex County deed dated June 15, 1867, does not mention the presence of buildings on this parcel. The Pearl Street and Cross Street houses were apparently built between 1867 and 1870 by Reuben D. Horton and his sons David S. Horton and Alfred Horton. The Hortons paid Perkins \$1,386.14 for this parcel. The Hortons owned and operated R. Horton & Sons trunk makers of Boston. The Hortons probably did not live in these houses and instead sold them within a few years.

Numbers 122 and 124 Pearl Street were respectively owned by Cromwell G. Rowell and Louisa and Andrew J. Barnes, and by 1884, the two Pearl Street houses and 76 Cross Street were owned by Louisa Barnes. By the early 1900s, Winifred P. Davis, physician lived and worked at 124 Pearl Street. By 1910, Annie Garrigan, the widow of James H. Garrigan, is listed at this address. By 1919, Gertrude and Orin F. Davis, motorman, lived here. Davis, undoubtedly, was related to the apparently large Davis family whose roots in Somerville pre-dated the Civil War. Later owner occupants included Louise C. and Chester A. Penney, salesman (1924), Helen A. and John M. Costello, engineer and Theodore G. Roder, carpenter (1940).

76 Cross Street was owned by Louisa and Andrew J. Barnes during the late 19th century and by the early 1900s was the residence of two widows: Eliza A. Goodhue and Elizabeth B. Dow. By 1919, #76 was occupied by Robert L. Chester, clerk, Mary D. Frates, dressmaker, and George W. Hayes, who was employed by the Boston and Maine Railroad as a foreman.

The date on the one story concrete commercial block at 72-78 Cross Street reads: 1922. In 1924, the house numbered 76 Cross Street that had been hoisted atop the multi-store commercial block was the



residence of Ora E. and Karl Elsing, tailor, and Edward Zimiti, also a tailor. The five stores on the first floor encompassed: Kerner Drug Co. (#72), M. O. Keefe Grocery (#74), Red Cash Market (#74-1/2), John Connor Grocers (#76a), Cross Street Shoe Store (#76b) and McLasky Provisions Company (#78).

By 1930, #76a and #76b Cross Street were vacant. #72 Cross Street still contained Kerner Drugs, while #74 was occupied by First National Inc. Stores. #78 Cross Street housed Prospect Hill Meats--a name possibly chosen to suggest that this meat market enjoyed the patronage of the nearby hilltop neighborhood of prosperous families. In 1930, Bertram E. Busted lived here. By 1933, this block had two vacant stores at #74a and #76b Cross Street, while Kerner Drug, Leslie J. Denton Restaurant, and Larkin and Sandler Meats occupied the remaining commercial spaces. By 1940, all of the stores were vacant, while #76 Cross Street was the residence of William J. Keating and Henry J. Hubert.



**59 Cross Street, photo left**

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

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

Heading northward along Broadway pause to look at the **Edgerly Educational Center** which borders Otis and Bonair Streets, as well as Cross Street. Built in 1935 as the John A. Dickerman School, this mammoth educational facility replaced a much smaller Victorian Era School that was confusingly named after school committee member John Edgerly. Much later in its history the Dickerman name was discontinued and the Edgerly name rose to the fore. Who was John A. Dickerman? He was a Somerville resident who served with great distinction during World War I. During the battle of Apremont in France on April 1, 1918, he sustained severe wounds, losing an arm and a leg, and eventually his life in this battle. He was one of the members of the Stokes Mortar Section who bravely repulsed German troops. Dickerman's 104<sup>th</sup> Infantry was decorated by the French Government for their valor, which significantly was the first time that the American troops were decorated by a foreign government.

Stylistically, the Edgerly Educational Center is a restrained example of a Georgian/Art Deco public building. These two architectural styles are not typically seen in combination with each other. The Art

Deco style was cutting edge in America, having been introduced ten years earlier at the Paris Exposition of 1925. The Georgian Revival had been part of the American design scene since the late 1800s when Americans began to discover and value their own antique architecture rather than looking only to European influences.

The Dickerman School is symbolic of the City of Somerville's long-term commitment to offering its citizens the best possible trade school education. In a city where industry has played a pivotal role in the overall prosperity of the community, City officials have recognized that a skilled trade education is the key to the long-term economic well-being of Somerville. As early as 1910, a vocational or trade school was begun in Somerville, and by the end of the decade, the U.S. Government recognized the work of the City's vocational program as it applied to returning WWI soldiers--recognition that was forthcoming despite the less than ideal conditions of the vocational education facility. City officials were eager to provide new quarters for the trade school. In 1927, the Superintendent recommended a new school comprising three units--vocation, continuation and elementary schools, situated on the site of the old Edgerly School on Cross Street between Otis and Bonair Streets. The old Edgerly School was demolished in 1934, and the cornerstone of the new Dickerman School was laid at the northwestern corner of Cross and Bonair Streets in 1935. Completed by 1937 from designs by a yet-to-be identified architect, the new school was built at a cost of almost \$400,000. Exhibiting first class fire proof construction for its time, its floors and walls are composed of concrete. The Dickerman School encompassed nearly 100,000 square feet which occupies a lot totaling 41,457 square feet, The exterior of the building is dark red New England brick with cast stone cornices, belt courses, window sills and copings. The building included both state of the art electrical equipment and an interior, automated telephone system.

The segment of the school devoted to the vocational education program contained eight shops, two academic classrooms, two drawing rooms, a lunch room, and auditorium which doubled as a gym. The following trades were taught: Carpentry, Machine, Auto Mechanic, Printing, Drafting and Electrical. The Continuation program contained four shops and two classrooms. The elementary school segment was built to house five class rooms, two special classrooms, a kindergarten room, and a play room.

*From the Edgerly Education Center head north on Cross Street and then turn east on Broadway.*

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

This red brick building was built in 1895 as Fire House Engine No. 2. It may be difficult to envision this use due to the removal of its crenellated tower and battlements, making it resemble more of an Italian palazzo. Its construction as a fire station is indicative of the high density development of East Somerville after 1890, which corresponded with the introduction of the electric trolley. Towards the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the building became a recreational facility to serve both the community's seniors and youth.

**Row Houses at 8-16 Cross Street East**

This group of buildings was constructed at the request of Seman Klous, a brick maker and land developer. Klous owned the first building to catch fire in the Great Fire of Boston in 1872, as well as the



land between the rear lot lines of Austin Street and Foss Park, originally known as Broadway Park from 1865 to 1880. Although these row houses have suffered over time with multiple ownerships and prolonged disinvestment, one can still see the fine bones and Mansard style essence of this *circa* 1880 building.

#### **161 Broadway, Park Garage Company, 1914**

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

**The East Somerville Branch Library**, at the corner of Broadway and Illinois Avenue, photo below.



Built in 1918, this **Branch Library** is a satellite of the Central Library atop Central Hill. Somerville's public library system began in 1871, the year the community incorporated as a city. The East Somerville branch was organized in 1912 in a commercial space located at 153 Perkins Street. Formal establishment of the East Somerville Branch Library was associated with the explosive residential growth that

occurred during the World War I era when two-family dwellings were built in mass numbers along the streets that were named after American states. Its establishment may also have been a by-product of the early Automobile Age when people began to rely on cars to perform errands, such as dropping off library books. Architecturally, this library is noteworthy for the simple rectangular masonry form, as well as its Classical Revival ornamentation that includes Ionic and Doric pilasters, and a heavy entablature below the cornice of the roof. The building was funded by Andrew Carnegie, the Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania steel magnate. A Scotland native, Carnegie funded hundreds of fine libraries throughout Great Britain and the United States during the period of 1895-1930. Carnegie attributed his business success to his early access to the private library of a wealthy family in his hometown.



#### **Franklin Building, northwest corner of Franklin Street and Broadway, photo left**

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.



**Columbia Building at 84-86 Broadway, photo right**

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.

**Hurst's Broadway Theatre, now Mudflat Studios at 79-83 Broadway, photo right**

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

Thank you for taking this tour! For additional information, contact the staff of the Somerville Historic Preservation Commission within the Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development, via [www.somervillema.gov/historicpreservation](http://www.somervillema.gov/historicpreservation) or 617-625-6600.