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III. CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
IV. OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
(i) JOSEPH A. CURTATONE
(ii) MAYOR

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

ALTERATION TO A HISTORIC PROPERTY STAFF REPORT

Site / District(s):	80 Franklin Street	c. 1850 – Blodgett-Gee House
Case:	HPC 2014.098	Lower Franklin Street Local Historic District
Applicant Name:	Walter Jr. Moura, Contractor	
Applicant Address:	97 Winthrop Street, Medford, MA	
Date of Application:	November 24, 2014	
Legal Notice:	Remove chimney	
Staff Recommendation:	Deny Certificate of Appropriateness	
Date of Public Hearing:	December 16, 2014	

I. Building Description (from the Form B)

Architectural Description: The early double house at 80 Franklin Street was likely built 1848-1852 by an unknown housewright for Nathan Blodgett as the original owner, later owned by John Gee. The plan follows a Late Federal period double house form of two stories with a gable roof and two rear chimneys, set on a brick foundation. The plan is similar to 74 Franklin Street (SMV.584), also owned by Blodgett, and possibly built as a boarding house. The design is Italianate Style as seen in the bracketed entrance hood and the paneled facade bays, while the pedimented dormers show an older Federal Style form, suggesting a conservative builder. A recent remodeling has altered the second story window facade, possibly from a five bays as 74 Franklin Street (SMV.584).



Although altered, the Blodgett-Gee house is of architectural interest as an early boarding house, preserving mid-19th century features on a Federal house plan.

Historical Context/Evolution of Structure or Parcel: The early double house at 80 Franklin Street is likely dated 1848-1852 by deed and map research to Nathan Blodgett, later owned by John Gee. The original property trace is confused in the estate of Hannah Underwood, a widow, who sells the Franklin Street lot in January 1848 "with buildings" to Nathan Blodgett, a local brickmaker. The house is apparently shown on the 1852 Draper Map and clearly located on the 1852 & McIntyre Map, thus confirming a likely construction date of 1848-1852 and possibly earlier. The house matches a similar Blodgett house at 74 Franklin Street (SMV.584) of the same date, both apparently built to house local workers for the industrial activities on Washington Street. As neither house is

shown on the 1830 Hales Map, both houses appear to date from 1848-1852, matching the Italianate Style features. The property is bought by John Gee in 1861 and shown to Gee on the 1874 Atlas and again on the 1895 Atlas.

The Blodgett-Gee house is important surviving example of an early boarding house on Franklin Street, likely dating from 1848 with industrial development of Washington Street.

II. Project Description

Proposal of Alteration: Brief Description of Work:

The Applicant is repairing a leaking roof, replacing damaged wood shingle siding and replacing rotted and damaged window frames. The repairs have automatically received a Certificate of Non-Applicability for repairs and replacement in kind per Section 10 of the Historic District Ordinance. He would like to remove the chimney on the left (south side).

III. Findings for a Certificate of Appropriateness

1. Prior Certificates Issued/Proposed:

This property was designated as part of a Local Historic District in 2010. This is the first time this property has come before the Commission.

Precedence:

2. Considerations:

- *What is the visibility of the proposal?* The chimney is visible from the public right of way.
- *What are the Existing Conditions of the building / parcel?* Two chimneys are located behind the ridge line but are clearly visible from Franklin Street. These indicate the locations of rooms and fireplaces or stoves in the rooms below, showing their relative importance as habitable spaces.

The primary purpose of the Preservation Ordinance is to encourage preservation and high design standards in Local Historic Districts, in order to safeguard the architectural heritage of the City. Guidelines have been developed to ensure that rehabilitation efforts, alterations, and new construction all respect the design fabric of the districts and do not adversely affect their present architectural integrity.

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

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 are mentioned on the survey form.

B. Changes and additions to the property and its environment that have taken place over the course of time are evidence of the history of the property and the neighborhood. These changes to the property may have developed significance in their own right, and this significance should be recognized and respected (LATER IMPORTANT FEATURES will be the term used hereafter to convey this concept). There are no other changes to the building proposed.

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

The proposal is to remove rather than rebuild the chimney.

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

There is no intent to replace the existing architectural feature once it is removed.

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.

There is no intent to match the existing architectural feature once it is removed.

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 visible from Franklin Street.

- *Does the proposal coincide with the appropriate Specific Guidelines as set forth in the Design Guidelines?* The scope of work does not meet HPC guidelines with the work based upon the physical and documentary evidence.

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.*

The hole in the roof will be repaired with 3-tab asphalt shingles to match the existing.

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

There will be no change in the existing roof covering.

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.*

The chimney shape form and location will not be preserved.

Summary:

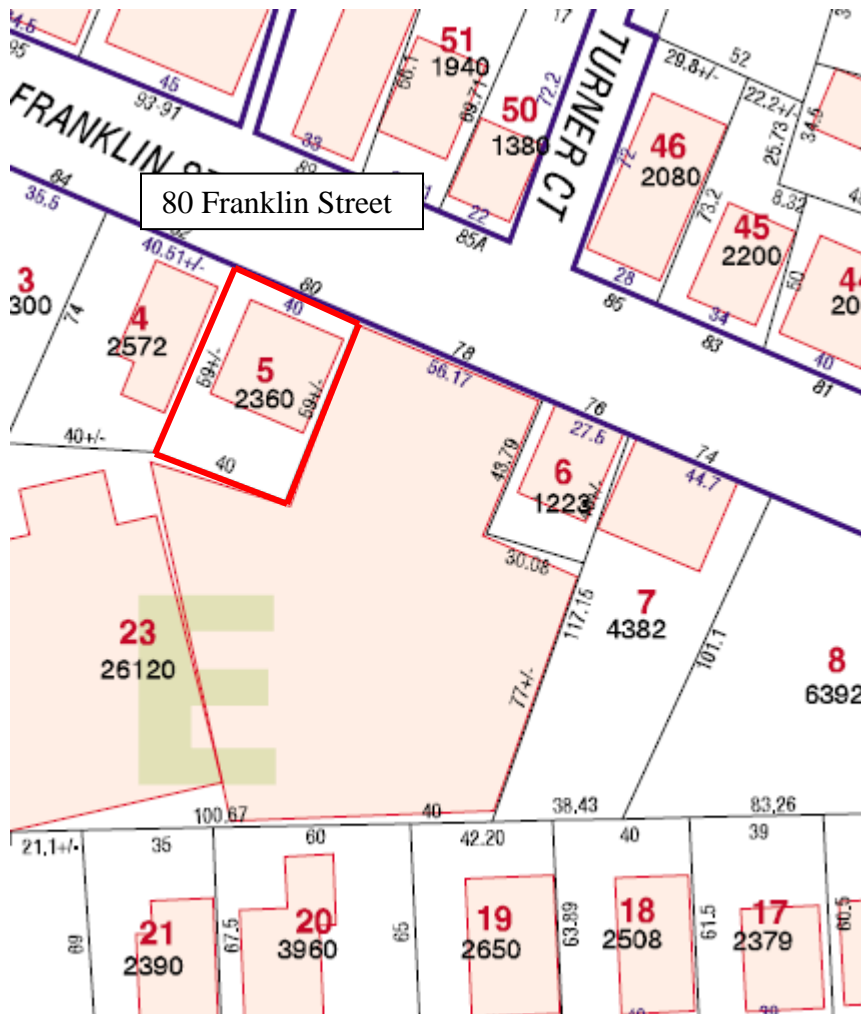
The proposal does not meet the guidelines as noted above. The chimney would be removed rather than repaired or replaced in kind, and would entail the removal of a character-defining feature. *Existing chimneys are an important architectural detail that in most cases contribute to the architectural integrity 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.*

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 Lower Franklin Street Local Historic District; therefore **Staff recommends that the Historic Preservation Commission do not grant Walter Jr. Moura, Contractor for Edson daSilveira, Owner a Certificate of Appropriateness to remove the existing chimney on the south side of the building.**

The Staff recommends that the Applicant be granted a Certificate of Non-Applicability to repair or rebuild the existing chimney with the existing brick or in-kind to match the existing as closely as possible in size, shape, texture and color and with an appropriate mortar that is consistent with the hardness of the bricks used. New flashing should be installed to make the seal with the roof water-tight.





80 Franklin Street – Assessors Photo