



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

**GEORGE J. PROAKIS**  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

PLANNING DIVISION  
HISTORIC PRESERVATION

---

**STEP 1: DETERMINATION OF SIGNIFICANCE**  
**STAFF REPORT**

---

**Site:** 1252 Broadway

**Case:** HPC.DMO 2021.24

**Applicant:** Annette Thomas

**Owner:** 1252 Broadway Somerville, LLC

**Legal Ad:** *Demolish principal structure\*\**

**HPC Meeting Date:** October 19, 2021

**\*\*Staff Note:** This structure has already been demolished. The applicant is coming before the HPC for retroactive permission to demolish a principal building.



*Top: Front elevation Nov, 2020*

*Bottom, left: Front elevation*

*Bottom, middle left: Left elevation*

*Bottom, middle right: Rear elevation*

*Bottom, right: Right elevation*



## **I. HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION**

***Historical Context:*** 1252 Broadway was a two and a half story residential structure. Broadway is dominated by triple-deckers and two and half story residential structures.

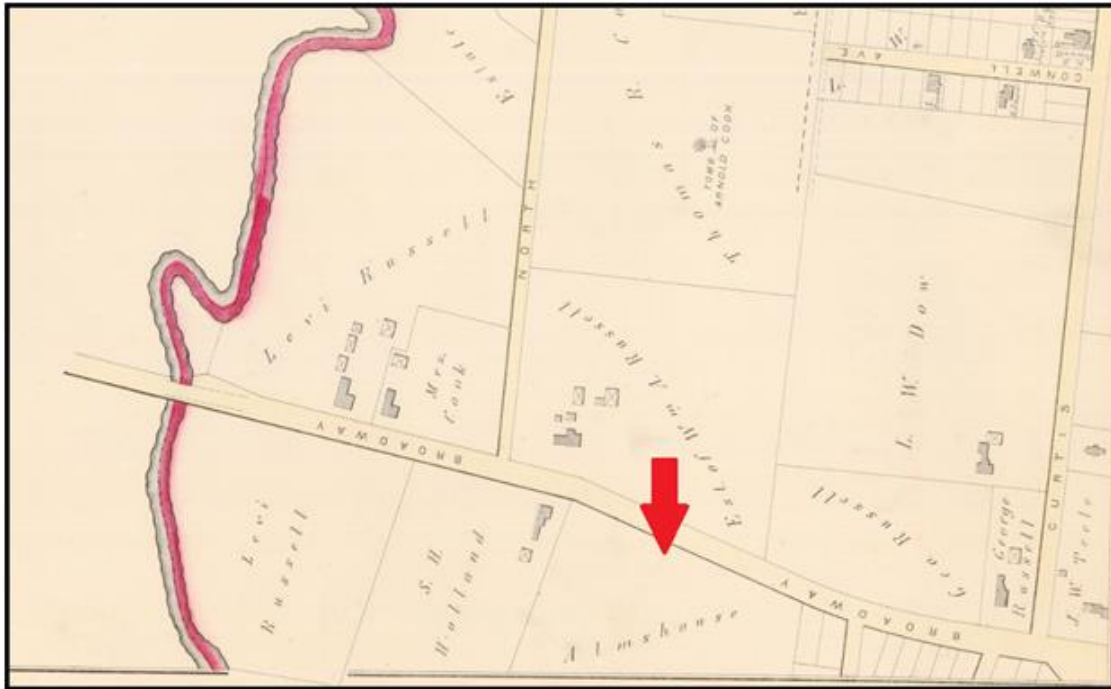
Broadway is one of the oldest roads in Somerville running from the Charlestown neck to the Alewife Brook. West Somerville was largely undeveloped until the end of the 19th Century. Unlike most of the rest of Somerville, the area comprising West Somerville was relatively flat and for most of the 18th and 19th centuries it was used for farming and dairying. The 1852 Draper Map and 1874 Hopkins Map depict the farmland that dominated West Somerville in the mid-late 19<sup>th</sup> Century.



*Above: 1852 Draper Map, indicating general area that 1252 Broadway is constructed*

Additionally, a major factor of growth in the area was the construction of the Lexington and Arlington railroad. In 1870, the Lexington railroad route was changed so as to connect to the Lowell Railroad at Somerville Junction.

(Continued on next page)



*Above: 1874 Hopkins Map, Plate 52 & 53, with arrow indicating approximate location of 1252 Broadway*

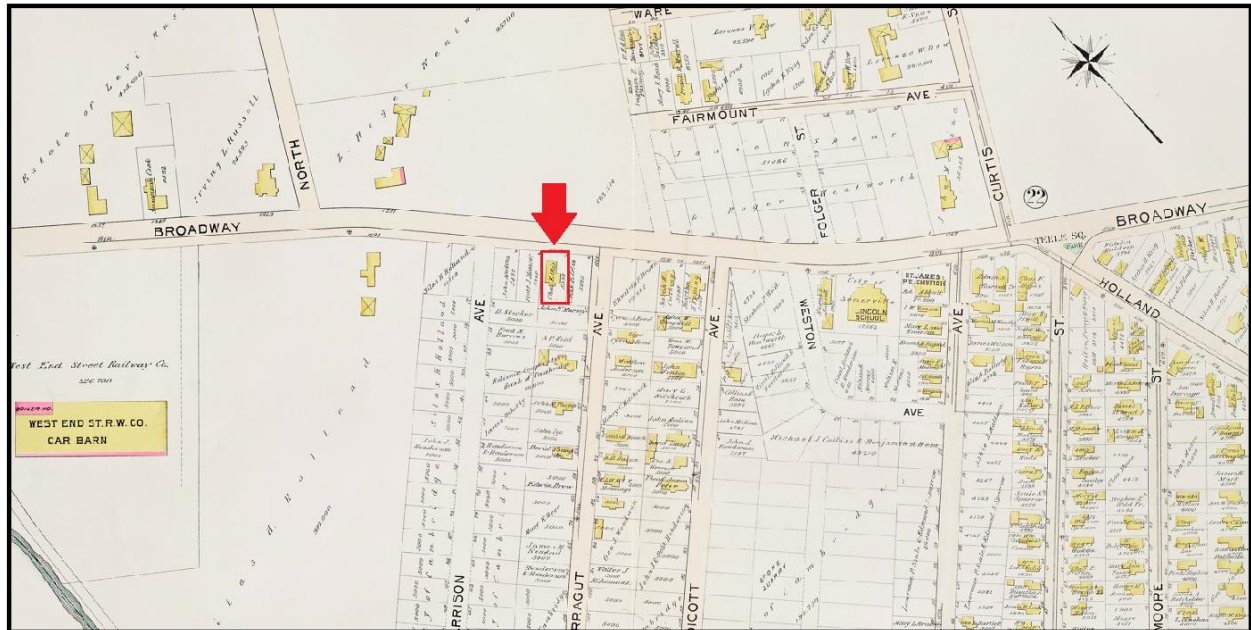
In 1885 the West End Street Railway car shop, constructed at the western extreme of Broadway at Alewife Brook Parkway, was built anticipating the imminent development of a commuter use, and by 1900 maps show most of the area around 1252 Broadway platted, but only a few houses built. As buildable land in the other parts of Somerville became scarcer, and as streetcar and trolley service became more available, many of the large landowners and farmers in West Somerville sold their property for residential development. As was the case in other sections of the city, lot subdivision often preceded the actual construction of houses by a decade or more as real estate and homebuilding was affected by various recessions and financial panics. Looking at the 1884 Hopkins Map, this platting in anticipation of new residents is evident.



*Above: 1884 Hopkins Map, Plate 15, specifying the location of 1252 Broadway*



The 1895 Bromley Map is reflective of the development that took place in west Somerville towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. The speculative plats have been bought, and many have been built upon. The map shows that the structure at 1252 Broadway is one of these new constructions. The map also shows that a large enough population has moved to the area to warrant a school and a church to service the local community.



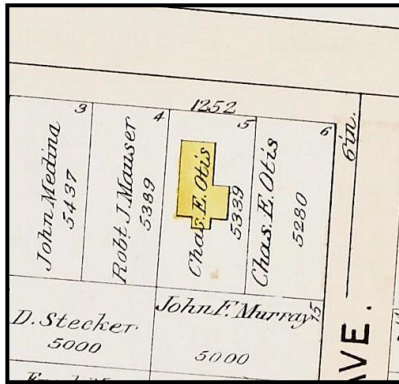
Above: 1895 Bromley Map, Plate 21, specifying location of 1252 Broadway



Above: 1900 Sanborn Map, Plate 2, specifying location of 1252 Broadway

By 1900, additional lots have structures built on them. Within several years the Lowell branch of the railroad was extended to Concord Avenue and with it significant commercial and residential

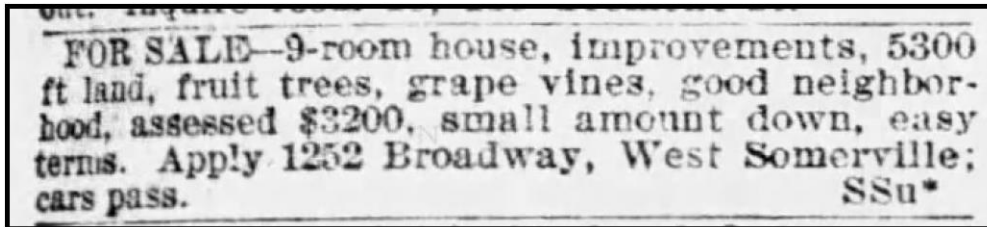
development. It was in the early 20th Century that nearby Teele Square saw an explosion of commercial construction. Developers and builders like Zebedee E. Cliff had erected substantial business blocks like the Cliff Building in the Square. By the early 1920s the west Somerville fire station had been built as well as the elaborate Teele Square movie theater with its associated block of stores. Commercial blocks like 1198-1212 Broadway were being constructed on the western periphery of the Square. A further indication of the growth and development of West Somerville is that, by 1920, the Somerville Institution for Savings had a branch located at 1154-1164 Broadway.



A close-up of the 1895 Bromley Plate 21 shows the structure with a side ell on the left side of the property and a rear bay.

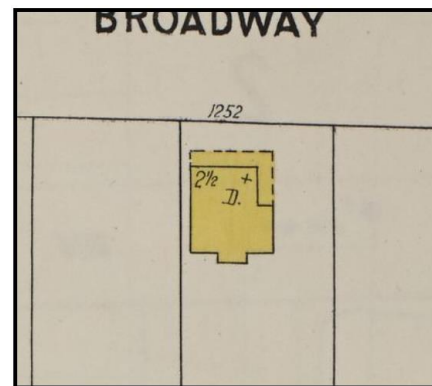
An advertisement to sell the property in the Boston Globe in 1897 states the property as having a house with nine rooms, and 5300 sq ft of land.

*Left: Close-up of 1895 Bromley Map*  
*Below: Boston Globe Excerpt, 1897*

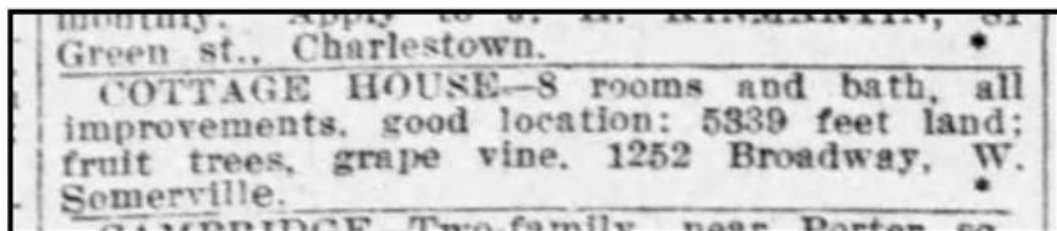


By 1900, what appears to be a front porch that wraps around to the left side of the property has been added.

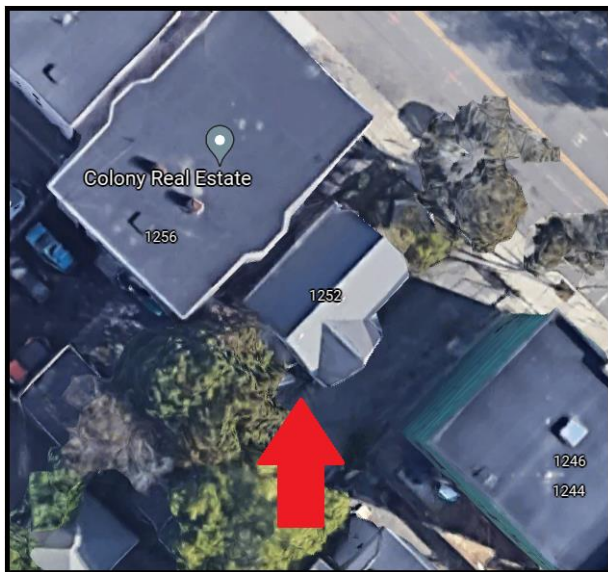
In 1919, an advertisement selling the property in the Boston Globe describes the house as having eight rooms on a 5,339 sq ft lot.



*Right: Close-up of 1900 Sanborn Map*  
*Below: Boston Globe Excerpt, 1919*



A satellite image of the property in 2020 shows that the porch has been removed, and the structure returned to its original footprint.

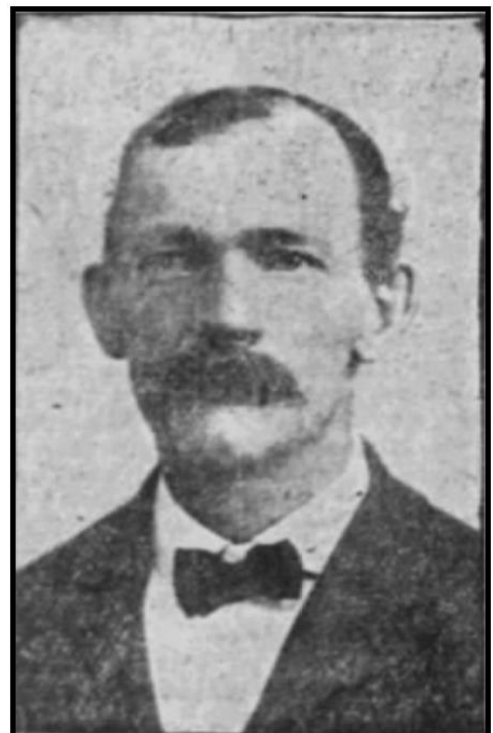


*Left: Google Satellite Image, 2020*

Both City Directories and the historic maps state that the first owner of 1252 Broadway was Charles E Otis. Charles owned and lived at the property from 1890 to 1899. He was a carpenter by trade. Living with him was William R Otis and his son, William R Otis Jr. Staff has been unable to decipher if Charles E Otis was related to the other two men, though based on the last name it is likely.

William R Otis was a cabinetmaker. Prior to moving to 1252 Broadway, he owned 67 Thurston St, also known as the Otis-Wyman House, a locally designated historic property.

The primary residents of 1252 Broadway appear to be members of the working class. A primary subset appears to be people who worked in professions that supported the railway and the rail cars that brought development to West Somerville, such as motormen and car conductors. A complete list of residents for 1252 Broadway is included below.



*Above: Charles E Otis, Boston Globe, March 02, 1908*

Name	Year(s) of Residency	Occupation
Arnold, Charles A	1903	Motorman
Armour, Thomas A	1907-1911	Carpet Layer
Bennett, Edwin H	1904	Superintendent of Buildings at Tufts
Copp, Gesner	1907-1908	Motorman
Dreisigaker, Ralph E	1912	Motorman
Farrow, Fannie	1913-1914	
Hallett, Britie S	1902-1903	
Lemon, Wallace	1905	Blacksmith
MacBeth, Elizabeth	1917-1918	
MacBeth, Thomas	1914-1918	Motorman
MacIsaac, Daniel	1906	Electrician
Mulcahey, James	1899	Farmhand
Murphy, Mary	1897	
Otis, Charles E	1890-1899	Carpenter
Otis, William R	1892-1899	Cabinet Maker
Otis, William R Jr	1896-1899	Clerk
Roach, Michael	1899	
Robinson, Alonso A	1913	Patternmaker
Sanderson, Gustav	1899	Stonecutter
Sheen, Maurice	1899	Laborer
Wellington, Edward	1907	Car Conductor

## II. ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

Please see the section immediately below which discusses location, design, materials and any alterations as the same information would be written here, just in longer form.

*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.*

### 1. 1252 Broadway

The period of relevance for the house starts c.1874-1929

- a. Location: It is likely that this structure was in its original location and was built on-site.
- b. Design: The house was a gable roof, wood-framed residential building with an asymmetrical entryway. The property contained a hooded porch for the entryway, an ell on the left side, bay in the rear.
  - Flat roof with deep eaves

- Likely a brick foundation with concrete parging.
- Front Elevation
  - Hooded portico entryway with decorative trim and posts
  - Late 20<sup>th</sup> Century door flanked by sidelights
  - Brick and granite or slate steps from landing to walkway
  - Bay window to the left of the entryway
  - Fenestration consisted of three six-over-one windows on the second floor and one six-over-one window on the third floor. First floor bay window contained modern vinyl or aluminum windows with applied muntins.
  - Decorative scallop shingling on top floor
  - Clapboard for first and second floors
  - Thick molded caps above windows
- Right Elevation
  - Fenestration consisted of three six-over-one windows on the second floor and one six-over-one window on the third floor. First floor contained a porthole window.
  - Decorative scallop shingling with clapboard
- Left Elevation
  - Fenestration consisted of three six-over-one windows on the second floor and one six-over-one window on the third floor. First floor contained a port window.
  - Decorative scallop shingling with clapboard
- Rear Elevation
  - Bay  
Further details are not visible using satellite imaging or Google

c. Materials:

- Foundation: Concrete parging over brick
- Windows: Wood and Aluminum or vinyl
- Entry door: modern. Wood and textured glass
- Siding: Wood clapboard and scalloped shingles
- Trim: Wood
- Steps: Brick with granite or slate
- Roof: Gable with end facing street, and ell on left side

d. Alterations: Demolished. Prior to demolition - addition of bay window on front. Modern replacement doors.

e. Evaluation of Integrity of 1252 Broadway Based on the observations of the building and a study of the historic maps, it is Staff's position that the building did retain integrity of its original form **prior to demolition**. The demolition of the structure has removed all distinguishing features and original massing.



### **III. FINDINGS**

*For a Determination of Significance, the subject building must be found either (i) importantly associated with people, events or history and/or (ii) historically or architecturally significant. The Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) must make these findings. The portions of the Demolition Review Ordinance (DRO) related to these findings are included below:*

#### **A. HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION**

*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 of Massachusetts.*

##### **Residential Structure**

1. The HPC must make a finding as to whether or not the RESIDENTIAL STRUCTURE at 1252 Broadway meets any of the criteria stated above.
2. The HPC must specifically state why the RESIDENTIAL STRUCTURE at 1252 Broadway does or does not meet the threshold for historic significance under finding “a”.

#### **B. HISTORICAL & 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 of the subject property, either by itself or in the context of a group of buildings or structures, and therefore it is in the public interest to be preserved or rehabilitated rather than to be demolished.*

##### **Residential Structure**

1. The HPC must make a finding as to whether or not the RESIDENTIAL STRUCTURE at 1252 Broadway meets any of the criteria stated above.
2. The HPC must specifically state why the RESIDENTIAL STRUCTURE at 1252 Broadway or does not meet the threshold for historic significance under finding “b”.

If the HPC makes the above finding, the HPC must state their reasons why they take this position.

### **IV. VOTE**

1. When bringing the matter to a vote, the HPC must include the reasons why the RESIDENTIAL STRUCTURE at 1252 Broadway is or is not “historically significant”.