



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

*HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION*

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**ALTERATION TO A HISTORIC PROPERTY STAFF REPORT**

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Site / District(s)      56 Bow Street / Bow Street LHD/NR  
Case:                      HPC 2012.091

Applicant Name:        Kathleen Galle  
Applicant Address:      56 Bow Street

Date of Application:    8/14/2012  
Legal Notice:           Remove chain link fence at rear of property and temporary fence at rear of driveway;  
                                 install 6' White Cedar wood fence to enclose backyard.

Staff Recommendation: Certificate of Appropriateness  
Date of Public Hearing: Wednesday, September 19, 2012

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**I.        BUILDING DESCRIPTION**

*1.    Architectural Description:*

This structure is a gable-end worker's cottage of the Italianate style and likely predates the 1874 Hopkins Atlas. The building has three bays on the primary façade with a side-hall entry and is two rooms in length. The minimal detail is consistent with a building of this class; however, the arched window under the gable and deep eaves provide minimal ornamentation. The window casing is also still evident, though the two-story front porch is a later twentieth century addition.



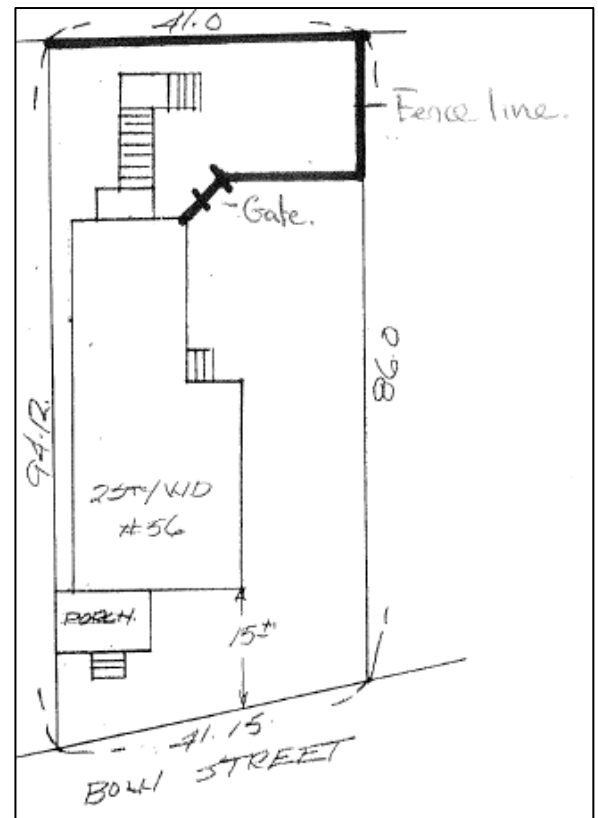
2. *Historical Context/Evolution of Structure or Parcel:*

The 1852 Draper Map illustrates a building in this location; however, the building is oriented lengthwise along Bow Street, but the possibility remains that this could be the same structure. The building first appears at the current location on the 1874 Hopkins Atlas, under the ownership of L. Arnold. An ell, or rear wing, is illustrated at the back of the building, and another addition, at a right angle, is attached to the rear ell. Directory research from 1876 explains that Leonard Arnold, a sash and blind maker on Bow Street, lives on Vinal Street opposite Aldersey Street. The 1874 Hopkins Atlas also illustrates that Arnold owns lot 81 on Vinal Street as well as lot 107 and 108 along Putnam Street. Additionally, there is a listing in the 1876 Directory for Leonard Arnold's sash and blind making business, which is the only business of this type listed in the 1876 Directory. The building continues to appear under the ownership of L. Arnold on the 1884 Hopkins Atlas, while the 1884 Somerville Directory explains that Arnold still has the sash and blind business on Bow Street. However, the property at 28 Vinal Street and the two lots along Putnam Street appear under the ownership of Irene G. Arnold. 1884 directory research also states that Andrew J. Peavey, a master machinist for the American Tube Works on Frost Avenue, has a house at 56 Bow Street. By 1895 (Bromley Atlas), Leonard Arnold appears again as the owner of 28 Vinal and still the owner of 56 Bow, which no longer has two rear ells but instead has a stable at the rear of the lot.

II. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1. *Proposal of Alteration:*

Remove chain link fence at rear of property and temporary fence at rear of driveway; install a 6' White Cedar tongue and groove wood fence on three sides at the rear of the property to enclose the backyard. The new fence would be perpendicular to a white plastic fence located along the rear left side of the property and have a gate at a west angle, separating the backyard from the driveway. While the temporary fence angles south toward the back of the property (see picture), the new fence proposes to cut straight across the driveway.



Top left: Existing chain link fence at rear of property  
Bottom: Existing temporary fence at rear of driveway

Right: Site plan of proposed fence and gate



Above: Proposed White Cedar fence to enclose backyard

### III. FINDINGS FOR A CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS

1. *Prior Certificates Issued/Proposed:*

In 2005, a prior owner was granted a Certificate of Hardship to install a white recycled plastic privacy fence at the rear left side of the property. In 2008, the same owner was granted a Certificate of Non-Applicability to repair and rebuild a chimney.

2. *Precedence:*

Properties with a similar fence type that have been approved include 26 Bow Street (C/A, 2003), 16-18 Westwood Road (C/A 2004) and 58 Columbus Avenue (C/A 2005). Although the heights of these fences vary, they are similar in that they all have a lattice panel at the top with pyramidal caps and are representative of the same time period.

3. *Considerations:*

- *What is the visibility of the proposal?*

The portion of fence to replace the existing chain link fence will be minimally visible from the street as the lot is deep, there is a plastic fence that blocks visibility of the rear portion of the lot, and there is a considerable amount of foliage. However, fences that block views of this proposed fence are considered temporary and foliage is only a seasonal deterrent.

The portion of fence to replace the temporary fence at the rear of the driveway will be highly visible; however, as the lot is deep, this portion of the fence will be located more than 60 feet from the sidewalk and street.

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

Currently, a chain link fence lines the rear lot line and a portion of the right rear property line. The white plastic fence, approved in 2005, is still in existence along the left rear property line. The owners are frustrated by their lack of privacy in the backyard as well as the view of trashcans and dumpsters from the large apartment buildings located on either side as well as Bombay Market, which fronts onto Somerville Avenue.

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

A. *The design approach to each property should begin with the premise that the features of historic and architectural significance must be preserved. In general, this tends to minimize the exterior alterations that will be allowed.*

The features described on the Form B, deep eaves and window casings, are not proposed to be altered as part of this proposal. These details will not be negatively affected by the installation of the proposed fence. Since the addition of this fence will deter public views from the rear portion of the property, which currently shows a chain link fence and dumpsters on the other side, this proposal will have a positive effect on the property. Furthermore, the proposed fence height and design, with horizontal lattice and pyramidal caps, is reminiscent of the late nineteenth century construction date of the dwelling.

- 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.*

The cedar replacement material is an upgrade from the existing chain link fence that is neither historic nor appropriate for the property.

- *Does the proposal coincide with the appropriate Specific Guidelines as set forth in the Design Guidelines?*

HPC Specific Guidelines do not explicitly address fences. Municipal preservation guideline research regarding fence location advises that fences are appropriate when placed in a rear yard with minimal visibility, or are considerably set back from the streetscape to allow the property owner privacy, pet control or security. Additionally, the placement of a fence along lot lines confirms historic lot patterns of historic neighborhoods such as Bow Street.

#### H. Landscape Features and Paving

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

The addition of a fence does not eliminate any of the existing landscape features. Although the fence proposal does reduce visibility of the rear yard, it will prevent public view of the dumpsters as well as offer privacy and security to the owner.

2. *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 built environment has experienced considerable change since 1874, but has retained a substantial amount of historic and architectural integrity. The proposed fence is suggestive of the dwelling's c.1874 construction date and is appropriate for the situation as this type of fence allows more privacy and security. The character of the fence is in keeping with the time period of construction and will enhance both the dwelling and the historic nature of the surrounding neighborhood.

### III. 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 Bow Street Local Historic District; therefore **Staff recommends that the Historic Preservation Commission grant 56 Bow Street a Certificate of Appropriateness.**

56 Bow Street

