



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

MICHAEL F. GLAVIN  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

*HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION*

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**DETERMINATION OF SIGNIFICANCE STAFF REPORT**

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Site:	281 R Highland Avenue	
Case:	HPC 2014.068	
Applicant Name:	Gio Nardella	
Date of Application:	August 18, 2014	HPC received: August 18, 2014
Recommendation:	Not Significant	
Hearing Date:	September 16, 2014	

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**I. Historical Association**

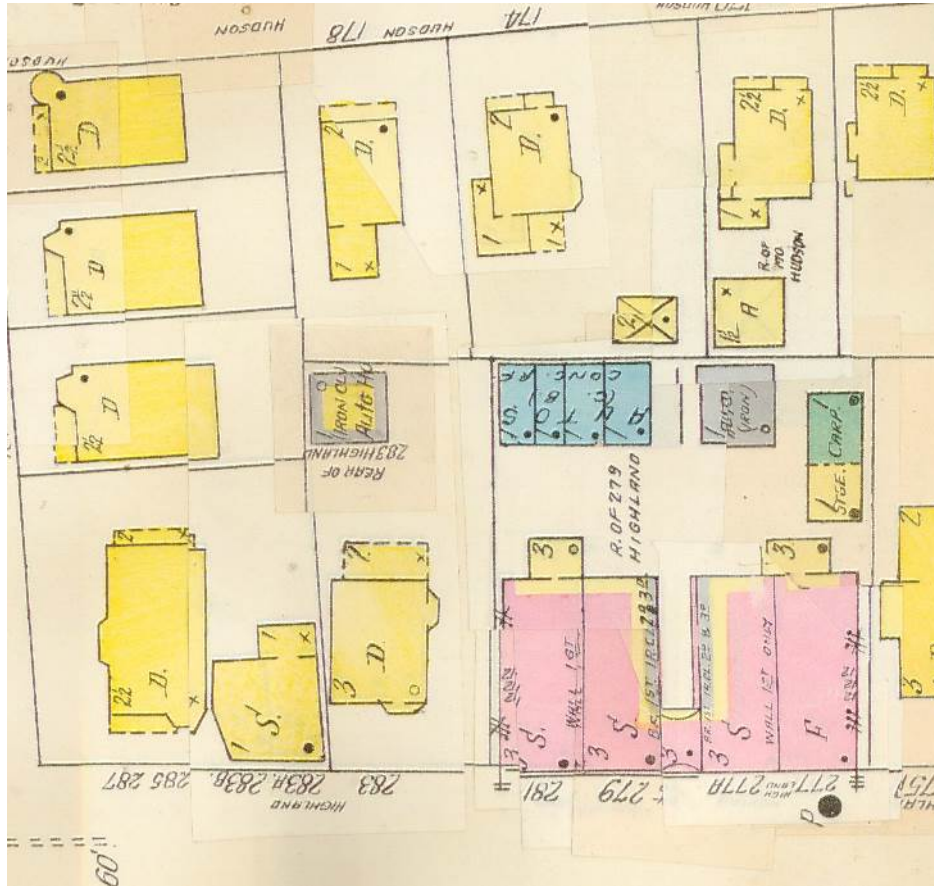
*Architectural Description:* The building is a 3-bay by 2-bay single story flat roofed structure on a cement pad. A small mudroom with storm windows and a two- step entry on the north side is located on the west side of the building. The sash are all double hung wood sash. The siding is wood clapboard. Trim is simple wood board.

*Historical Description:* The building first appears on the 1925 Sanborn Atlas as a carpenter's shop and storage. In the 1934 the building is shown fully as used by carpenter and in the 1950 Sanborn Atlas used for storage. In 1989 the Sanborn Atlas indicates that the building was in use a residence. The building permit record does not appear to have any relevance to this structure and no Certificates of Occupancy were found. The 1960 List of Residents has Henrietta O'Leary, operator, aged 65 and Mary Teixeira, at home, aged 73 as the occupants of 281 R. and noted that they had been residents there the previous year. The address was not found in the 1955 or 1965 listings.

*Architect:* Unknown.

*Context/Evolution:* The building is located behind a brick front apartment building and adjacent to a 1921 metal garage. It has gone through several changes of use from carpenter's shop to residence.





1925 Sanborn

*Summary:* The building has had several changes of use as can be seen in the Sanborn Atlases over time. The building is atypical of the neighborhood.

### 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 **not** find 281 R Highland Avenue 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 numerous alterations of use, lack of visibility and lack of associations with any historic persons or events.

## 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 281 R Highland Avenue begins around 1925 as an accessory structure.

### ***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 and is located behind an earlier brick apartment building.
- b. Design: The design is simple and utilitarian.
- c. Materials: The materials are traditional.
- d. Alterations: The conversion of the building from workshop to residential probably entailed alterations beyond the addition of the mudroom. No building permits were found for this property.

*Evaluation of Integrity*: Visually the building can be seen as an accessory structure and of a utilitarian nature given its lack of stylistic flourishes. It does not constitute an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood due to its location and its singular physical characteristics.

### **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 281 R Highland Avenue historically or architecturally significant.

The subject building is not found historically and architecturally significant due to the paucity of information and the lack of architectural distinction.

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### 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 1925, 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 281 R Highland Avenue 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 do not find 281 R Highland Avenue historically and architecturally significant.**

