



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: 21 College Hill Road c.1850 Thomas Cook House
Case: HPC 2013.083 Single-Building Local Historic District

Applicant Name: Christopher Montgomery, Owner
Applicant Address: 21 College Hill Road, Somerville, MA 02143

Date of Application: September 29, 2014
Legal Notice: *Install chimney cap*
Staff Recommendation: Certificate of Appropriateness
Date of Public Hearing: November 17, 2013

I. BUILDING DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION: From the Form B.
The Thomas Cook House, originally a farmhouse, is the only Greek Revival residence in the immediate vicinity. Built ca. 1850, the building retains an enclosed gable with an entablature, and wide corner pilasters. It is three bays wide and two bays deep, and is now sited with its gable end to the street. A pediment over the doorway and a narrow board dividing the first and second stories were probably added in the late 19th century.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT/EVOLUTION: From the Form B.



21 College Hill Road, 2014

Thomas Cook, a farmer, was one of a half dozen landholders in the Curtis North-Broadway area of West Somerville. The presence of Tufts College on nearby Walnut (College) Hill, established 1852, did not stimulate residential development and in fact small market-garden farms such as this one continued to be established well into the 1860s. Between 1884 and ca. 1910, the area was subdivided for house lots. Thomas Cook's house was moved back from its original North Street location, and newly platted College Hill Road provided access. Subsequently, the area filled with two and three-family houses.

II. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1. *Proposal of Alteration:*

1. Install a chimney cap on the active chimney.

The Applicant has repaired and installed a stainless steel liner on the only active chimney in the house. This needs to be topped by a chimney cap.

See the final pages for details and photos.

II. FINDINGS

1. *Prior Certificates Issued/Proposed:*

21	College Hill Road	C/NA	Fox, Montgomery & Zacheiss	2007.012	1. Install stove vent on rear wall of property, (not visible from the public right of way.)
21	College Hill Road	C/NA	Christopher Montgomery	2014.083	1. The chimney may be patched or rebuilt using mortar appropriate to the type of bricks used. 2. A stainless steel chimney liner may be installed.

2. *Precedence:*

- *Are there similar properties / proposals?*
- *Install a chimney cap.*

The Commission has granted Certificates of Appropriateness for 8 requests to install chimney caps since 2001. These have been predominantly simple black or copper flat top vents with low profiles. These were located at 14 Aldersey Street (2009), 26 Bow Street (2004), 63 Columbus Avenue (2001 and 2010), 81 Eustis Street (2003), 58 Meacham Road (2002), 8 Mount Vernon Street (2009), 23 Pleasant Avenue (2002) and 30 Day Street (2013).

3. *Considerations:*

- *What is the visibility of the proposal?*

The chimney cap would be visible from College Hill Road while approaching the house from North Street but not from the other direction. It would be located on the second chimney visible from the road.

- *What are the Existing Conditions of the building / parcel?*

The chimney has deteriorated and is the in use for the hot water and heating. Interior repairs are being made which include relining to bring the chimney up to code and the installation of the needed chimney cap. See photos at the end of the document.

- *Does the proposal coincide with the General Approach set forth in the Design Guidelines?*

GENERAL APPROACH

The primary purpose of Somerville's Preservation Ordinance is to encourage preservation and high design standards in Somerville's Historic Districts, in order to safeguard the City's architectural heritage. The following guidelines ensure that rehabilitation efforts, alterations, and new construction all respect the design fabric of the districts and do not adversely effect their present architectural integrity.

- 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.*

The chimneys were not discussed in the Form B.

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

No external materials will be repaired or replaced.

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

No external materials will be repaired or replaced.

- 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 addition of a chimney cap will not alter the existing fabric.

- 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.*

The chimney is and therefore the proposed cap will be visible from the public right of way.

B. Roofs

1. *Preserve the integrity of the original or later important roof shape.*

There will be no change to the shape of the roof.

2. *Retain the original roof covering whenever possible. If the property has a slate roof, conserve the roof slates. Slate is a near-permanent roofing material, and deterioration is generally caused by rusted roofing nails.*

There will be no change to the roofing material.

3. *Whenever possible, replace deteriorated roof covering with material that matches the old in composition, color, size, shape, texture and installation detail.*

Replacement roof material will be undertaken with in-kind material.

4. *Preserve the architectural features that give the roof its distinctive character, such as cornices, gutters, iron filigree, cupolas, dormers and brackets. Downspouts should be inconspicuously located and should be painted to match the color of the siding.*

There will be no change to architectural features distinctive to the c. 1850 farmhouse.

5. *New dormers will be permitted if they are related to the forms, proportions, size and arrangement of existing windows, and constructed in matching materials and colors. If possible, new dormers should be confined to the rear of the house.*

There are no new dormers planned for the building.

6. *Skylights with flat profiles may be installed on the rear of the property.*

No skylights are planned.

7. *Utility equipment, such as television antennae, air conditioners, solar collectors and other mechanical units should be restricted to the rear of the property or on portions of the roof that are not visible from a public way. If no other placement is possible, air conditioning and other cooling units on street facades should be of the slim-line type or set flush with the surface of the building and painted the same color as the window trim.*

No new utility equipment will be installed beyond the proposed chimney cap.

Chimneys are not specifically covered in the current Design Guidelines. However the draft guidelines underway note that existing chimneys are an important architectural detail that, in most cases, contributes to the architectural integrity of the structure and overall roof form. The chimneys on a historic building form the backbone of its structure; they indicate the building's interior layout and the uses of the rooms inside. Certain chimney styles are associated with particular styles of 18th and 19th century buildings. The style and shape of a chimney, as well as the form of its bricks, may reflect the aspirations of the building's original owners.

1. *Chimney caps should be in a dark bronze or copper finish.*

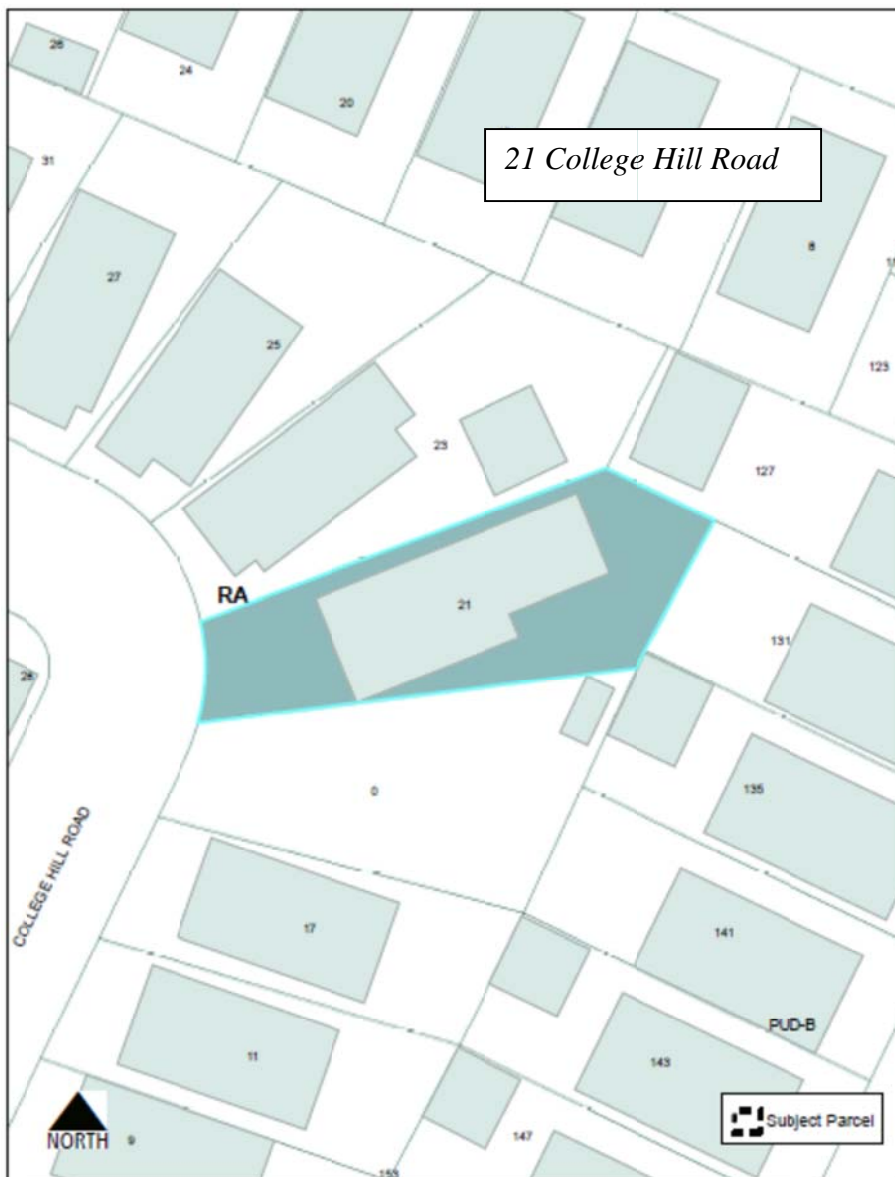
The proposed cap would be in a dark finish either black or copper and stylistically very simple so as to not detract from the existing chimneys.

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 Westwood Road Local Historic District; therefore **Staff recommends that the Historic Preservation Commission grant Christopher Montgomery, owner of 21 College Hill Road, a Certificate of Appropriateness** for the installation of a chimney cap.

1. Install a black or copper termination cap on top of the existing center chimney.





21 College Hill Road showing location of chimney for the proposed vent cap.