



Site

**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:	17-19R Aldersey Street	c. 1869 Adoniram Taylor House and Stable
Case:	HPC 2013.034	Aldersey Summit Local Historic District
Applicant Name:	RCG Aldersey LLC, Owner	
Applicant Address:	17 Ivaloo Street, Suite 100, Somerville, MA 02143	
Date of Application:	June 24, 2013	
Legal Notice:	<i>Replace chain link fence with 6' wood and lattice fence; construct trash enclosure to match; and install walkway from parking area to front steps.</i>	
Staff Recommendation:	Certificate of Appropriateness	
Date of Public Hearing:	July 16, 2013	

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**I. BUILDING DESCRIPTION**

**ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION:**

Built on one of the larger residential lots in the Prospect Hill area, this house is a fine example of a three story, Second Empire home. Although there is a center entrance with a projecting central pavilion the plan is asymmetrical with a side ell that is incorporated into the straight edged mansard roof. Intact architectural detail includes the paired cornice brackets, segmental arched dormers, patterned slate roof, wood block quoins, and cut glass panels on the paired entrance doors. There is a full length, wrap porch with a decorated balustrade and lattice screening on the side section. In all likelihood, this was added in the early 20th century. Similar detail is found on the mansard cottage at the rear of the property which is a converted stable.



**HISTORICAL CONTEXT/EVOLUTION OF STRUCTURE OR PARCEL:**

The property is one of the best examples of a well conserved Second Empire house on a large double lot in the residential district of Prospect Hill. Aldersey Street is part of a plan of building lots drawn up for Quincy A. Vinal

in 1868. [Plan Book 15, Plan 63/64]. Most of the land in this section of Prospect Hill was owned by the Vinals. This was part of a larger parcel conveyed to Ira Hill and Edwin M. Bacon, real estate investors in 1869. Within two months Hill and Bacon had this house built and sold to Adoniram J. Taylor, carpenter and house builder. It is possible that he may have built this house and subsequently purchased it. It is thought that Taylor was the carpenter who built the Enoch Robinson House at 36 Atherton Street. The "Round House" is noted for its unusual round shape and is the only such design in Somerville.

## II. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

### 1. *Proposal of Alteration:*

1. Replace chain link fence with 6' wood and vertical lattice fence at rear of property;
2. Construct an 8'x8' trash enclosure to match next to garage; and
3. Install granite paving stones 18" x 18" x 1 1/2" spaced 2"-3" apart from parking area to front steps.

See the final pages for details and photos.

## II. FINDINGS

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

2012.098	C/A, C/H, C/NA	09/28/12	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Remove and salvage existing carriage house (19R Aldersey Street) roof slates for repairs on main building (C/A); <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Any slates left over from repairs on the main house at 17-19 Aldersey Street should be used first on the front of the carriage house and then on the west side facing Vinal Avenue (C/A);</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. Replace slate and asphalt shingles on the remainder of the carriage house mansard with Slateline® architectural shingles (C/A) and</li> <li>3. Remove existing picket fence (C/A).</li> <li>4. Replace existing wood gutters of house and carriage house with aluminum gutters but not on the carriage house porch (C/H).</li> <li>5. Replace slate shingles with asphalt shingles on upper roof of carriage house (not visible) (C/NA).</li> </ol>
2012.099	C/NA	09/05/12	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Repair and replace siding and trim in-kind as needed;</li> <li>2. Recaulk or replace lights on all windows in-kind as needed;</li> <li>3. Replace storm windows;</li> <li>4. Repoint masonry including chimneys with mortar consistent to the existing in color, texture, tooling, and vapor permeability;</li> <li>5. Install new flashing in-kind where needed;</li> <li>6. Replace asphalt roofs and install flashing in-kind;</li> <li>7. Repair and replace lower mansard on main house with slate shingles in kind as needed using salvaged slate shingles from the carriage house roof that are not visible from the public right of way;</li> <li>8. Replace asphalt shingle on carriage house, porches and the upper roof of both buildings with asphalt shingles in-kind</li> <li>9. Replace aluminum gutters in-kind; and</li> <li>10. Paint</li> </ol>
2013.020	C/NA	05/06/13	Alterations to the east side of the carriage house not visible from public rights-of-way.

### 1. *Precedence:*

- *Are there similar properties / proposals?*

The Commission has regularly approved the removal of chain link fences. These include fences that were located at 26 Bow Street, 24 Chester Street, 58 Columbus Avenue, 57 Meacham Road, 140 and 144 Morrison Avenue, 8 and 74 Mount Vernon Street, 28 Warren Avenue, and 6 and 9 Westwood Road. While chain link fence was invented in 1844 in England, it was not produced in the United States until 1898 when Anchor Fence acquired the patent according to Wikipedia.

The proposed wood slat and lattice fence is a modern style compatible with older properties.

### 3. Considerations:

- *What is the visibility of the proposal?*

The proposed fence would be visible at the rear property line seen between the stable and house as well as minimally from the driveway side of the building. Much of that view would be obscured by the trash enclosure to be located to the left of the garage. The new walkway would be at grade and minimally visible.

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

The property was bought last year by RCG. They have done Director's Award winning repairs to both buildings and dealt sensitively to ensure that new materials blended with the old where necessary. There is a chain link fence at the rear of the property. There is no enclosure for the trash and recycling in this multi-unit building. The line of desire can be seen in the worn grass running from the driveway to the front steps.

- *Does the proposal coincide with the General Approach 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.

### 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.*
- 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.***

### **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.*
- 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.*
- 3. *The existing landforms of the site should not be altered unless shown to be necessary for maintenance of the structure or site. Additional landforms will only be considered if they will not obscure the exterior of the structure.*
- 4. ***The original layout and materials of the walks, steps and paved areas should be maintained if significant grade changes constitute an important feature of the structure or site. Consideration will be given to alterations if it can be shown that improved site circulation is necessary and that the alterations will accomplish this without altering the integrity of the structure.***

No changes to the features described in the Form B will be altered. The proposed fence and trash enclosure will not obscure any part of the original structures. The proposed walkway will regularize the preferred line of desire from the driveway to the front door and will not alter the integrity of the property.

### **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 Aldersey/Summit Local Historic District; therefore **Staff recommends that the Historic Preservation Commission grant 17-19, and 19R Aldersey Street a Certificate of Appropriateness** for the installation of the board and lattice fence on the property line and trash enclosure, and for the installation of a new granite block walkway.

