



**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:	10 Allen Court
Case:	HPC 2012.103
Applicant Name:	Kevin Emery
Date of Application:	September 13, 2012
Date of Significance:	October 18, 2012 / Significant
Det. of Preferably Preserved:	November 20, 2012
Recommendation:	Not Preferably Preserved



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

---

**I. Meeting Summary: Determination of Significance**

On Thursday, October 18, 2012, the Historic Preservation Commission, in accordance with the Demolition Review Ordinance (2003-05), made a determination that 10 Allen Court is Significant. Per Section 2.17.B, this decision is found on the following criteria:

*(A) The structure is at least 50 years old;*

**and**

*(a) 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**

*(b) 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 (A)*, listed above, historic map and directory research identifies the structure as c. 1869; however, the Commission concluded that this structure could be older than initial research indicates. Staff agrees that 10 Allen Court likely predates 1869 and conducted additional research to more accurately date the structure. Details of additional research are provided in the following section.

In accordance with *Criteria (a)*, listed above, the Commission agreed with Staff findings that due to the association of this structure with the Middlesex Dye and Bleachery (now Conway Park) as well as due to



the assemblage of styles this building continues to retain, the structure is importantly associated with the broad architectural, cultural and economic history of the City.

In accordance with *Criteria (b)*, listed above, the Commission disagreed with Staff findings. Staff did not find the structure historically or architecturally significant (in terms of period, style, method of building construction or associated with a reputed architect or builder). The Commission disagreed and found the structure historically and architecturally significant due to the period of construction and pattern of fenestration within the context of a group of buildings. This grouping consists of the subject dwelling and stable/garage at 10 Allen Court and the two-family dwelling at 7-9 Allen Court, located across the street.

## II. Additional Information

### *Additional Research:*

- Additional map research conducted by Staff includes the 1860 and 1868 Henry F. Walling maps of Boston and Vicinity. Although Allen Court (Place) is not identified on either map, this could focus the construction date to c. 1860-1869 with additional supportive evidence. Since Allen Court is similar to an alley and is not a thru street, maps prior to the 1874 Hopkins map may purposefully have not recorded it.
- Assessment record research indicates that in 1863 John Row has a house and stable valued at \$2500. 1866 and 1867 "takings" records list John Rowe with property at the "Bleachy." An 1858-1868 deed book lists John C. Row with a barn on Allen and a mortgage for \$550 dated August 13, 1867; however, the first barn identified on this property is illustrated on the 1884 Hopkins Map.
- Fire records exist only as far back as 1930 and there is no record for Allen Court.
- Building permit records indicate that the entire building was insulated in 2000, including the replacement of sheetrock and door and window moldings. In 2002, the roof was stripped down and re-shingled.
- Census data for John Rowe in Somerville does not precede 1880. This data states that John Rowe was born in Canada, is a carpenter, has a wife named Catherine who 'keeps house,' and a son named George who is 12 years old.

*Summary:* Additional research does not determine that the building is older than c.1869. A prior construction date is still possible; however, the additional resources consulted that assert this possibility are obscure and inconclusive. Therefore, Staff upholds the c.1869 construction date.

### *Site Visit:*

Another site visit was conducted on 10/24/2012. Staff attempted to determine more clearly if any window or door casings survive. Staff was not able to determine if this component still exists; however, the Applicant/Owner explained to Staff that he has gone over the building in detail and found no casings. Building permit records most likely confirm this statement. Staff also noted during the second site visit that the current height of the porch railings meet building code; evidence of prior railings is not clear.

### *Comparable Structures:*

Dwellings of comparable size and massing are found mainly in Ward II and Magoun Square, but neighborhoods such as East Somerville and Winter Hill also retain structures resembling the shape and size of the subject dwelling.

- 62 Dane Street (LHD) – c.1850, 1½ story, side hall entry, brick foundation

- 23 Fiske Avenue – c.1870-71, 1½ story, center hall entry, concrete foundation
- 25 Fiske Avenue – c.1871-74, 1½ story, center hall entry, brick foundation
- 12 Hinckley Street – c.1869-70, 1½ story, side hall entry, brick foundation
- 282 Lowell Street – c.1874-75, 1½ story, center entry, brick foundation
- 342 Lowell Street (LHD) – c.1861-62, 1½ story, center hall entry, brick foundation
- 88 Properzi Way – c. 1850, 1½ story, side hall entry, brick foundation
- 93 Properzi Way – 1870, 1½ story, side hall entry, concrete foundation

Predominant differences between the comparable dwellings and the subject dwelling are the level of architectural detail and location of later additions. Although some of the comparable dwellings have a center hall interior plan, these still share the modest massing and size of the subject building as well as illustrate the economic means of the working class during the mid to late nineteenth century.



10 Allen Court



Top: 62 Dane St (c.1850); 23-25 Fiske Ave (c.1870-74); 12 Hinckley St (c. 1869)

Bottom: 282 Lowell St (c. 1874); 342 Lowell St (c. 1861); 88 Properzi Way (c. 1850); 93 Properzi Way (c. 1870)

### 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:*

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

The modest massing and form demonstrate one type and the general size of working class industrial housing in Somerville during the mid to late nineteenth century which contribute architecturally to the heritage of the City. The fenestration pattern for various façades also contributes architecturally. The change in use of the stable to a garage as well as the spatial relationship between this structure and the subject dwelling reflects cultural and social heritage components. Last, the creation of Allen Court (Place) represents a popular strategy for land speculators to capitalize on their investments. The strategy of subdividing parcels and creating cul-de-sacs, or Courts, to access new, interior lots is demonstrated throughout the City.

- 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 integrity is retained within the size, massing, fenestration patterns or window and door openings, all within the context of a group of structures. This group is composed of the stable/garage and dwelling at 10 Allen Court and the two-family at 7-9 Allen Court, across the street. Staff notes that for a structure of this age to have retained its original massing, including the small rear ell, is unusual. Furthermore, the two-family dwelling at 7-9 Allen Court also retains its original form and massing.

Staff also notes that the structure has had a significant loss of the original setting due to the location and size of the two buildings on the corner of Allen Court and Park Street, the creation of Conway Park which has further isolated this building, and the accumulation of asphalt which further alters the historic sense of a relevant time period.

The Commission found that the structure has integrity of location (spatial layout of buildings) and design (form, massing, and fenestration composition). However, integrity of material is largely unknown without removing exterior materials and Staff found a loss of integrity with regard to the setting which no longer communicates a relevant time period.

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

The Commission found the building Significant due to the historical association of the subject dwelling with the Middlesex Bleachery (now Conway Park) and due to historical and architectural significance with regard to the integrity of location and design, within the context of a group of structures. Representing an aspect of state and local history, employee housing during the industrial period, the subject structure is significant at the state and local levels.

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

The structure is minimally visible from Park Street, between an early twentieth century double triple-decker and a mid twentieth century industrial building. Allen Court does not have a very coherent or recognizable streetscape and neighborhood; consequently, 10 Allen Court is visibly detached from an appropriate streetscape and neighborhood. There is currently no access to Conway Park from Allen Court. A cement retaining wall and chain link fence block views and access.

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

Staff did additional research to identify specific examples of working class housing stock within the City that are comparable to the subject dwelling in form, massing, and proximity to places of industrial employment. Due to the possibility that 10 Allen Court may still be older than what research supports, the comparable structures span from 1850-1874.

Comparable structures are predominantly located in the Ward II area, near the subject property, and south of Magoun Square in the Hinckley and Fiske street neighborhood. Form and massing are consistent for all the comparable dwellings though some have a center hall plan as opposed to a side hall entry plan.

While this type of dwelling is not scarce within the City, this type is also not prevalent. However, the comparable dwellings are all located within a neighborhood, contribute to the streetscape and retain their historic setting that communicates a relevant time period. These dwellings are more in tact examples of the subject dwelling and retain more integrity of material as well.

***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 parcel Significant due to an association of the dwelling with the Bleachery and period of working class housing, the intact form and massing, and fenestration pattern of the window and door openings within the context of this group of buildings. The factors that determined the Significance of the building convey multiple components of City heritage. However, due to minimal visibility of the structure, lack of a coherent streetscape, loss of historic setting, and comparable structures that represent the same historic context within a comprehensive streetscape and neighborhood as well as integrity of material, Staff do not find the potential demolition of 10 Allen Court 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 not detrimental to the heritage of the City, and consequently not in the best interest of the public to preserve or rehabilitate. Therefore, due to minimal visibility of the structure, lack of a coherent streetscape, loss of historic setting, and comparable structures that represent the same historic context within a comprehensive streetscape and neighborhood as well as integrity of material, **Staff recommend that the Historic Preservation Commission do not find 10 Allen Court 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).*



*10 Allen Court, aerial view*

