



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

*HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION*

---

**ALTERATION TO A HISTORIC PROPERTY STAFF REPORT**

---

Site: 46 Atherton Street J. O. Frost - Swan Greek Revival Double House  
Case: HPC 2016.083 Single Building Local Historic District  
Spring Hill National Register Historic District  
Applicant Name: Jeff Martinez & Annabel Realf, Owner  
Applicant Address: 46 Atherton Street, MA

Date of Application: October 19, 2016

Legal Notice: *Reconfigure front windows, doors; Replace windows on second floor to match ground floor; Add a deck on rear ell.*

Staff Recommendation: *Conditional* Certificate of Appropriateness

Date of Public Hearing: November 15, 2016

---

Historic and Architectural Significance

See attached survey form.

Existing Conditions

46 Atherton is a Greek Revival two family attached to a 3-condominium entity that occupies the west side of the house. Both sides of the house are in fair to poor condition with the 46 Atherton side being in slightly worse shape due to lack of maintenance. No building permits were found for work after 1951.

Proposed Work and Recommendations

The owners recently purchased the home due to its potential. Their plan is to phase the needed work, depending on their financing and budget. At this time they plan to add a driveway and alter the ground floor windows and entry.

The long term plan will be to repair/ replace rotten trim, remove and replace all vinyl windows, restore the cupola, repair and level the front porch which has a severe sag, and perform general maintenance and landscaping.

*1. Proposal of Alteration:* (see attached architectural drawings)

- 1) A single wide curb cut and driveway providing tandem parking for 2 cars
- 2) An egress and deck/ porch on the rear ell done in a classic style (see attached architectural drawings, and porch example).
- 3) Reconfigure front elevation to the original style:



- a) Remove door and picture window on left side of elevation and
- b) Replace with 6 on 6 wood double-hung windows,
- c) Remove 3 vinyl windows from the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor elevation and
- d) Replace with the same as 1<sup>st</sup> floor.

Currently, the grade of the yard slopes towards the house next door potentially causing flooding and water back-up. A driveway will help move water towards the storm drain located near the back of the property. The house, as it is now, has a non-functional floor plan. In order to make it functional, the egress needs to be moved outside. This new porch/ egress would be minimally visible from the street, and has the added benefit of partially hiding the admittedly unattractive addition that was added sometime in the 1900's. They have looked at Anderson Architectural series windows, but are open to other manufacturers as well.

## II. FINDINGS

### 1. *Prior Certificates Issued/Proposed:*

No prior Certificates for work were issued for this property.

### 1. *Precedence:*

- *Are there similar properties / proposals?*
  - 1. A single wide curb cut and driveway providing tandem parking for 2 cars

Curb cuts are not within the purview of the Commission. However, the HPC typically reviews and approves changes to driveway material. Typical materials approved are pavers, brick and concrete. The HPC has approved two new driveways in the past, one of which is located at 36 Atherton Street (2014). Neither driveway has been constructed.

- 2. An egress and deck/ porch on the rear ell done in a classic style (see attached architectural drawings, and porch example).

The egress to the proposed rear deck is not visible from the public right of way. The deck would protrude approximately 3' from the rear of the main block. New rear porches not visible from the public right of way have received Certificates of Non-Applicability. New front porches have been approved to match those on similarly styled buildings.

- 3. Reconfigure front elevation to the original style:
  - a. Remove door and picture window on left side of elevation and
  - b. Replace with 6/6 wood double-hung windows,
  - c. Remove 3 vinyl windows from the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor elevation and
  - d. Replace with the same as 1<sup>st</sup> floor.

There have been no cases reviewed by the Commission for such an extreme return to the original style; most cases have been for the removal of improper siding and the reinstatement of original fabric.

### *Considerations:*

- *What is the visibility of the proposal?*

The alterations will be fully or partially visible from the public right of way.

- *What are the Existing Conditions of the building / parcel?*

The building has been altered with picture windows, vinyl windows and an added door on the main façade.

- *Is the proposal more appropriate than the existing conditions?*

Yes. The Applicants intend to bring the building back to its original style and form on the exterior.

- *Does the proposal coincide with the General Approach set forth in the Design Guidelines?*

## GENERAL APPROACH

*The primary purpose of Somerville's Preservation Ordinance is to encourage preservation and high design standards in Somerville's Historic Districts, in order to safeguard the City's architectural heritage. The following guidelines ensure that rehabilitation efforts, alterations, and new construction all respect the design fabric of the districts and do not adversely effect their present architectural integrity.*

- A. *The design approach to each property should begin with the premise that the features of historic and architectural significance described in the Study Committee report must be preserved. In general, this tends to minimize the exterior alterations that will be allowed.*
- C. *Whenever possible, deteriorated material or architectural features should be repaired rather than replaced or removed.*
- D. *When replacement of architectural features is necessary, it should be based on physical or documentary evidence of the original or later important features.*
- E. *Whenever possible, new materials should match the material being replaced with respect to their physical properties, design, color, texture and other visual qualities. The use of imitation replacement materials is discouraged.*
- F. *The Commission will give design review priority to those portions of the property which are visible from public ways or those portions which it can be reasonably inferred may be visible in the future.*

The windows are noted as original in the Form B which does not appear match the evidence of the picture. Replacement of significant architectural features will be undertaken to restore the building to look closer to its original appearance. The proposed driveway and deck will not affect an original fabric.

### **Windows and Doors**

- 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.*
- 1. *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 opening locations will be relocated to their original positions on the façade and sized appropriately. Casings will replicate those found either on the building or on the other double houses on Spring Hill.

### **H. Landscape Features and Paving**

*The general intent of this section is to preserve the existing or later essential landscape features that enhance the property.*

Design Guidelines do not address driveway material or location. The installation of a driveway is compatible with the historic district as the parcel evolves to accommodate other modes of transportation; the dimensions proposed are 9'.

The driveway would be located along the right side property line and would not alter any essential landscape features.

*It is recognized that often the environment surrounding the property has a character, scale and street pattern quite different from that existing when the building was constructed. Thus, changes must frequently*

*be made to accommodate the new condition, and the landscape treatment can be seen as a transition feature between the structure and its newer surroundings.*

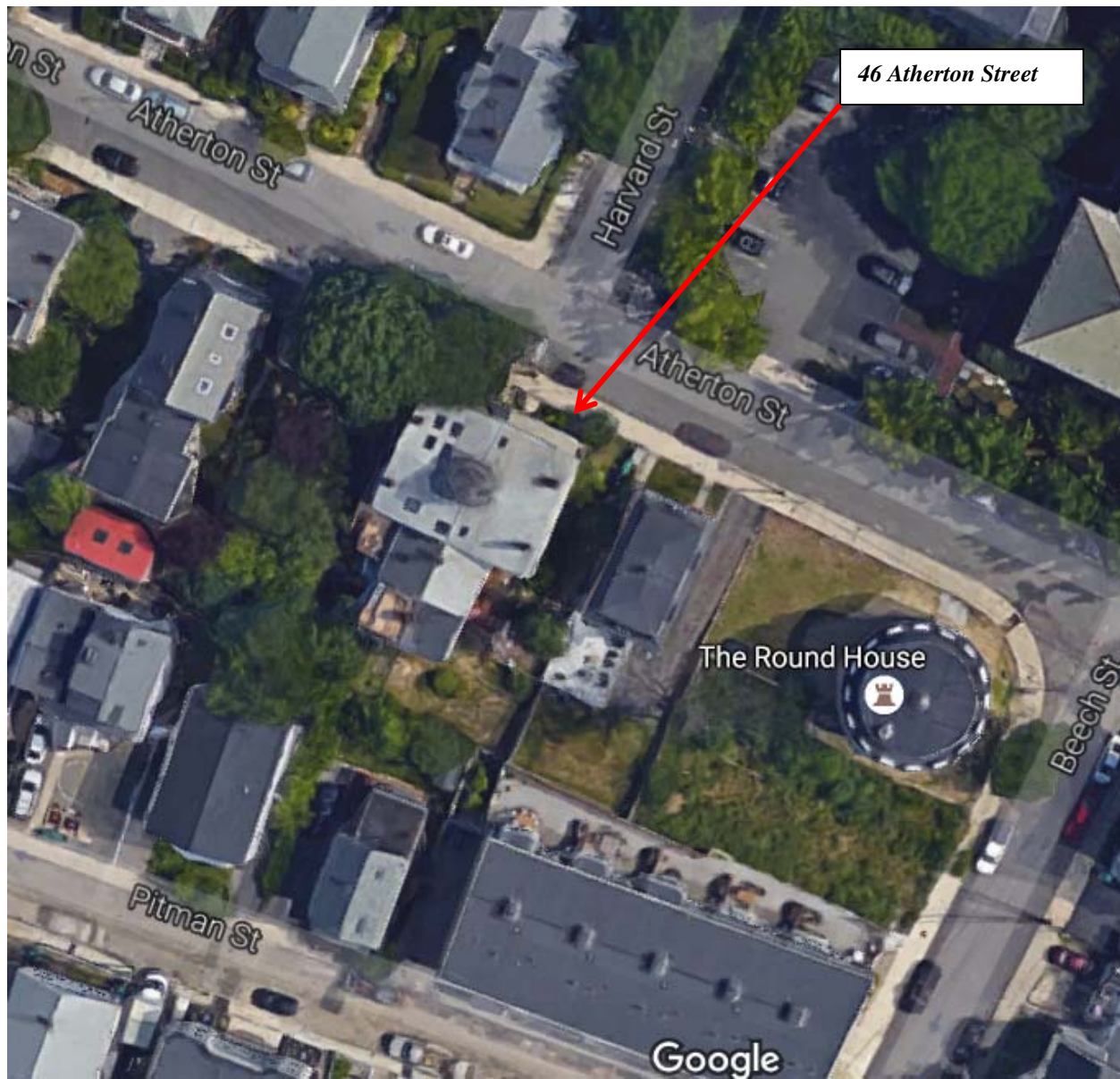
The surrounding environment has been significantly developed over the last hundred years. The addition of a driveway, approximately 9' wide, would be an appropriate transitional component of the landscape.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

*The Staff recommendation is based on a complete application and supporting materials, as submitted by the Applicant, and an analysis of the historic and architectural value and significance of the site, building or structure, the general design, arrangement, texture, material and color of the features involved, and the relation of such features of buildings and structures in the area, in accordance with the required findings that are considered by the Somerville Historic District Ordinance for a Historic District Certificate. This report may be revised or updated with new a recommendation or findings based upon additional information provided to Staff or through more in depth research conducted during the public hearing process.*

Staff determines that the alteration for which an application for a Historic Certificate has been filed **is appropriate for and compatible** with the preservation and protection of the J. O. Frost - Swan Greek Revival Double House Local Historic District; and would not cause substantial detriment or derogation to the District therefore Staff recommends that the Historic Preservation Commission grant a **Certificate of Appropriateness** to Jeff Martinez & Annabel Realf, Owners to make the following alterations and repairs to the historic fabric under the following conditions:

1. All appropriate building permits shall be obtained prior to the start of any work.
2. If changes are necessary to the proposed design for which this Certificate of Appropriateness was issued, new plans shall be submitted to Historic Staff prior to commencing the work.
3. A 9' driveway providing tandem parking for 2 cars may be installed to the east of the building
4. The driveway material shall be constructed of concrete, 9 feet wide with 6' of green space between driveway and property line, and 3' of green space between the driveway and house
5. An egress and deck/ porch on the rear ell done in a classic style (see attached architectural drawings, and porch example).
  - a. The posts shall be no less than 6" square with simple toppers.
  - b. The balusters shall be simple 2" stock.
  - c. The railings shall be of a generic style.
6. Reconfigure front elevation to the original style:
  - a. Remove door and picture window on left side of elevation;
  - b. Install 6/6 wood double-hung Andersen® Architect® series windows with no Lo-E glass and dark spacers sized to match the other originally sized windows on the façade;
  - c. Remove 3 vinyl windows from the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor elevation and
  - d. Replace with the same as 1<sup>st</sup> floor;
  - e. The window sash shall have a dark color.
7. Historic Staff shall issue a sign-off upon completion of the project that it was executed in accordance with this Certificate and approved plans.



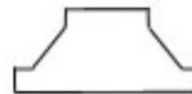
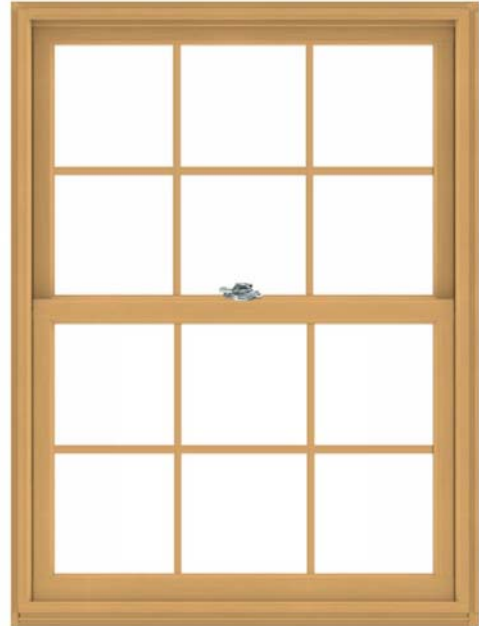


## Full Divided Light

Give your window an authentic look with grilles that are permanently applied to the interior and exterior of your window with an aluminum spacer between the glass. An Energy Spacer option is also available to help achieve ENERGY STAR® certification in the Northern climate zone (A-Series only.)

Not available on 100 Series products.

A-Series Double-Hung Window



Chamfer



Ovolo



# Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System

## Scanned Record Cover Page

<b>Inventory No:</b>	SMV.91
<b>Historic Name:</b>	
<b>Common Name:</b>	Frost, J. O. - Swan House
<b>Address:</b>	44-48 Atherton St
<b>City/Town:</b>	Somerville
<b>Village/Neighborhood:</b>	Spring Hill
<b>Local No:</b>	1091, 58
<b>Year Constructed:</b>	c 1850
<b>Architect(s):</b>	
<b>Architectural Style(s):</b>	Greek Revival
<b>Use(s):</b>	Multiple Family Dwelling House
<b>Significance:</b>	Architecture
<b>Area(s):</b>	SMV.O: Brastow and Harvard Street Subdivision SMV.AQ: Spring Hill Historic District SMV.AY: Somerville Multiple Resource Area
<b>Designation(s):</b>	Local Historic District (03/11/1985); Nat'l Register MRA (09/18/1989); Nat'l Register District (09/18/1989)
<b>Building Materials(s):</b>	Roof: Asphalt Shingle Wall: Asbestos Shingle; Wood



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](http://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](http://www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc)

This file was accessed on: Tuesday, November 1, 2016 at 11:32 AM

FORM B - BUILDING

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
294 Washington Street, Boston, MA 02108

NRD15/MRA - 9.18.89

(IC)

UND. 3/11/85

(IC)

AQ

AY

Area <u>Spring</u>	Form no. <u>58</u>
-----------------------	-----------------------

(91)



Somerville

P1-SPRING

s 46-48 Atherton St.

USGS BOSTON  
SECT B

ic Name Frost / Swan

iginal residence

resent

hip: ☒ Private individual

Private organization n/a

Public n/a

iginal owner J.O. Frost

Mrs. Swan

PTION:

Date ca. 1850

Source map research

Style Greek Revival

Architect Unknown

Exterior wall fabric asphalt(?)

Outbuildings none

Major alterations (with dates) none

Moved no Date n/a

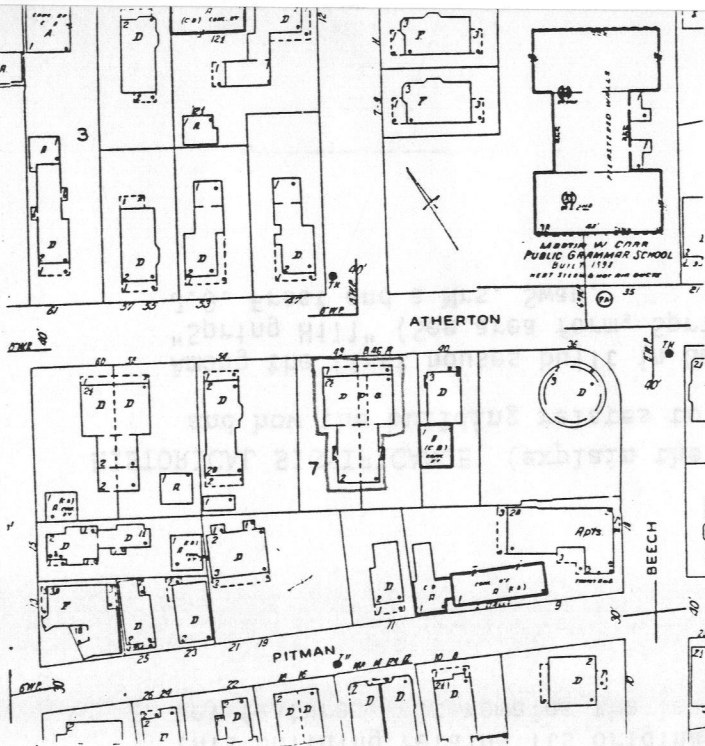
Approx. acreage less than one acre

Setting urban residential - in Spring

Hill district, mid to late 19th century

residential neighborhood, densely

populated



Recorded by Carole Zellie

Organization Somerville Historic Comm.

Date 1981

Staple additional sheets here



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

One of seven Greek Revival houses built on the Southern Slope of Spring Hill, this building retains its original windows, Doric columned porch, and other key features. It remains the least altered of the original group.

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

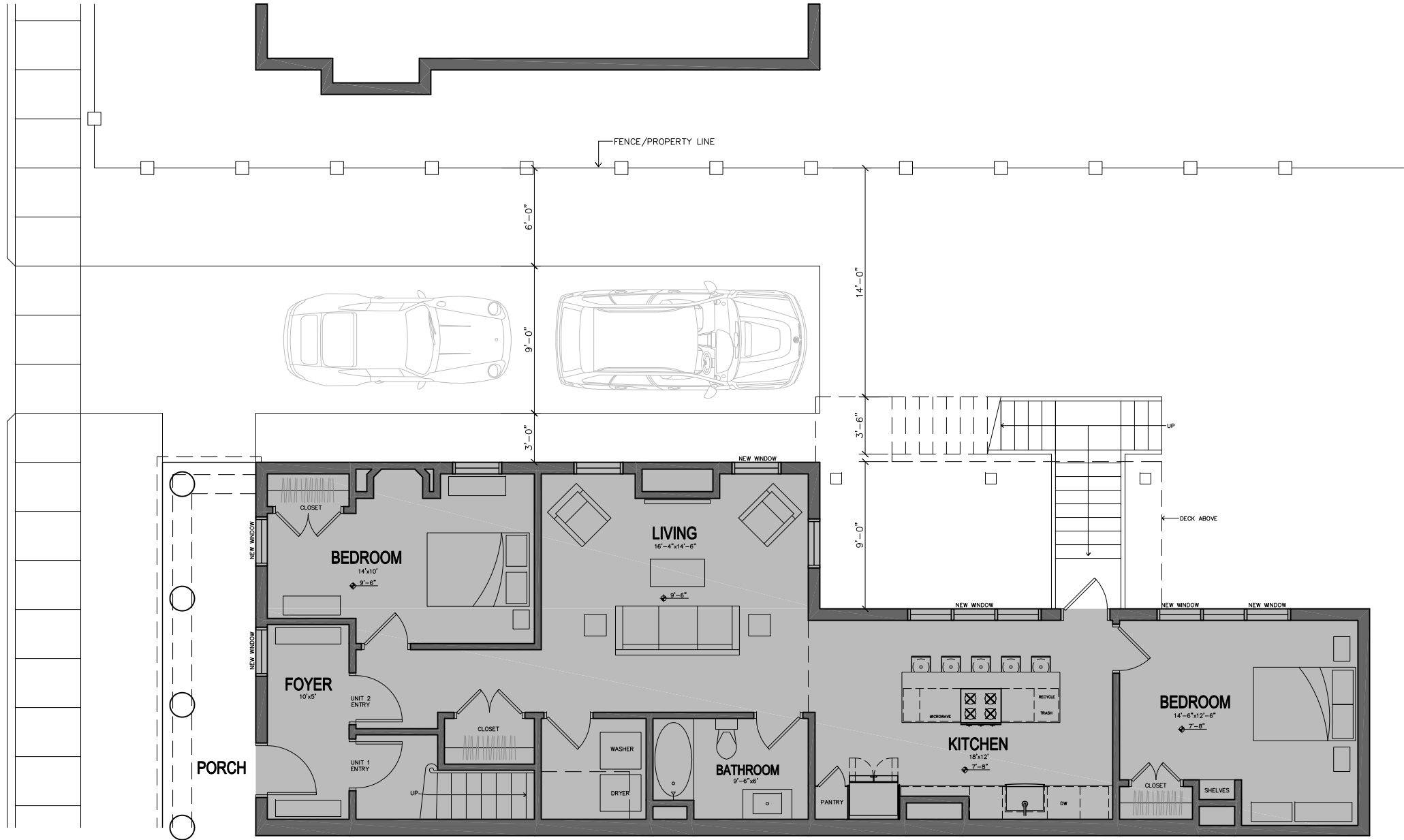
Among the first houses built in George Brastow's 1843 subdivision of "Spring Hill" (See area form, Spring Hill). Original owners included J.O. Frost and a Mrs. Swan.

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

Draper, 1852 Map of Somerville  
1874 Directory







46 ATHERTON STREET  
1/8" = 1'-0"

PROPOSED DRIVEWAY/DECK 1