



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: 35 Cutter Street
Case: HPC 2013.038
Applicant Name: Sandra Xuyu

Date of Application: June 26, 2013
Recommendation: Significant
Hearing Date: July 16, 2013

I. Historical Association

Architectural Description: The subject structure, c.1874, is a 1½ story side-gable dwelling in an unidentified style. The front, or primary façade, features a projecting and enclosed front entrance with a small shed dormer located above. Oversize replacement windows flank either side of the center entry and paired replacement windows are located beneath the gable on either side. The rear elevation illustrates a perpendicular ell with various smaller additions projecting from the main ell, including a concrete block component. There is also a five car concrete block garage located at the rear of the property.

Historical Description: The subject property is first illustrated on the 1874 Hopkins map (Plate B) under the ownership of H.A. Hills; however, the 1873 directory lists Henry A. Hills as a locksmith who lives at 8 Cutter Street. The 1877 directory lists Hills as the occupant of 35 Cutter Street, but by 1881, William Goodspeed, whose occupation is listed as “dining room” in Boston, is the occupant. The 1884 Hopkins map illustrates that Orrin Ray, a teamster, is the property owner while the 1884 directory notes



35 Cutter Street, photos 2013



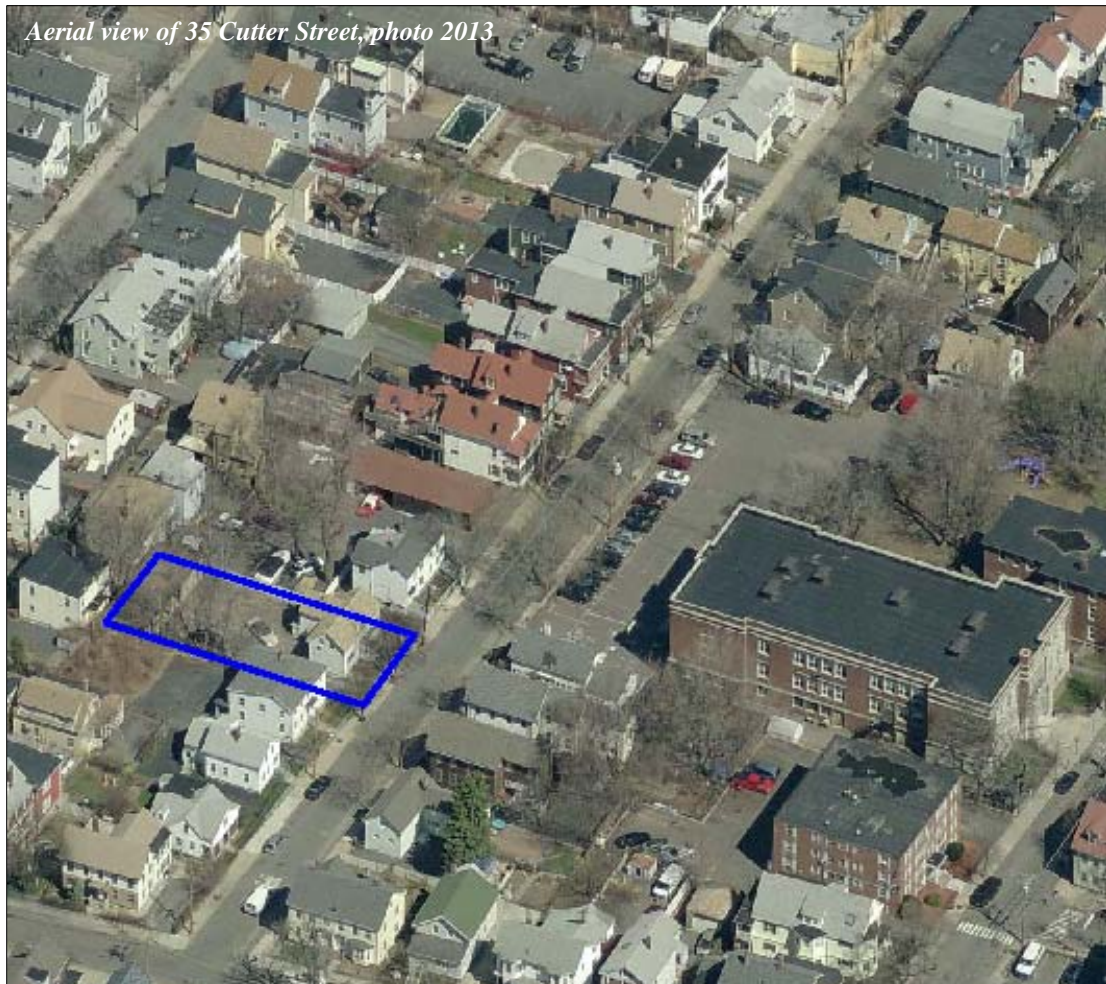
that Henry A Harvey, another teamster, is the occupant through 1890. Robert Chisolm (or Chisholm), a blacksmith, resides here from 1905 through 1910, but in 1906, a permit was granted to Orrin Ray for a wood stable. Fireman Frank O'Leary, of Ladder No. 3, is the resident in 1915. By 1919 the Noyce family, which includes Benjamin (a carpenter), Mary, Charles, and Henry are the occupants. A permit in 1922 for a five car concrete block garage (still existent) and a permit in 1923 for a three car concrete garage were both granted to T.Brennan for this parcel. Both garages are illustrated on the 1933 Sanborn map (Sheet 51). The Noyce family continues to reside at this location through 1945. By 1955, Daniel (USAF) and Agnes (laundry worker) Coffey reside here with their family through 1960. A permit in 1976 allows the addition of vinyl siding over wood, granted to S.Defonso.

Context/Evolution:

East Somerville is one of the oldest settlement areas in the City and, over time, has been expanded by filling in the Mystic and Miller's rivers. Dense residential development in this neighborhood dates from the early 19th century and was primarily constructed to provide housing for laborers who worked in nearby factories and brickyards.

Edward Cutter platted Cutter Street in 1849. Early subdivision activity concentrated between the Charlestown line and Cross Street; however, many of these streets were speculatively entered into plan books and not built for another 10-20 years. Cutter Street appears to be one of these streets.

Cutter Street is predominantly composed of 2½ story gable-end dwellings. However, the structures on either side of #35 are consistent in that they too are of the side-gable form. While 1½ story dwellings are interspersed, these are a mixture between side- and end-gable forms. Immediately across the street is a parking lot that extends across three lots for St. Benedict's Parochial School, c. 1933.



Summary:

The subject structure, c.1874, is a 1½ story single-family dwelling in an unidentified style. The visible features appear to illustrate replacement windows and doors as well as vinyl siding; however, the overall massing and form (with rear ell) appear in tact. According to research, Cutter Street seems to have been developed during the 1870s, as opposed to when it was platted in 1849, and is not associated to anyone of special interest with regard to the history of the City. The dwelling appears to have been constructed within a group of structures, namely those along Cutter Street, though the group of structures appears to be a mixture in form and massing, these are likely all dwellings constructed for the working class.

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 35 Cutter 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.

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 35 Cutter Street begins with the c.1874 date of construction as a modest single-family dwelling and continues into the present day as the use of this structure remains consistent.

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 subject structure is located along Cutter Street in East Somerville. The location has not been altered and the dwelling continues the unique rhythm of rooflines at the southern end of the streetscape; however, the streetscape is interrupted by the concrete block garage and the large parking lot across the street.
- b. Design: The original form and massing are still evident as well as the rear ell. While there are modifications to most façades, such as the projecting entrance, oversized flanking window bays, and shed dormer, the intent of the design can still be inferred with regard to the fenestration pattern. As working class housing, the level of architectural

detail was likely minimal to begin. While doors and windows have been replaced, and synthetic siding covers the entire structure, original design features could still remain beneath the siding and within the enclosed entry.

- c. **Materials:** The materials that compose this structure are predominantly wood, with materials such as aluminum and/or vinyl windows and doors, and asphalt shingles added at a later period. While the current siding potentially covers some remaining window and/or door casings, there is very little visible with regard to remaining evidence of these components. However, a number of details could remain existent beneath the current siding.
- d. **Alterations:** Aside from various small additions and material alterations, such as replacement doors, windows, shingles and exterior cladding, the structure retains the original form, massing, and rear ell. While components of the original design can still be inferred, there are modifications to each façade.

Evaluation of Integrity:

Material alterations and additions have altered the exterior appearance of this humble single-family dwelling over the years, though the form, massing (including the rear ell) and portions of the original fenestration pattern are still understood. While there was likely minimal architectural detail to start, there is little visible to illustrate if any original material remains. While this dwelling is an important component to the unique rhythm of rooflines at the southern end of Cutter Street, the streetscape as a whole is interrupted by the parking lot and school across the street as well as the concrete block garage two lots away.

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 find 35 Cutter Street historically or architecturally significant.

The subject dwelling is found historically significant as a representative of 19th century working class housing stock due to the remaining integrity of the structure with regard to original form, massing, and portions of the fenestration pattern. In addition, due to the location of the structure within the Cutter streetscape, this dwelling continues the unique rhythm of rooflines and, therefore, is significant within the context of the group of buildings which compose the Cutter streetscape.

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, c. 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 35 Cutter Street 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 find 35 Cutter Street historically or architecturally significant.**

35 Cutter Street

