

CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS MAYOR'S OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT JOSEPH A. CURTATONE MAYOR

MICHAEL F. GLAVIN EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

DETERMINATION OF SIGNIFICANCE STAFF REPORT

Site: 124 Highland Avenue

Case: HPC 2018.106

Applicant Name: Tony Barros & Mark Killoren

Date of Application: October 18, 2018
Recommendation: Significant

Hearing Date: November 13, 2018

I. Historical Association

Historical Context: Highland Avenue has been a major thoroughfare for most of the City's history. While by 1874, a number of houses had been constructed along the south side of Highland Avenue, which had been platted, there were still numerous lots that were not developed.

Evolution of Site: In 1900 the property was owned by George A. Bruce. From Somerville: Past and Present – "Bruce, George A., was



born at Mount Vernon, N. H., November 19, 1839, the son of Nathaniel and Lucy (Butterfield) Bruce, of that town. He was fitted for college at the Appleton Academy in his native town, and was graduated at Dartmouth College in 1861. He enlisted in the Thirteenth New Hampshire Volunteers, and served as first lieutenant, aide, judge advocate, and assistant adjutant-general. He was mustered out July 3, 1865, and brevetted lieutenant-colonel. He studied law in Lowell, and was admitted to the bar in 1866, and opened his office in Boston, where he has ever since remained. Mr. Bruce was a member of the New Hampshire Legislature in 1866, and of the Senate of Massachusetts in 1882, 1883 and 1884, being president of the Senate the last year. He came to Somerville in 1874, and served the city as mayor in 1877, 1880 and 1881. Mr. Bruce married Miss Clara M., daughter of Joseph F. and Sarah (Longley) Hall, of Groton. They reside on Highland avenue." His home was demolished to make way for the current building prior to 1925.

The American Legion was founded in 1919. See https://www.legion.org/history for a short history of the organization and its importance. Beginning in 1924, the American Legion Hall at



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124 Highland Avenue served as a social, political and cultural center for Somerville's veterans. They advocated for the needs of veterans, celebrated and memorialized veterans roles in a number of wars. One of the more unusual rites performed in 1927 was the mixing of earth from the graves of World War I combatants on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean. Weddings, funerals and other rites of passage are noted in eighty-plus articles reviewed in the Globe through 1987 as occurring at the Posts. Oral histories of the importance of the organization and the meeting hall confirm that the Post continues to serve veterans and their families today. Some of the more interesting articles are attached.

Architectural Description: The c. 1931 Post 19 American Legion Headquarters at 124 Highland Avenue is a two-story brick building with cast-stone detailing at the windows and dual pilasters at either side of the entry in a modified Classical Revival style typical of the Depression era civic and institutional buildings. The Classical Revival style demonstrated a sense of tradition and solidity badly needed in the uncertain times. The original windows were 6/6 as can be seen in the historic photographic postcard. The sides and rear of the building have circa 1964 modern additions according to the building permit record. See photos.

Summary: The c. 1931 Post 19 American Legion Headquarters at 124 Highland Avenue is a two-story brick building in a modified Classical Revival style typical of the Depression era civic and institutional buildings. "The American Legion was chartered and incorporated by Congress in 1919 as a patriotic veterans organization devoted to mutual helpfulness. It is the nation's largest wartime veterans' service organization, committed to mentoring youth and sponsorship of wholesome programs in our communities, advocating patriotism and honor, promoting strong national security, and continued devotion to our fellow service members and veterans." according to the American Legion website.

Findings on Historical Association

For a Determination of Significance, the subject building must be found either (a) importantly associated with people, events or history or (b) historically or architecturally significant (Ordinance 2003-05, Section 2.17.B). Findings for (b) are at the end of the next section.

(a) In accordance with the historic information obtained from *Findings on Historical Association*, which utilizes historic maps/atlases, City reports and directories, and building permit research, and through an examination of resources that document the history of the City, such as *Somerville Past and Present*, Staff find 124 Highland Avenue to be <u>importantly associated</u> with one or more historic persons or events, or with the broad architectural, cultural, political, economic or social history of the City or the Commonwealth.

The subject building is found importantly associated with the broad architectural, cultural, economic and social history of the City due to association with the American Legion Post 19, a chapter of a national veterans' organization.

II. Historical and Architectural Significance

The findings for historical and/or architectural significance of a historic property address the period, style, method of building construction and association with a reputed architect or builder

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of the subject property, either by itself of in the context of a group of buildings of structures (Ordinance 2003-05, Section 2.17.B).

The period of significance for 124 Highland Avenue begins before its construction in 1931 as headquarters for the American Legion Post 19. The Post 19 received its charter in 1919 and was based in the Community House at 124 Highland Avenue.

Integrity

The National Park Service identifies historic integrity as the ability of a property to convey significance. A property should possess sufficient integrity to convey, represent or contain the values and qualities for which it is judged significant; therefore, the following is an identification and evaluation of these qualities and alterations as they affect the ability of the subject property to convey significance.

- a. <u>Location:</u> The building is located on a major east-west local artery which has a mix of formerly single family mansions, churches, apartment buildings and commercial buildings.
- b. <u>Design:</u> The design is originally a simple two-story cube with a stylized Classical Revival entry, cast stone cornice and panels beneath the windows. The 1960s additions on the sides and rear are simple in form with windows and doors typical of the time. A canopy shelters the side door to the lower level. The roof is flat.
- c. Materials: The building is predominantly brick with concrete details.
- d. <u>Alterations:</u> Beyond the additions to the original building, the doors and windows have been replaced.

Evaluation of Integrity: The main block of the building presents as a 1930s Classical Revival building, with 1960s additions toward the rear away from Highland Avenue.

Findings for Historical and Architectural Significance

For a Determination of Significance, the subject building must be found either (a) importantly associated with people, events or history or (b) historically or architecturally significant (Ordinance 2003-05, Section 2.17.B). Findings for (a) can be found at the end of the previous section.

(b) In accordance with the *Finding on Historical and Architectural Significance*, which addresses period, style, method of building construction, and association with a reputed architect or builder, either by itself or in the context of a group of buildings or structures, as well as integrity, which assess the ability of the property to convey significance, Staff find **124 Highland Avenue** historically or architecturally significant.

The subject building is found historically due to on-going association with the American Legion Post 19 and their role; and architecturally significant as a good example of 1930s Classical Revival style executed on a small scale.

III. Recommendation

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Recommendations are based upon an analysis by Historic Preservation Staff of the permit application and the required findings for the Demolition Review Ordinance, which requires archival and historical research, and an assessment of historical and architectural significance, conducted prior to the public meeting for a Determination of Significance. This report may be revised or updated with a new recommendation and/or findings based upon additional information provided to Staff or through further research.

For a Determination of Significance, the structure must be either (A) listed on the National Register or (B) at least 50 years old.

(A) The structure is NOT listed on or within an area listed on the National Register of Historic Places, nor is the structure the subject of a pending application for listing on the National Register.

OR

(B) The structure, circa 1931, is at least 50 years old.

AND

For a Determination of Significance under (B), the subject building must be found either (a) importantly associated with people, events or history or (b) historically or architecturally significant.

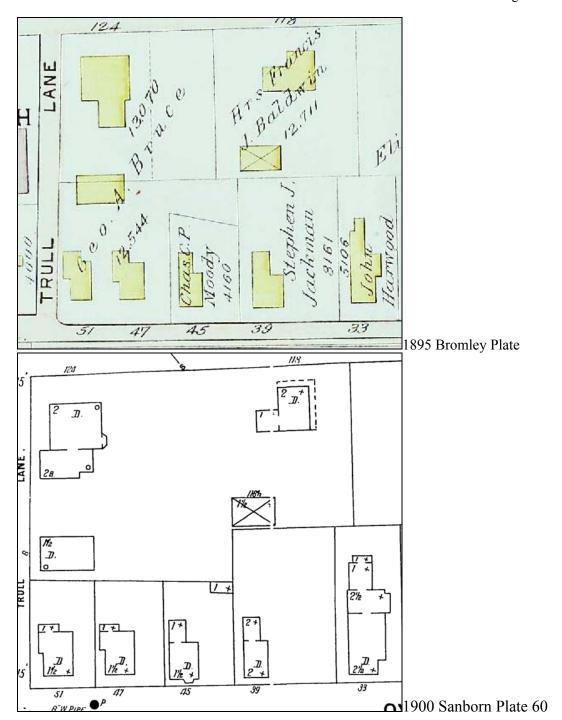
(a) In accordance with the *Findings on Historical Association*, which utilizes historic maps/atlases, City reports and directories, and building permit research, and through an examination of resources that document the history of the City, **Staff recommend that the Historic Preservation Commission find 124 Highland Avenue** importantly associated with one or more historic persons or events, or with the broad architectural, cultural, political, economic or social history of the City or the Commonwealth.

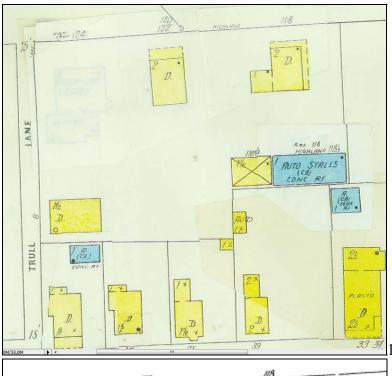
The subject building is found importantly associated with the broad architectural, cultural, economic and social history of the City due to association with the American Legion Post 19, a chapter of a national veterans' organization.

OR

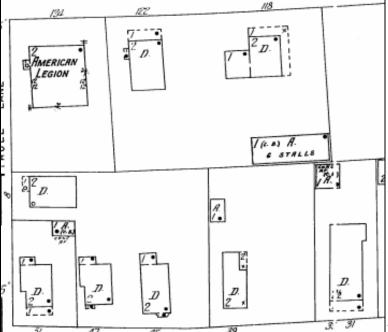
(b) In accordance with the *Findings on Historical and Architectural Significance*, which addresses period, style, method of building construction, and association with a reputed architect or builder, either by itself or in the context of a group of buildings or structures, as well as integrity, the ability to convey significance, **Staff recommend that the Historic Preservation Commission find 124 Highland Avenue historically and architecturally significant.**

The subject building is found historically due to on-going association with the American Legion Post 19, a veterans' organization since 1919; and architecturally significant as a good example of 1930s Classical Revival style executed on a small scale.

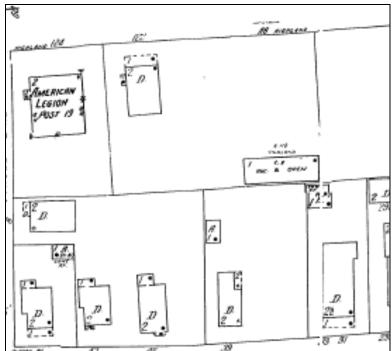




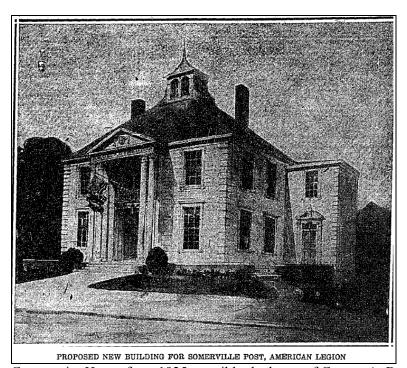
1925 Sanborn Plate 60



1933 Sanborn Plate 26



1950 Sanborn Plate 26



Community House from 1925, possibly the home of George A. Bruce

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Postcard from c. 1934-1935 – note memorial plaque on left.



From the 1942 Somerville Centennial History



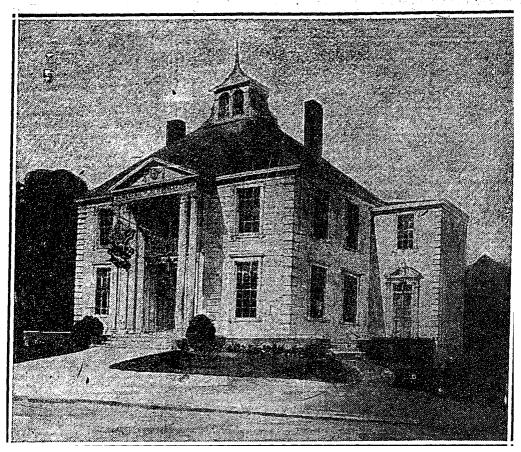
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SOMERVILLE LGION BEGINS DRIVE FOR BULDING FUN

Boston Daily Globe (1923-1927); Apr 1, 1925; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Boston Globe

SOMERVILLE LEGION BEGINS DRIVE FOR BUILDING FUND



PROPOSED NEW BUILDING FOR SOMERVILLE POST, AMERICAN LEGION

A. L., opened this morning in an effort to raise \$25,000 with which to remodel the present quarters of the organization and make a permanent home for the World War veterans of the city of Somerv'Me. The drive is indorsed by Mayor John M. Webster who has asked that the citizens of the city come forth and aid the Legion so that they may realize their ambition.

The Somerville Post plans to remodel its present quarters, the old Community House at 124 Highland av, so that it will be a worthy memorial. In order that the drive may be a success a well organized committee has been formed. The committee has arranged to place suitable placards in the homes of persons who have aided them in their drive, which will continue until May 30.

A tablet is also to be erected within the building with the names of the sallors, soldiers and Marines who dled A. L., opened this morning in an ef-

The drive of the Somerville Post, A. L., opened this morning in an etagonal control of the Legion committee are George H. Toomey, chairman; Joseph P. McCarron, vice chairman; Joseph P. McCarron, vice chairman; Charles W. Small, treasurer; Paul E. Laurent, general secretary.

The World War veterans of the city of Somerville, The drive is included the present quarters of the city of Somerville. The drive is included the committee in the citizens of the city of Somerville, The drive is included the citizens of the city of sasked that the citizens of the city of somerville Post plans to remodel the present quarters, the old Community for dedicatory evercises and formal opening on Armistice Day. The Honorary Citizens' committee work about the first of Junes of the dedicatory evercises and formal opening on Armistice Day. The Honorary Citizens' committee work of the city william S. Howe, Charles S. Clark, Joseph S. Pike, Jason M. Carson, Frank W. Kaan, John E. Honorary chairman; Hon John M. Webster who have aided them in their drive, hich will placards in the homes of pering on Armistice Day. Hiram N. Dearborn Lyman A. Steeves, Frederic W. Cook, Honorary chairman; Hon John M. Webster who have aided them in their drive, hich will placards in the homes of pering on Armistice Day. Hiram N. Dearborn Lyman A. Sam Walter Foss, Mrs Allee M. Pearson, Mrs Mary F. Kane, president, Hondelor, Hon John M. Woods, Hon A. Perry, Hon Leonard B. Charles W. Eldridge, Leon M. Conwell, V. Cork, Associated Charlites, and Mrs Charles W. Eldridge, Leon M. Conwell, Lena B. Newton.

Y-D LEGIONAIRES ORGANIZE BAND: MUSICIANS ARE MEMBERS OF <SPAN CLASS= Boston Daily Globe (1872-1922); Sep 8, 1919; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Boston Globe

Y-D LEGIONAIRES ORGANIZE BAND

Musicians Are Members of Somerville Post

For the first time in many years, Somerville has a permanently organized military band. It is the Y-D Veterans' Band of Somerville Post, No. 19, American Legion, of which Capt John H Mack is commander, and with three exceptions consists of musicians who served overseas.



GEORGE D. CHAPMAN

George D. Chapman of 233 Common st. Belmont, the bandmaster, was borr in Windsor, N. H. 40 years ago. He served at the Mexican border as bandmaster of the 1st Massachusetts Field Artillery Band and later led the bandmounted. In 1917 he went overseas as leader of the 101st Field Artillery Band and was later transferred to the band of the 102d Field Artillery.

The members of the band are as follows.

lows.

Walter H. Thomas, drum major; Dustin L. Downs, William T. Madden, Austin R. Stiles, William G. Walsh, William G. Heath, Albert C. Maxwell, George F. Fowler, Harold E. Breed, Charlton E. Young, Adolph Merolla, Raymond J. Mackay, Raoul A. Forest, Franklin E. Gunning, Reno Boretti, Armand J. Berube, Carl H. Lentz, Alfred N. McLean, Carl H. Stearns, Eric Stearns, James H. Murphy, Thomas J. Gough, Ernest J. Hill, Charles S. Gorton, Warren F. Sanderson, Joseph M. Wood, Martin J. Riley, Patrick H. Toura, John T. Coyne, William M. Collings, Harold A. Shedd, James A. Blakemore, Roy W. Wiggett, Manuel E. Pacheco, Paul C. Harris, Merrill L. Knight, William T. Madden and Harry Harris. Harris.

LEGIONNAIRES TO EXCHANGE SOIL ON GRAVES OF BUDDIES BURIED IN ... Boston Daily Globe (1923-1927): Jun 27, 1927; ProQuest Historical Newspapers; The Boston Globe

LEGIONNAIRES TO EXCHANGE SOIL ON GRAVES OF BUDDIES BURIED IN SOMERVILLE AND OVERSEAS

Veterans Going From That City to Paris Convention in September Plan Unique

Memorial Tribute to Those Who Fell in the World War



MISS E. JEANNETTE COUTURE Graves Registration Officer of Somerville Post, American Legion Somerville Legionnaires who will at-



ADJT PAUL E. LAURENT Chairman of Graves Memorial Committee ory of buddies buried at sea, there will be a fitting ceremony aboard ship.

The Somerville Overseas' Graves

Memorial Committee, arranging the



MISS M. ETTA WALLACE Historian of Somerville Post schools for their generous contribution of pennies-and other coins-to the

tend the Paris convention in September will carry with them soil from graves of Legionnaires buried in this country and will place it on the graves of Somerville men who are buried in France. Soil from those graves in France will be brought back to this country and mixed with soil on graves of buddies in local ceme-

teries. More than 30 Somerville men The party will travel aboard the The Legion is deeply grateful to the "Overseas Graves Memorial Commit-Cunard liner Scythia, and, in mem-children of the public and parochial tee." rest in graves in France.

Couture, graves' registration officer; Miss M. Etta Wallace, historian, and Adjt Paul E. Laurent, chairman. Seven Received "D. S. C."

Seven of them, including Saxton C. Foss, formerly of the Globe, gained

the Distinguished Service Cross.
One, George Dilboy of the 103d Infantry, was awarded the Congressional

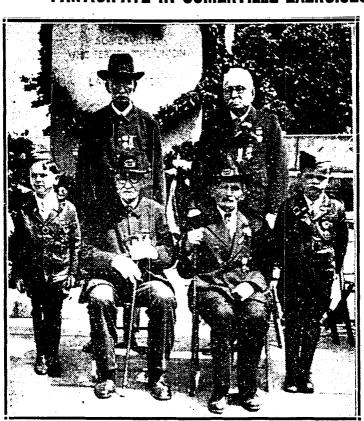
fund. Public May Contribute details, consists of Miss E. Jeannette The subscription totalled \$236.66-far in excess of the expectation of the Overseas' Graves Memorial Commit-

The public of Somerville has already generously responded to this appeal and others who wish to contribute to the fund may forward their donations to Legion Headquarters, 124 Highland av, or to the Somerville National Bank. Checks should be made payable to the

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E OF WILLARD C, KINSLEY POST, G. A. R., PARTICIPATE IN SOMERVILLE EXER Poston Globe (1928-1960); May 31, 1934; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Boston Globe FIVE OF WILLARD C

FIVE OF WILLARD C. KINSLEY POST, G. A. R., PARTICIPATE IN SOMERVILLE EXERCISES



G. A. R. MEMBERS AT SOMERVILLE EXERCISES
Rear Row, Left to Right—Eugene D. Lacount, Commander of
Front Row—Charles E. Stone, Jacob P. Foss. At left, James Scar
Francis Dailey, grandsons of Commander Dailey. M. Dailes At left, James Scanlon; at right,

Memorial Day exercises were conducted by five of the six surviving members of Willard C. Kinsley Post, 139, G. A. R., in Somerville.

Post 139, organized Oct 8, 1870, once with a membership of more than 300, was yesterday represented by Commander Dennis M. Dailey, 89; Amasa E. Googins, 93, S. V. C.; Charles E. E. Googins, 55, D. V. C.; Stone, 92, J. V. C.; Eugene D. La-count, 89, chaplain, and Jacob P. Foss. 89, officer of the day. Congress-Foss, 89, officer of the day. Congressman Arthur D. Healey of Somerville, past commander of Somerville Post 19, A. L., delivered the oration at the oration at 19, A. L., delivered noon in G. A. R. Hall.

preceded by a The exercises were parade, starting at 9:30 o'clock from the high school grounds. Maj Joseph E. Wiley, Spanish War veteran, was chief of staff and in charge of the starting at 9:30 o'clock from parade.

he Civil War monument in the Somerville-av cemetery and the diers' and Sailors' Monument in oid Somervine-av cemetery and the Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument in Central Hill, Park were visited. Offi-cers of Post 139, G. A. R., and allied veteran organizations conducted exercises.

The parade was led by Cos A and B, 101st Engineers, M. N. G.; Mayor James E, Hagan and Aldermen, Post

U. S. W. V.; Women's Auxiliaries of Somerville Post, A. L., and Dilboy Post, V. F. W.; National Auxiliary of Naval War Veterans, Poppy Club, Naval War Veterans, Poppy Club, Somerville Cadets, Daughters of the American Revolution, Patriotic Order of Americans, Girl and Boy St Catherine's Cadets. Scouts,

Music was furnished by the High, ortheastern and Western Junior Northeastern and Western Junior High Schools, American Legion and St Catherine's Bands and St Joseph's Fife and Drum Corps

After the ceremonies at the Central Hill monument, the memorial program was held in G. A. R. hall where Commander Dailey presided and the Somerville High School band furnished music.

Prayer was offered by Chaplian ugene D. Lacount. Commander Eugene Dailey made an address of welcome, and Mayor Hagan introduced the orator, Congressman Healey. Orders of the day were read by Clarence W. Warren Goldthwaite. Fred Ela recited Lincoln's Gettysburg address Sally M. Dailey, granddaughter of Sally M. Dailey, granddaughter of Commander Dailey, sang a solo, and granddaughter, Mary another

another granddaughter, Mary C. Dailey, read a patriotic selection.
At 9 a m, memorial exercises held by Somerville Post, A. L., Thomas F. Mackay, commander, at the post home, 124 Highland av. The address was by City Clerk Norman E. Corwin, member of the post; Mayor Hagan spoke; Miss M. Etta Wallace, post historian, read the honor roll. 139, G. A. R., in automobiles, escorted by Maj John A. Cummings-Camp.
Sons of Veterans; Sergt Frank E.
Draper Camp, U. S. W. V.; Somerville Post, A. L.; George Dilboy Post, post historian, read the honor roll, V. F. W.; disabled veterans in automobiles, Woman's Relief Corps, Mrs chaplain, Rev Stephen C. Lang. Music George O. Brastow Tent, D. of V.; was by the post drum and bugle in the post Corp Clarence Stewart Auxiliary, corps.

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SOMERVILLE POST BURNS MORTGAGE AT DANCE
Daily Boston Globe (1928-1960); Apr 12, 1939; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Boston Globe
pg. 6

SOMERVILLE POST BURNS MORTGAGE AT DANCE Members of Somerville Post, No.

19, American Legion, and their friends gathered last evening at a dinner dance and entertainment in Cocoanut Grove. The affair also marked the burning of the mortgage on the post's property, 124 Highland av., Somerville. The ceremony was conducted by Comrade Fred G. Albano, chairman of the ways and means committee.

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Swift Opens World of Tomorrow Plant in Somerville *Daily Boston Globe (1928-1960);* Jun 15, 1958; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Boston Globe

Swift Opens World of Tomorrow Plant in Somerville

Swift & Co. played host to mouth-watering food displays hpy, Somerville Mayor Witthe future for thousands of and a special Space Show cat-liam J. Donovan and Harold youngsters and adults yester-apulting spectators headlong E. Wilson of Chicago, company in celebration of the open-into a World of omorrow. ing of its multi-million dollar facilities at 7 Medford st., Som-

The handsome food processing plant and service center,

Murphy paid tribute to the more than-100-year-old ..firm, whose fotrunes have been so It turned out to be a picnic a two-story brick building, whose formunes have been so for all concerned — complete was formally opened at 10 closely linked with our state with bands and bunting, a.m. Lt. Gov. Robert K. Murof New England."

He told the crowd, swelled by white uniformed plant workers and their families, that the new center across from the old Swift buildings (a Somerville landmark for generations) makes a total of 25 units of all types operated by the firm in this state and brings the total to 54 for New England.

Last year, he said, these units spent about \$71 million to do business in Massachusetts, and represent the ma-jor portion of its New England operations which spent nearly

\$100 million.

"Refusing to rest on its laurels, Swift & Co. has gone ahead with new plans and properties which will continue to aid our economy,"

"The full of Cambridge.

"In so doing, as witnessed by this new building, it has reaffirmed its faith in the present and future of Massachusetts—a fact for which we can all be grateful."

Plant Is Symbolic

Wilson told the group from the gaily decorated speakers



CAR OF THE FUTURE-Robert Carver, public relations staff member for General Motors, explains workings of model Sunmobile car, powered by sunlight. His audience at the Swift plant opening are, left to right, Anthony Poleo, 13; Donna Muolo, 6, and Frank Utano,

ties for continued growth. The new Swift unit is definitely built with the future in mind."

"The rich New England consumer market of 9.7 million people is expected to grow to more than 11 million in seven years. Swift & Co. is making a major move in this growth," he said.

platform:

"Our new plant is symbolic, company; Walter Manning, both of the 100 years of Swift tradition in New England, built before the England and the England the En

the powerful claws of a large Maine lobster, expertly wielded by 12-year-old Wilbert Nick-erson of Plympton whose father is with the American Lob-

Other speakers included ered to plaudits of the crowd. Richard C. Caines, New Eng-

tradition in New England, birthplace of the organization, and of the future potential as well."

He said that "in this section of the country, where we spend \$100 million annually for all company operations,

butcher as the strand was sev- the U. S. Department of Agri- inside (many of the huge rooms convert the sun's energy di-After that, spectators began paid by and report directly to preserve the meats) the saw amounts of electricity.



RIBBON OF FRANKFURTS OPENS SWIFT PLANT-Wilbert Nickerson of Plympton cuts frankfurts with an eight-pound lobster named "Swifty" at Swift & Co. plant dedication. Left to right, Richard C. Caines, N.E. district manager, Swift's; William J. Donovan, Somerville mayor; Harold E. Wilson, vice president, Swift's; Lt. Gov. Robert Murphy; and John P. Swift, Massachusetts commander of ster Co.

"Went through it like but the Meat Inspection ranch of sharply lowered temperatures scribed as the first device to

World of Tomorrow

Then, after inspection of hundreds of attractively displayed finished products of the company, they went through a rear door to the World of Tomorrow exhibits in another building, marked along the way by a sign post—"Lost and Found Area: Children Included."

Congress of attractively displayed have amazed the firm's would have amazed the firm's would have amazed the firm's would have amazed the firm's Swift of Sagamore, who took his first major step in the company's future in 1855 when he borrowed \$20 from his father, bought a heifer, processed it, sold it and made \$3 profit!

Goggled-eyed youngsters and adults took in the many exhibits sponsored by American of time which a man might Legion Post 19 of 124 Highland have at his disposal in order to av., Somerville, commanded by do nothing.—JACQUES MARI-Thomas F. Burns. Thomas F. Burns.
These included full-scale

These included full-scale reproductions of the Army's ground - to - air missle, the Hawk; the Navy's air-to-air missile Sparrow III; a solar battery developed by Bell at home and twitched—DAWN Telephone Laboratories, de-POWELL.

culture whose inspectors are are kept at near freezing to rectly and efficiently to usable

displays of the many goods manufactured by Swift, including garden supplies, adhesive for book binding, furniture etc.; curing, thawing, pickling and tempering rooms.

Also, huge smoking and cooking cabinets each capable of handling 6000 pounds of meat at a time; storage rooms where palm frond-decorated sides of beef, whole pigs, etc., hung row upon row; through to wrapping and packaging rooms where Swift workers went busily about their tasks.

Also a silvery Moon House for 1958 which is insulated against heat and cold, completely self-supporting and weighs only 144 pounds; an Atoms-for-Peace exhibit by Atomic Energy Commission; an Air Force space suit; and Ford's "Mystere" or car of the future, a pink and white job with transparent dome, complete with telephone and a television set in the back seat.

All in all it was quite a day for the guests—to be repeated

for the guests—to be repeated today.

And it was a day which