



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: 23 Cleveland Street
Case: HPC 2015.020
Applicant Name: Cindy He

Date of Application: Thursday, November 8, 2012
Date of Significance: Tuesday, December 18, 2012

Recommendation: NOT Preferably Preserved
Hearing Date: Tuesday, January 15, 2013



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

I. Meeting Summary: Determination of Significance

On Tuesday, June 16, 2015, the Historic Preservation Commission, in accordance with the Demolition Review Ordinance (2003-05), made a determination that the c. 1874 single-family dwelling at 23 Cleveland Street is Significant. Per Section 2.17.B, this decision is found on the following criteria:

Section 2.17.B - The structure is at least 50 years old;

and

(i) *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

(ii) *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 2.17.B*, listed above, historic map and directory research identifies the structure as c. 1874. single-family dwelling at 23 Cleveland Street is not clear to have been present on the 1860 Walling Map of Boston and Vicinity.

In accordance with *Criteria (i)*, listed above, the Commission agreed with Staff findings, due to an association of the property with the broad architectural, cultural, economic and social history of the City due to its association with workers and the Middlesex Bleachery, as well as the early development by George Brastow of Spring Hill, and John Nichols, Boston wharfinger.

In accordance with *Criteria (ii)*, listed above, the Commission agreed with Staff findings, due to the ability of the subject parcel to clearly convey significance through its integrity as a workers cottage, which is clearly visible in its scale, massing, form, and its association with the Middlesex Bleachery, John Nichols, and the Brastow development.

The period of significance for 23 Cleveland Street begins circa 1870 with its construction on the Brastow development for workers housing on land owned by John Nichols and continues into the present day as the use of this structure remains consistent.

II. Additional Information

Additional Research: John C. Nichols (1924-1880) was an owner of the Fiske Wharf Warehouse Company, Boston and Caswell's Wharf in Charlestown. He was succeeded by his son John Loring Nichols (1856-1934), a Harvard graduate. John L. Nichols did not live as an adult in his father's house on Central Street but on Commonwealth Avenue in Boston.

No additional information was found about the early residents of 23 Cleveland Street.

Richard Barlow, owner from 1884-1895 worked at the Middlesex Bleachery. The Middlesex Bleachery closed in 1936, at which time it was the oldest textile mill in the United States. The Bleachery was at the base of Spring Hill where Conway Park is now located.



*While many of the important industries which were started here in the early days of the century are now almost forgotten one still flourishes after a life of seventy five years the bleachery on Somerville Avenue incorporated in 1821 as the Charlestown Bleachery It has changed proprietor ship and name several times since then being known as the Milk Row Bleachery the Somerville Dyeing and Bleaching Company and the Middlesex Bleachery and Dye Works Its latest owners were Messrs KM Gilmore and John Haigh the latter recently deceased The bleachery people form almost a community of their own and the narrative of their three quarters of a century if written would be very entertaining. **Somerville Past & Present, p.33***

Site Visit: Architecturally, the house is a simple workers cottage with for the most part simple door and window casings and a low wainscot. The newel is turned and the stair rails and balusters are plain. The style is typical of the mid-18th century. The radiators consist of wide pipes that snake across the rooms below the windows. Only one room has decorative door casings.

Structural Report: The Owner has submitted a structural report by Arthur Choo. See attached. A site visit conducted May 29, 2015 gave Staff the opportunity to view the interior of the building. The floor and nearby walls showed evidence of severe water damage in the rear middle ell. The floor of the dining area inside the double glass doors had sunk severely and was supported by lally columns. The brick chimney had been removed from below. The remaining portions of the building felt firm to the step. The utilities have been stopped, leaving the house without heat, electricity or water. On the second floor there is evidence of leaks from a skylight into the bathroom.



Cleveland Street, looking east toward Central Street

Comparable Structures:

There are a number of single-family dwellings with a modest 1½ story massing located throughout the City. Comparable structures within the City include:



Above: 25 Clyde Street LHD (1860); 342 Lowell Street LHD (1861); 60 Linden Avenue LHD (1861),



Above: 27 Dane Avenue (c.1874); 80 Properzi Way (c.1850), 37 Fiske Avenue (1866)

Predominant differences between the comparable dwellings and the subject dwelling are the number of windows, the level of architectural integrity, and the heights of the brick foundation. These comparable dwellings have construction date between 1852 and 1874. Most of the comparable structures have similar size and massing, a center-hall entry, and a similar fenestration pattern.

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 form and massing of this single-family dwelling represents workers housing. Workers housing is marked by its simplicity and its unassuming presence. Increasingly rare workers cottages and farm houses are scattered throughout the city. Some collections of workers housing can also be found in such compact neighborhoods such Duck Village, Hinckley/Magoun and other groupings near the industrial and transportation hubs.

The Cleveland Street streetscape was largely unbuilt until the last decade of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. As such, this house is the smallest of the houses on the street, over-shadowed by the larger buildings constructed on a denser scale. The buildings on either side are also indications of the development of Cleveland Street at a later date. These types of buildings are however, consistent with housing for the middle and working classes.

- 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 that integrity of this single-family dwelling is retained within the location and form, as well as, to a moderate degree, integrity of design. The structure retains integrity of location through siting and orientation as well as through spatial relationships to other buildings along Cleveland Street. The subject structure retains a moderate level of historical and architectural integrity due to the likely c. 1870 date of construction; retention of simple form, massing, fenestration patterns; and as part of the early development of Spring Hill.

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

The Commission determined that this structure is building architecturally significant due to its integrity as a workers cottage, which is clearly visible in its scale, massing, form, and is historically significant due its association with the Middlesex Bleachery, John Nichols, and the Brastow development, one of the first suburban developments in the City.

The house is typical of workers housing but is located in an area that changed around it. It is noteworthy for its diminutive size and does not stand out in a street with many 3-deckers and the 1898 brick Carr Schoolhouse. The house is one of the smallest in the neighborhood and the street since much of the development on the street occurred after 1910 when Cleveland Street connected Elm Place to Central Street and the Nichols estate was subdivided.

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

The subject parcel is visible along Cleveland Street and is located just across the street from the Carr School House. It is patently different from the other houses on the street due to its age and purpose. A building that is different from its surroundings always tells a story of change and transitions.

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

Single-family workers houses are becoming increasingly rare. This type of housing was a welcome alternative to the crowded tenements of Boston and above the smells and pollution caused by the industries along the railroad.

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 determined that this structure is building architecturally significant due to its integrity as a workers cottage, which is clearly visible in its scale, massing, form, and historically significant due its association with the Middlesex Bleachery, John Nichols, and the Brastow development, one of the first suburban developments in the City.

The house is typical of workers housing but is located in an area that has changed around it. It is noteworthy for its diminutive size and does not stand out in a street with many 3-deckers and the 1898 brick Carr Schoolhouse. The house is one of the smallest in the neighborhood and the street since much of the development on the street occurred after 1910 when Cleveland Street connected Elm Place to Central Street and the Nichols estate was subdivided.

Significance is also due to the ability of the subject parcel to convey integrity regarding location and form as well as, to a moderate degree, design. The Commission found that integrity of this single-family dwelling is retained within the location and form, as well as, to a moderate degree, integrity of design. The structure retains integrity of location through siting and orientation as well as through spatial relationships to other buildings along Cleveland Street. The subject structure retains a moderate level of historical and architectural integrity due to the likely c. 1870 date of construction; retention of simple form, massing, fenestration patterns; and as part of the early development of Spring Hill.

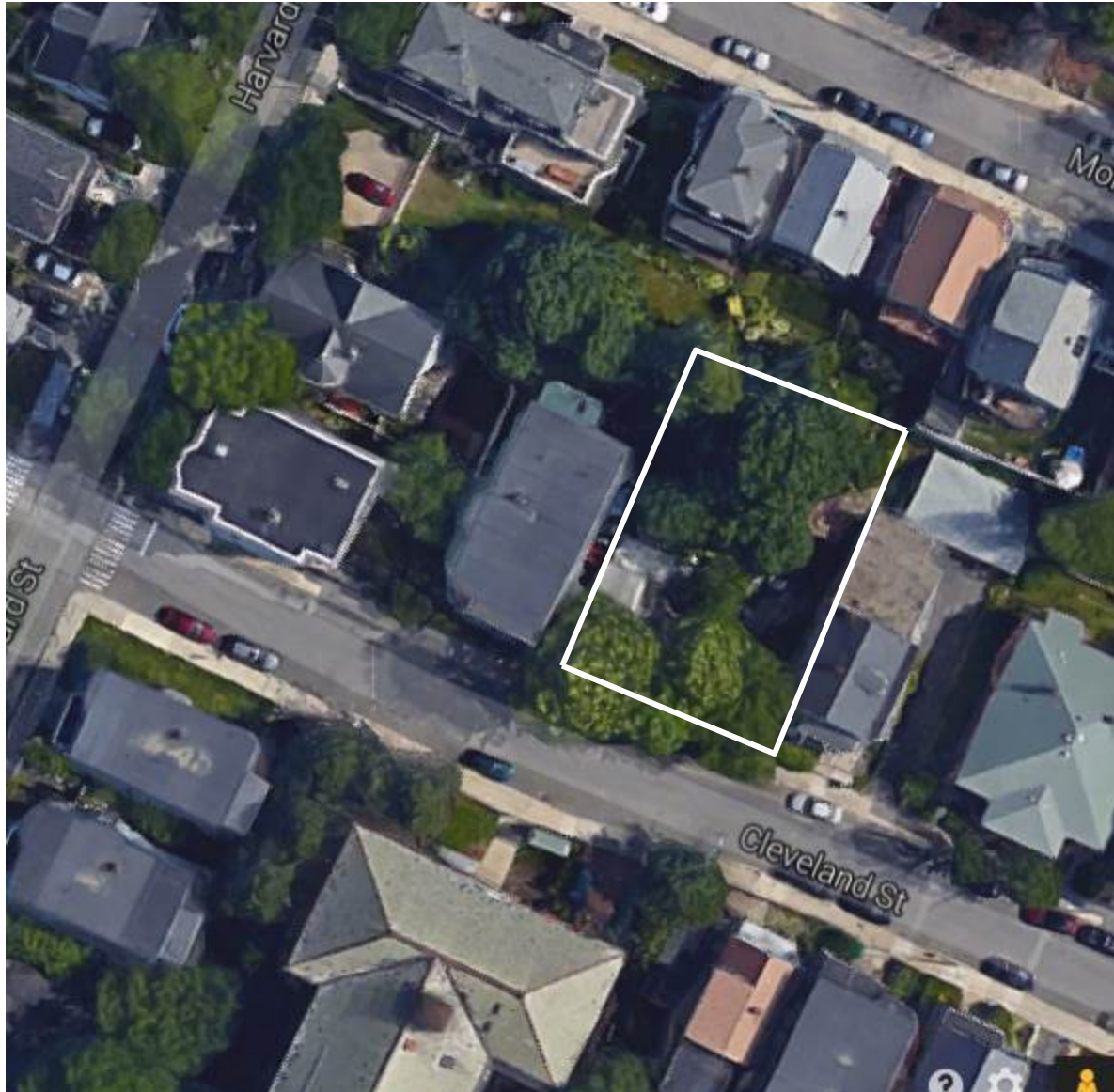
The additional information provided and consideration criteria (a-e) listed above convey that this type of dwelling was once common throughout the City, and has minimal architectural detail typical of its style and age, other than form. The structure has a number of enclosures and additions showing the evolution of the structure over time. Therefore, Staff find the potential demolition of 23 Cleveland Street 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 detrimental to the heritage of the City, and consequently in the best interest of the public to preserve or rehabilitate. Therefore, due to the rarity of this type of residential dwelling within the City, its consistent form and massing, **Staff recommend that the Historic Preservation Commission find 23 Cleveland Street 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).



23 Cleveland Street aerial view



Dining Room floor showing separation from chimney flue.



Basement showing lally columns beneath dining room area.



Parlor



Stairs



Parlor



Small bedrooms



Large bedroom