



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
MAYOR'S OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
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MAYOR

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HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

DETERMINATION OF SIGNIFICANCE STAFF REPORT

Site:	17-27 Holland Street (currently known as "Johnny D's")
Case:	HPC 2015.062
Applicant Name:	Carla Delellis
Date of Application:	September 10, 2015
Recommendation:	Significant
Hearing Date:	October 20, 2015

I. Historical Association

Historical Context: The earliest phase of notable residential development in Davis Square occurred from 1865-1873. It happened largely in anticipation and subsequent introduction of the Lexington and Arlington Branch of the Boston and Maine Railroad to the area in 1870-1871. The new streetcar and train service provided Davis Square with easy access to Boston. The Square is now a well-preserved early twentieth century commercial district and a thriving center of mixed uses, incorporating many commercial businesses, restaurants, offices, entertainment venues, and houses.



Evolution of Site: The subject property has evolved considerably since the beginning of the 1900s. The 1895 Bromley shows a house on a large lot belonging to Louisa A. Brine that has frontage on both Holland Street and Winter Street. The 1877 City Directory notes that she is a teacher at the Jackson School on Maple Street. Her house can also be seen at 18 Winter Street on 1900 Sanborn Map. The house was demolished sometime prior to 1925 as can be seen on the 1925 Sanborn Map.

A Common Victualler's License was also issued Everett A. Currier for use at 21 Holland Street in 1906 and 1911. Due to address and street numbering changes, this may be for the building next door as can be seen in the 1900 Sanborn Map. This also holds true for John J. Hall who acquired a Common Victualler's License in 1916, to be used at 17 Holland Street.



The City Directory for 1925 indicates that 3 businesses were located at 17-27 Holland Street. Building permits indicate that the property was owned by Maurice J. Barron and family from 1918-1930 and possibly later.

In 1922, M. Barron received a Permit to close up doors to make windows for a restaurant at **17 Holland Street**. In the mid-1920s, a trio of Greek brothers, Christos, Trakas and Harry (or Harvey) Psilopoulos had a restaurant there where they sold coffee and candy. They were raided by the police for gambling in 1923 per *The Boston Globe*, and per Board of Aldermen Minutes had their license revoked in 1927. The Psilopoulos brothers are also listed in the 1925 City Directory as Harry, proprietor; Anthony, chef; and Charles, counterman. They lived at 30 Holland Street. By 1929, 17 Holland was used as an upholstery shop by Myer Possick. 17 Holland Street is then listed as an eating establishment on all building permits issued from 1922-1949.

21 Holland Street is noted in 1925 as a hardware store belonging to Edward Ginsburg who lived with his wife, Annie, in the Dreyfus Building in Davis Square. By 1929, Abraham Andrews had taken over the hardware store. In 1940, Davis Square Hardware was owned by Albert Sheinkoph who also owned Davis Square Plumbing Company. In 1942, the building was repaired after a fire according to building permits issued to J. Barron. In 1953, a permit was issued to Davis Square Hardware to change their signage.

In 1925, **27 Holland Street** was home to Pasik Brothers, Dry Goods. Morris and Nathan Pasik lived at 67 Fremont Street. By 1929, Edward S. Mitchell was selling fish there. He and his wife Jessie G. lived on Saint James Street. A 1939 building permit was issued to L(ottie Z.) Hobbes, wife of Cecil, to install 2 fry-o-lators to cook clams and fish. The 1940 Directory shows that Davis Square Fish Market was owned by Cecil R Hobbes. According to the Johnny D's website, the building remained a fish market until it was purchased by the nightclub for their kitchen in the 1987. The owners, Bill and Alice of 40 years are commemorated in the ten Statue Park sculptures by James Tyler.

There is no further information in the building permit records or the city directories regarding the distribution of the use or ownership of the buildings that comprise the current Johnny D's Uptown Restaurant and Music Club between 1940 and the 1980s.

Since 1969 Johnny D's UpTown has been a prominent music venue and restaurant known for bringing a wide range of musicians to the City for over 30 years. For further information on who has played there and the history of the business, see their website <http://johnnyds.com/>

Architectural Description: Originally constructed as two buildings with a mixture of brick, concrete block and wood, the current business, Johnny D's, presents a unified single story façade tied together by facing bricks along Holland Street and a small faux slate shingled roof line. A simple sign with the current shows listed on the board is centered on the facade. A second sign is perpendicular to the street with the name of the business shown prominently. The rear Winter Street facade clearly shows the two buildings. The back of 17 Holland has a plain board covering while the 21-27 Holland Street elevation has a mural, a door, a flat pediment and a modern cornice with large dentils. The side walls are brick.

Summary: Constructed sometime between 1916 and 1923, 17-27 Holland Street has held several locally important business types from hardware stores, dry goods, restaurants and fish markets

until its latest incarnation as the music venue, Johnny D's Uptown Restaurant and Music Club since 1969. The building has been altered over time and does not resemble a 1920s storefront.

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 finds 17-27 Holland 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.

The subject building is found importantly associated with the broad architectural, cultural, economic and social history of the City due to its current association with the culture of the City. The types of businesses were those of importance to the local community although the architecture was undistinguished and is no longer visible. The current business has been important to the cultural landscape of the City and region for almost 50 years.

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 17-27 Holland Street begins in the early 1920s as a restaurant and shops and continues through to the present day as a prominent music club.

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 is located on a major local artery close to the Davis Square MBTA Station and numerous bus lines. The building has not been moved.
- b. Design: The design is a simple utilitarian single story brick and concrete block building with applied cornices and roof sheds. A 1980s façade has replaced the original.
- c. Materials: 1980s brick and 2000s vinyl architectural roof shingles dominate the front façade. The Winter Street façade is plain with modern applied cornice and dentils and a mural on one of the two buildings.

- d. Alterations: The original facades are not known. Photos could not be found of these buildings. Several building permits note that windows were altered and replaced. The façade has experienced numerous alterations on both front and back elevations

Evaluation of Integrity: The building has little architectural integrity having undergone numerous alterations.

The building is not distinguished architecturally, having a façade that dates predominantly to the 1970s or 1980s. The physical characteristics of the building are neither unique nor emblematic of its current use nor its historic use as restaurant, fish shop and hardware store.

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 17-27 Holland Street architecturally significant. Its current historical significance as a music club is less than 50 years old.

The subject building is not found historically and architecturally significant due to the number of alterations to the building and due to the lack of historical significance prior to the last forty-six years.

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.

The subject building is found importantly associated with the broad architectural, cultural, economic and social history of the City due to its current association with the culture of the City. The types of businesses were those of importance to the local community although the architecture was undistinguished and is no longer visible. The current business has been important to the cultural landscape of the City and region for almost 50 years.

The c. 1923 building is not distinguished architecturally, having a façade that dates predominantly to the 1970s or 1980s. The physical characteristics of the building are neither unique nor emblematic of its current use nor its historic use as restaurant, fish shop and hardware store.

The subject building is not found historically and architecturally significant due to the number of alterations to the building and due to the lack of historical significance prior to the last forty-six years.

(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 structures, circa 1923, are at least 50 years old.

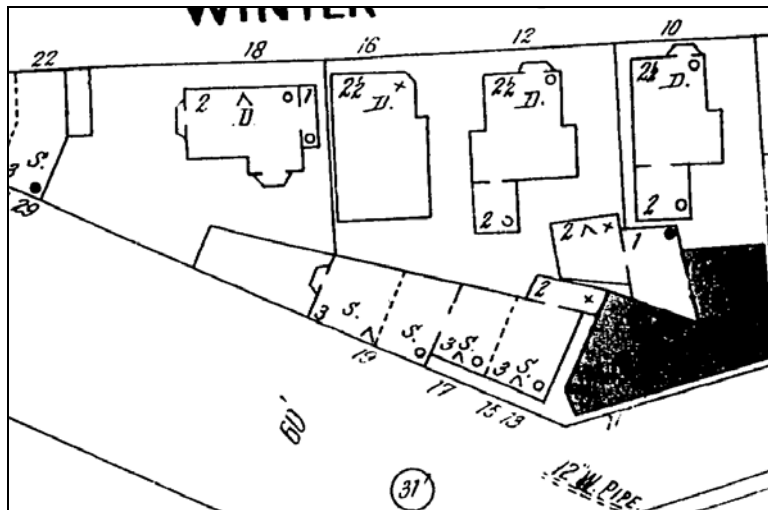
AND

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.

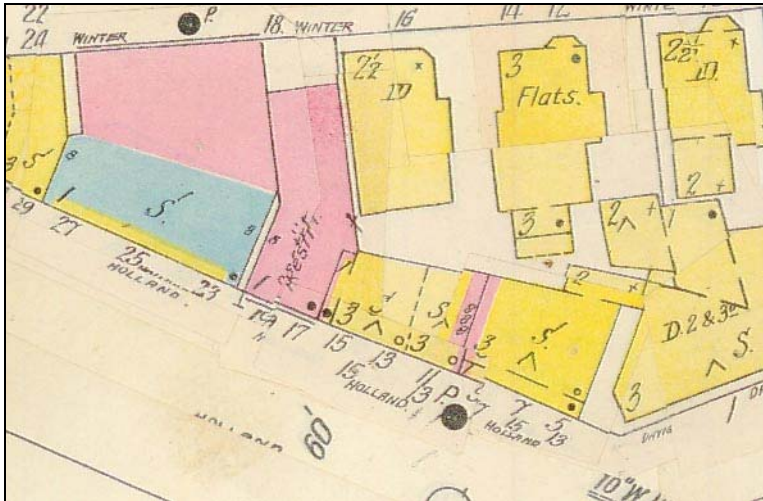
(a) In accordance with the *Findings on Historical Association*, which utilizes historic maps/atlas, City reports and directories, and building permit research, and through an examination of resources that document the history of the City, **Staff recommend that the Historic Preservation Commission find 17-27 Holland 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

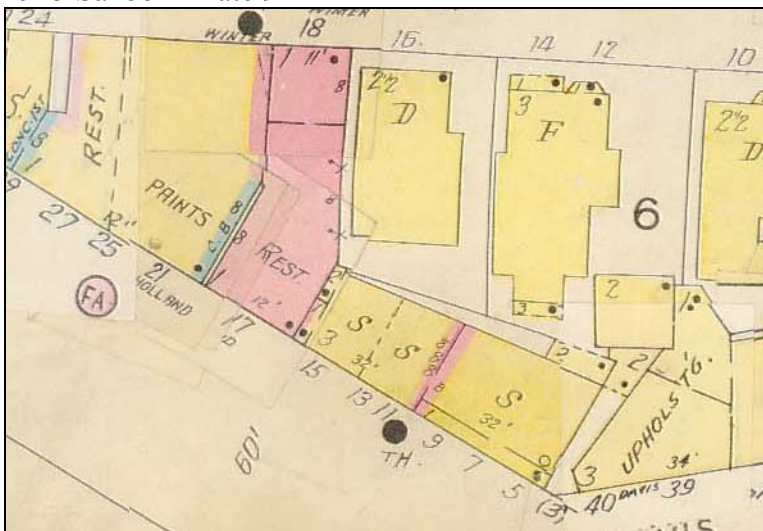
(b) In accordance with the *Findings on Historical and Architectural Significance*, which addresses period, style, method of building construction, and association with a reputed architect or builder, either by itself or in the context of a group of buildings or structures, as well as integrity, the ability to convey significance, **Staff recommend that the Historic Preservation Commission do not find 17-27 Holland Street historically and architecturally significant.**



1900 Sanborn Plate 9



1925 Sanborn Plate 9



1959 Sanborn Plate 225

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