



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

*HISTORIC PRESERVATION DIVISION*

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**ALTERATION TO A HISTORIC PROPERTY STAFF REPORT**

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**Site:** 58 Meacham  
**Case:** HPC 2015-051

**Historic Name:** Henry R. Glover House  
**District(s):** Campbell Park/Meacham Road LHD

**Applicant Name:** Paul Christie  
**Applicant Address:** 58 Meacham, Somerville, MA

**Owner Name:** same as above  
**Owner Address:** same as above

**Date of Application:** July 27, 2015  
**Legal Notice:** *Alter front porch and rear steps; Remove fire escape.*  
**Staff Recommendation:** Approval with conditions  
**Date of Public Hearing:** August 18, 2015

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**I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The applicant requests a Certificate of Appropriateness to alter the structure in the following manner as described in the application:

*"We would like to swap out turned posts on the front porch for square posts similar in nature to the back porch. We would also like to change handrails o mahogany in the same style as the back porch.*

*We would like to remove rusting fire escape from the back of the house, third floor to second, and replace with wood the rusting stairs from the second floor to the first."*

**II. PROPERTY DESCRIPTION**

**1. Historical and Architectural Description:**

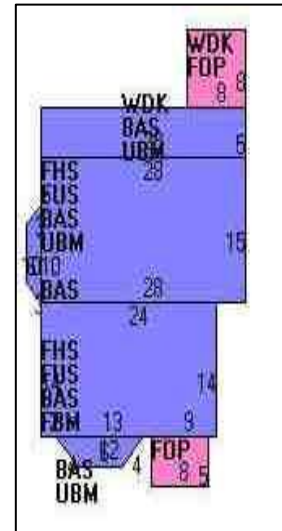
Historically known as the Henry R. Glover house, it was constructed between 1892 and 1894. It is alternately listed as a Victorian Eclectic and an altered Italianate/Queen Anne. Like many of the houses built by Henry Glover in this neighborhood, this is a 2 ½ story, originally wood-framed residential structure

with templar gable ends. The structure currently retains its original massing and exterior plan, but it has been altered with the application of vinyl or aluminum siding, replaced front porch decking, posts and rails and replacement windows. In addition, fire escapes have been added and replaced over the course of the years.

**Fig. 1**



**Fig. 2**



**Fig. 1** at left depicts the front façade of 58 Meacham while **Fig. 2** at right shows the building layout from the Somerville Assessor's site.

## 2. Context/Evolution of Structure or Parcel:

Research shows that this property is one of many houses in the immediate area that was built in the 1890s when this particular subdivision was created. Although the subdivision was laid out in 1847 by George Meacham, there was no development until the 1890s. By that time, much of the land on Meacham Road was owned by Henry Glover and Charles H. Saunders of Cambridge. Glover, a real estate investor also from Cambridge, built and sold many of the houses in the neighborhood while others he retained for rental income.

Much of the Davis Square area became home for railroad and streetcar commuters which is evidenced by the suburban building boom of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Streetcar service along nearby Massachusetts Avenue to Porter Square and to Davis Square provided easy access to Boston and Cambridge for employment. This area was also home for many Somerville workers. By the 1870s, Davis Square was evolving into a commercial center with several commercial blocks. The Somerville Horse Railroad Company and the Boston and Maine Railroad provided good transportation to and from this area.

## 4. Proposal

Swap out turned posts on the front porch for square posts similar in nature to the back porch. Change front porch hand rails to mahogany in the same style as the back porch. Remove rusting fire escape from the back of the house, third floor to second, and replace with wood the rusting stairs from the second floor to the first.

### III. FINDINGS

The applicant applying for this Certificate of Appropriateness has received several such certificates from the HPC over the years as well as Certificates of Non-Applicability. A list of these certificates appears below:

**1 - HPC 2015.036 – 58 Meacham Road, Somerville**

**Certificate of Non-Applicability**

1. Condition: The front and back porches including rails, posts, and balusters shall be repaired or replaced to match the existing in style, height, texture, size, shape, and installation detail.

**2 - HPC 12.102 – 58 Meacham Road**

**Certificate of Non-Applicability**

1. Nature of Non-Applicability:
  - a. Repair and replace damaged and missing slates on-kind as needed;
  - b. Install 34' of copper ridge-cap, 29' of copper valleys, and
  - c. Re-flash chimney and vent pipe with 6 oz. copper flashing.

**3 - HPC #06.45 – 58 Meacham Road**

**Certificate of Appropriateness**

1. Nature of Non-Applicability:
  - a. Replace existing window on south side rear with Atrium style 6068 French doors, each be a single panel and with no additional internal divisions for muntins and brick mold casings on rear second floor porch.

**4 - HPC #02.45 – 58 Meacham Road**

**Certificate of Appropriateness**

1. Nature of approved work:
  - a. Install a flat lid copper chimney cap

**HPC #02.45 – 58 Meacham Road**

**Certificate of Non-Applicability**

1. Nature of Non-Applicability:
  - a. Rebuild existing chimney on the condition that the Staff review and approve any replacement brick before installation;
  - b. Install lead flashing;
  - c. Install 2 new screen doors and a new door on the rear of the building;
  - d. Repair and replace damaged or rotted siding, trim or sheathing in-kind as necessary; and
  - e. Repaint the house.

**1. Considerations:**

- **What is the visibility of the proposal?**

The proposed alterations, both for the front porch, fire escape and stairs are all visible from public ways.

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

Overall, the structure appears to be in good condition.

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

Yes.

## **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 affect 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.
- B. Changes and additions to the property and its environment that have taken place over the course of time are evidence of the history of the property and the neighborhood. These changes to the property may have developed significance in their own right, and this significance should be recognized and respected (LATER IMPORTANT FEATURES will be the term used hereafter to convey this concept).
- 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.

**Staff comments:** The proposed work complies with items D, E, and F. Replacing the turned wood columns on the front porch with square ones is more in keeping to the style and period of the structure. Replacement of the deteriorating metal fire escape appears necessary from a safety perspective. It should be noted that the extant metal escape and stairs are not original to the building. Replacing the metal portions with wood (mahogany) brings these elements of the structure into keeping with the rear decks, landings and stairs that have already been replaced, providing a cohesive look to the rear of the building. The applicant will need to apply for appropriate building permits from the Inspectional Services Division (ISD) before work can begin.

## **III. RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the materials submitted by the Applicant, the above findings and subject to the following conditions, Staff recommends a approval of the certificate of appropriateness sought by the applicant only if the following conditions are met:

**Condition 1** – Applicant shall obtain all appropriate building permits prior to commencing work.

**Condition 2** – Applicant shall wrap the front porch posts as shown in Figs. 7 and 8 in the Addendum section of this staff report.

**Condition 3** – Applicant shall paint the front porch posts and railings as this is an appropriate application for a building of this style and period as opposed to the exposed mahogany proposed in the application. Should the HPC agree with this condition, the applicant should consider selecting a wood other than mahogany. However, due to its lack of durability, pine should not be used.

**Condition 4** – Applicant shall finish the replaced fire escape and stairs on the rear of the house in the same manner as the existing portions of the fire escape and stairs that run from the second floor to the ground.

**Condition 5** – Applicant shall contact HPC Staff upon completion of the work for sign-off that the work was done in accordance with the Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) and approved plans.



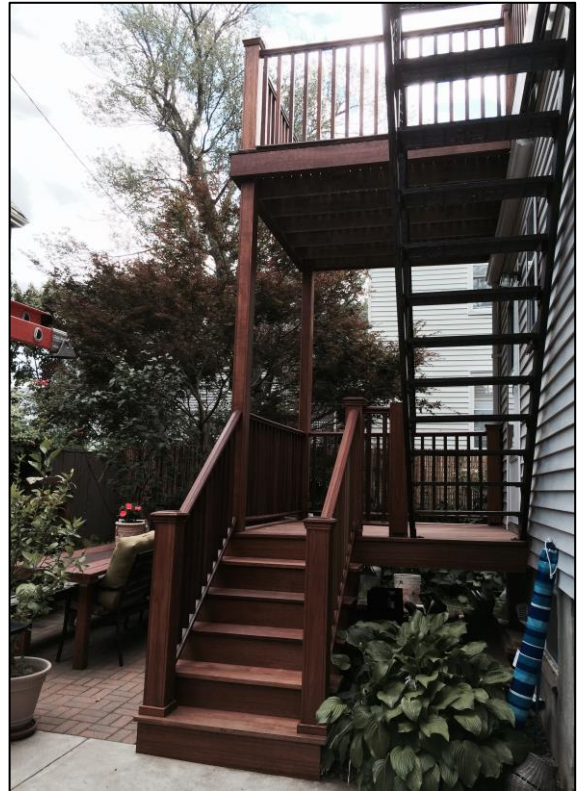
#### IV. ADDENDUM

Figures 3 – 6 below show the areas of proposed alteration for 58 Meacham

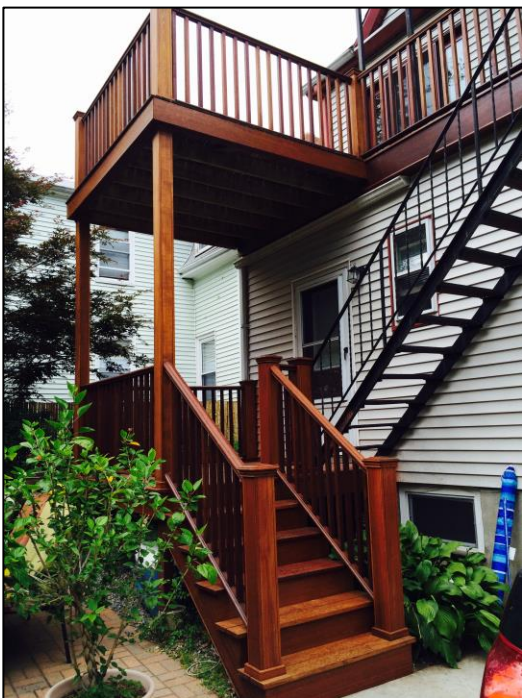
*Fig. 3 Front porch post and railing*



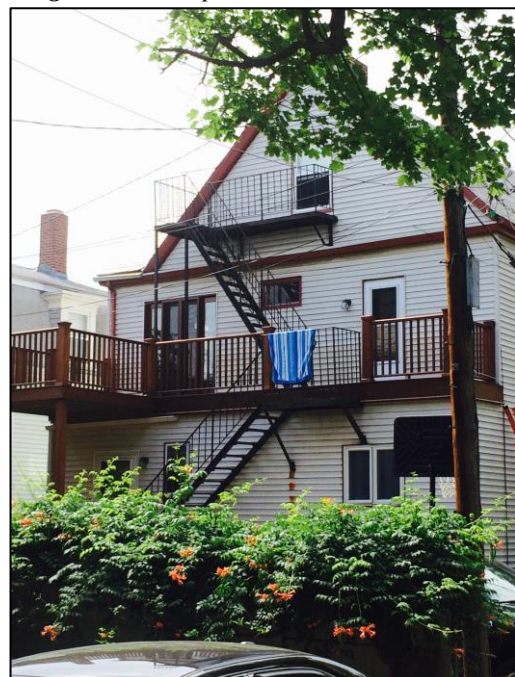
*Fig. 4 Stairs, decks and escapes*



*Fig. 5 Fire escape*



*Fig. 6 Fire escape*



Figures 7-9 below provide a good example of an appropriate style of post and railings for the front porch of 58 Meacham:

*Fig. 7*



*Fig. 8*



*Fig. 9*