



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

MICHAEL F. GLAVIN  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

*HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION*

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**DETERMINATION OF SIGNIFICANCE STAFF REPORT**

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Site: 27-31 Murdock Street  
Case: HPC 2017.016

Applicant Name: Brian Lavelle  
Date of Application: March 29, 2017

Recommendation: Significant  
Hearing Date: April 18, 2017



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**I. Historical Association**

Context:

Clyde, Murdock, and Warwick streets may have been developed as a small neighborhood of houses adjacent to the Tufts Brick Manufacturing Company, owned by the Tufts family was located nearby on Cedar Street. The brickyard was fully exploited by 1858 when Asa Murdock, Cambridge dry goods dealer had the neighborhood surveyed and platted into roughly 7500 SF parcels. By 1874 the neighborhood was mostly built out with the cottages set on large yards with sufficient space to keep a few animals and grow produce. The purchasers were primarily laborers of Irish and Scottish descent as can be seen in the 1880 Census.

Brick making in Somerville was one of the earliest industries which was in its prime from 1860-1880. After the Great Fire of Boston all buildings were required to be constructed of non-flammable materials. By 1900 only one company, the Sanborn Brick Company remained in Somerville.

Historical Description:

Deed research shows the purchase of Lot 34 on the W.A. Mason and Sons 1858 plat by James Powers in November 1869 from the estate of Asa Murdock. The Powers family held the property until the death of Bridget Powers in 1938. Little information was found about them. The 1874 Hopkins Map shows the ownership to a Mrs. Charlton but this was not supported by the deed research. The 1884 Hopkins Map shows the ownership to a Mrs. Powell which could be a misreading of the name Powers. The 1895 Bromley Map has the property properly attributed to the ownership of Jas. A. Powers. See below for a full chart of the known owners and residents as found in the deeds, U.S. Census, City Directories and other sources of information.

The next owner after the Powers family, James D. Sharkey was a carriage painter turned automobile painter and used car dealer whose home and place of business was listed as 22 Clyde Street through 1933. 22 Clyde Street backs directly onto 27-31 Clyde Street. He was involved in raising money for Liberty Loan Committee in 1918. The Sharkey family could be found at 22 Clyde Street since at least 1884 as seen on the Hopkins Map of that year and again on the 1895 Bromley Map. The relationship between the two properties is shown on the maps below.

According to the 1940 Census, George A. Marshall was a bus driver and had lived on Josephine Avenue prior to moving to Murdock Street.

*Architectural Description:*

The subject property, c.1869, is a 2 story single-family L-shaped structure that is one bay wide in an undecorated and simple form. The main floor is set on a high foundation although not as tall as those found on Clyde Street. The ground floor front window has been altered to a picture window. A modern entry door into what might have been a single story porch constructed in 1946 by G. Marshall but cannot be seen on the Sanborn Maps. The door into the ell opens onto a non-existent porch.

*Summary:*

The building was constructed c.1869 as single-family working class housing. The building has been slightly altered by the addition on a corner at an unknown date. The building style is simple as appropriate for a working class home. The building is primarily associated with the Powers family and later the Sharkey family. Both families lived in the Patch for generations.

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## **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) can be found at the end of the next section.*

(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, such as *Somerville Past and Present*, Staff **find** 27 Murdock 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 the association of the property with workers and the Tufts Brick Manufacturing Company, whose location and employment opportunity prompted the development of this small neighborhood of working class housing.

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## **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 27 Murdock Street begins at the time of construction, c. 1869 and extends into the twentieth century as this dwelling has evolved and continues to house the working class.

***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 location of the subject dwelling is at the rear of a long and narrow lot on Murdock Street behind a 1988 pre-fabricated garage. This location has not been altered. The subject building is located within a context of buildings and structures which, together, create a setting that reflects the character of the place in which the subject building played a historical role, i.e. working class housing for laborers of the Boston Brick Company. The surrounding buildings are a mix of new apartment buildings and altered workers cottages.*
- b. Design: The design of the original dwelling is a simple 2-story 1 by 2 bay gable roofed structure with another lower wing set perpendicularly to the main body. An enclosed porch is set on one corner of the building.*
- c. Materials: The materials that compose this dwelling represent preferences of those who created the dwelling as well as later owners and occupants. While a majority of the material has been replaced, such as windows and doors, original materials may still exist beneath siding.*
- d. Alterations: The changes to the massing have been minimal as the enclosed corner is clearly an afterthought and does not disturb the roof line and general massing of the house. The siding and window replacements are typical. It is possible that the original clapboard still remains.*

*Evaluation of Integrity:*

This building has undergone few major changes since the original date of construction, c. 1869. Unfortunately, the surrounding streetscape is minimally intact due to infill development and alterations to existing buildings.

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**Findings on 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 *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, which assesses the ability of the property to convey significance, Staff find 46 Murdock

Street historically and architecturally significant as workers housing due to its size, form and massing. Unfortunately, the context of the building is lost, since it sits at the rear of the property and the neighboring properties have been or are being redeveloped. The 1988 garage blocks much of the view of the house.

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### 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 on further information provided to Staff or through additional 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 1869, is at least 50 years old.

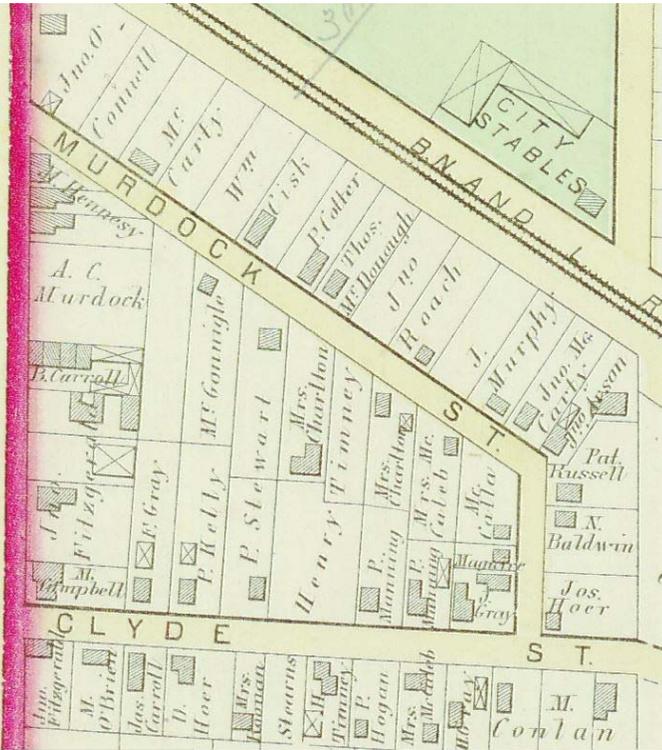
**AND**

*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.*

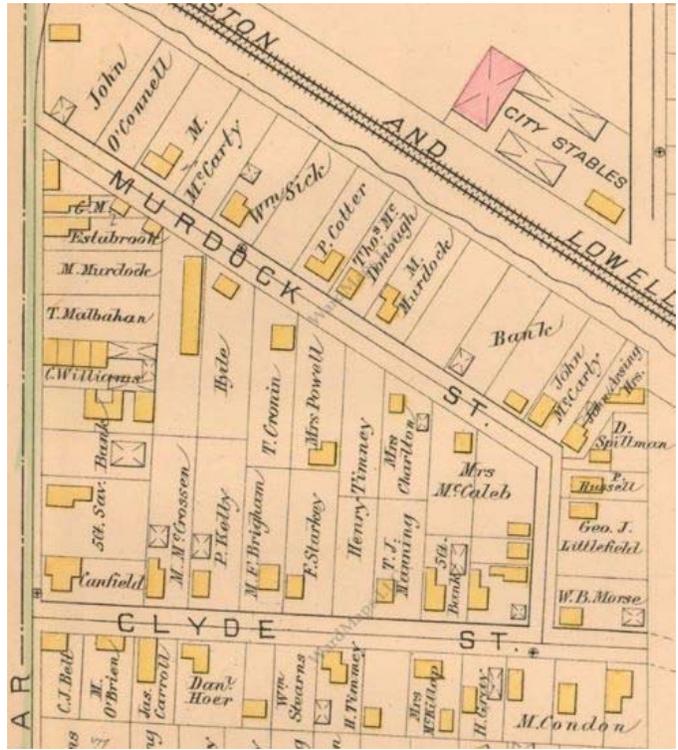
(a) In accordance with the *Findings on Historical Association*, which utilizes historic maps/atlasses, City reports and directories, and building permit research, and through an examination of resources that document the history of the City, such as *Somerville Past and Present*, **Staff recommend that the Historic Preservation Commission find 27 Murdock 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 27 Murdock Street historically and architecturally significant** as workers housing due to its size, form and massing.



1874 Hopkins



1884 Hopkins





1928 Sanborn

1950 Sanborn Plate 241

1959 Sanborn Plate 241



<i>Fam ily Num ber</i>	<i>Hous e Num ber</i>	<i>LOCATION</i>	<i>O/R</i>	<i>NAME</i>	<i>AGE/ Date</i>	<i>OCCUPATION</i>	<i>PLACE OF BIRTH</i>	<i>Immig. Year</i>	<i>SOURCE</i>	<i>NOTES</i>
				<b>Asa Murdock</b>					<b>W.A. Mason plan of the Patch dated April, 1858 Deed 1105/201</b>	
		<b>Lot 34, W.A. Mason Plan dated April 1858</b>	<b>O</b>	<b>James Powers</b>	<b>11/5/1869</b>					<b>From Sabrina &amp; Maria Murdock, heirs of Asa Murdock, lot 34 on plan drawn by W.A. Mason dated April, 1858</b>
<b>56</b>	<b>62</b>			<b>James Powers (head)</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>Laborer</b>	<b>Ireland</b>		<b>1870 Census</b>	
				Mary Powers (wife)	43	Keeping house	Ireland		1870 Census	
				Hannah Powers (daughter)	13	At school	Massachusetts		1870 Census	
				Tommie Powers (son)	10	At school	Massachusetts		1870 Census	
				Mary Powers (daughter)	8	At school	Massachusetts		1870 Census	
				Bridget Powers (daughter)	6	At school	Massachusetts		1870 Census	
				Patrick Powers (son)	4	At home	Massachusetts		1870 Census	
			<b>O</b>	<b>Mrs. Charlton</b>					<b>1874 Hopkins Plate 30-31</b>	
<b>305</b>	<b>336</b>	<b>Murdock Street</b>	<b>O</b>	<b>James Powers (head)</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>Gardener</b>	<b>Ireland</b>		<b>1880 Census</b>	
				Mary Powers (wife)	45	Keeping House	Ireland		1880 Census	
				Thomas Powers (son)	16	News Messenger	Massachusetts		1880 Census	
				Bridget Powers (daughter)	12	Scholar	Massachusetts		1880 Census	
				Patrick Powers (son)	10	Scholar	Massachusetts		1880 Census	
			<b>O</b>	<b>Mrs. Powell</b>					<b>1884 Hopkins Plate 12</b>	
			<b>O</b>	<b>James Powers</b>					<b>1895 Bromley Plate 15</b>	
		27 Murdock Street		James Powers		City Laborer			1896 City	

<i>Fam ily Num ber</i>	<i>Hous e Num ber</i>	<i>LOCATION</i>	<i>O/R</i>	<i>NAME</i>	<i>AGE/Date</i>	<i>OCCUPATION</i>	<i>PLACE OF BIRTH</i>	<i>Immig. Year</i>	<i>SOURCE</i>	<i>NOTES</i>
									Directory	
		27 Murdock Street	O	James Powers (head)	65	Day Laborer	Ireland	1853	1900 Census	
		27 Murdock Street		Patrick Powers (son)	33	Teamster	Massachusetts		1900 Census	
		27 Murdock Street		Bridget Powers (daughter)	32	Washerwoman	Massachusetts		1900 Census	
		27 Murdock Street		Bridget Powers	6/25/1908				Deed 3376/519	From estate of James Powers, Dennis Cronin, Administrator
385	504	27 Murdock Street	O	Bridget Powers (head)	39	Washerwoman, Private	Massachusetts		1910 Census	
303	129	27 Murdock Street	O	Bridget Powers (head)	50	Washerwoman, Private	Massachusetts		1920 Census	
216	416	27 Murdock Street	O	Bridget Powers (head)	60	Washerwoman, Independent	Massachusetts		1930 Census	
		27 Murdock Street		James D. Sharkey	6/22/1938				Deed 6214/419	From estate of Bridget F. Powers, David J. Kelley, Administrator
		27 Murdock Street	O	George A. Marshall & Alice B. Marshall	10/1/1942				Deed 6637/59	From James D. Sharkey
		27 Murdock Street		G. Marshall					1946-2-412 Building Permit	Bld porch raise roof on 1 side as shown in plans
		27 Murdock Street	O	Domenic A. DeMattia & Irene E. DeMattia	8/31//1949				Deed 7473/82	From George A. Marshall & Alice B. Marshall

<i>Fam ily Num ber</i>	<i>Hous e Num ber</i>	<i>LOCATION</i>	<i>O/R</i>	<i>NAME</i>	<i>AGE/ Date</i>	<i>OCCUPATION</i>	<i>PLACE OF BIRTH</i>	<i>Immig. Year</i>	<i>SOURCE</i>	<i>NOTES</i>
		27 Murdock Street	O	Anthony Rania & Clara Rania	8/8/1952				Deed 7946/501	From Domenic A. DeMattia & Irene E. DeMattia
		27 Murdock Street	O	Warren G. Tosi & Lois O. Tosi	6/1/1967				Deed 11333/106	From Anthony Rania & Clara Rania
		27 Murdock Street		W. Tosi					1983-1-695	Install wood
		27 Murdock Street		W. Tosi					Building Permit 1988-1-297	burnin stove
		27 Murdock Street		Warren O. Tosi	89	Laundry Worker	Italy		Building Permit 10/21/2001	Constr gar to accom auto
		27 Murdock Street	O	Gary A. Small					Deed notes Tosi Probate and Deed 11333/106	10/21/2001 Death Certificate
		27 Murdock Street	O	Matthew Penney	8/28/2008				Deed 51629/28	From estate of Lois O. Tosi & Warren G. Tosi
										From Gary A. Small