



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: 7 Durham Street Garage/Shed
Case: HPC 2014.100

Applicant Name: 7 Durham Street LLC
Date of Application: December 12, 2014

Recommendation: Not Significant
Hearing Date: January 20, 2015

I. Historical Association

Historical Context: the house was constructed between 1884 & 1895. It was noted on the maps that it owned by Thomas C. Smith who worked at the American Tube Works with the job title of tube worker per City Directories 1895 & 1919. The American Tube Works was a major employer in the neighborhood from the early 1850s through the 1930s and an important business in the development of the railroads and modern plumbing.



A mall shed is located on the property as early as 1900. A sorting shed/ barn was constructed in 1919 per building permit. A larger outbuilding is shown on the 1925 Sanborn possibly showing the current structure. No information could be found regarding the type of sorting that might have been done here.

The 1920 City Directory does not have Thomas C. Smith as an owner/resident.

Evolution of Site: The building is located in the Duck Village neighborhood where there is a mix of workers cottages, three-deckers and former industrial buildings. Durham Street was platted by 1874. By 1884 the first few houses were constructed. Most of the remaining houses were erected by 1895 with a couple of 3-deckers added around 1900. The house associated with this outbuilding is a modest cottage encased in a faux stone veneer.

Architectural Description: This shed-roofed clapboard structure has modern garage doors and a side entry on the front façade. There are two double-hung windows on each side of the building. One window and the lower sash of the other three windows have been replaced with fiber board.

Summary: The wood garage/shed was constructed circa 1919 as a sorting shed per building permit record by Thomas C. Smith who had worked at the American Tube Works. The garage/shed is located along the back property line. No connection could be found between the structure and the American Tube Works. Thomas C. Smith was no longer in residence the year after the building permit was issued.

No information could be found as to what was sorted in this structure. The building is unusual as a wood garage constructed at a time when most garages were constructed of concrete blocks.

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 7 Durham Street garage/shed 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.

The subject building is not found importantly associated with the broad architectural, cultural, economic and social history of the City due to the lack of information on Thomas C. Smith or the purpose of the sorting shed. The building has no known relationship with his employment at the American Tube Works. Its use as a garage can be seen on the 1925 Sanborn excerpt below.

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 building is a simple shed/garage constructed circa 1919. It has been used as a garage since at least 1925.

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: The building form is a simple wood clapboard shed with a vehicular and a pedestrian door. The doors facing the street are modern. There are four double hung windows with the original casing simple casing with a bead around the outer edge.
- c. Materials: The building is constructed of wood, a typical material for sheds but not for garages of this period.
- d. Alterations: The doors have been replaced. One window and three lower sash have been replaced with particle board.

Evaluation of Integrity: The structure retains its form and fabric with exception of the doors and windows.

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

The building is undistinguished in form or style. Its form is that of a small utilitarian structure similar in form but not material of automotive shelters of the period.

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 clearly visible as one walks or drives up Durham Street, however the synthetic stone siding on the house at the front of the parcel draws the eye away from the out building. It is not a singular part of the landscape.

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 7 Durham Street shed/garage historically or architecturally significant.

The subject building is not found historically and architecturally significant due to the fact that the building is a simple utilitarian structure not associated with a particular architect or builder nor is it a significant part of the streetscape and is not a characteristic building of its period by itself or in the context of a group of buildings.

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 1919, 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.

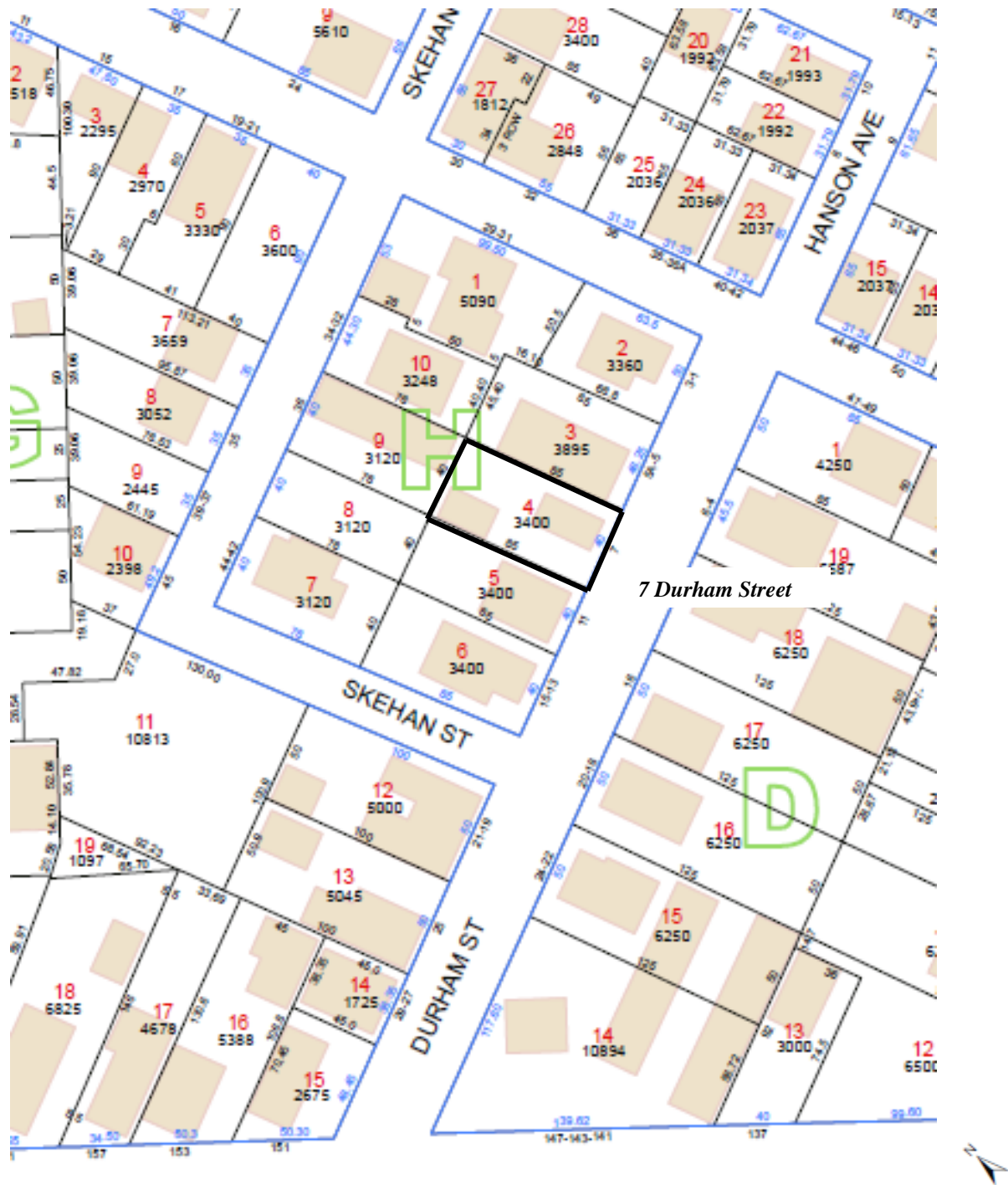
(a) In accordance with the *Findings on Historical Association*, which utilizes historic maps/atlas, City reports and directories, and building permit research, and through an examination of resources that document the history of the City, **Staff recommend that the Historic Preservation Commission do not find 7 Durham Street shed/garage 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.**

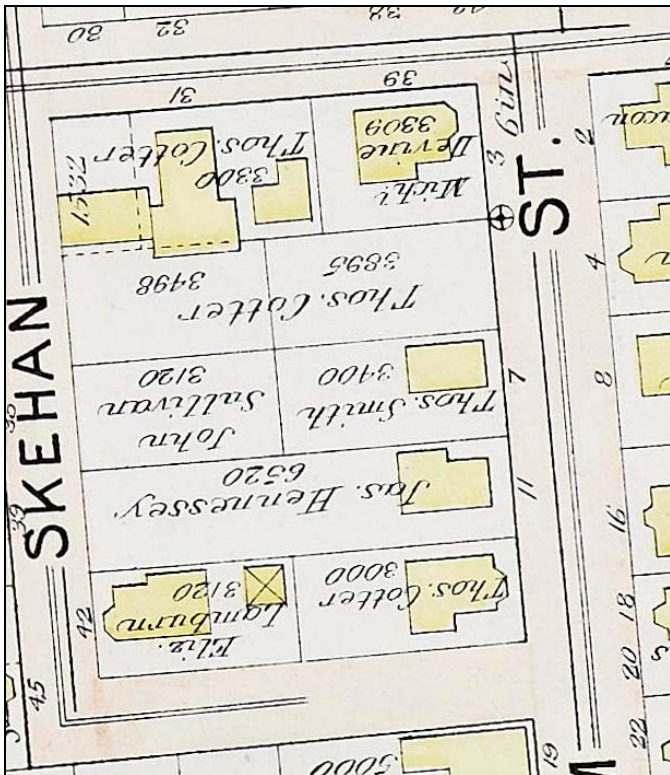
The subject building is not found importantly associated with the broad architectural, cultural, economic and social history of the City due to the lack of information on Thomas C. Smith or the purpose of the sorting shed. The building has no known relationship with his employment at the American Tube Works.

OR

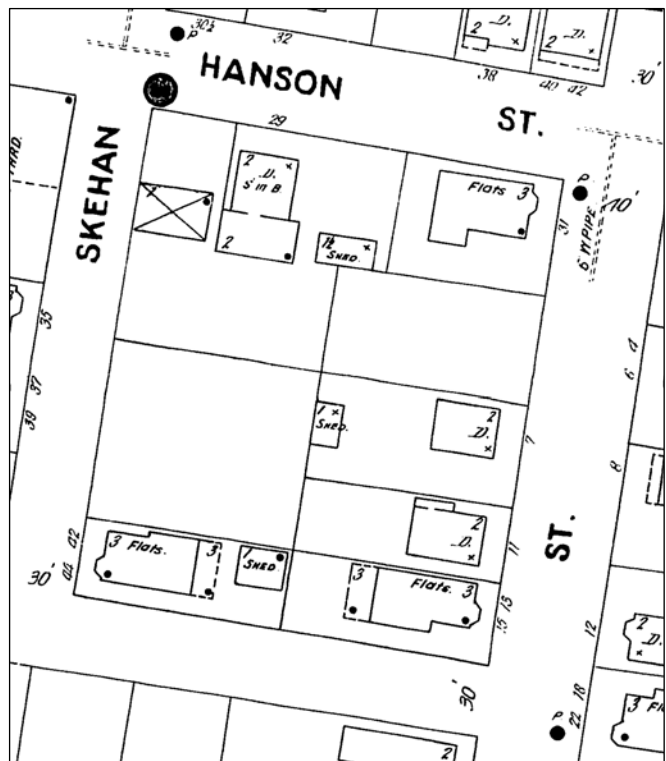
(b) In accordance with the *Findings on Historical and Architectural Significance*, which addresses period, style, method of building construction, and association with a reputed architect or builder, either by itself or in the context of a group of buildings or structures, as well as integrity, the ability to convey significance, **Staff recommend that the Historic Preservation Commission do not find 7 Durham Street shed/garage historically and architecturally significant.**

The subject building is not found historically and architecturally significant due to the fact that the building is a simple utilitarian structure not associated with a particular architect or builder, nor is it a significant part of the streetscape. It is not a characteristic garage of its period by itself or in the context of a group of buildings.

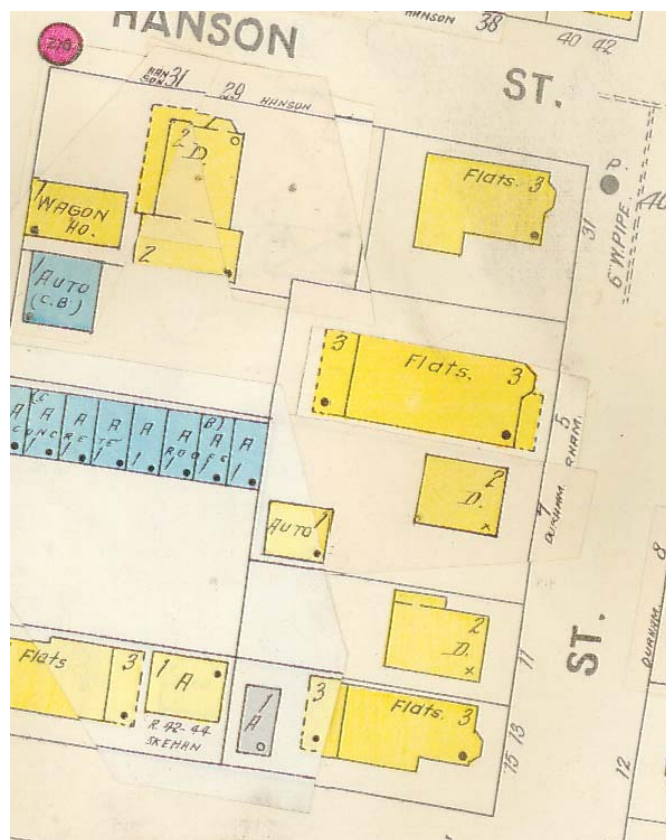




1895 Bromley Plate 5 detail



1900 Sanborn Plate 53



1925 Sanborn – Plate 53

