

Fall 2011 Walking Tour

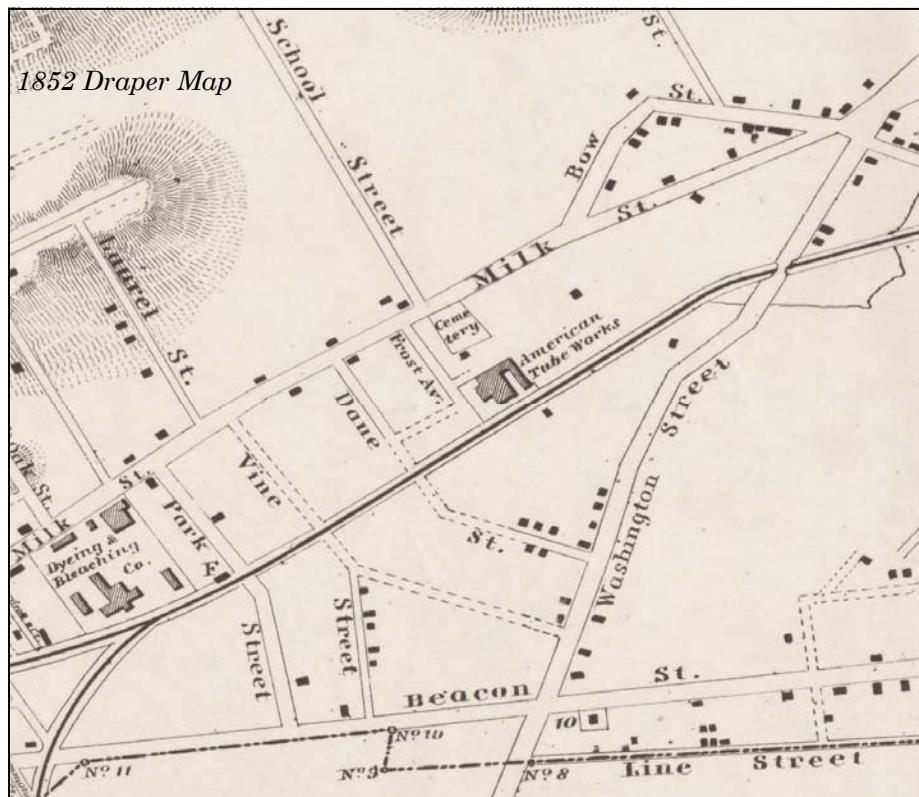
Up and Coming Hotspots: Historic Union Square West 2011

Sunday, September 18, 2011

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

*Begin at Gerrior Square, the small triangular park at the intersection of
Somerville Avenue, Bow and Carlton Streets.*

Union Square History



Union Square is located at the intersection of two 17th century highways, and is the oldest and largest commercial district in Somerville. Both Washington Street (known first as the Road to Newtowne and later as the Road to Cambridge) and Somerville Avenue (originally Charlestown Lane and later Milk Row) were established during the early 1630s. Somerville Avenue, or Milk Row, was part of the road system that western farmers in Middlesex County used to access their markets in City Square, Charlestown and Faneuil Hall in the heart of Boston. For over a century horse-drawn carts loaded with dairy and agricultural products were a familiar sight for the few families living along Milk Row. By the mid 1830s, however, rail lines were beginning to flourish and they were a more expeditious way to transport farm products to distant urban markets.

Mayor Joseph A. Curtatone

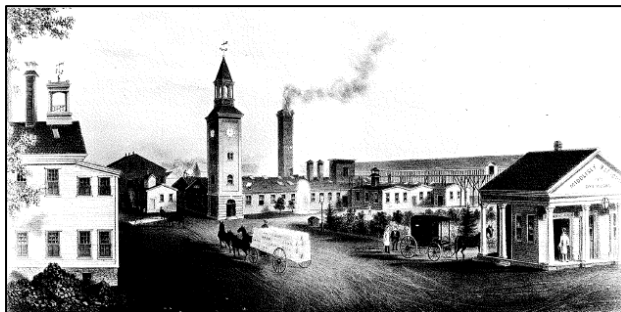
Union Square was once known as “Sand Pit Square,” based upon the sandy soil found in the clay pits that yielded a fine grade of silica for making glass and brick. During the 1850s, this crossroad became known briefly as “Liberty Pole Square,” referring to a flagpole erected by local firemen. Then the name changed to Union Square in the 1860s when a recruitment center was located in the center to enlist Somerville soldiers for the Civil War Union effort.

As railroad service expanded, commercial and residential development grew, both within and around the Square. In 1835, the Boston and Lowell Railroad opened its first station for passengers on the south side of Washington Street. In 1836, the Fitchburg Railroad was introduced to Union Square, and ran parallel to Milk Row/Somerville Avenue. Originally constructed as a freight line, by 1842 the Fitchburg Railroad began carrying passengers and serving multiple stations in and around Union Square. Station locations included Webster Street (near Prospect Street) and Kent Street, to service early Spring Hill commuters. In 1845, horse car service was established between Union and Harvard Squares via Kirkland and Washington Streets. Each of these additions offered Union Square residents an easy commute into Boston.



Union Square Station

Fast, efficient, and dependable public transit along these transportation corridors not only spurred rapid population and commercial growth, but also paved the way for “the land beyond the neck” to break away from Charlestown. In 1842, the area became an independent town known as Somerville, a name that was pleasing to the ear, yet never officially attributed to a particular figure or factor.



Milk Row, later Middlesex Dye & Bleachery, 1864 engraving. Image from “Beyond the Neck”

In terms of industrial development, Union Square was already on its way to becoming a hub of industry before the railways arrived. As early as 1820, the Middlesex Bleachery and Dye Works, currently the Conway Park site on Somerville Avenue, was said to be the oldest textile finishing plant in the United States. Although the complex closed in 1936 and the buildings have been demolished, the utilitarian brick buildings further east on Somerville Avenue and Dane Street, known as the American Tube Works complex, recall this gritty industrial streetscape, once typical of Union Square West.

During the 1850s and 1860s, small factories and meat packing plants were built alongside the railroad tracks, forming new employment centers. Manufacturing grew rapidly with enterprises such as the American Tube Works Company, established in 1851, and the Union Glass Company, established in 1854, and once located between Webster and Prospect Streets. Other Union Square industries at this time included wood-working shops, ice businesses, and carriage factories.

Industrial expansion in Union Square during the late 19th century also required more land to accommodate new factory buildings. Since the northern side of the Square was hilly and better suited for residential construction, the southern side was more logical. First a body of water known as Willis Creek, later known as Millers River, had to be filled. As early as 1830, marshland between the Union Square crossroads and the western intersection of Somerville Avenue and Bow Street disappeared beneath fill materials, to create a new straight segment of Somerville Avenue that led into the heart of the Square. From then on Bow Street was no longer part of Somerville Avenue, but its *bowed* curve remains as a reminder of colonial efforts to avoid

the marshland. Filling in Willis Creek/Millers River also eliminated the discernable boundary between Cambridge and neighboring Charlestown and Somerville. The new land was now ripe for locating railroad tracks and industrial buildings.

This year's tour begins at the western edge of Union Square. It focuses on the few pre-1850 sites and buildings that remain from the time Somerville Avenue was commonly known as Milk Row. By exploring a post-1850 industrial complex, as well as modest homes associated with factory workers and middle-class tradesmen, we will discover that Duck Village has nothing to do with quacking fowl, but instead refers to illegal activities occurring during Prohibition. We will also visit the newly designated Dane Street Local Historic District and the oldest cemetery in Somerville. The tour will end where it began—at a crossroads noteworthy for a wide mix of architecturally significant buildings.

*Let us start at the small triangular traffic island where Somerville Avenue intersects with Bow and Carlton Streets. This is known as **Gerrior Square**, named in honor of two Somerville brothers who died in World War I. Here one can visualize some of the striking architecture and significant buildings that still mark the western gateway to historic Union Square.*

Western Gateway



Drouet Block, 58-68 Bow Street

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 three wooden commercial blocks 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 caliber of design.

Anchoring one corner of the intersection is the **Bennett Block, 380 Somerville Avenue**. Of wood-frame construction, this remarkably intact Queen Anne commercial and residential block built in 1892-1893 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.



Bennett Block, 380 Somerville Ave-

The lot housing 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 was 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

*The Richmond Block is discussed more in depth near the end of the tour.

free-standing pediments, adding considerable interest to the roof line. Although the current owner was recently given a permit to substantially enlarge and renovate the building to create condominiums, the new design preserves significant portions of the historic building's form and architectural details.

From the Bennett Block, look east along Somerville Avenue to notice the rectangular brick building at 374 Somerville Avenue, an early 20th century theatre.

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



Star Theatre, Union Square

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, located in Davis Square, is the only one still operating in the City as a movie theatre. 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 II. The building is currently occupied by a retail business, known as the Grand, and two architecture offices, with no remaining evidence of the Star's lobby or auditorium.

Now look to the northwest side of Gerrior Square to see a reminder of Somerville's auto-dominated past.

Automobile Age

The former **Metropolitan Gas Station at 69 Bow Street**, nestled at the intersection of Bow Street and Somerville Avenue, 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.

69 Bow Street



Walk west from Gerrior Square along Somerville Avenue, past a modern supermarket once part of the old Hawkins Farm, and stop to consider a trio of Greek Revival and Italianate vernacular dwellings that were built during the second quarter of the 19th century.

George Ireland Farm

A mini-village of modest dwellings are located at the northwest corner of Somerville Avenue and School Street. They are noteworthy for their siting and 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. Around 1880 the land was subdivided into house lots.

437 Somerville Avenue, circa 1830, is a humble Greek Revival style cottage that 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.

437 Somerville Avenue





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.

439-441 Somerville Avenue

439-441R Somerville Avenue

The most western member of this trio, **439-441 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 time period of the Ireland farm subdivision.



461 Somerville Avenue

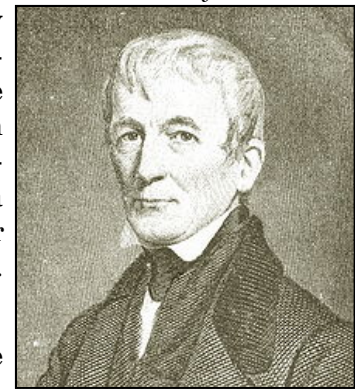
The **Ireland-Dane House** at **461 Somerville Avenue** sits at the corner of Granite Street and is notable as the oldest dwelling still surviving on Somerville Avenue. Possibly built as early as 1791, the house harks back to the early days when Milk Row served as a major artery for transporting agricultural 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.

461 Somerville Avenue 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.

Patrick Tracy Jackson



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 nearby streets.

Cross Somerville Avenue, head south on Dane Street, and walk across the former Fitchburg Railroad tracks. Turn right onto Village Street and enter Duck Village.

Duck Village



“Duck Village,” 1874 Hopkins Map

Duck Village is bound by the Fitchburg Railroad tracks and Dane, Washington, Park, and Beacon Streets. Although most of these houses date from the mid-19th to the early 20th century, the name “Duck Village” is relatively recent, coined during the Prohibition Era (1920-1932). According to local oral tradition, people in danger of being arrested for making and distributing illegal alcohol would “duck” into the densely settled neighborhood for protection. Similar to the north slope of Beacon Hill where fugitive slaves hid in concealed alleys, passageways, and crawl spaces prior to the Civil War, Duck Village incorporates meandering streets and narrow passageways. Those familiar with the neighborhood used them as a means to escape local authorities.

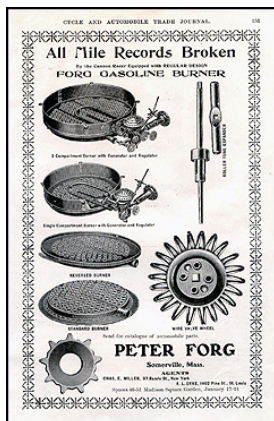
In 1920, Temperance Movement activists triumphed over their “wet” opponents who were not in favor of banning all liquor sales. The Constitution was amended, forbidding the manufacture and distribution of spirits within the United States. As a result, breweries and package stores went out of business, throwing thousands out of work, and enabling rum runners or bootleggers to make sizeable fortunes smuggling liquor into the country. Alternatively, for those eager to ignore the ban on alcohol, a bad batch of homemade bathtub gin could cause significant health problems, including blindness or even death.

Walk along Village Street toward Properzi Way, past a concrete garage at 17 Village Street and a foundry building at 27 Village Street. The north side of the Village Street and Properzi Way intersection displays the rear facade of the Peter Forg Manufacturing Company, at 50 Park Street. The oldest part of the existing two story brick factory dates back to the company’s expansive period during the early 1900s.



27 Village Street

The **Peter Forg Manufacturing Company, 50 Park Street**, is a testament to family perseverance and adaptability. Still in business 130 years after its founding, the Forg Company website states:



Forg Advertisement

“In 1881 Peter Forg (a German immigrant) opened a woodworking company catering to the furniture business. The company hand carved intricate figures and details that adorned tables and chairs. In the 1890s there was a gradual shift into metal stamping. This was the result of a growing need in the furniture, bicycle and automotive industry for metal stampings. When the automobile market started to take hold, they produced stamped parts used by the Stanley Steamer Automobile Company as well as Rolls Royce. When World War I broke out, the needs shifted to defense manufacturing. Peter Forg Mfg Co. was making trench helmets and other stamped parts and moved out of the woodworking industry completely. Peter Forg Manufacturing Company is now in its fifth generation of ownership by the Forg family.”

Walk from Village Street, along Properzi Way to Beacon Street, and pause to admire the potential Properzi Way/Vine Street Local Historic District.

Properzi Way

Vine Street was renamed in the early 1960s in memory of Father Nazereno Properzi, who organized St. Anthony of Padua Roman Catholic Religious Society in 1915. Father Properzi also oversaw the construction of St. Anthony's Church at the northern end of the street near Somerville Avenue, which was completed during the mid-1920s. Father Properzi provided more than forty years of leadership to a parish that primarily served the Italian community of Somerville.

Properzi Way is primarily characterized by working-class housing built prior to the Civil War. An 1848 plan by D.A. Sanborn depicts the east side of Vine Street (Properzi Way) platted with seven lots, all owned by S.T. Frost. The 1852 Draper map indicates that several houses were built on these lots by then, and also shows that Beacon Street was set out as early as 1813 and was part of the Hampshire Turnpike.



1852 Draper Map

The west side of Vine Street (Properzi Way) has a more complicated development history and is not exclusively composed of residential development. By 1880, the west side of Vine Street, near Beacon Street, was a rail yard owned by the Charles River Street Railroad Company, later known as the Boston Elevated Railroad Company. Prior to this George Kaan owned a house on the site. The sale changed his economic status, evidenced by his subsequent move from Vine Street to Pleasant Avenue on Prospect Hill. By 1884, R. Estabrook laid out house lots on and adjacent to Eliot Street, located mid-way along the west side of Vine Street. At the opposite end of Vine Street, near the Fitchburg Railroad tracks, only minimal development occurred until the 1900s.

Between the property of Kaan and Estabrook was that of Daniel E. Chase, one of Vine Street's (Properzi Way) best known residents. Chase owned a distillery in Boston, specializing in molasses rum (yet another neighborhood connection with liquor), and later moved his distillery to 15 Bleachery Court in Somerville. The primary Chase house (now demolished), which fronted on Park Street, had several stables, as well as a small house located along Vine Street. This small house is quite possibly the one-story gable end dwelling at **93 Properzi Way**, circa 1870.



93 Properzi Way



Also part of the Chase family property is the Four-square style house at **85 Properzi Way**. Built around 1890, it is now clad in wood shingles and set back from the street with a deep front lawn. With a portion of open space still remaining around these Chase buildings, one can envision the multi-building estate that would have been an anomaly within this working-class neighborhood.

85 Properzi Way

Potential Properzi Way Local Historic District

The east side of Properzi Way encompasses noteworthy mid- to late 19th century residences at **72, 76, 80, 84-86, and 92 Properzi Way**. Constructed of wood and often set close to the street, these houses exhibit elements of the Greek Revival and Italianate styles.

The Peter J. Fitzgerald House, **72 Properzi Way**, represents a later addition to this memorable streetscape. Built 1890 in the Queen Anne style, the construction of this two-story gable end house was funded by the family business, “butter and eggs.”

72 Properzi Way



76 Properzi Way, built circa 1850 in the Italianate style, was one of two houses (along with 80 Properzi Way) owned in 1860 by journalist Charles H. Woodell. Woodell was born around 1828 in Newburyport, MA and worked as a newspaperman throughout New England before purchasing the Worcester Evening Gazette in 1869. He also served as an editor of the Gazette until his sudden death in 1871.



76, 80 & 84-86 Properzi Way

80 Properzi Way, the other Woodell-owned dwelling, was also constructed in the Italianate style circa 1850. In 1868 the Woodells sold the house to Charles Trull, who then sold it again in 1873 to John H. McGarr, a native of Ireland and a Somerville policeman. However, the question remains whether Woodell, or his wife Fanny, ever actually lived in either of these houses.

The double house at **84-86 Properzi Way**, circa 1870, has an architectural feature that sets it apart from other Somerville houses built with a center gable in the Italianate style after the end of the Civil War. This feature, located in the attic, is an unusually large Federal style attic fanlight, or demi-lune window, which would have been out of fashion for nearly forty years. Initially known as 84½-86½ Properzi Way, the original owner of 84½ was Joseph Smith, an Overseer at the Charlestown Mills, while John O'Brien, a laborer for the Charlestown Mills, originally occupied 86½. The O'Brien family lived at this location for close to a century, until the 1970s.

88 Properzi Way was constructed in the Greek Revival style circa 1850. This gable end house has several architecturally distinctive details including the sidelights and pediment surround of the front door, cornice-headed windows, and unusually wide fascia boards at the deep eaves. Early owners included William H. Bichnell and James W. Malloy. Bichnell, a machinist in Boston, also owned a grocery store at 518 Somerville Avenue run by his wife. The Malloy family owned both 88 and 92 Properzi Way from 1865 through the 1890s. They resided in 92 and rented 88 for additional income.



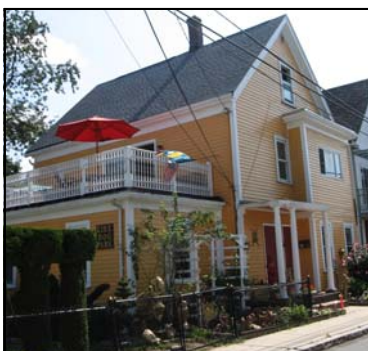
92 Properzi Way

Associated with 88, **92 Properzi Way** appears similar to a stable; however, this façade actually dates to more recent times, as it was altered by the current owner, well-known architect Moshe Safdie, to photograph and store his firm's architectural models. Built around 1850 as a residence, the original 16' x 24' rectangular section was likely a typical two room side-hall plan. A kitchen ell, circa 1906, is located at the rear of the house and the Somerville Assessor's database indicates there have been two other rear additions. Possibly property of the Francis Tufts family,

the house was sold in 1865 by Tufts to Samuel Trull who immediately sold it to James W. Malloy, the machinist who also purchased 88 Properzi Way at the same time. This house was owned by Malloy family

100 Properzi Way, a former basket factory, houses the architectural firm of Moshe Safdie, one of the most prominent and accomplished architects in the world. Born in 1938 in Haifa, Israel, Moshe Safdie trained at McGill University from 1955-1961. He designed Habitat for the 1967 World Expo in Montreal and his more recent work includes the futuristic Marina Bay Sands in Singapore and the Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art in Arkansas. The firm also has offices in Jerusalem and Singapore. Safdie has taught at the Harvard Graduate School Design since the late 1970s.

Round the corner onto Beacon Street, turn left at Durham Street, left again at Skehan Street, and then right onto Hanson Street.



38 Hanson Street

38 Hanson Street is a vernacular late 19th century wood-frame dwelling, representing typical housing for this area. However, atypical lawn ornaments, a small army of ducks in various sizes, lend a delightfully surreal quality to the streetscape, representing a more benign version of Alfred Hitchcock's early 1960s film *The Birds*. A hand painted sign at the main façade speaks to the origin of the Duck Village name.

*Continue southeast along Hanson Street, walk toward Washington Street, a.k.a. the old Road to Newtowne, and turn left to admire an unusually ornate Greek Revival house at **384 Washington Street**.*

Built circa 1855, the gable end house at **384 Washington Street** survives from a time when Washington Street was lined with fine houses on spacious lots. Beginning around 1869, this house was owned by Charles Shuebler, a German immigrant who prospered as a jeweler. 384 Washington Street has a side-hall interior plan and once possessed an extensive rear ell that was partially removed to accommodate a condominium complex. By far the most interesting feature of the house, aside from the generously proportioned Doric corner pilasters, is the oculus window in the attic, encircled by a high relief laurel wreath carving.



384 Washington Street

From Washington Street stroll east, turning left onto Dane Street.

Dane Street

The street was named after Osgood Dane, a stone dealer who once lived at 461 Somerville Avenue. The street and adjacent lots were platted by surveyors Parker and Felton in 1845 to connect Somerville Avenue with Washington Street. Initially, house construction along the street was slow, but once the newly organized American Tube Works (1852) revealed a factory would be built at the northern end of Dane Street (along Somerville Avenue), house construction on Dane Street began in earnest. Interestingly, American Tube Works employees, despite the proximity of the factory, were not well represented residents along Dane Street.

Dane Street Local Historic District

Triple-decker buildings, located at the Washington and Village Street intersections of Dane Street, bookend a small local historic district (LHD) encompassing **62, 64, 65 and 66 Dane**

Street. A small cottage at **72R Dane Street**, possibly dating back to the late 18th century, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and was designated as a single-building LHD in 1985. While these houses exhibit style characteristics that were popular a decade before the Civil War, the architectural significance of the Dane Street LHD lies in the collection as a whole, rather than the individual buildings themselves, similar to the houses on Properzi Way.

The Greek Revival style, which was waning in popularity by the time **65 Dane Street** was built circa 1856-57, can be seen in the columned porch, tall windows, and front door flanked with sidelights. Although the original owner is unidentified, William Mills, a plumber, owned this house by the late 1860s, and a second identified owner, a carpenter named Levi H. Proctor, lived here by 1890.



65 Dane Street



64 & 66 Dane Street

66 Dane Street, built circa 1855, is a diminutive cottage clad in wood shingles. While difficult to categorize stylistically, this structure nevertheless has considerable visual appeal. This is the only house within the District that research suggests has an historical association with an American Tube Works employee, as the house may have been built for James Fox, an engineer for the Tube Works. Fox only owned the property very briefly because, as noted in a deed, he moved to England and sold the cottage to William Mills, a plumber and early resident at 65 Dane Street.

Early in its popularity, the Italianate style of **64 Dane Street**, circa 1851, is evident in the encircling verandah and saw cut brackets and return eaves. The oldest house in the District, 64 Dane Street was built on a lot owned by Samuel T. Frost, a real estate speculator actively buying and selling properties in the Duck Village area during the 1850s. Frost sold this lot to Rufus Littlefield, a mason, who may have constructed the brick foundation. Upon completion, Littlefield sold the house to collar maker William James for \$2,100.

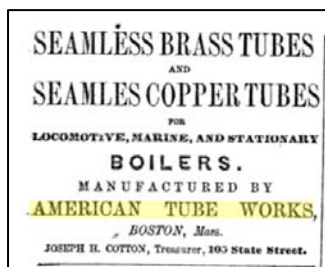
The Carpenter Gothic style, usually manifest in modest housing as an isolated element, is also represented in this District, as seen in the scalloped barge boards on **62 Dane Street**, an L-shape cottage. Middlesex County deeds suggest that carpenter William T. Hill built this house in 1855. The house's first owner Richard Hodson, a machinist from Chelsea, MA, lived here from the 1850s through 1880.

62 Dane Street



From Dane Street, walk over the railroad bridge and turn right into the American Tube Works industrial complex.

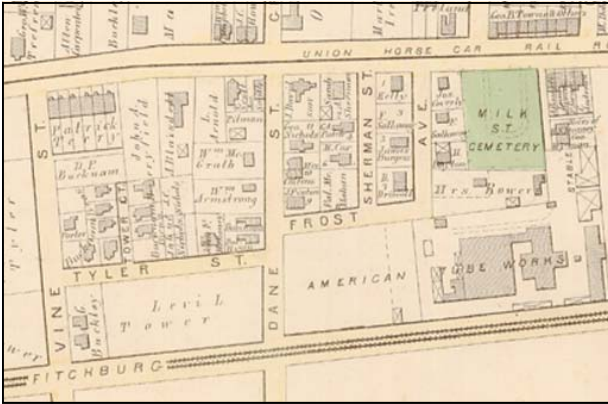
American Tube Works



Tube Works Advertisement

The American Tube Works was incorporated in March of 1852 to manufacture seamless brass and copper tubes. The company had obtained exclusive rights to manufacture "Green's Patent brass tubes," patented in England four years earlier. The Tube Works produced seamless boiler tubes for locomotive, marine and stationary engines, as well as tubes and piping for a variety of other purposes. The company appears to have been immediately successful, employing 175 men by 1865, second only to Union Glass Works on the eastern side of the Square. That year, the Company also produced brass and copper tubing valued at \$1.2 million dollars!

Its success was due to the first director of plant operations, Freeborn Adams, a South Boston machinist, who had previously invented similar equipment to produce seamless copper tubes. Since the Tube Works manufacturing process was unpatented, the process was a closely guarded secret—hence the fact that individual building uses are not detailed on early maps. For more than half a century the company's products were exported to all corners of the world.



1884 Hopkins Map, Tube Works Complex

The current American Tube Works buildings along Dane Street and Somerville Avenue represent a second incarnation of this complex. All of the multiple Tube Works buildings built during the mid-19th century, were demolished between 1890 and 1920 to accommodate newer, more modern factory buildings. The company could afford this radical facelift due to an increase in demand during the late 1880s and 1890s. Following the Civil War years demand for plumbing and other domestic fixtures rose in correspondence to increased urbanization and a heightened need for plumbing and sanitation systems.

In 1934, the Tube Works ceased operations in Somerville, and at least some of the buildings were used by the Whiting Milk Company, possibly up to the 1960s when the union firm was bought out by the H.P. Hood Company. Since then, the remaining five buildings have been occupied by a variety of commercial and industrial uses, including a metal fence manufacturer, paper retailer, boxing club, multiple auto repair shops, self-storage, and other commercial offices.

The **Boiler House at 24 Dane Street**, built around 1915-1920, 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 copper canopy that marks the Dane Street entrance. The Boiler House was constructed to produce heat and power for the entire Tube Works complex.



24 Dane Street, Boiler House copper canopy

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

The **Drawing Mill at 444 Somerville Avenue** sits across another alley, known originally as Sherman Street, and directly east of 460 Somerville Avenue. This building 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, one-and-one-half-story building. 444 Somerville Avenue has brick walls laid in common bond and a front gable roof with a shallow pitch and monitor. A brick smoke stack is located on the west elevation.

Walk east towards Market Basket and pause to consider two contiguous brick buildings at 440R and 438R Somerville Avenue.

440R and 438R Somerville Avenue originally served as a **Machine and Pattern Shop** and a **Blacksmith Shop**, respectively. Built ca.1900, the Machine and Pattern Shop is a rectangular thirteen-bay by seven-bay, two-and-one-half story building whose walls are laid up in common bond.

438R-440R Somerville Avenue



These two buildings were likely built as support structures, fabricating and repairing the machinery. 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 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.

Milk Row Cemetery

The **Milk Row Cemetery** is a historic burial ground tucked amidst active retail stores and bound on two sides by the former factory buildings of the American Tube Works. Founded as early as 1804, the Cemetery was testament to the growing population of families living beyond Charlestown Neck during the first quarter of the 19th century. It is one of two cemeteries in the City and decidedly the oldest by two centuries. It sits on land sold by Samuel Tufts to Timothy



Tube Works & Milk Row Cemetery

Tufts and others, and ultimately several members of the Tufts, Stone, and Rand families were buried here. Enoch Robinson, eminent inventor and builder of the distinctive Round House on Spring Hill, donated a plot in the grounds to construct a Civil War monument. Erected in the summer of 1863, this statuesque marble memorial is reputed to be the first in the nation funded by citizens honoring soldiers who died in the Civil War. Burials in the Milk Row Cemetery occurred less frequently after 1832, corresponding to the opening of Mount Auburn Cemetery in Cambridge in 1831. Somerville's first school stood at the eastern corner of the lot from 1796 until 1849.



Milk Row Cemetery, ca.1875

Tube Works Administration Building

The Tube Works **Administration Office** building at **440 Somerville Avenue** borders the west side of the Cemetery. Built around 1913, this rectangular five-bay by twelve-bay two-story building has brick walls laid in common bond and a shallow pitch, front-gable roof. A significant feature of the building is the metal hoist rail that runs between the Administrative Office and the Drawing Mill to the west. The class-cized 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.



440 Somerville Avenue, metal hoist

Cross Somerville Avenue, and head north on Quincy Street.

Quincy Street

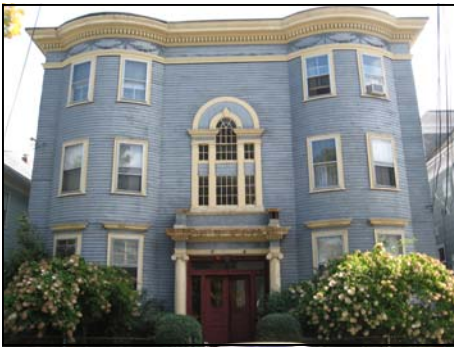
Quincy Street was part of a real estate empire assembled by brothers Robert and Quincy Vinal after the Civil War. The street was likely named after Quincy Vinal who lived in the Greek Revival house at 15 Aldersey Street on Prospect Hill. As young men the brothers worked for their

father at the family grain mill in North Chelsea (later Revere), and later, they established their own agricultural commodities business at Lewis Wharf in Boston.

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, these row houses represent an interesting example of the Panel Brick style, introduced to the Back Bay in Boston during the mid 1870s. By 1880 this style had reached outlying areas like Somerville. 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 covered with a mansard roof which was near the end of its popularity as a roof type.



4, 6 & 8 Quincy Street



15 Quincy Street

15 Quincy Street is one of the best examples of a wood-frame multi-family dwelling in the Boston area. This three story Colonial Revival building is unusually well-detailed, complete with an Ionic column entrance and monumental Palladian window above. The main façade culminates in a molded cornice with a sharply rendered dentil course. Built during the mid-1890s for Antonio Sears, a tailor, this building was originally the *Hotel Quincy*. The inhabitants were possibly long-term tenants, rather than the short-term transients that were more often associated with hotels during this period. The structure is a product of Somerville's greatest building boom, occurring between 1890 and 1910. During this twenty year period, fifty percent of Somerville's building stock was constructed, despite brief recessions in 1893 and 1907.

22 Quincy Street is the Italianate, gable end house of Reverend Ichabod Marcy. Built circa 1870 with a side-hall interior plan, the Marcy house provides a physical link to the beginning of the Quincy Street development undertaken by the Vinal brothers.

The substantial double house at **29-31 Quincy Street** has a Mansard roof with Italianate trim details. The building is reminiscent of other significant Mansard roof dwellings built within the City after the Civil War, including those along Pearl Street in East Somerville, built by Alonzo Bowers and others. Evidence suggests that 29-31 Quincy Street was built by and for carpenter John D. Hills. It was completed in 1873, just as the nation slid into an economic recession known as the Panic of 1873, and housing starts came to a screeching halt in Somerville, and did not revive until the early 1880s.



29-31 Quincy Street

Near the intersection of Quincy and Summer Streets, notice the wonderfully odd streetscape at the northwest corner of these streets.

46 Quincy Street is a miniature villa, complete with a Mansard roof and tower over the entry bay. **55 Summer Street**, across the intersection, is a Mansard style house that was hoisted above a low-rise concrete commercial block during the 1890s and early 1900s. This was a fairly common approach in Boston as property owners adapted to the growing trade and ownership of automobiles.



46 Quincy Street

Head southeast along Summer Street to the Nunziato Field Dog Park on the northeast corner of Vinal Avenue.

Summer Street



Luther V. Bell School

The **Nunziato Field and Dog Park** site was once the location of the Luther V. Bell School, designed by S.S. Woodcock. Built in 1874 in the Italianate style, this was a substantial brick building that rose three stories to an intersecting hip and gable roof crowned with a distinctive cupola.

On the south side of Summer Street, opposite the Vinal Avenue corner, are two different approaches to post Civil War housing in Somerville. Free-standing gable end dwellings, such as **22, 24, 26** and **28 Summer Street**, were far more typical than the formal Mansard style brick townhouses seen at **8-20 Summer Street**.

The quartet of modest vernacular houses at **22-28 Summer Street** are similar in siting, form and proportion, so at first glance they all appear to be built during the same time. However, these wood-frame houses were built a decade apart. Numbers **22** and **24 Summer Street** date back to the early 1870s, while **26** and **28 Summer Street** were built during the early 1880s. In the early 1900s, the occupants of these houses included a harness maker, machinist, paper cutter, carpenter, and baker. In 1903, Reverend Lewis V. Price, pastor of the Union Square Presbyterian Church, resided at 26 Summer Street.



22, 24 & 26 Summer Street



8-20 Summer Street

8-20 Summer Street is a group of six attached townhouses built circa 1880 for George Simonds who apparently lived outside the City as he is not listed in Somerville Directories. Constructed of red brick with polygonal bays at the second story, the townhouses are enclosed by a substantial hip-on-mansard roof. The west end unit also exhibits an early 1900s brick storefront addition that housed an ice cream parlor in its early history. Residents during the early 1900s included a chiropodist, engineer, confectioner, plumber, and a physician who maintained an office at 8 Summer Street.

All of these noted properties on Summer Street have been recently approved, or are in the process of being proposed for designation as part of a larger Union Square Local Historic District.

Round the corner to Bow Street and walk toward the former Union Square Police Station.

Bow Street

The **Union Square Police Station at 50 Bow Street** was built in 1874 from designs provided by George A. Clough, the first in-house architect for the City of Boston. Clough designed numerous fire stations, police stations, and other municipal buildings in Boston neighborhoods during the 1870s. This well-known architect provided Somerville with a stately Mansard style police station during the City's infancy as an incorporated municipality (1871). This building also represents a recent preservation success story for the City of Somerville.



50 Bow Street

The original Mansard roof, reputed to have been destroyed in a 1940s fire, was recreated as part of a public-private partnership in an adaptive reuse project. The extensive rehabilitation and restoration work resulted in a fourteen-unit condominium development that was completed in 2005.

46 Bow Street



Next door to the former police station is the **E.C. Mann House** at **46 Bow Street**. This late 19th century house is a key component in the remarkable node of primarily Victorian buildings that border the intersection of Bow/Summer Streets. The Mann House sits at the westernmost edge of the Bow Street residences known collectively as “Doctors’ Row.” The facades of the Mann House are unusually ornate, complete with all manner of turned elements, windows of various shapes and sizes, and a picturesque roof line enlivened with copper finials. Particularly noteworthy are the extremely narrow columns at the front porch and the high quality stained glass windows. This highly eclectic and colorfully painted house would be very much at home in the “painted lady” neighborhoods of San Francisco.

Cross Bow Street to stand on the small triangular traffic island at the intersection of Bow and Summer Streets to see an impressive 360 degree panorama of buildings, each possessing their own distinctive historic design. Continue to the intersection of Bow Street and Wesley Park where this walking tour will conclude.

Crescent Row at **39-49 Bow Street** represents a rare example of Federal Revival row housing built circa 1900. Instead of imitating the fancy row houses of Charles Bulfinch (1769-1844), these houses celebrate the simple charm of plain attached dwellings built for working-class families during the early 1800s. This set of unique row houses serves as a strong visual anchor for this highly notable intersection.



39-49 Bow Street



Construction of the **First United Methodist Church** (1858-1874) at **1 Summer Street** began on the eve of the Civil War and then, inexplicably, took sixteen years to complete! However, the outcome is a handsome Victorian Gothic house of worship, faced with red brick and rock, and trimmed with granite. The 90-foot polychrome slate steeple that originally completed the east tower of the façade was removed after the extraordinarily destructive hurricane of 1938. The building was converted from 2003-2007 into a seven-unit condominium development, with some enjoying expansive ceiling heights up to 65 feet.

*First United Methodist Church,
1 Summer Street*

The Richmond, **33-37 Bow Street**, is a mixed use, commercial/residential building built in 1892. As one of three substantial wood-frame buildings in the western section of Union Square, the Richmond was also designed by the eminent architect Aaron Gould. The Queen Anne style of this building is noteworthy for its towered massing, polygonal oriels, and the sleeping porches nestled within the Wesley Park building façade.



33-37 Bow Street, Richmond Block

Fall 2011 Union Square West Walking Tour



S = Start; F = Finish, Courtesy of Google Maps

The tour was researched, organized, and led by Edward Gordon, and the brochure was prepared by Amie Schaeffer, Brandon Wilson, and Kristi Chase, staff planners to the SHPC.

We hope that you enjoyed this historic Somerville tour. For more information or additional brochures, please visit www.somerville.gov/departments/ospcd/historic-preservation.

Sponsored by:
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Mayor Joseph A. Curtatone