



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
MAYOR'S OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
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HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

DETERMINATION OF SIGNIFICANCE STAFF REPORT

Site: 10 Allen Court
Case: HPC 2012.103

Applicant Name: Kevin Emery
Applicant Address:

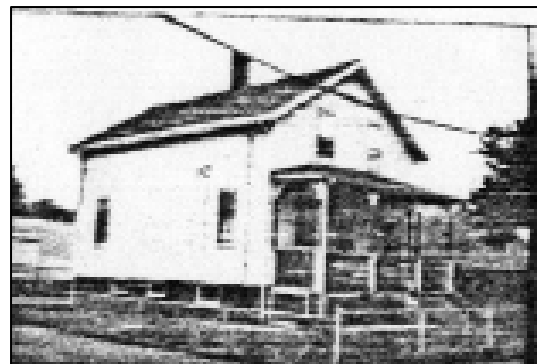
Date of Application: September 13, 2012
Recommendation: Significant
Hearing Date: October 16, 2012

I. BUILDING DESCRIPTION

Architectural Description:

This 1½ story workers cottage, c. 1869, depicts a convergence of styles. The earliest style visible is Greek Revival, which is evident by the simple entablature and transom door surround. The low pitch roof is characteristic of both the Greek Revival and Italianate styles, while the deep eaves and narrow windows of the primary façade note the Italianate style. The front porch, which extends the width of the structure, is a Victorian detail added between 1900 and 1934.

This single family, gable-end dwelling is three bays wide and two rooms deep with a side-hall interior plan and center chimney. The high brick foundation has a number of windows to allow light into the basement and the structure is currently enveloped in synthetic siding with vinyl



Left: 10 Allen Court, front and left side façades
Above: 10 Allen Court, date unknown

windows. A rear ell, or addition, with a door is located at the back of the structure and the foundation below this ell gives access to a crawl space. Additionally, a stable/garage is located in the left rear corner of the property. This secondary structure has a hayloft door and is also entirely sheathed in synthetic siding.

The interior of the building shows that the chimney has been removed and, while the front entry notes a side-hall interior plan, upon further inspection, the location of the entry staircase does not appear original due to the peculiar configuration of the ceiling and floor surrounding the staircase.



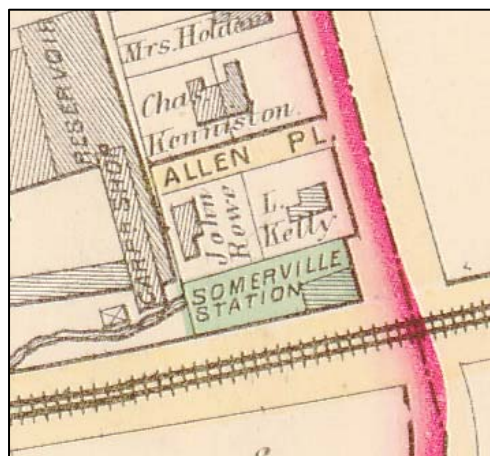
Left: 10 Allen Court, stable/garage

Right: 10 Allen Court, entry door surround

Historical Description:

The earliest documented existence of this structure is in the 1869 directory, which states John C. Rowe is a carpenter with a house on Allen Court. This directory also explains that Lawrence Kelley is a book folder for the Somerville Bleachery with a house on Park Street at the corner of Allen Court. Cornelius Sullivan is a plumber and gas fitter for the Masonic Block in Union Square and also has a house on Allen Court.

According to the 1874 Hopkins Map (right), Plate J, the subject dwelling appears consistent to the current form, a gable-end dwelling with a rear ell, owned by John Rowe. The building is located next to the Middlesex Bleachery and Dye Works and the "carpenter shop" for the Bleachery is located immediately adjacent to the right of the dwelling. The Somerville Railroad Station is located south of the subject building, behind the property of L. Kelly, and Charles Kenniston, a machinist and absentee landlord, owns the land across the street.



The directory of 1871-72 lists John Rowe as living on Milk, or Somerville Avenue, near Dane Street. Information about Lawrence Kelly and Cornelius Sullivan is consistent with the previous directory, and Daniel Sullivan, a plumber, boards at the house of Cornelius Sullivan on Park Street.

The 1873 directory lists several Allen Court occupants, but specific locations are unknown, other than Lawrence Kelly. The occupants listed are: Albert J. Austin, a painter for the Charleston

Navy Yard; Charles H. Hackett, an expressman; Mrs. Charles H. Hackett, a dressmaker; and Francis Wyeth, an employee of the Fitchburg Railroad.

By 1876, John Rowe (spelled Row) is still living on Somerville Avenue and Mrs. Thomas McIntosh has a house on Allen Court, but the specific location is unknown. The 1877 directory lists three new occupants of Allen Court: George A. Roberts, a clerk; Frank Light, a currier; and Edward D. Gibbs, a clerk who works at Faneuil Hall Market in Boston. The 1884 Hopkins Map (Plate 9) does not illustrate any ownership changes on Allen Court, but a stable is illustrated on the subject property and a small unknown structure is located on the property of L. Kelly. The directory of 1881 list of Allen Court occupants is: Charles K. Bewley, a sausage maker who boards at the house of C. H. Hackett; Edward D. Gibbs, who now works at 96 Blackstone in Boston; and Charles H. Hackett himself, an expressman who works at Congress Square in Boston. The directory for 1884 lists Charles H. Hackett and Charles E. Keniston along with an insurance agent, Charles A. Hunt, who boards at Hackett's house, and Theodore P. Prentiss, a letter carrier for Howard Row in Cambridge.

The 1895 Bromley Atlas (Plate 4) illustrates that Mary A. Hackett is now the owner of 10 Allen Court and the size of the parcel size is 4,870 square feet; the Assessor presently lists the parcel as 4920 square feet. The Kenniston land across the street is now owned by Eliza A. Herriston and the buildings appear consistent to prior maps/atlas. Maps that correspond to 1900 differ slightly as the Kenniston building is relocated directly across the street from 10 Allen Court and a new three-story mixed-use building is constructed on the corner at 25-27-29 Park Street. The Lawrence building also has an addition, but by 1934 (Sanborn, Plate 265) this structure is gone. The 1934 Sanborn Map also depicts a front porch on 10 Allen Court and the stable, which is now a garage, appears enlarged.

Directories from the early twentieth century note a variety of residents with working class occupations. Examples from 1905 include Vincenzo Bertocchi, a dyer at 7 Allen Court, and Sylvestro Pirani, a shoemaker at 9 Allen Court. The subject parcel is not listed in the reverse directory for 1905. By 1910, Fiorvantti Bertelli, a tubeworker, lives at 10 Allen Court and in 1915, Pio Carciofi, a baker, is also a resident of this building. The 1925 directory changes the spelling of Fiorvantti to Floravante and lists Caterina, a cloth dryer, as his wife. Family members, Adolfo, a chauffer, and Alfred, a foundry worker, also reside here at this time. Caterina, now Catherine, is a widow by 1929. However, Adolfo, Alfred, and now Harold, also a chauffer, continue to reside on Allen Court. Members of the Bertelli family continue to live at this residence through the 1940s.

Architect: The architect is unknown; however, since the first known owner is a carpenter, there is the possibility that John Rowe is the builder/architect.

Context/Evolution of Structure or Parcel:

The building appears on the 1874 Hopkins Map as the present building, a gable-end dwelling with a rear ell, or addition, built as working class housing for employees of the Middlesex Bleachery and Dye Works. Other buildings on Allen Court, as demonstrated by Lawrence Kelly, were also employed by the Bleachery. The 1900 Sanborn Map depicts the structure as two stories and the ell as a single story. Around the turn of the twentieth century, the built environment around Allen Court began to change as Somerville became more densely settled. The 1934 Sanborn illustrates the addition of a front porch on 10 Allen Court, and the stable/garage, c. 1884, appears enlarged prior to 1934.

Summary of Context/Evolution of Structure or Parcel:

The John Rowe house was constructed c.1869 as a 1½ story gable-end dwelling with a rear ell. The stable/garage is c.1884 and the front porch was added c.1934. This building illustrates not only an assemblage of styles but informs how a modest dwelling can evolve through different architectural periods and retain details that identify each specific style.

II. FINDINGS ON CRITERIA FOR DEMOLITION

The structure must be either (A) listed on the National Register or (B) at least 50 years old.

(A) The structure is NOT listed on or within an area listed on the National Register of Historic Places, nor is the structure the subject of a pending application for listing on the National Register.

(B) The structure, c. 1869, is at least 50 years old.

The structure must be found either (A) importantly associated or (B) significant.

(A) In accordance with the historic information obtained from *Section One – Building Description* which utilizes historic maps/atlasses, City reports and directories, and building permit research, and through an examination of resources that document the history of the City, Staff find 10 Allen Court to be 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.

- + The subject property is found importantly associated with the broad architectural, cultural and economic history of the City of Somerville due to the previous proximity of this structure to the Middlesex Dye and Bleachery, which represents a component of the lifestyle of the working class population at this time, as well as due to the assemblage of styles this building continues to retain.

(B) Upon the following outlined evaluation of both the historic and architectural significance, which addresses period, style, method of building construction, and association with a reputed architect or builder, either by itself or in the context of a group of buildings or structures, as well as integrity, degree of alteration, and scarcity or frequency, Staff do not find 10 Allen Court historically or architecturally significant.

Evaluation Criteria to Determine Architectural Significance

1. Period of Significance: *The integrity of a building or structure is evaluated as it relates to the period of significance; therefore, the period of significance must first be determined.*

The period of significance for 10 Allen Court begins at the time of construction, c. 1869, and extends into the twentieth century as Ward II continues to develop its industrial context of buildings and a need for nearby working class housing. Proximity to the Millers River, Boston, and Cambridge make the flat topography of Ward II an ideal location for industrial development, which brought the Fitchburg Railroad in 1836. While the industrial period of Ward II continues through the 1940s, the Bleachery ceases operations in the 1930s.

2. Integrity: *The subject property must possess sufficient integrity to convey, represent or contain the values and qualities for which it is judged significant. "Sufficient" integrity is determined by examining the degree of overall change in appearance, based on the number of "detrimental" or "critical" (irreversible) changes.*

- Detrimental changes include:

- New, relocated or removed chimney: The chimney has been entirely removed on the interior; all that remains is a small portion above the ridge of the roof.
- Rebuilt foundation or walls: The high brick foundation does not appear to be a reconstruction; however, the visible portion on the rear façade by the door is concrete. Various sections of the foundation have not been repaired appropriately and the brick is crumbling in several areas. The front entry porch does not appear to have a full foundation but to be constructed on brick footings.
- Modern porch: The Victorian era porch was added to the structure c. 1934. The porch is more than 50 years in age and helps to inform how the building evolves through different architectural periods.
- Original windows changed at a later but still historical date; modern windows in original frames; original windows intact but extra windows added; change in shape or size of openings: All windows, including those at grade level are replacement windows.
- Original doors changed at a later but still historical date; modern doors in original frames; original doors intact but extra doors added; change in shape or size of openings: All doors are replacement doors. A wood door leading to the crawl space underneath the rear ell appears to be from a historic period, but this door is not in good condition.
- Synthetic siding: The entire building is sheathed in synthetic siding; window and door casing are not visible and any other architectural details are not visible.
- Removals and/or additions, including outbuildings: The only known addition to the dwelling is the twentieth century front porch. The only known outbuilding is the stable converted to garage, c.1884.
- Recent change in location: The location of the building has not changed.
- Isolation from its original context (loss of historical setting): The dwelling has lost the majority of the surrounding historic context as the Middlesex Bleachery and Dye Works is no longer existent. The surrounding built environment is considerably more dense than at the period of construction; however, the two-family dwelling across the street represents the same time period and class of housing even though it was moved between 1895 and 1900.

- *Critical changes are irreversible, greatly alter the structure, and/or destroy more significant features.*

Critical changes are the removal of the chimney, windows, and doors. These changes are all irreversible, but the removal of the original windows and doors greatly alters the historic integrity of the building. Another potential, yet critical change is the current exterior siding, which may or may not have or be continuing to destroy additional significant features.

- *Summary of Integrity:*

Whether a change is in fact critical to the integrity and further negates the historical value depends on:

a) *The degree of the structure's architectural significance:* A modest example of how a building evolves through different architectural periods and retains details that identify different styles, this building has minimal architectural significance as all the doors and windows have been replaced and the Greek Revival door surround has been severely altered. The remaining significance for this building is encompassed by the humble 1½ story massing and original form, including the rear ell. The Victorian porch is significant, but as a late addition to the structure, the significance of the porch is associated more closely with how the building has evolved, rather than the architectural integrity.

b) *The proportion of significant features remaining:* Remaining features that contain a degree of significance are the Greek Revival door surround, the 1½ story massing, and the original building form. Proportionally, these components encompass the entire building; however, the remaining integrity of these components appears minimal and is largely unknown, due to the siding.

c) *Whether the significance is primarily dependent on the architecture:* Due to the age and modest nature of the structure as well as an association with the industrial development of Ward II, the primary significance of the subject building is not dependent upon the architecture, but dependent upon the association and proximity to industrial employment opportunities.

d) *The appropriateness of changes:* The siding and replacement doors and windows are not historically appropriate for the structure, but comparatively, these alterations are common for buildings of this age.

3. Degree of Alteration: *Building evaluations shall discuss the degree of detrimental or critical change to the building, and their effect on the architectural significance. A building should not be classified as historic if distinguishing features are removed or concealed, rendering the building less exemplary of a given style or period of architecture.*

The number and extent of critical change to this building is detrimental to the architectural significance. The building no longer represents the original intent of the design, nor is it exemplary of the period of architecture from which it was constructed.

4. Scarcity or Frequency: *Scarcity shall be determined by knowledge of similar remaining structures, whether in type or style. If the subject structure is the only example, or of a few remaining examples of its kind, determinations regarding significance and integrity would be less severe than for resources that occur frequently.*

Somerville does retain multiple examples of working class housing stock prior to the twentieth century. Although structures that represent the working class of this era are not plentiful, they do exist and retain considerably more architectural integrity than

the subject building. Some examples are located in the Clyde Street area. Other examples of modest working class dwellings with a humble massing and minimal embellishment are located in East Somerville.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

These recommendations are based upon a historic and architectural analysis by Historic Preservation Staff of the application based upon the required findings of the Somerville Demolition Ordinance, and is based only upon archival and historical research, and a historical and architectural evaluation of significance conducted prior to the public meeting for a Determination of Significance. This report may be revised or updated with new recommendations or findings based upon additional information provided to the Historic Preservation Staff or through more in depth research.

The structure must be either (A) listed on the National Register or (B) at least 50 years old.

(A) The structure is NOT listed on or within an area listed on the National Register of Historic Places, nor is the structure the subject of a pending application for listing on the National Register.

(B) The structure, circa 1956, is at least 50 years old.

The structure must be found either (A) importantly associated or (B) significant.

(A) In accordance with historic map and directory research, and through an examination of resources that explore the history of the City, **Staff recommend that the Historic Preservation Commission find 10 Allen Court to be importantly associated with the broad architectural, cultural, and economic history of the City.**

(B) Upon an evaluation of both the historic and architectural significance, which addresses period, style, method of building construction, and association with a reputed architect or builder, either by itself or in the context of a group of buildings or structures, as well as integrity, degree of alteration, and scarcity or frequency, **Staff recommend that the Historic Preservation Commission do not find 10 Allen Court historically or architecturally significant.**



10 Allen Court