



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
MAYOR'S OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
KATJANA BALLANTYNE
MAYOR

TOM GALLIGANI
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

PLANNING DIVISION
HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ALTERATION OF A LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICT (LHD) PROPERTY
STAFF REPORT

Site: 76 Highland Ave

Case: HP25-000076

Applicant: Li Liu

Owner: Li Liu

Legal Ad: *The Applicant seeks a Certificate of Appropriateness to alter an LHD property by replacing a total of 29 windows.*

HPC Meeting Date: October 7, 2025



The purpose of a staff report is to provide the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) with a professional assessment of alteration proposals made for Local Historic District (LHD) properties. These assessments are based on the Historic District Ordinance (HDO) in compliance with M.G.L. Chapter 40C, and the associated Design Guidelines. A Staff Report is not a determination/decision and does not represent findings. A staff report does not constitute authorization in any form.

I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Subject Property: The locus is the c.1885 Queen Anne house known as the George Loring House. This property is located in the Prospect Hill neighborhood, directly across Highland Avenue from the Central Hill municipal campus.

A full description of the property is provided in the attached Form B survey, conducted by the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC).

Proposal:

- The applicant seeks to replace 29 wood windows due to the existing condition (rotten, drafty and the majority may not be open) and replace them as shown in the diagrams with the following materials:
 - 3 basement windows (B-1, B-4 & B-5) – American Craftsman Vinyl windows
 - 3-bathroom windows (2-11, 2-12, 2-16) – vinyl windows
 - All other windows – Anderson 400

A)



Front Elevation windows facing Highland Avenue

B)



Left elevation windows, facing Putnam Street

C)



Right elevation, abutting neighbor on Highland Ave.

D)



E)



D) and E) are rear elevations, abutting 66 Putnam St.

II. FINDINGS

The HPC must make findings based on the Historic District Ordinance (HDO) in compliance with M.G.L. Chapter 40C, and associated Design Guidelines. Applicable regulations are discussed below.

A. Replacement of windows

The applicable Somerville LHD Design Guideline is *C. “Windows and Doors”*

Preservation Planning Assessment:

Shingle style houses use varied window styles as integral components of their architectural design. In the case of 76 Highland Avenue, the window selection, style and arrangement are reflective of elements of the medieval residential design it seeks to emulate. The relevant portions of the Design Guidelines address the treatment of windows are *Section II, C. Windows and Doors*.

SECTION II, C. Windows and Doors, items 1 and 2 read as follows:

1. Retain original and later important door and window openings where they exist. Do not enlarge or reduce door and window openings for the purpose of fitting stock window sash or doors, or air conditioners.
2. Whenever possible, repair and retain original or later important window elements such as sash, lintels, sill, architraves, glass, shutters and other decorative elements and hardware. When replacement of materials or elements is necessary, it should be based on physical or documentary evidence. If aluminum windows must be installed, select a baked finish that matches as closely as possible the color of the existing trim. Investigate weather-stripping and storm windows with a baked enamel finish as an alternative to the replacement of historic sash.

The applicant is proposing to replace 29 wood windows in total (each one circled green in the images above) with vinyl replacements as follows:

- Windows **B-1 B-4 & B-5** (shown below and labeled and marked in the images above) located in the basement of the building in the right, left and back elevation. These windows will be replaced with American Craftsman vinyl windows.



- Windows **2-11, 2-12, and 2-16** (shown below and labeled and marked

in the images above) located in the left and back elevations in the second-floor bathrooms, per the applicant's narrative. These windows will be replaced with generic vinyl windows.



- All other windows will be replaced with Anderson 400 double-hung windows, except for window B-1 which is a casement window¹.

The applicant explained within the narrative and communications to the PPZ (planning and preservation) department that current windows are rotten and drafty, some have broken glass and have deformed to the point they cannot be open. Further, some windows were replaced 16 years ago with storm windows and have also deformed. Additionally, the applicant mentioned that the windows seem to have been fixed multiple times by previous owners. Below are some images shared by the applicant showing the conditions mentioned above.



¹ Casement window has hinges only in one side and opens outward like a door.

As detailed above, changes of not-in-kind windows such as vinyl do not comply with any of the above-stated design guidelines. The lattice mullioned windows are specifically called out in the Form Bs from the 1980s “Other architectural features of note include the lattice mullioned windows in the central and side oriels”. Other elements of this design include the steeply pitched roof, the chimneys and the protrusion of the second and third floors above each one below them.

If the HPC votes to approve the permission for replacement of 29 windows with vinyl replacements, recommended conditions appear below.

If the HPC votes to deny the replacement of 29 windows, they may then vote to approve repair and restoration of the windows with conditions added.

HPC Determination:

- The HPC must determine if, based on a review of the documentation presented, the proposed project complies with the Design Guidelines.
- The HPC must structure their motion to include their own specific findings on the proposed project.

III. FINDINGS & VOTE

When bringing the matter to a vote, the HPC must state their findings and reasons for why they take their position.

IV. RECOMMENDED CONDITIONS

IF the HPC approves replacement windows for this property, Preservation Planning recommends the following conditions be attached to any Certificate of Appropriateness that the HPC might grant for this project:

1. The Applicant shall obtain all necessary permits for this project through the Inspectional Services Department (ISD). The Applicant must upload a copy of this Certificate to their BUILDING PERMIT application and obtain any necessary division/departments signoffs. This Certificate is for the above-described work only. Any changes to this proposal shall first be submitted to Preservation Planning at historic@somervillema.gov for review and approval PRIOR to implementation. Failure to do so will nullify this Certificate and delay final sign-offs/CO.
2. Work for which this Certificate is granted must commence within one year of issuance. If work does not commence within one year or pauses for a significant period of time such that the expiration date of the Certificate passes, the Applicant shall be required to apply for this Certificate to be re-issued. The Applicant shall contact Preservation Planning at historic@somervillema.gov for instructions.
3. The Applicant shall contact Preservation Planning a minimum of 15 business days prior to arranging for a final inspection from ISD. Preservation Planners or their designee shall issue a sign-off upon completion of the project that was executed in accordance with the Certificate of Appropriateness. Contact shall be made at the following email address ONLY: historic@somervillema.gov.

The Applicant must provide before and after photos of the project area in the email as .JPG attachments. The attachments cannot be embedded in the body of an email.

Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System

Scanned Record Cover Page

Inventory No:	SMV.36		
Historic Name:	Loring , George House		
Common Name:			
Address:	76 Highland Ave		
City/Town:	Somerville		
Village/Neighborhood:	Prospect Hill;		
Local No:	140; 76; 88; 92-B-28;		
Year Constructed:	C 1895		
Architectural Style(s):	Shingle Style;		
Architect(s):	Loring , George F.;		
Use(s):	Single Family Dwelling House;		
Significance:	Architecture;		
Area(s):	SMV.C , SMV.AY		
Designation(s):	Nat'l Register MRA (03/11/1985); Local Historic District (03/11/1985); Nat'l Register Individual Property (03/11/1989);		
Building Materials:	Roof: Wood Shingle; Wall: Brick; Cedar Shingle; Wood; Wood Shingle;		
Demolished	No		

The Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) has converted this paper record to digital format as part of ongoing projects to scan records of the Inventory of Historic Assets of the Commonwealth and National Register of Historic Places nominations for Massachusetts. Efforts are ongoing and not all inventory or National Register records related to this resource may be available in digital format at this time.

The MACRIS database and scanned files are highly dynamic; new information is added daily and both database records and related scanned files may be updated as new information is incorporated into MHC files. Users should note that there may be a considerable lag time between the receipt of new or updated records by MHC and the appearance of related information in MACRIS. Users should also note that not all source materials for the MACRIS database are made available as scanned images. Users may consult the records, files and maps available in MHC's public research area at its offices at the State Archives Building, 220 Morrissey Boulevard, Boston, open M-F, 9-5.

Users of this digital material acknowledge that they have read and understood the MACRIS Information and Disclaimer (<http://mhc-macris.net/macrisdisclaimer.htm>)

Data available via the MACRIS web interface, and associated scanned files are for information purposes only. THE ACT OF CHECKING THIS DATABASE AND ASSOCIATED SCANNED FILES DOES NOT SUBSTITUTE FOR COMPLIANCE WITH APPLICABLE LOCAL, STATE OR FEDERAL LAWS AND REGULATIONS. IF YOU ARE REPRESENTING A DEVELOPER AND/OR A PROPOSED PROJECT THAT WILL REQUIRE A PERMIT, LICENSE OR FUNDING FROM ANY STATE OR FEDERAL AGENCY YOU MUST SUBMIT A PROJECT NOTIFICATION FORM TO MHC FOR MHC'S REVIEW AND COMMENT. You can obtain a copy of a PNF through the MHC web site (www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc) under the subject heading "MHC Forms."

Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Massachusetts Historical Commission
220 Morrissey Boulevard, Boston, Massachusetts 02125
www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc

This file was accessed on: Tuesday, August 12, 2025 at 10:10 AM

Date: October 7, 2025

Case: HP25-000076

Site: 76 Highland Ave

FORM B - BUILDING

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
80 BOYLSTON STREET
BOSTON, MA 02116



Sketch Map: Draw map showing property's location in relation to nearest cross streets and/or geographical features. Indicate all buildings between inventoried property and nearest intersection(s).
Indicate north

See Attached Assessor's Map

UTM REFERENCE 19 327/330 4694/560

USGS QUADRANGLE Boston North

SCALE 1:25,000

OFFICE COPY
DO NOT REMOVE

AREA

FORM NO.

C, AY

140 36

Pl-Prospect
USGS-BOST,N
SECT. B

Somerville

76 Highland Avenue

Historic Name George Loring House

Present residential

Original residential

OPTION

ca. 1895

map research/directories

Shingle Style/Queen Anne

Architect Loring & Phipps

Exterior Wall Fabric brick/shingles

Outbuildings none

Major Alterations (with dates) none

Condition good

Moved no Date n/a

Acreage less than one acre

Setting Southwest corner of Highland Ave. & Putnam St., on main thoroughfare facing institutional center of Central Hill.

Recorded by Gretchen G. Schuler

Organization Mass. Historical Commission

Date September, 1988

SMV. 36

NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA STATEMENT (if applicable)

The George Loring House at 76 Highland Avenue is one of the only Shingle Style, architect built houses in Somerville. It retains integrity of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling and association with well known local architect George Loring and with the development of late 19th century Somerville. It fulfills Criteria A, B and C of the National Register of Historic Places at the local level.

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE Describe important architectural features and evaluate in terms of other buildings within the community.

The George Loring House, built by 1895, is one of the best conserved local examples of the late Shingle Style of architecture. Organized under a single large gable, the house is massed as a simple rectangular unit. The elements of the brick and shingle facade are arranged symmetrically and have a horizontal orientation. The broad massed chimneys, the expansively shingled and steeply pitched roof are references to the English Medieval structures. Other architectural features of note include the lattice mullioned windows in the central and side oriels, the shed roof dormers with 4/1 sash, and the recessed entrance flanked by brick projecting one-story bays.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE Explain the role owners played in local or state history and how the building relates to the development of the community.

Located in the part of Somerville known as Central Hill, the George Loring House is a focal point on a corner lot adjacent to the institutional center of Somerville. The prominence of the location articulates the prominence of the resident and architect as a Somerville citizen.

The first George Loring House is located next to this property and was used by the Loring family until the 1890s when Loring designed and built this dwelling for the family on the remaining building lot of their Italianate ca. 1880 house at 78 Highland Avenue. Loring, born in Boston in 1851, entered the office of Boston's City Engineer in 1868 and from 1874 to 1882 served as head draftsman. He worked briefly with George A. Clough, former City of Boston Architect, and began his own firm in 1883. In 1889 Loring and Sanford Phipps (formerly of Somerville) established a partnership and went on to design numerous public and residential buildings in New England and New York, including many of the buildings at Tufts University and public buildings in Somerville. Loring also designed over 100 houses in Somerville.

(continued)

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

- Bromley, G.W. Atlas of the City of Somerville, 1895.
Somerville Journal.
Somerville Board of Trade, A Martin & Sons, Publisher, 1912.

8/85

DO NOT REMOVE
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Date: October 7, 2025

Case: HP25-000076

Site: 76 Highland Ave

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEETMASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
Office of the Secretary, Boston

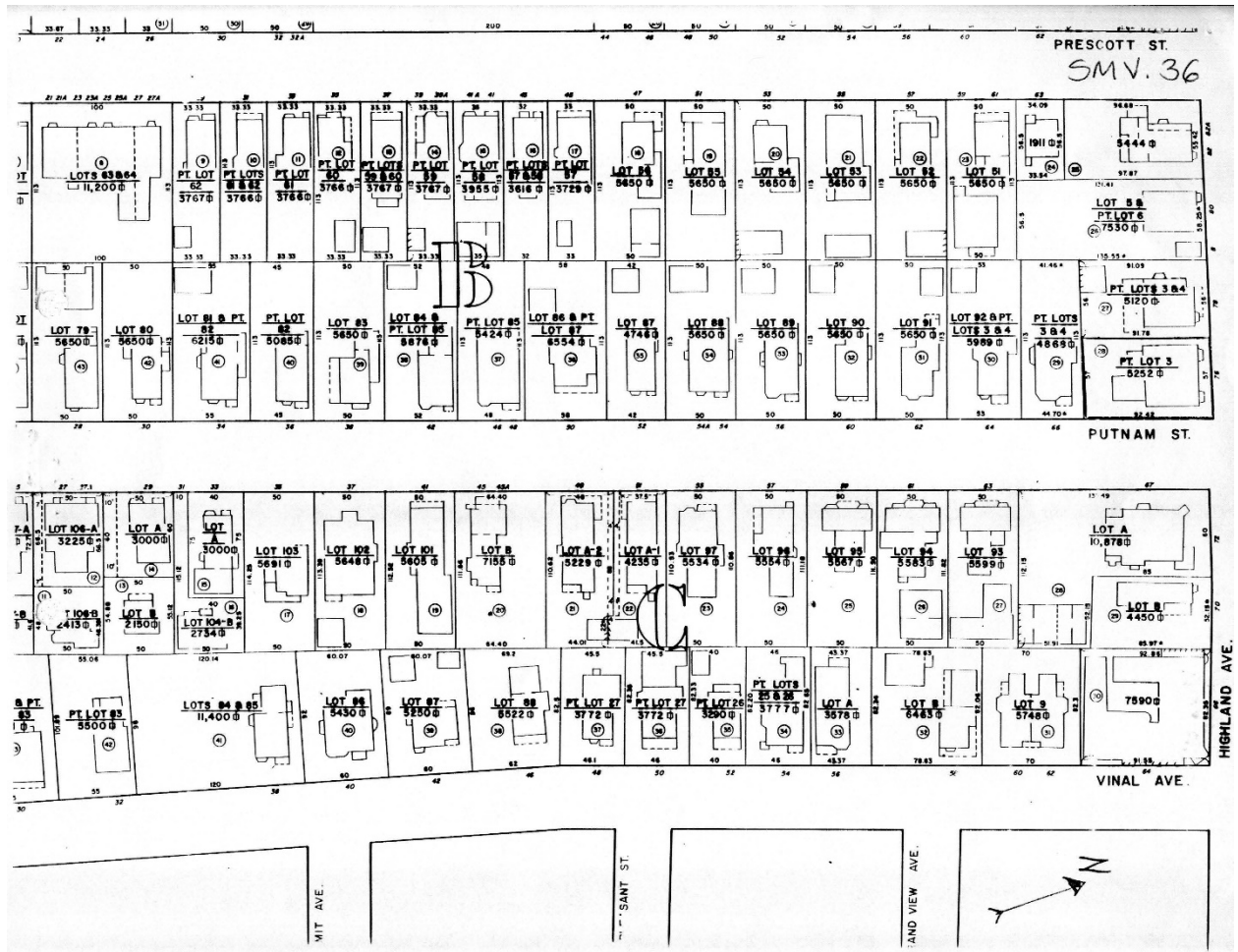
Community: SOMERVILLE	Form No: 140 36
Property Name: George Loring House	

Indicate each item on inventory form which is being continued below.

Historical Significance (con't)

The George Loring House is significant for its association with prominent architect George Loring, as one of the best conserved examples of Shingle Style architecture designed and lived in by George Loring. The House is also significant for its representation of late 19th century development of substantial single family residences on Highland Avenue, a fashionable neighborhood of prominent Somerville citizens. It was the time of rapid expansion in the development of apartment houses to accommodate the rising population, however, it was also a time for continued prosperity for many local and Boston based businessmen, thus the construction of large single family homes as well.

Staple to Inventory form at bottom



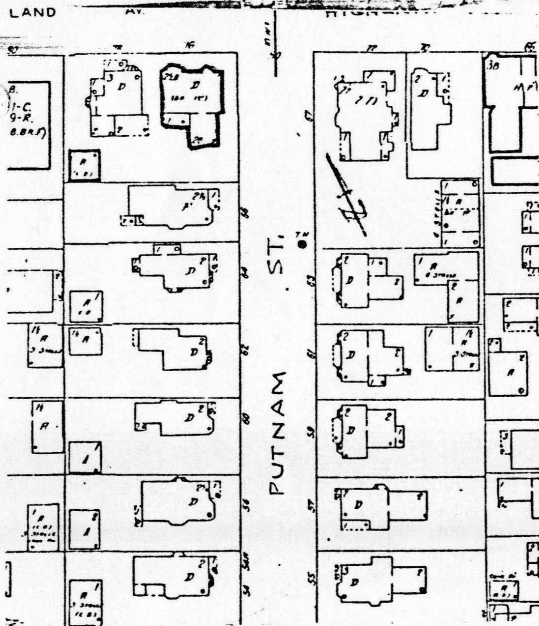
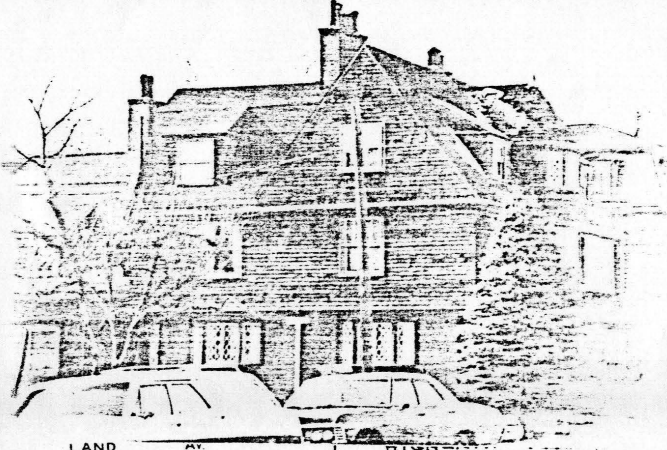
Date: October 7, 2025

Case: HP25-000076

Site: 76 Highland Ave

FORM B - BUILDING

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
294 Washington Street, Boston, MA 02108

Recorded by Carole ZellieOrganization Landscape ResearchDate 12/80

NR/MA

have a 1988 form
- 4000 ft in 100 ft

Area	Form no.
Prospect Hill	88
Roll 41:31 36	

Somerville

76 Highland

Name George Loring Houseginal residencesent residence

p: ☐ Private individual
Private organization

Public

ginal owner George Loring

ION:

Date ca. 1895Source map researchStyle Shingle/English Medieval Revival

Architect

Exterior wall fabric brick/shingle

Outbuildings

Major alterations (with dates)

Moved _____ Date _____

Approx. acreage

Setting

(Staple additional sheets here)

SMV.36

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE (describe important architectural features and evaluate in terms of other buildings within community)

Fine mullioned windows in central and side oriels, and Loring's skillful use of shingle and brick resulted in one of Somerville's finest Shingle Style houses. The broad, massed chimneys and steeply pitched roof are strong references to the English Medieval structures which Loring often used as sources for his more rustic designs. Fortunately, this house is well conserved.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE (explain the role owners played in local or state history and how the building relates to the development of the community)

George F. Loring was born in Boston in 1851 and attended Boston public schools. In 1868 he entered the office of Boston's City Engineer where he served as head draftsman from 1874-1882. Loring accepted a position with the architectural firm of George A. Clough, former City Architect of Boston, in 1882, and remained there until establishing his own firm in 1883. In 1889, he joined forces with another architect, Sanford Phipps, formerly of Somerville. Loring and Phipps opened offices in Boston and designed numerous public and residential buildings in New England and New York, concentrating their efforts in Somerville where they became the most popular firm of their day.

The first home Loring occupied in Somerville was an existing structure at 78 Highland Avenue. A large two-story Mansard with an L-shaped wing at the rear, this house is a particularly gracious example of a vernacular late 19th century style which is prevalent in Somerville. The original clapboard has been replaced with cedar shingles, and the portico has been enclosed, but the basic form of the house remains as it was when Loring occupied the property.

In about 1895, Loring built a second residence for his family next door at 76 Highland Avenue. This house is among Somerville's most outstanding examples of the late shingle style type made popular by H.H. Richardson and McKim, Mead and White in New England. Organized under a single large gable, the house is massed as a simple rectangular unit. The elements of the brick and shingle facade are arranged symmetrically and have a horizontal orientation, giving the structure an overall quietness and formality which reflects the tendency in the late 19th century to temper the restlessness of earlier Queen Anne types.

Most of the residences designed by Loring and Phipps in Somerville tend further towards a genuine Colonial Revival style. Their public buildings were often in a Richardson Romanesque style, in keeping with the fashionable movement towards simplification. Among the firm's notable public structures in Somerville are the first bldgs of Tufts University, the Public Library (now demolished), several public schools, the Masonic Temple and Odd Fellows Hall.

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

Assessor's Records; Somerville Journal;
Somerville Board of Trade, A. Martin &
Sons, Publisher, 1912; G.W. Bromley,
Atlas of the City of Somerville, 1895;
Form no. 92-B-28 OPCD

20M-2/80

Date: October 7, 2025

Case: HP25-000076

Site: 76 Highland Ave

FORM B - BUILDING

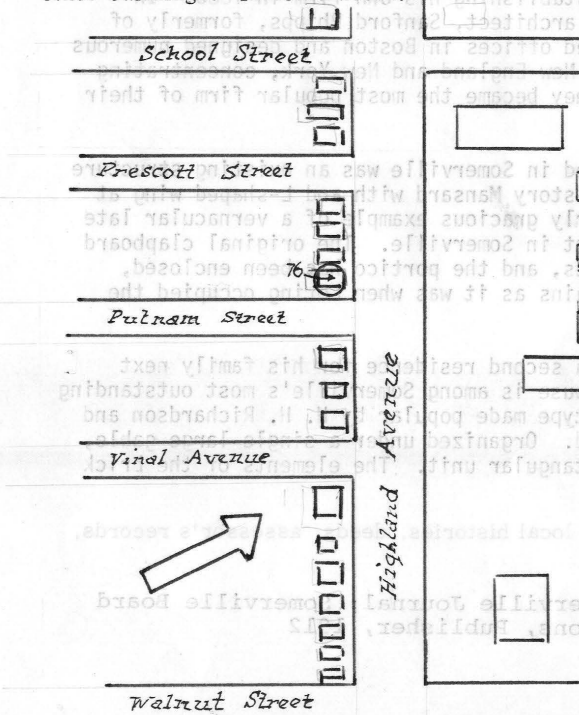
MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
Office of the Secretary, State House, Boston

In Area no.	Form no.
C-24	92-B-28
	36



own Somerville
 address 76 Highland Avenue
 name Miss Elizabeth Raymond
 present use Residential
 present owner Miss Elizabeth Raymond
 description:
 date c. 1895
 Source Somerville Journal obituary
 style Richardsonian Shingle
 Architect George F. Loring

4. Map. Draw sketch of building location in relation to nearest cross streets and other buildings. Indicate north.



Exterior wall fabric cedar shingle/brick
 Outbuildings (describe)
 Other features half-turret composed of
2nd floor bay and attic dormer
 Altered Date
 Moved Date

5. Lot size: 5,170 sq. ft.

One acre or less Over one acre

Approximate frontage 57

Approximate distance of building from street 5'

6. Recorded by Michael A. Campbell, Kathe M. Tutman, Walter Mulligan
 Organization Office of Planning and Community Development

Date September 22, 1978

(over)

RECEIVED

SEP 28 1978

MASS. HIST. COMM.

SMV. 36

7. Original owner (if known) George F. LoringOriginal use Residence

Subsequent uses (if any) and dates _____

8. Themes (check as many as applicable)

Aboriginal	_____	Conservation	_____	Recreation	_____
Agricultural	_____	Education	_____	Religion	_____
Architectural	<u>x</u>	Exploration/ settlement	_____	Science/ invention	_____
The Arts	_____	Industry	_____	Social/ humanitarian	_____
Commerce	_____	Military	_____	Transportation	_____
Communication	_____	Political	_____		
Community development	<u>x</u>				

9. Historical significance (include explanation of themes checked above)

George F. Loring was born in Boston in 1851 and attended Boston public schools. In 1868 he entered the office of Boston's City Engineer where he served as head draftsman from 1874-1882. Loring accepted a position with the architectural firm of George A. Clough, former City Architect of Boston in 1882, and remained there until establishing his own firm in 1883. In 1889, he joined forces with another architect, Sanford Phipps, formerly of Somerville. Loring and Phipps opened offices in Boston and designed numerous public and residential buildings in New England and New York, concentrating their efforts in Somerville where they became the most popular firm of their day.

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In about 1895, Loring built a second residence for his family next door at 76 Highland Avenue. This house is among Somerville's most outstanding examples of the late shingle style type made popular by H. H. Richardson and McKim, Mead and White in New England. Organized under a single large gable, the house is massed as a simple rectangular unit. The elements of the brick

10. Bibliography and/or references (such as local histories, deeds, assessor's records, early maps, etc.)

Assessors' Records; Somerville Journal; Somerville Board
of Trade, A. Martin & Sons, Publisher, 1912

Date: October 7, 2025

Case: HP25-000076

Site: 76 Highland Ave

SMV.36

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEETMASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
Office of the Secretary, Boston

Community:	Form No: 92-B-28
Property Name:	

Indicate each item on inventory form which is being continued below.

9. Historical Significance (cont.)

and shingle facade are arranged symmetrically and have a horizontal orientation, giving the structure an overall quietness and formality which reflects the tendency in the late 19th century to temper the restlessness of earlier Queen Anne types.

Most of the residences designed by Loring and Phipps in Somerville take this tendency even further towards a genuine Colonial Revival style. Their public buildings were frequently executed in a Richardsonian Romanesque style, and in keeping with the fashionable movement towards simplification. Among the firm's most notable public structures in Somerville are the first buildings of Tufts University, the Public Library (now demolished), several public schools, the Masonic Temple and Odd Fellows Hall.



North facade

Staple to Inventory form at bottom