



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

MICHAEL F. GLAVIN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

DETERMINATION OF SIGNIFICANCE STAFF REPORT

Site: 17 Porter Street
Case: HPC 2016.007
Applicant Name: Daniel A. & Amanda A. Caspariello
Date of Application: February 16, 2016
Recommendation: Significant
Hearing Date: March 15, 2016

I. Historical Association

Historical Context: *From the Form B for 23 Porter Street*

Spring Hill evolved into a prime residential neighborhood of Somerville from the mid-1800s. The topography lent itself to well-drained soil for agriculture and to fine vistas for the residential subdivisions that began with George Brastow's 1843 rectilinear plan for 72 house lots on Spring Hill. With the exception of early farmhouses and the first Greek Revival double houses, the first houses built in the Spring Hill subdivisions were substantial single family homes built on ample lots. By the 1870s, with the expansion of the industries on Milk Row (now Somerville Avenue), and the horsecar and later the streetcar on Summer Street from Union to Davis Square came the expanded development of this area with smaller single-family workers housing and attached row houses and larger tenements, built near the bottom of the hill on small court or terrace streets.



Porter and Linden Streets were subdivided in 1844 having been the estate of A. Brackett. Porter Street is one of the original rangeways. 22 and 23 Porter Street are Local Historic Districts.

For a full list of the owners, tenants and alterations see table at the end of the report.

Evolution of Site:

The boundaries of the lot can be seen on the 1874 and 1884 Hopkins Maps, however, the houses at 17 and 19 Porter Street do not appear until 1895. Arthur H. Wilkins, bookkeeper at the Fanueil Hall Market is found in the 1888 City Directory living at 19 Porter Street. The first found resident at 17 Porter Street is Martin L. Walls, wood carver according to the 1889 City Directory. A Martha L. Walls is shown as owner of 17 Porter Street on the 1895 Bromley. This is probably an error since no Martha Walls can be found in

Massachusetts in either the 1880 or the 1900 Census. The 1900 Census shows Henry C. Walls, son of Martin L. Walls as the owner. There is no Massachusetts census information available for 1890. See table for known inhabitants of 17 Porter Street, and owners. According to the building permits and Sanborn Maps a store was added to a small garage beside the house next to Gould Avenue., This was demolished at an unknown date. An addition to the building was constructed around 1948. The garage is attached.

Architectural Description: The house is a two-story gable-front building circa 1889 with large shed dormers set back a few feet from the front façade and ending with the rear edge of the original building. A double front entry circa 1924 is located within a sheltered alcove. A two story flat-roofed addition circa 1948 meets the second story eaves of the dormers. The building was sided in 1966 with aluminum and has an asphalt roof. The main, front façade has a tympanum stepped out slightly indicating that decorative shingles may be found beneath the siding. The windows are all replacements. Two stacked picture windows are located on the side toward Gould Avenue. A 2-car garage with stairs to a deck is attached to the Gould Avenue side of the rear addition. The fenestration on the uphill, north side of the house is irregularly distributed indicating different uses of the rooms on both floors. The foundation is cement covered. The front porch also has a cement coating. The porch and stair railings are metal. Decorative rafter ends and brackets are retained.

Summary: 17 Porter Street is a typical circa 1890 Queen Anne style house as can be seen in the gable end toward the street, the asymmetrical façade with protruding bays and bracketed doorway. It bears a close relationship to the house immediately to its north. The size and style are typical of lower middle income residents of Somerville at the time of its construction. By 1900 the residents were primarily blue collar workers. The owners in the first half of the twentieth century were of Italian descent.

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/atlasses, 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 17 Porter Street to be 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 its association with the streetscape, and Italian immigration patterns in the twentieth century. Despite alterations primarily on the rear, the house fits well with the orientation and scale of buildings on Porter Street.

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

The period of significance for 17 Porter Street begins with its construction in the late 1890s as a home for a woodcarver and cabinetmaker and continues through at least the 1960s as home to blue collar and working class Somerville residents. It is architecturally important as one of grouping of similar buildings that characterize the neighborhood and streetscape.

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. **Location:** The house has not been moved. It is located on a residential street where most of the houses have a gable end to the street. 17 Porter is directly across from 22 Porter Street, a Local Historic District and only one door from 23 Porter Street, another Local Historic District.
- b. **Design:** The building has the massing of a late nineteenth century Queen Anne style house. The asymmetry is mostly seen on the front façade with its smaller front gable and inset entry doors.
- c. **Materials:** The building is a wood frame structure with applied aluminum siding. Window reveal indicates that the original siding is likely still there. The windows have been replaced.
- d. **Alterations:** The front north corner was altered to allow the conversion to a two family. A large addition on the rear and a two-car garage have been added to the side. Two window openings have been altered. Aluminum siding covers the original wood.

Evaluation of Integrity: While the building has alterations to its form and windows, it still is essentially a late nineteenth century building in close proximity to two Local Historic Districts and other buildings with similar massing and form. The amount of window reveal indicates that the original wood siding may still be extant beneath the current building skin.

Does the subject parcel represent a distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction?

Due to the alterations 17 Porter Street is less than pristine but does retain its essential form. Because it is set in a neighborhood with similar gable end buildings interspersed with both slightly early and later construction and of similar height and massing, it fits within its context.

Does the subject parcel represent an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community or region due to its singular physical characteristics or landscape?

The house blends with the neighborhood and does not have any distinguishing features beyond the large two-car garage on its south side rear. While the removal of this particular building would not be a loss, the construction of another building that did not replicate the form and massing consistent with the neighborhood would damage the historic fabric of the street. It is architecturally important as one of grouping of similar buildings that characterize the neighborhood and streetscape.

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 17 Porter Street historically or architecturally significant.

The subject building is found historically and architecturally significant due to its period, style, method of construction, integrity of form and massing, especially in the context of a group of buildings.

III. Recommendation

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.

The subject building is found importantly associated with the broad architectural, cultural, economic and social history of the City due to its architectural association within the streetscape, and the cultural and social history of the City due to its association with Italian immigration patterns in the twentieth century.

While the building has alterations to its form and windows, it still is essentially a late nineteenth century building in close proximity to two Local Historic Districts and other buildings with similar massing and form. The amount of window reveal indicates that the original wood siding may still be extant beneath the current building skin.

The house blends with the neighborhood and does not have any distinguishing features beyond the large two-car garage on its south side rear. Despite alterations primarily on the rear, the house fits well with the orientation and scale of buildings on Porter Street. While the removal of this particular building would not be a loss, the construction of another building that did not replicate the form and massing consistent with the neighborhood would damage the historic fabric of the street. It is architecturally important as one of grouping of similar buildings that characterize the neighborhood and streetscape.

The subject building is found historically and architecturally significant due to its period, style, method of construction, integrity of form and massing, especially in the context of a group of buildings.

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 1889, is at least 50 years old.

AND

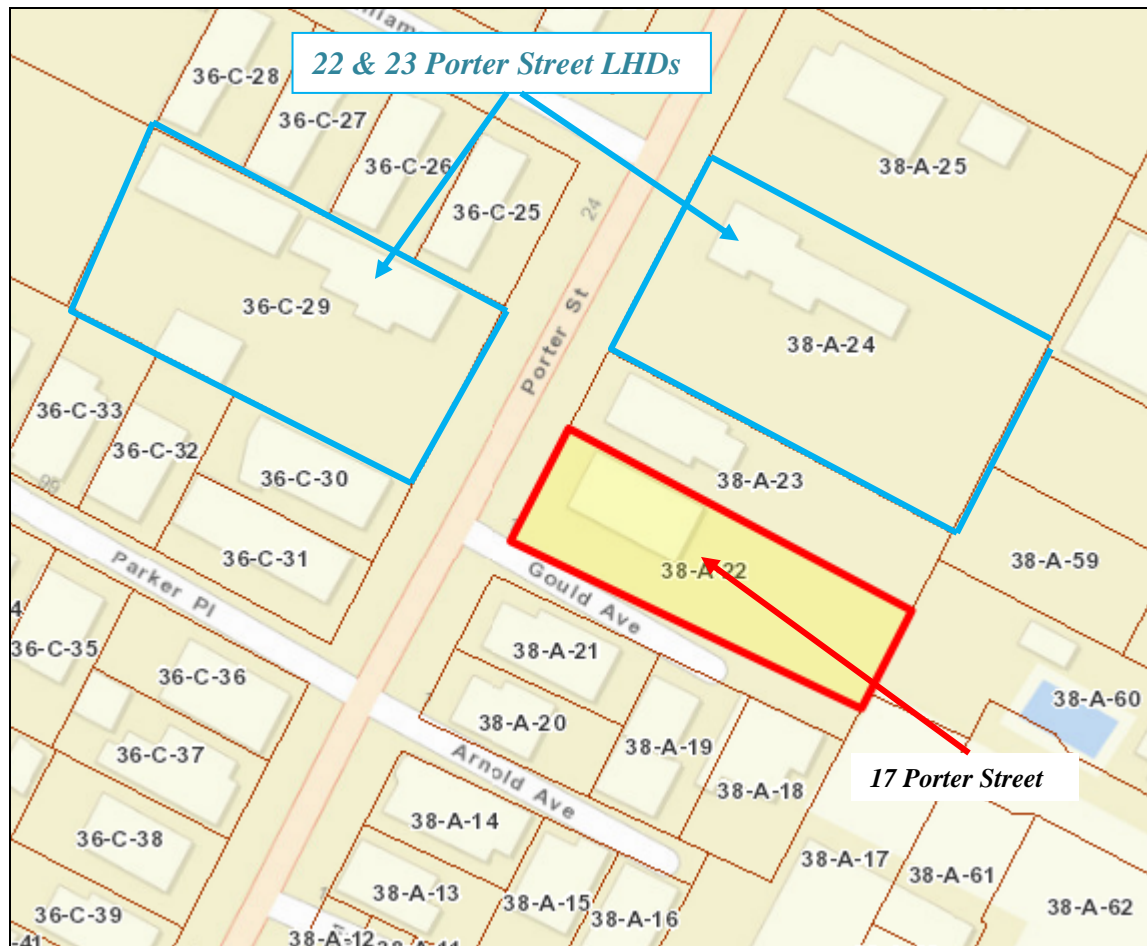
For a Determination of Significance under (B), the subject building must be found either (a) importantly associated with people, events or history or (b) historically or architecturally significant.

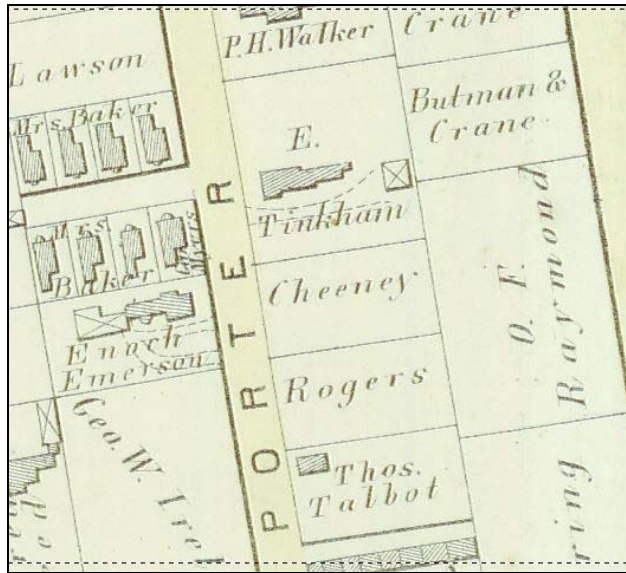
(a) In accordance with the *Findings on Historical Association*, which utilizes historic maps/atlasses, City reports and directories, and building permit research, and through an examination of resources that document the history of the City, **Staff recommend that the Historic Preservation Commission find 17 Porter Street 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.

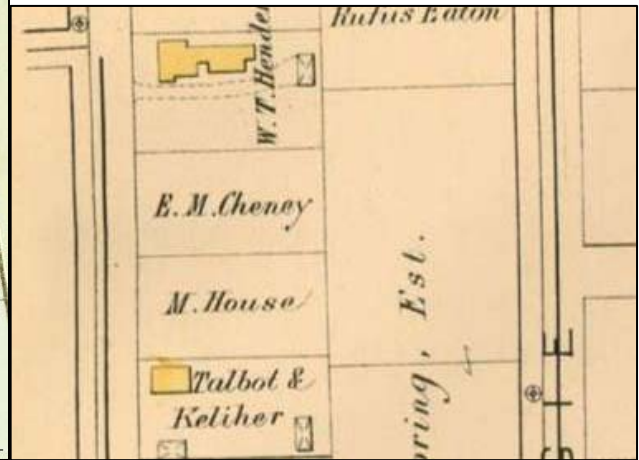
OR

(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 17 Porter Street historically and architecturally significant.**





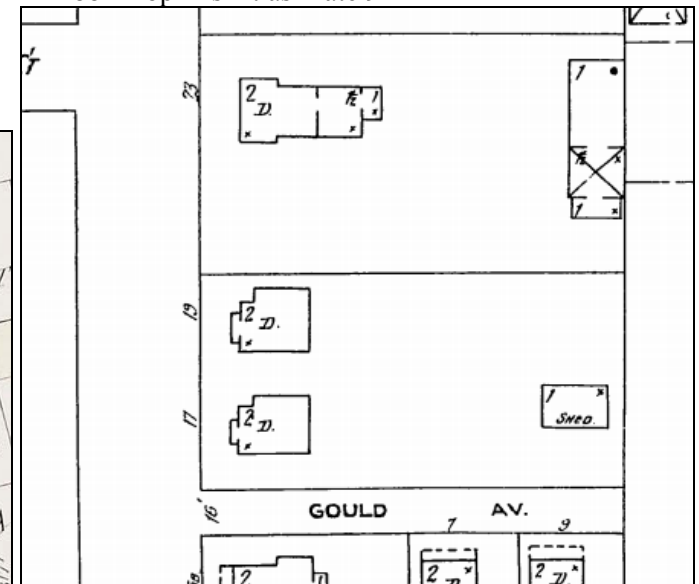
1874 Hopkins Atlas Plate 40-41



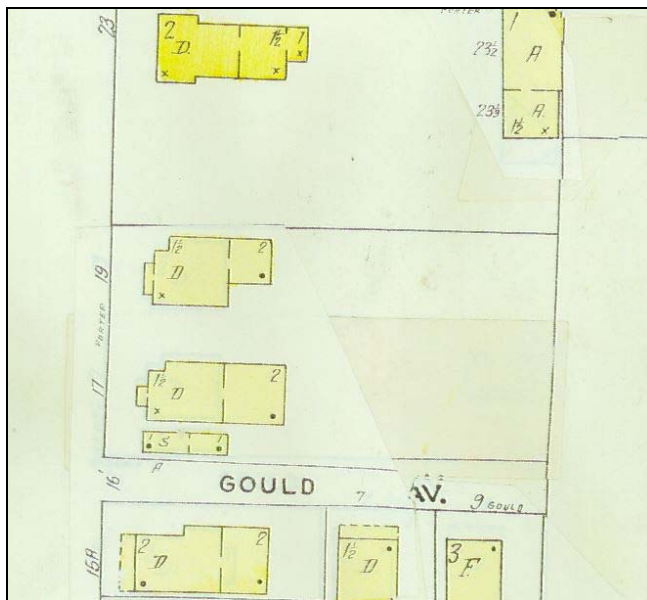
1884 Hopkins Atlas Plate 9



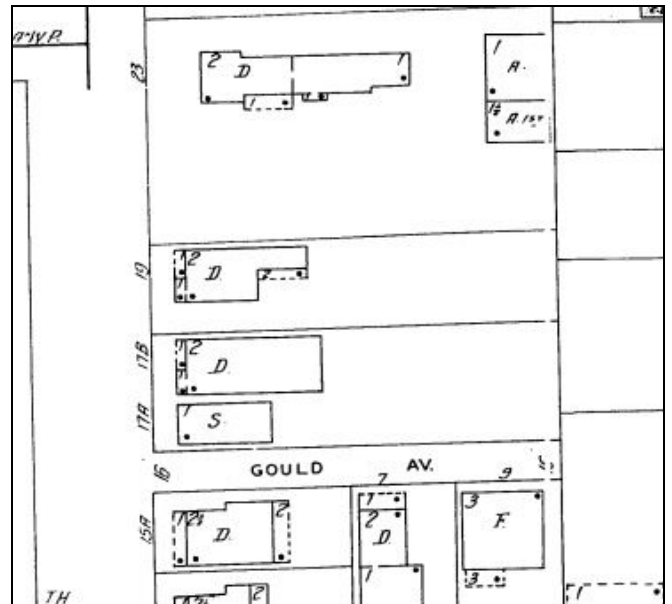
1895 Bromley Atlas Plate 17



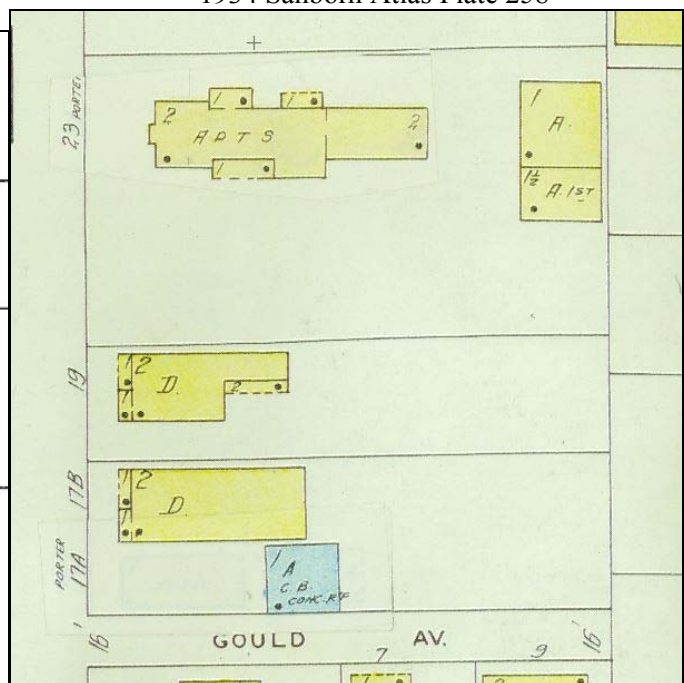
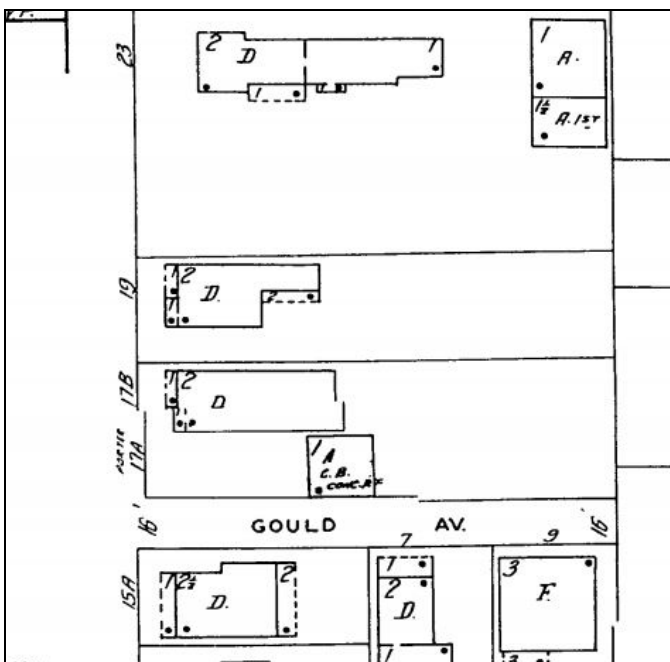
1900 Sanborn Atlas Plate 16



1925 Sanborn Atlas Plate 28



1934 Sanborn Atlas Plate 258



1950 Sanborn Atlas Plate 258

1959 Sanborn Atlas Plate 258





LOCATION	O/R	NAME	AGE/ DATE	OCCUPATION	PLACE OF BIRTH	SOURCE	NOTES
	<i>O</i>	<i>Anthony Brackett</i>	<i>November 26, 1844</i>			<i>Deed Book 453 1874-1884 Hopkins Atlas</i>	<i>portion of Lot 67 on a plan of an estate belonging to Anthony Brackett, situated in Somerville, surveyed by John Law,</i>
<i>Porter Street</i>							
<i>Porter Street</i>	<i>O</i>	<i>Cheney</i>					<i>Vacant land</i>
							<i>and a reserved strip of land shown on "plan of land as shown on a plan entitled "Plan of Lots in Somerville surveyor for F. Gould & D.L. Murray" by Charles D. Elliot, Engineer and Surveyor</i>
<i>Porter Street</i>	<i>O</i>	<i>F. Gould & D.L. Murray</i>	<i>September 2, 1891</i>			<i>Deed Book 2069 1889 City Directory</i>	
<i>17 Porter Street</i>		<i>Martin L. Walls</i>		<i>Wood Carver</i>			<i>Possibly Martin L. Walls, per 1889 Directory - 1880 Census names Henry C. Walls as son b. 1864-65</i>
	<i>O</i>	<i>Martha L. Walls</i>				<i>1895 Bromley Atlas</i>	
	<i>O</i>	<i>M .L. Walls</i>				<i>1900 Stadley Atlas</i>	
<i>17 Porter Street</i>	<i>O</i>	<i>Henry C. Walls</i>	<i>1864</i>	<i>Engineer Stationary</i>	<i>Maine</i>	<i>1900 Census</i>	
		<i>Jennie (wife)</i>	<i>1872</i>		<i>England</i>		
		<i>Martin L. Wall (father)</i>	<i>1835</i>		<i>Maine</i>		
		<i>Frederick F. (brother)</i>	<i>1866</i>	<i>Printer</i>	<i>Maine</i>		
<i>17 Porter Street</i>		<i>Albert D. Wilson</i>		<i>Rubber Worker</i>		<i>1903 City Directory</i>	
<i>17 Porter Street</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>Nerimo Guazzaloco</i>		<i>Laborer</i>		<i>1910 City Directory</i>	
							<i>The Guazzalocos are related to the same family that owned 589-593 Somerville Avenue.</i>
<i>17 Porter Street</i>		<i>Nericoa Gazzaloco</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>Tube Works</i>	<i>Italy</i>	<i>1910 Census</i>	



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		<i>Eliza (wife)</i>	32		<i>Italy</i>		
		<i>Orlando (son)</i>	8		<i>Italy</i>		
		<i>Stella (daughter)</i>	4		<i>Massachusetts</i>		
		<i>Hodie (son)</i>	2		<i>Massachusetts</i>		
		<i>Jennie Bragoli (s-in-law)</i>	21	<i>Jewelry sorter, jewelry shop</i>	<i>Italy</i>		
		<i>Rocco Penchano (border)</i>	22	<i>Pottery worker, pottery</i>	<i>Italy</i>		
		<i>Antony Bragoli (border)</i>	25	<i>Tube Works</i>	<i>Italy</i>		
17 Porter Street	O	Vito Carniggo (Carnizzo)(head)	28	Laborer, general work	Italy	1920 Census	Vito Canizzo b.
		<i>Saveria Carniggo (wife)</i>	28		<i>Italy</i>		
		<i>Agbritina Carniggo (daughter)</i>	6		<i>Massachusetts</i>		
		<i>Gregorio Carniggo (son)</i>	2		<i>Massachusetts</i>		
		<i>Louis Carniggo (son)</i>	3 mos.		<i>Massachusetts</i>		
		<i>Christine Carniggo (cousin)</i>	31		<i>Italy</i>		
		<i>Lucia Carniggo (cousin)</i>	18		<i>Italy</i>		
		<i>Zaphalia Carniggo (cousin)</i>	24		<i>Italy</i>		
		<i>Agbritina Carniggo (mother)</i>	65		<i>Italy</i>		
		<i>Margaret Carniggo (cousin)</i>	26		<i>Italy</i>		
17 Porter Street		V Carnitzo (Carnizzo)				BP 1922-1-862	New door & 2 windows, garage altered for store
17 Porter Street		V Cannizzo (Carnizzo)				BP 1924-1-83	1-family changed to 2
17 Porter Street		Mrs. Josephine Martini		Grocer		1929-1930 City Directory	Mrs. Martini ran the store
17 Porter Street		Agide Quinzani		Baker	<i>Italy</i>	1930 Census	
		<i>Zoe Qunizani (wife)</i>			<i>Italy</i>		
		<i>Elizabeth Quinzani</i>		<i>Bookkeeper</i>	<i>Italy</i>		

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		<i>Vacant store</i>			<i>1940 City Directory</i>
<i>17 Porter Street</i>		<i>Pasquale Todisco</i>		<i>Labor foreman</i>	
		<i>Margaret (wife)</i>			
		<i>Edwin C. Pitcher</i>		<i>Mohair sorter</i>	
		<i>Mary (wife)</i>			
<i>17 Porter Street</i>	<i>O</i>	<i>Pasquale Todisco (head)</i>	<i>43</i>	<i>Foreman, construction company</i>	<i>Italy</i>
		<i>Margaret (nee Martini)</i>			<i>1940 census</i>
		<i>(wife)</i>	<i>41</i>		<i>(per obit for Pasquale Todisco, Jr.)</i>
		<i>Mariellino (daughter)</i>	<i>16</i>		<i>Massachusetts</i>
		<i>Anthony (son)</i>	<i>14</i>		<i>Massachusetts</i>
		<i>Josephine (daughter)</i>	<i>13</i>		<i>Massachusetts</i>
		<i>Patsy (son)</i>	<i>11</i>		<i>Massachusetts</i>
		<i>Lenora (daughter)</i>	<i>7</i>		<i>Massachusetts</i>
		<i>Rose Marie (daughter)</i>	<i>3</i>		<i>Massachusetts</i>
		<i>Robert (son)</i>	<i>6 mos</i>		<i>Massachusetts</i>
<i>17 A Porter Street</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>Mary C. Pitcher (head)</i>	<i>30</i>	<i>Typing, Addressing Machine Company</i>	<i>Massachusetts</i>
		<i>Edwin C. (son)</i>	<i>5</i>		<i>1940 census</i>
		<i>Frederick E. (son)</i>	<i>9 mos</i>		<i>Massachusetts</i>
		<i>Rita Lynch (sister)</i>	<i>25</i>		<i>Massachusetts</i>
		<i>Lorraine (niece)</i>	<i>8</i>		<i>Massachusetts</i>
		<i>William (nephew)</i>	<i>7</i>		<i>Massachusetts</i>
		<i>Joan (niece)</i>	<i>5</i>		<i>Massachusetts</i>
<i>17 Porter Street</i>		<i>Pasquale Todisco</i>	<i>48</i>	<i>Steam Fitter</i>	<i>1945 City Directory</i>
		<i>Margaret</i>	<i>45</i>	<i>Housewife</i>	
		<i>Marceline</i>	<i>21</i>	<i>Secretary</i>	
<i>17 A Porter Street</i>		<i>James F O'Brien</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>Army</i>	
		<i>Mary M.</i>	<i>23</i>	<i>Housewife</i>	
		<i>Robert Sorenson</i>	<i>28</i>	<i>Army</i>	
		<i>Catherine F.</i>	<i>28</i>	<i>Clerk</i>	

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	M Tadisco			BP 1948-2-525	<i>Build garage 2 car under new addition to hse</i>
17 Porter Street	Pasquale Todisco	53	Contractor	1950 City Directory	
	Margaret	50	Housewife		
	Josephine	22	bookkeeper		
17 A Porter Street	James F O'Brien	29	Clerk		
	Mary M.	28	Housewife		
	Robert Sorenson	32	Salesman		
	Catherine F.	33	Clerk		
17 Porter Street	Pasquale Todisco	58	Construction	1955 City Directory	
	Pasquale N.	26	Mechanic		
	Josephine T.	28	Operator		
17 A Porter Street	Apostalos Traganos	60	Cook		
	Constantine	24	U.S.N.		
	Smaryde L.	52	Housewife		
17 Porter Street	Raymond Martin	32	P.O.	1960 City Directory	
	Lorraine	26	Housewife		
17 A Porter Street	Apostalos Traganos	65	Cook		
	Katherine	22	Clerk		
	Smaryde L.	52	Housewife		
17 Porter Street	Richard Dion	1932	Florist	1965 City Directory	
	Carol H.	1937	Housewife		
17 A Porter Street	Apostalos Traganos	1895	Cook		
	Paraskeva	1944	U.S.A.F.		
	Smany	1907	Housewife		
17 Porter Street	R Dion			BP 1966-1-138	<i>Reside w alum rpl gutter</i>
17 Porter Street	R Dion			BP 1972-2-423	<i>Build above ground pool</i>
17 Porter Street	L Celli			BP 1975-1-10	<i>Remove parts of roof with 2 layer of roof shingles</i>
17 Porter Street	L Celli			BP 1989-2-564	<i>Supply/install units</i>

