



**CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS**  
**MAYOR'S OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**  
**JOSEPH A. CURTATONE**  
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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

*HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION*

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**DETERMINATION OF PREFERABLY PRESERVED STAFF REPORT**

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Site:	35 Cutter Street
Case:	HPC 2013.038
Applicant Name:	Sandra Xuyu
Date of Application:	June 26, 2013
Date of Significance:	July 16, 2013
Recommendation:	Preferably Preserved
Hearing Date:	Tuesday, August 20, 2013



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

*35 Cutter Street, photos 2013*

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**I. Meeting Summary: Determination of Significance**

On Tuesday, July 16, 2013, the Historic Preservation Commission, in accordance with the Demolition Review Ordinance (2003-05), made a determination that 35 Cutter 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**

*(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. The Cutter 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 disagreed with Staff findings and determined the structure importantly associated with people, events or the history of the City as a

representative of 19<sup>th</sup> 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 accordance with *Criteria (ii)*, listed above, the Commission agreed with Staff findings due to the location of the structure within the Cutter streetscape, which continues the unique rhythm of rooflines noting significance within the context of a group of buildings.

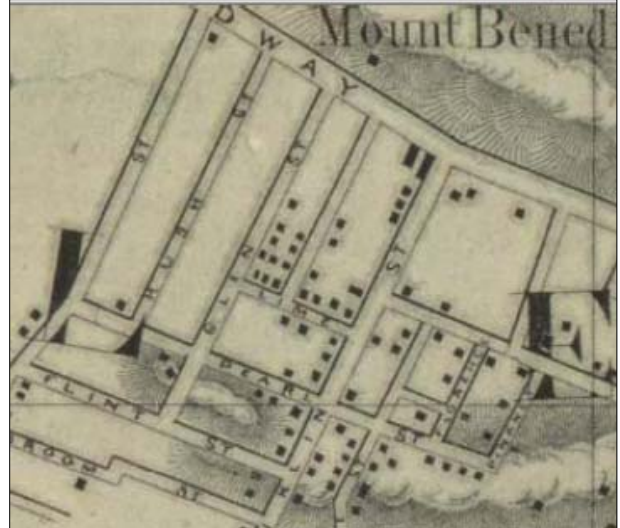
## II. Additional Information

### *Additional Research:*

- Edward Cutter platted Cutter Street in 1849. Early subdivision activity concentrated between the Charlestown line and Cross Street. Through additional map research, Cutter Street appears to have been indicated on the 1858 Walling map of Boston. Further directory research (1869) identifies the subject structure as 8 Cutter Street and the lists locksmith Henry A. Hills as the occupant. The 1851 directory does not list Cutter Street or an H.Hills.

Construction dates that predate the 1870s are often difficult to determine due to the level of detail illustrated on maps that predate the 1870s. Generally, structures cannot specifically be identified on maps from the early to mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, so often deed research will verify the construction date. However, the 1858 Walling map, clearly illustrates the subject structure.

*1858 Walling map of Boston and vicinity*



- Census data offers relatively little additional information. This data confirms that William Goodspeed, a dining saloon keeper, resided here in 1880 with his wife Ella and two daughters. Orrin Ray, a teamster, is listed as an occupant of 39 Cutter Street in 1880, but is illustrated as the property owner on the 1884 Hopkins map and the Noyce family is only listed as residing at this location in 1920.
- Inspectional Services does not have a file for this property.

### *Site Visit:*

Another site visit further illustrate that the southern end of the Cutter streetscape illustrates a unique rhythm of rooflines as these dwellings are diverse and not oriented consistently in the same manor.

### *Comparable Structures:*

One-story side-gable dwellings with three bays are located in certain areas throughout the City and compose a moderate portion of the residential housing stock within the City. This building type is generally constructed as a single family dwelling and often constitutes workers housing. Comparable structures along Cutter Street as well as in the Lowell Street neighborhood include:



*35 Cutter Street, photos 2013*

- 40 Cutter Street (center hall entry)
- 18 Cutter Street (center hall entry)
- 34 Cutter Street (center hall entry)
- 37 Fiske Street (center hall entry)
- 23-25 Fiske Street (center hall entries)
- 283 Lowell Street (center hall entry)



*Top: 40 Cutter Street; 18 Cutter Street; 34 Cutter Street  
Bottom: 37 Fiske Street; 23-25 Fiske Street; 283 Lowell Street*

Predominant differences between the comparable dwellings and the subject dwelling are the level of architectural detail, such as bay windows and eave returns, and the level of architectural integrity that remains due to alterations and the removal of historic fabric. Many of the comparable structures, as well as the subject dwelling, have an altered fenestration pattern due to enlarged windows on the primary façade. A majority of these comparative structures appear to retain more architectural integrity than the subject structure.

In addition, while all the examples present a center hall entry, several are oriented with the gable end facing the street. While this is not a predominant building type found throughout the City, as the comparable structures illustrate, other examples exist both within the Cutter streetscape and within other areas of the City.

### **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 a working class building type that is commonly found within certain areas of the City. The Cutter streetscape and surrounding neighborhood are composed of a mixture of building types that create a unique rhythm of rooflines. Although the structure is a cohesive component to the streetscape, Cutter Street is composed of a mixture of 1½ and 2½ story buildings. While the gable form is consistent, the gables are oriented both to the street and to the side of the lot and do not necessarily correlate to the front entrance which are also both oriented to the street and to the side of the lot.

The siting of the structure, centered on the lot, is rather uncommon by Somerville standards and does not seem to follow a pattern along the street. The original three bay fenestration pattern can be generally inferred, due to the small massing of this structure, and the center hall entry is still clearly understood; however, the level of detail for working class structures such as the subject structure is often minimal.

- 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 the remaining integrity of this single family dwelling is retained within the form and massing as well as portions of the fenestration pattern. As the level of detail for working class structures such as the subject structure is often minimal, integrity of such structures is often upheld by the original form and massing as well as fenestration pattern rather than the retention of architectural detail.

The structure retains integrity of location through siting and orientation as well as through spatial relationships to other buildings along Cutter Street, particularly those buildings at the southern end of the street as these are more closely related with regard to construction date, such as 40 Cutter Street.

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

The Commission determined that this structure is Significant as a representative of 19<sup>th</sup> century working class housing 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 rhythm of rooflines and, therefore, is significant within the context of a group of buildings which compose the Cutter streetscape.

Working class housing constructed during the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century represents an aspect of local history.

- 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 highly visible along Cutter Street and is located near the center of the streetscape, which remains predominantly intact. Cutter Street composes a mixture of 1½ and 2½ story buildings with a consistent gable form. Though the gables are oriented both to the



street and to the side of the lot, they do not necessarily correlate to front entrances which are also both oriented to the street and to the side of the lot.



*Cutter streetscape, photo 2013*

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

Single-family side-gable workers cottages, both facing the street or with the gable-end oriented to the street, are found within specific areas of the City, such as portions of East Somerville, the Hinckley Magoun neighborhood, and around Lowell Street. While this is not a predominant building type found throughout the City, as the comparable structures illustrate, other examples exist both within the Cutter streetscape and within other areas of the City. A majority of these comparative structures appear to retain more architectural integrity than the subject structure.

***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 found the subject parcel Significant as a representative of 19<sup>th</sup> century working class housing 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 a group of buildings which composes the Cutter streetscape.

Additional historic research identifies this structure as c.1858 and illustrates that several of the surrounding buildings along the Cutter streetscape constitute portions of the original mid 19<sup>th</sup> century historic context. Together, this collection of buildings at the southern end of Cutter Street, demonstrates the early subdivision activity that concentrated between the Charlestown line and Cross Street.

The additional information provided and consideration criteria (a-e) listed above conveys that this type of dwelling is common only within certain neighborhoods of the City, as is the associated streetscape which illustrates a unique rhythm due to inconsistent orientation of the gable. However, there are other similar building types that illustrate a higher level of architectural integrity, though the associated streetscapes are less in tact. Ultimately, Staff finds the potential demolition of 35 Cutter 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 earlier c.1858 construction date and intact existence of the original historic building context at the southern end of Cutter Street, which demonstrates early subdivision activity, and as a representative of mid 19<sup>th</sup> century working class housing, **Staff recommend that the Historic Preservation Commission find 35 Cutter 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).*

35 Cutter Street, aerial view

