



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

MICHAEL F. GLAVIN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

DETERMINATION OF PREFERABLY PRESERVED STAFF REPORT

Site:	57 Broadway
Case:	HPC 2017.004
Applicant Name:	Vincent Lee
Date of Application:	February 1, 2017
Date of Significance:	February 21, 2017
Recommendation:	Preferably Preserved
Hearing Date:	March 21, 2017

**A determination of Preferably Preserved begins a nine month Demolition Delay.*

I. Meeting Summary: Determination of Significance

On Tuesday, February 21, 2017, the Historic Preservation Commission, in accordance with the Demolition Review Ordinance (2003-05), made a determination that 57 Broadway is Significant. Per Section 2.17.B, this decision is found on the following criteria:



Section 2.17.B - The structure is at least 50 years old;
and

- (i) The structure is 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;*
and / or
- (ii) The structure is historically or architecturally significant (in terms of period, style, method of building construction, or association with a reputed architect or builder) either by itself or in the context of a group of buildings or structures.*

According to *Criteria 2.17.B*, listed above, historic map and directory research identifies the structure as c. 1873 with Gilbert Tufts as the first inhabitant.

In accordance with *Criteria (i)*, listed above, the Commission determined 57 Broadway ‘Significant’ due to an association of the property with the broad architectural, cultural, economic and social history of the City due to its associations with the Tufts family, J.H. Cotton as a prominent landowner, and Louis H. Mudgett, manager of several musical institutions, and with the broad architectural, cultural, political, economic or social history of the City.

In accordance with *Criteria (ii)*, listed above, the Commission also found the subject buildings historically and architecturally significant due to its relationship to the streetscape and its place within a group of similarly important buildings and an intact representative of 19th century working- class housing stock. The subject building is found historically and architecturally significant due to its period, style, method of building construction, and 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 57 Broadway historically or architecturally significant. This house is one of a small collection of working class houses on the north side of Broadway on the remains of Mount Benedict all constructed before 1874. It is the mirror twin to the house at 59 Broadway which shares the same form and construction although its brick veneer gives the building more solidity. The building is in a key location within the. It is integral to the pre-1874 neighborhood and despite alterations is readily identifiable as an Italianate home through its massing, fenestration and other characteristics. The method used for the installation of the current aluminum siding suggests intact architectural details beneath.

The period of significance for 57 Broadway begins circa 1870 with the platting of the area by William A Garbett or Corbett on the southeastern edge of Mount Benedict in 1867 and continuing to the present day as workers housing. Its proximity to the Boston and Maine Railway within easy walking distance of the station made the neighborhood highly desirable for Boston commuters.

II. Additional Information

Additional Research:

- Building permit files from Inspectional Services do not provide any additional relevant information.
- Gilbert Tufts lived at the corner of Broadway and Benedict Avenue from 1873-1875, thereafter at the corner of Broadway and Mount Vernon Street. His tannery was located at the Tufts Mill Pond where Sullivan Square now sits.
- J. H. Cotton 1873-1916 Directories –American Tube Works, titles range from Clerk to Assistant Treasurer and Treasurer. Joseph H. Cotton had his hand in many things as can be seen in this excerpt from **Political Pamphlets, 1876-1888**. His appointment by Massachusetts Governor, Benjamin F. Butler (1883-1884) was controversial as was the Governor himself.

expose him to attacks which he could not successfully repel.

- There is no probability that Mr. Cotton will be confirmed as judge of the Charlestown court by the executive council. The facts of his career, and other statements, stronger than any here given, are being laid before them by the excited citizens of the district. It is said that even Mr. Maguire, the Democratic councillor, who, so far as known, has voted for every nomination the governor has made, will oppose this one. Indeed, it is suggested that the governor made the nomination confident that it would not be confirmed, and intending merely to pay as cheaply as possible one of his political debts. (Since the above was written, the governor has been forced, by the array of damaging facts against the nominee, and the determined position to his confirmation, to withdraw Mr. Cotton's name.)

Other nominations made by the governor all show the same disposition to reward personal and political services.

- The colorful Louis H. Mudgett only lived at 57 Broadway for a short time and resided in many homes in the Boston area as did many of the residents of 57 Broadway. Katherine (Catherine) Dawley and her sisters found there in 1924 until at least 1940 were among the longest term inhabitants and owners.
- Population According to the 1880 Census, most of the people living in the neighborhood were born in Massachusetts with one immigrant from PEI. Jobs ranged from Teacher to expressman to bookbinder to produce salesman.



By 1900, the neighborhood had become more mixed with places of origin including Canada, Ireland, Germany, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Illinois, Iowa and the West Indies. Jobs held by mostly the men in the family were less skilled and included expressman, teamster, junk dealer, laundress, brewer, rubberworker, foreman, lawyer and mechanic.

- By 1930, the neighborhood had become even more diverse with residents coming from Massachusetts, Vermont, New Hampshire, New York, and Michigan within the United States. A large number of families also came from England, Canada, Ireland, Germany and Italy. Their jobs are described as chauffeur, waitress, plasterer, steelworker, foreman, ticket agent, tailor, packer, mechanic and a number of other blue collar jobs

Site Visit:

Mount Benedict has a variety of housing stock ranging from 2 ½- story single-family gabled houses to 3-story Mansard. These building styles reflect the times in which they were built. Gable-end single family house reflect the earliest period of development followed shortly after with Mansard roofed cottages and apartments. Most of the current buildings were in place by 1884.



57 Broadway and comparable house, location unknown c. 1895 by Somerville photographer, Philip Mason.



Broadway at Benedict Avenue and Austin Street looking west.



Corner of Broadway and Benedict Avenue looking north.



Austin Street looking south toward Broadway

Comparable Structures:

Two story gable-end dwellings with two or three bays are common throughout the City and compose a majority of the residential housing stock within the City. This building type is generally constructed as a single or two-family dwelling. Comparable structures of the same dates and style include:

- 1 Webster Street (LHD)
- 81 Pearl Street (LHD)
- 67 Florence Street (LHD)
- See the neighboring houses on Austin Street and Benedict Avenue, especially the mirror twin at 59 Broadway.

Predominant differences between the comparable dwellings are all gable end toward the street. The shapes and sizes of the eaves and bays as well as width of the buildings. They all have different amounts details retained and have changed over time. They were all constructed for workers and inhabited by families for generations. For the most part they are well-maintained and retain much of their original character. 1 Webster Street, 81 Pearl Street and 67 Florence Street in East Somerville



Above: 1 Webster Street (1851), 81 Pearl Street (1860); 67 Florence Street (c.1857).

III. Preferably Preserved

If the Commission determines that the demolition of the significant building or structure would be detrimental to the architectural, cultural, political, economic, or social heritage of the City, such building or structure shall be considered a preferably preserved building or structure. (Ordinance 2003-05, Section 4.2.d)

A determination regarding if the demolition of the subject building is detrimental to the architectural, cultural, political, economic, or social heritage of the City should consider the following:

- How does this building or structure compose or reflect features which contribute to the heritage of the City?*

The form and massing of this single-family dwelling represents an increasingly rare residential building type within the City. The Mount Benedict streetscape and surrounding neighborhood are predominantly composed of workers housing similar to the form and massing of the subject parcel, and together, the

buildings that form this streetscape illustrate the suburbanization and industrialization of East Somerville in the third quarter of the 19th century.

As industries developed in Charlestown, Boston and East Somerville along the rail and river corridors, housing for the workers also developed in close proximity to their places of work. Slaughter houses, tanneries, wharves, railroad depots, and furniture factories were located in close proximity with Sullivan Square. These streets would have been undesirable to middle management and building owners who preferred to build above and away from the noise and pollution of their businesses on Somerville's many hills.

While many of the remaining industrial buildings are being adapted for reuse, the housing associated with the businesses is being demolished for larger structures. The destruction of the workers neighborhoods removes the context and the history of Somerville, a city proud of its connections with the working class forever.

b) What is the remaining integrity of the structure? The National Park Service defines integrity as the ability of a property to convey significance.

The Commission found that integrity of this one-family dwelling is retained within the location and form, as well as integrity of design. The structure retains integrity of location through siting and orientation as well as through spatial relationships to other buildings along Broadway, Benedict Avenue and Austin Streets. The building is an excellent example of an L-shaped cottage that retains many of its original features including, but not limited to: window layout, gable ends with indications of size and location of the brackets, and 2-story rear ell. The main massing and form remains evident despite alterations to the siding, roofing materials and windows.

.c) What is the level (local, state, national) of significance?

Somerville prides itself on its working class heritage. The elimination of the historical evidence of this history belittles the importance of an entire class of people without whom the City as it is today would not exist. This closely built neighborhood developed at a time when much of Somerville was still fairly rural due to the industries located along the railroads, river and mill ponds nearby. See above for the Commission's Determination of 'significance'.

d) What is the visibility of the structure with regard to public interest (Section 2.17.B.ii) if demolition were to occur?

The subject parcel is highly visible at the corner of Benedict Avenue and Broadway. It is the first neighborhood immediately visible along Broadway. The neighborhoods on the other side of Broadway are hidden commercial building

e) What is the scarcity or frequency of this type of resource in the City?

Workers housing set within a clear neighborhood of similar buildings is becoming increasingly rare as developers buy up the small houses suitable for single families with yards for the children to play in order to construct larger buildings that disrupt the context and proportions of these districts of pocket-sized homes. This house is unusual in that it has a mirror twin immediately next door. Buildings of similar form but later construction date can be found on Prentiss Street in Cambridge with Stick and Queen Anne detailing and steeper roof pitch as opposed to the earlier Italianate style with a shallower roof pitch of this house.

Upon a consideration of the above criteria (a-e), is the demolition of the subject building detrimental to the architectural, cultural, political, economic, or social heritage of the City?

The Commission found the subject building importantly associated with the broad architectural, cultural, economic and social history of the City due to its association with popular architectural trends within the

working-classes and the early residential development of Union Square during the third quarter of the 19th Century. Despite the alterations to the building, the retention of form and location give a very good sense of this type of working-class housing in the 19th century. The building is integral to the Broadway streetscape and serves as an entry to the neighborhood beyond. Its removal would leave its sister property an orphan on the increasingly busy and dense Broadway and divorce the neighborhood from its connection to 19th century Somerville.

Upon a consideration of the above criteria (a-e), is the demolition of the subject building detrimental to the architectural, cultural, political, economic, or social heritage of the City?

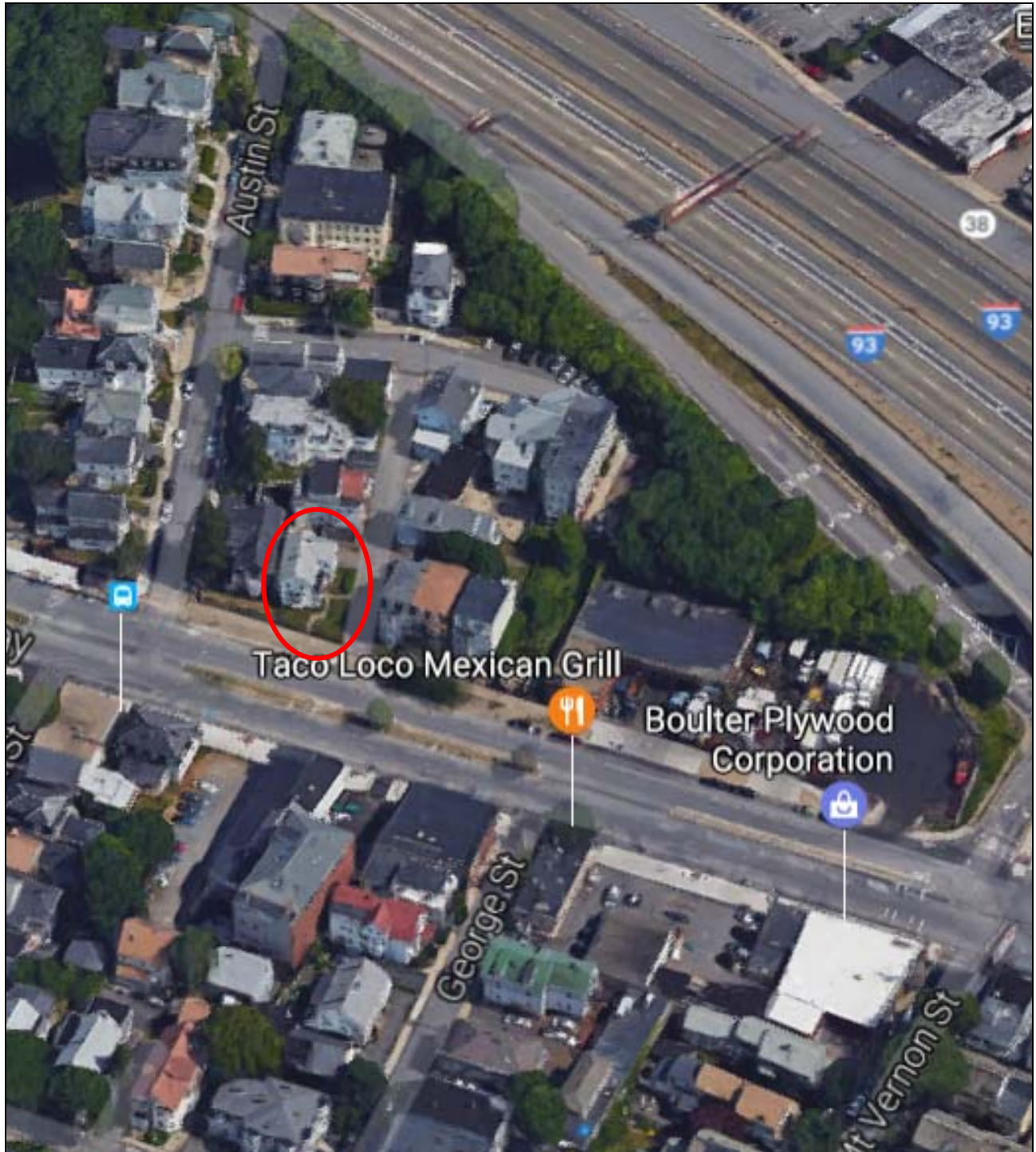
Following the criteria (a-e) noted above Staff found the potential demolition of 57 Broadway detrimental to the heritage of the City.

IV. 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 hearing for a Determination of Preferably Preserved. 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.

In accordance with the Demolition Review Ordinance (2003-05), Section 4.D, Staff find the potential demolition of the subject structure detrimental to the heritage of the City, and consequently in the best interest of the public to preserve or rehabilitate. Therefore, due to the significance of this residential property, its integrity, its place in the development of the City and the associated streetscape within the City and its relation to Mount Benedict, **Staff recommend that the Historic Preservation Commission find 57 Broadway Preferably Preserved.**

If the Historic Preservation Commission determines the structure is Preferably Preserved, the Building Inspector may issue a demolition permit at anytime, upon receipt of written advice from the Commission that there is no reasonable likelihood that either the owner or some other person or group is willing to purchase, preserve, rehabilitate or restore the subject building or structure (Ord. 2003-05, Section 4.5).



57 Broadway, aerial view