



**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 PREFERABLY PRESERVED STAFF REPORT**

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Site:	36 Horace Street
Case:	HPC 2016.016
Applicant Name:	Maria Valente
Date of Application:	March 23, 2016
Date of Significance:	April 26, 2016
Recommendation:	Preferably Preserved
Hearing Date:	May 17, 2016



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

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

the Historic Preservation Commission voted unanimously (6-0) to determine the c. 1874 single-family dwelling at 36 Horace Street 'Significant' because the building, per Section 2.17.B of the Demolition Review Ordinance 2003-05, is "at least 50 years old, and is or has been determined by the Commission to be a significant building or structure after a finding that the building or structure is either:

- i. "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 of Massachusetts, or
- ii. "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, and therefore it is in the public interest to be preserved or rehabilitated rather than to be demolished."

36 Horace Street is found importantly associated with the broad architectural, cultural, economic and social history of the City due to its association with the meat packing industries of the last half of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Somerville and Cambridge were at one time among the largest of the meat packing centers in the US. Horace Street, along with South, Ward, and Medford Streets retain a strong association with the nationally-important photographer Lewis W. Hine and his photographs of the exploitation of child labor in the earliest part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

36 Horace Street retains a number of qualities that continue to convey both historic and architectural significance, such as the location of the structure on the lot and the spatial relationships between the subject dwelling and other dwellings along Horace Street. Other qualities that convey significance include the original form and massing, fenestration pattern for various façades, and the side-hall interior plan, which is understood from the exterior.

The building on its own encompasses the humble nature of the inhabitants over time and more specifically that of the 19<sup>th</sup> century industrial area. These buildings demonstrate the conditions of those working and living near the slaughter houses.

The period of significance for 36 Horace Street begins before 1874 as workers' housing for the meat packing industry and continues through the present as workers housing. Its significance continues into the present day as the use of this structure remains constant throughout its existence.

## **II. Additional Information**

### *Additional Research:*

- A clear article on Lewis W. Hine and National Child Labor Committee can be found at <https://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/hine-photos/>. Hine produced over 5000 photographs documenting child labor. His photos of the neighborhood and the children of South, Horace, Ward and Medford Streets can be found on several web sites.

### *Site Visit:*

A site visit was conducted on Sunday, May 1, 2016 to review the structural conditions of the building. The following was observed:

1. Exterior left (south) wall of structure does not look plumb – significant leaning;
2. The Foundation appears to be in OK shape;
3. Structure is balloon framed with a variety of approaches to sistering and reinforcement;
4. There is significant sagging in the framing on the first and second floor sandwiches; and
5. There is evidence of fire (charring of framing members) at third floor and roof rafters.

### *Comparable Structures:*

Beyond the collection of workers housing on Horace Street, there are a number of single-family dwellings with 1½ story massing located throughout the City. Intact neighborhoods of workers cottages from the third quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century such as this one are not common.

Comparable structures within the City include, but not limited to:

- 25 Clyde Street (LHD)
- 342 Lowell Street (LHD)
- 27 Dane Avenue
- 80 Properzi Way
- 37 Fisk Avenue
- 31 Richardson Street

Predominant differences between the comparable dwellings and the subject dwelling are orientations toward the street, heights of basements, and the shapes and sizes of the ells. They were all constructed for workers and inhabited by families for generations. For the most part they are well-maintained and retain much of their original character, Properzi Way, Dane Avenue, and Fisk Avenue are located in existing neighborhoods of workers housing with somewhat similar and later dates than the Horace Street structures.



*Top: 25 Clyde Street (1860); 342 Lowell Street (1861); 80 Properzi Way (c.1850).  
Bottom: 27 Dane Avenue (c.1874); 37 Fisk Avenue (1866); 31 Richardson Street (c. 1850).*

### 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 represent a desirable form of workers' housing despite its location amid the slaughter houses. Single-family workers' housing gave autonomy to their residents through the provision of yards, un-programmed open space which was often used to house chickens and grow vegetables for the resident families. This provided a very different experience for residents in these single-family houses than the alternative tenement style workers' housing which provided no such benefits. Rooms were often sublet for added income. The Horace streetscape and surrounding neighborhood are predominantly composed of structures similar to the form and massing of the subject parcel and interspersed with later 3-decker housing, and together, the buildings that form this streetscape illustrate the industrialization of Somerville in the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

As industries developed along the rail and river corridors of Somerville, housing for the workers was developed in close proximity to their places of work, some of which had easy access to public transportation. Slaughter houses, glass factories, and furniture factories were located along these corridors. These streets would have been undesirable to middle management and building owners who preferred to build above and away from the noise and pollution of the rail lines and their businesses on Somerville's many hills.

While many of the remaining industrial buildings are being adapted for reuse, the housing associated with these businesses is being demolished for larger structures. The destruction of the workers neighborhoods removes the context and the history of Somerville, a city proud of its connections with the working class.

- 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 integrity of this one-family dwelling is retained within the location and form, as well as integrity of design. The structure also retains integrity of location through siting and orientation as well as through spatial relationships to other buildings along Horace Street. The building is a good example of a workers' cottage which, with its neighbors, gives witness to the lives of its residents.

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

36 Horace Street is found importantly associated with the broad architectural, cultural, economic and social history of the City due to its association with the meat packing industries of the last half of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Somerville and Cambridge were at one time among the largest of the meat packing centers in the US. Horace Street along with South, Ward and Medford Streets retains a strong association with the nationally important photographer Lewis W. Hine and his photographs of the exploitation of child labor in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century

- 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 Horace Street and is located in the center of a small group of similar gable-ended buildings. Horace Street is a short two blocks long with the house located near the end of small cul-de-sac ending at the railroad tracks.

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

Somerville prides itself on its working class heritage. The elimination of the historical evidence of this history belittles the importance of an entire class of people without whom the City as it is today would not exist. This closely-built neighborhood developed at a time of growth from 1870-1900 when the population of the City more than quadrupled from 14,685 to 61,643. Somerville was becoming fully developed with the last land, at the time, least desirable parcels developed along the nearby railroad next to the slaughterhouses.

Workers' housing set within a clear neighborhood of similar buildings is becoming increasingly rare as developers buy up the small houses that are suitable for single families with yards for the children to play in order to construct larger buildings that disrupt the context and proportions of these districts of pocket-sized homes.

***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?***

Based upon the findings in Section III. Preferably Preserved items a-e, Staff finds that the demolition of 36 Horace Street would be 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 finds 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 frequency of this type of residential dwelling and associated streetscape within the City, the importance of Horace Street, and the location of the structure within the Horace Streetscape, **Staff recommends that the Historic Preservation Commission find 36 Horace 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).*



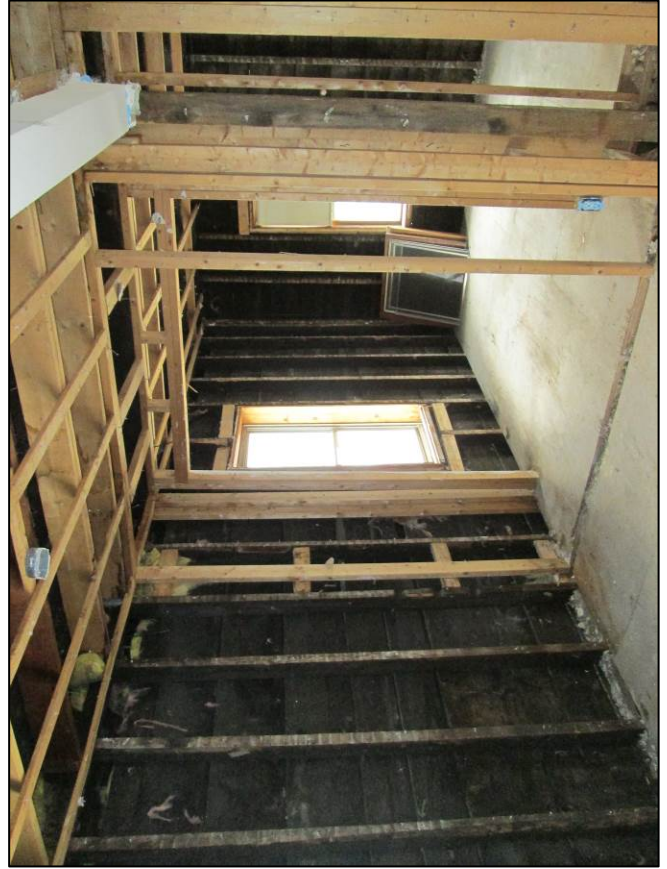


Basement





Ground Floor







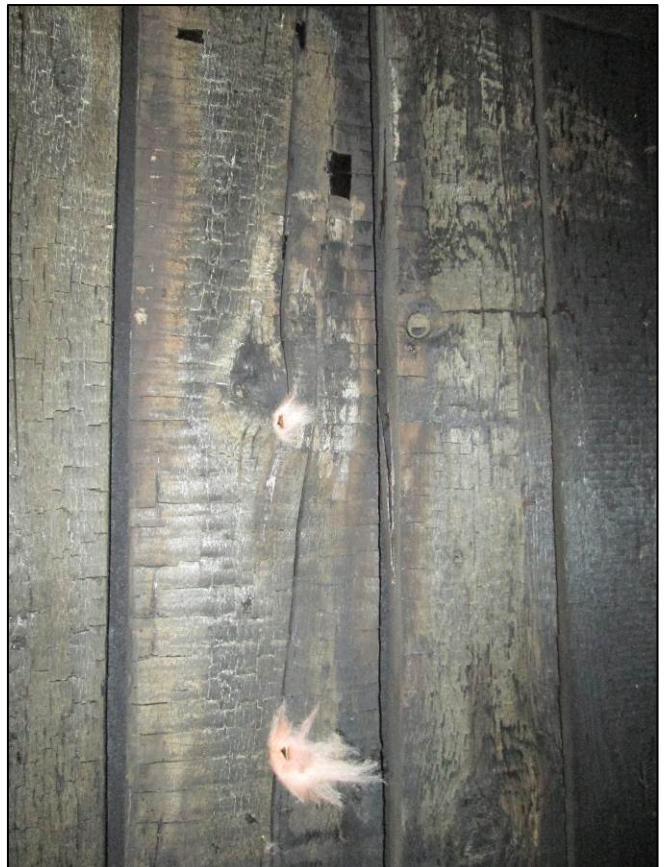
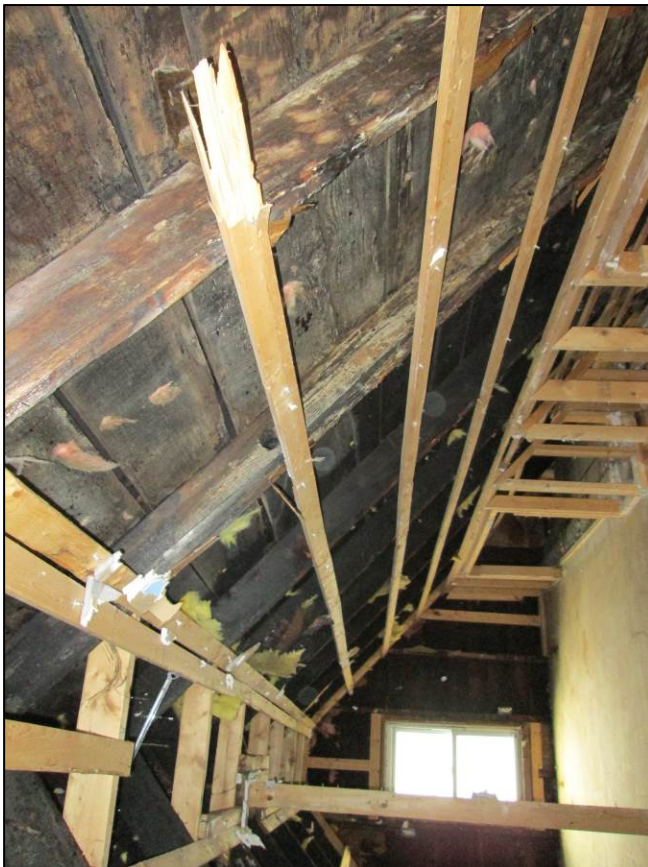
Second Floor







Attic







*Horace Street looking south*



*Annie Fedeles working on crochet as she walks down Horace Street; Photo: Lewis W. Hine, August 1, 1912*