



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: 24 Beacon Place
Case: HPC 2013.094
Applicant Name: E. John Beauvais, GFY Inc.

Date of Application: December 18, 2013
Recommendation: Not Significant
Hearing Date: January 21, 2014

HPC received: December 16, 2013

I. Historical Association

Architectural Description: This 2 ½ story vernacular house has a shallow pitched roof similar to that of a Greek Revival. There are no eave returns. It is clad in wood shingle and aluminum siding. The original front façade is obscured by additions on each floor. The fenestration pattern is not original. The two inset front doors indicate a side-hall floor plan.

A large ell on the rear of the building rises slightly higher than the front portion. This ell has enclosed porches on the rear.

See photos at the end of the report.

Historical Description: The 1874 Hopkins Atlas shows ownership of this property to Mrs. Rose Kelly, widow of Lawrence. The 1874 and 1884 Atlases show 2 houses on the site with # 24 set back further from the lot line. The 1895 Bromley Atlas shows 3 houses owned by Thomas A. Bent, carpenter. 24 Beacon Place is shown with the same footprint as 22 Beacon Place set further forward on the lot and with a bay window. The 1900 Stadley Atlas shows the property conjoined with a large property at 384 Washington Street and owned by a



jeweler, Charles F. Schubeler, Schuebler or Schnebler. This Atlas is more schematic and shows the building to be narrower than 22 Beacon Place and set slightly further back from the front lot line.

The 1869 City Directory places the owner, Mrs. Kelly's residence on Beacon Street near Dimmick Street. Her house in subsequent directories is further identified as being at the foot of Tiger Court (now Beacon Place). Living with her are James Kelly, gardener (1877) and provisions (1881); and John H Kelly, junk dealer (1884). Mrs. Kelly is not found in the 1890 City Directory which lists John H. Kelly at 22 Tiger Court. City Directories up to this date did not necessarily include street addresses. It is not known whether the family lived in one or both buildings at different dates.

Thomas A. Bent, carpenter and owner in 1895 did not live on Beacon Place but at 120 Summer Street. The next known owner, Charles F. Schuebler, lived at 384 Washington Street in 1900.

It is unknown who all the residents of #24 were prior to 1903 when the Directories included a street listing with heads of household, however, James B. Steadman, carpenter could be found in the directories of 1895 at #24 and 1903 as living at 24 Beacon Place and at 24a in 1900.

By 1910, the building seems to have been turned into a 3-family with Edward Yeomans, carpenter and James B. Steadman, carpenter at 24 Beacon Place and John O'Donnell, laborer at 24a. These same 3 names are also found in the 1915 Directory at this address.

The 1924 Directory lists William T Babcock, painter, his wife Jennie E; Mrs. Etta Carroll, widow of Walter; Mrs. Elizabeth Yeomans, widow of Thomas; Nathaniel Seymour, rubber worker and his wife Mabel at 24 Beacon Place with John J. Quinn, laborer and his wife Annie M at #24a..

By 1930, William H. Bonnell, furniture repairer; his wife Margaret; Mrs. Norah A. Kelley, widow of Thomas; George P. O'Hara, auto mechanic; and his wife Lillian M. can all be found at #24.

Directory research through 1965 reveals a similar pattern of workers and their wives living at 24 Beacon Place.

Architect: Unknown

Context/Evolution: Beacon Place is a small cul de sac of workers housing off Beacon Street, a major thoroughfare since colonial times. Tiger Court of Beacon Place was not developed until the late 1860s. All the cottages and houses appear to have been constructed to house workers. The different atlases show differing configurations and locations on the lot for the house. It is possible that the house lost a back addition and gained a bay, then gained a new addition, had added porches on the rear that were later enclosed. It is also possible that there were 3 different buildings on this site

During the summer of 2013, several houses on Calvin Street and Beacon Place burned as a result of arson. The Beacon Place buildings are still standing. The Owner had intended to rehabilitate this property however his structural engineer found the building too unsound to continue.

Summary: The dates of construction and alterations are unclear. The building has been home to generations of predominantly Irish workers. The much-altered house is in very poor condition due to the fire last summer. See Structural Report.

Findings on Historical Association

*For a Determination of Significance, the subject building must be found either (a) **importantly associated with people, events or history** or (b) historically or architecturally significant (Ordinance 2003-05, Section 2.17.B). Findings for (b) are at the end of the next section.*

(a) In accordance with the historic information obtained from *Findings on Historical Association*, 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, such as *Somerville Past and Present*, Staff **do not** find 24 Beacon Street 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.

While the subject building is found associated with the broad architectural, cultural, economic and social history of the City due to its association with Irish workers in the last half of the 19th and early 20th century, no important associations were found to a particular wave of immigration.

II. Historical and Architectural Significance

The findings for historical and/or architectural significance of a historic property address the period, style, method of building construction and association with a reputed architect or builder of the subject property, either by itself or in the context of a group of buildings or structures (Ordinance 2003-05, Section 2.17.B).

The period of significance for 24 Beacon Place begins around 1870 and continues to the present day as a home for workers.

Integrity

The National Park Service identifies historic integrity as the ability of a property to convey significance. A property should possess sufficient integrity to convey, represent or contain the values and qualities for which it is judged significant; therefore, the following is an identification and evaluation of these qualities and alterations as they affect the ability of the subject property to convey significance.

- a. **Location:** The building has not been moved.
- b. **Design:** While the roof pitch of the house is that of a Greek revival, the proportions of the building below are too tall and no other details relate to that period. Alterations of the front and rear additions, the siding, and the fenestration do not convey a sense of the original design. No building Permits were found to account for these changes.
- c. **Materials:** Aluminum, wood shingles and modern windows do not contribute to the sense of age.

- d. Alterations: The alterations to the building are such that no particular style or period dominates. The front façade of the building has additions on the first, second and third floors. These are of varying sizes and shapes, and are not placed symmetrically. The front doors appear to be metal and are inset on the original façade location. The windows are differing configurations and sizes. The visible side elevation has a few window penetrations towards the rear.

Evaluation of Integrity:

Does the subject parcel represent a distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction?

The scale of the building fits with others on the street, all of which have replacement siding.

Does the subject parcel represent an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community or region due to its singular physical characteristics or landscape?

The building is typical in its size and location. It has a gable end toward the street, a common feature of New England architecture.

Findings for Historical and Architectural Significance

*For a Determination of Significance, the subject building must be found either (a) importantly associated with people, events or history or (b) **historically or architecturally significant** (Ordinance 2003-05, Section 2.17.B). Findings for (a) can be found at the end of the previous section.*

(b) In accordance with the *Finding on Historical 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, which assess the ability of the property to convey significance, Staff do not find 24 Beacon Place historically or architecturally significant.

The subject building is not found historically and architecturally significant due to its lack of association with any important historic figure or event and its lack of cohesive architecture. The building is unable to convey a coherent story of immigrant history due to its condition and numerous alterations.

III. 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 meeting for a Determination of Significance. 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.

For a Determination of Significance, 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.

OR

(B) The structure, circa 1874, is at least 50 years old.

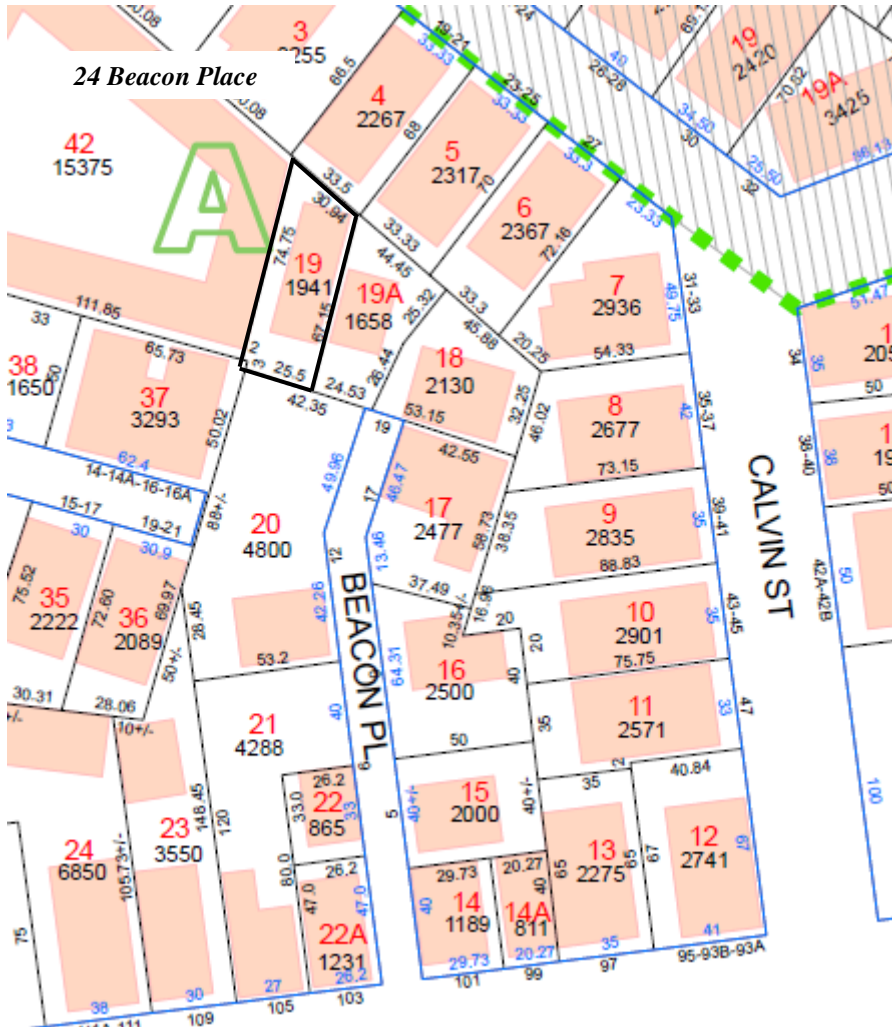
AND

For a Determination of Significance under (B), the subject building must be found either (a) importantly associated with people, events or history or (b) historically or architecturally significant.

(a) In accordance with the *Findings on Historical Association*, 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 recommend that the Historic Preservation Commission do not find 24 Beacon Place 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.**

OR

(b) In accordance with the *Findings on Historical 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, the ability to convey significance, **Staff recommend that the Historic Preservation Commission do not find 24 Beacon Place historically and architecturally significant.**

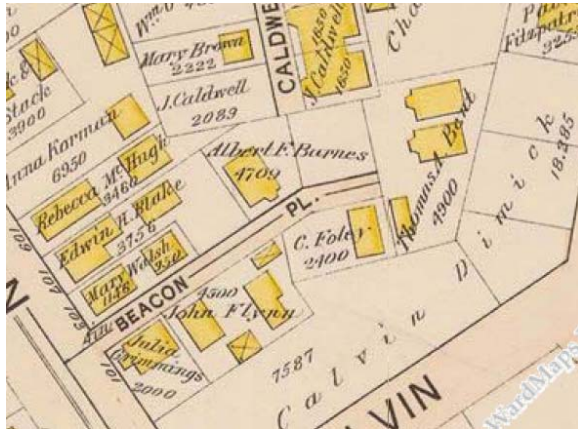




1874 Hopkins Atlas



1884 Hopkins Atlas



1895 Bromley Atlas



1900 Stadley Atlas



