



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

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

ALTERATION TO A HISTORIC PROPERTY STAFF REPORT

Site / District(s): 25-35 Atherton Street Carr School LHD, Spring Hill NRDIS, NRIND
Case: HPC 2014.070

Applicant Name: Sara-Ann Patterson, Trustee for Carr Schoolhouse Condominium Trust
Applicant Address: 25-35 Atherton Street

Date of Application: August 18, 2014
Legal Notice: *Install new metal fence.*

Staff Recommendation: Certificate of Appropriateness
Date of Public Hearing: September 16, 2014

I. Building Description

Architectural Description: The Martin W. Carr School of 1898 is a mixture of Renaissance and Colonial Revival Style architecture designed by Aaron Gould. The three-story brick building faces south on Atherton Street, two short blocks from the busy arterial of Somerville Avenue. The freestanding building is situated on a level site on the southern slope of Spring Hill, and is set back from Atherton Street.

The school is surrounded mostly by parking in a relatively intact residential neighborhood with stylish mid-nineteenth century single-family houses and later two-family and few apartment buildings. The H-shaped school is finished entirely with red brick with a granite foundation.



25-35 Atherton Street

Historical Context/Evolution of Structure or Parcel: Located in a residential district on the south side of Spring Hill. The Carr School was converted from a school to 19 rental units in the early 1980's and later into a condominium complex. The entire building is under preservation restrictions for portions of the interior as well as the exterior. It is a well-designed and preserved example of Renaissance and Colonial Revival institutional architecture, and is one of the few surviving works of local architect Aaron H. Gould in Somerville. Built on the site of the earlier Spring Hill Primary School (1850) and the First Baptist Church (1852), it has associations with the development of the Spring Hill area, one of Somerville's earliest residential \ subdivisions (1847-). As an

imposing public building, it reflects the expansion of City facilities to meet the strong population growth at the turn of the century.

The Carr School was opened in 1898 to serve as a 14-room grade school. Two additional rooms were devoted to manual training facilities used by upper grades. The Carr was the first H-plan school in Somerville. This modern plan allowed maximum light and air into the classrooms. Gould's Ellis School (1898) and the Kelley School (1902, razed) both in Cambridge were similarly designed. Although originally considered spacious, the School Report of 1901 noted that the building was already becoming seriously crowded. When opened, the Carr was one of 24 schools in the city and accommodated 700 pupils. Somerville's schools served a population which rose from 40,152 in 1890 to 61,643 in 1900.

Martin W. Carr (1829-1902), for whom the building is named, was president of M. W. Carr and Company, a Somerville jewelry manufacturing firm with a national market. Carr served as an alderman and as a member of the School Committee. He lived on Craigie Street, at the edge of the Spring Hill neighborhood.

The immediate area was platted in the mid-nineteenth century as a railroad commuter's neighborhood, intended primarily for Boston businessmen by George O Brastow. The Carr School was among the last additions to the area. The Gothic Revival, Greek Revival, Italianate, and Second Empire Style single-family houses which surround the school site are testament to Spring Hill's early period of significance. Opposite the school to the south is the "Round House" built by inventor Enoch Robinson in 1856.

The turn of the century brought a substantial number of two and three-family houses and a significant increase in public building, particularly schools. The Carr School is one of the few unaltered survivors of this period.

Aaron H. Gould (1865-19) was born in Nova Scotia. Trained as a carpenter, he worked on large hotel and residential projects in Maine and in the South before moving to Somerville in the 1890s. He resided at 50 Columbus Avenue, in a Colonial Revival house of his own design, and maintained an office "there and at 42 Court Street, Boston. Gould was responsible for major public projects in Somerville including the now-razed Central Fire Station (1895) and the City Stables and Water Department (1898). He was also the architect of the Drouet and Richmond Blocks on Bow Street in Union Square.

II. Project Description

Proposal of Alteration: The Applicant would like to replace their chain link fence with a metal one. The proposed fence is a very simple in design so that it does not detract from the historic school building.

III. Findings for a Certificate of Appropriateness

1. Prior Certificates Issued/Proposed:

2003.002	Eric Shediak, Garo Development Corporation	C/A, denial	02/14/03	1. Open five (5) bricked-up basement windows; 2. Install 4/4 hopper style, insulated, clear glass windows consistent with the original windows in order to convert existing basement space to a two-bedroom condominium unit; and 3. Create a two-car parking area for same
2003.008	Eric Shediak, Garo Development Corporation	C/A	03/03/03	1. Re-open a sixth bricked-up basement window; 2. Install insulated frosted glass window that would service a bathroom in order to convert existing basement space to a two-bedroom condominium unit; and 3. Create a two-car parking area off Cleveland Street for same with landscape improvements

2003.040	Eric Shediak, Architect for Garo Development Corporation	C/A	09/22/03	1. Install brick paving instead of a previously approved brushed aggregate surface on a parking pad on Cleveland Street side of building.
2006.015	BJ Roberts Management, Carr Schoolhouse Condominium Trust	C/NA	03/14/06	1. Repair slate roof in-kind; 2. Repair and replace copper chimney cap in-kind.
2006.043	Carr School Condominium Trust	C/NA	07/28/06	1. Repair slate roof in-kind; 2. Install ice & water shield; 3. Replace copper valleys and panels as needed; 4. Install copper eave apron on interior side of building; and 5. Install snow rails.
2013.065	Carr School Condominium Trust	C/NA	9/20/2013	1. All repairs shall be completed as described in the Conditions Assessment Report by Ward Hamilton dated August 23, 2013 and the Carr School Rehabilitation Project Request for Proposals dated August 30, 2013. 2. The repairs shall include slate repairs, valley, ridge and hip flashing, snow fence, copper gutters and curbing, vent stack assemblies and other roof penetrations, masonry repointing, and repairs to rotted and damaged wood as needed.
2014.070	Carr School Condominium Trust	C/NA	9/8/2014	1. Three 9' St. Charles walkway lights with 22" globes may be installed. 2. Four 14' Boston single parking lot lights with 22" globes may be installed. 3. The parking lot shall be resurfaced and striped to match the existing. 4. The chain link fence may be removed.

3. *Precedence:* Metal fences have been granted Certificates of Appropriateness at 67 Florence Street (2012), 27 Chester Street (2011 and 2012), and 45 Walnut Street (2013) because they met HPC Guidelines for landscaping and fences.

1. *Considerations:*

- a. *What is the visibility of the proposal?* The fence will be visible on Atherton, Harvard and Cleveland Streets
- b. *What are the Existing Conditions of the building / parcel?* This 20 unit condominium trust has been maintaining the building for years repairing the building as needed. The existing grounds have a chain link fence.
- c. *How does the proposal relate to historic conditions of the building/parcel?* Good historic images of the school are rare. In one photo of the Round House, The school appears not to have any fencing. (See photo below). The proposed fence is modern enough in style to not be mistaken for one that might have been original to the building.

The primary purpose of the Preservation Ordinance is to encourage preservation and high design standards in Local Historic Districts, in order to safeguard the architectural heritage of the City. Guidelines have been developed to 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.

1. *Does the proposal coincide with the General Approach set forth in the Design Guidelines? This alteration meets HPC Guidelines for appropriateness.*

- 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.*

No alterations to character-defining features mentioned on the Form B are anticipated.

- 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).*

There will be no changes to any later important features.

- C. ***Whenever possible, deteriorated material or architectural features should be repaired rather than replaced or removed.***

There will be no replacement of architectural features.

- D. ***When replacement of architectural features is necessary, it should be based on physical or documentary evidence of the original or later important features.***

The proposed fence will be composed of traditional materials and constructed in a style that would not be mistaken for historic but would complement the historic building. The metal fence would have vertical pickets, and a flat top rail. (See sketch below.)

- 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.***

The new material is an upgrade from the existing chain link fence, the removal of which has already received a Certificate of Appropriateness issued on behalf of the Commission.

- 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.***

This feature is highly visible.

2. *Does the proposal coincide with the appropriate Specific Guidelines as set forth in the Design Guidelines?*

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.*

There are no changes to the essential landscape features.

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.*

No re-grading is necessary for the maintenance 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 circulation pattern will not be altered.

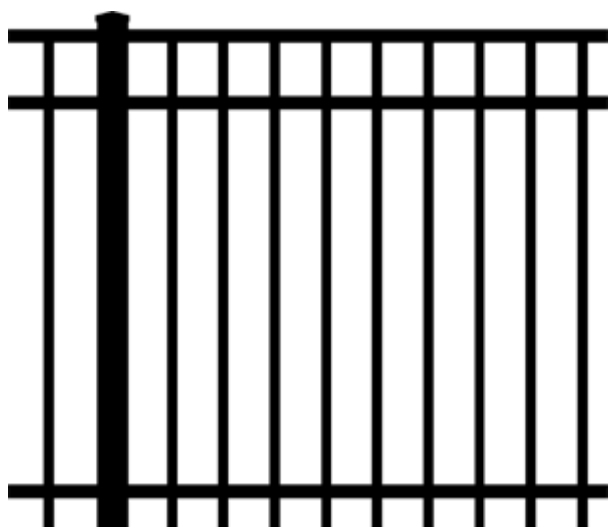
"Under Massachusetts General Law chapter 40C, the approval of a certificate ... should not have "substantial detriment to the public welfare" or "substantial derogation from the intent and purposes" of MGL Chapter 40C. According to the purpose section of MGL 40C, local historic districts are "to promote the educational, cultural, economic and general welfare of the public through the preservation and protection of the distinctive characteristics of buildings and places significant in the history of the commonwealth and its cities and towns or their architecture, and through the maintenance and improvement of settings for such buildings and places and the encouragement of design compatible therewith." For instance, the removal of architectural trim would not promote the welfare of the public and would derogate from the intent of MGL Chapter 40C.

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 Carr School Local Historic District; therefore **Staff recommends that the Historic Preservation Commission grant Sara-Ann Patterson, Trustee for Carr Schoolhouse Condominium Trust a Certificate of Appropriateness to install a metal fence around the perimeter of 25-35 Atherton Street.**

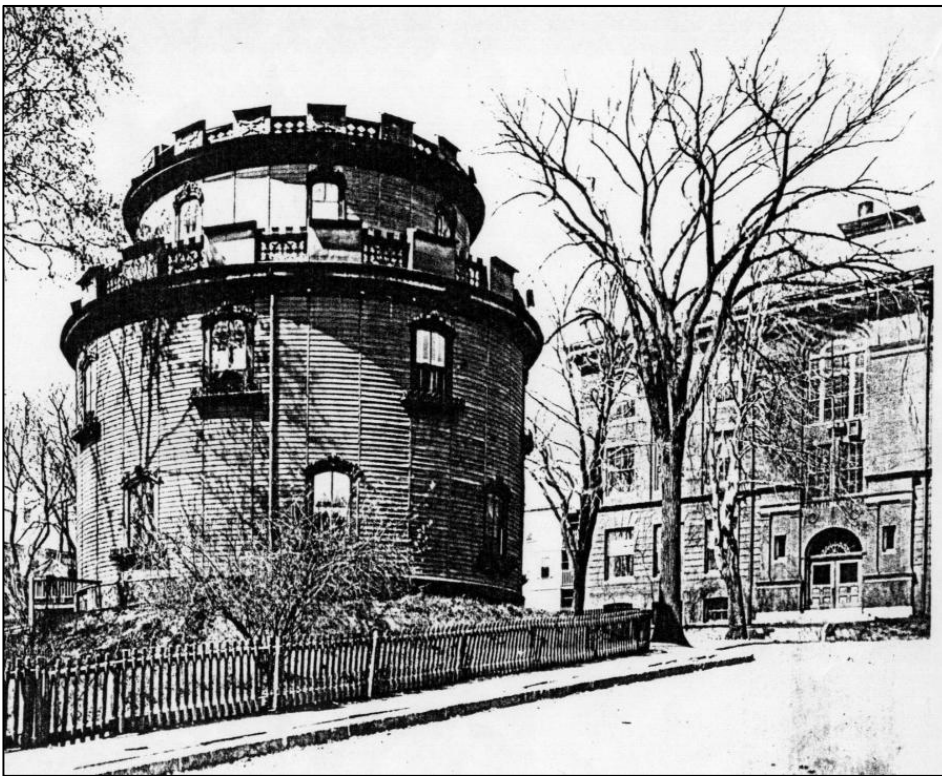
1. A new metal fence with vertical pickets and horizontal railings shall be installed on the periphery.



Proposed fence design.



25 Atherton Street, 2007 Photo



Round House and 25 Atherton Street, Unknown date