



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

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

*HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION*

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**DETERMINATION OF SIGNIFICANCE STAFF REPORT**

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Site: 19 Kent Court  
Case: HPC 2016.071  
Applicant Name: Eamon Fee  
  
Date of Application: August 4, 2016  
Recommendation: Preferably Preserved  
  
Determined Significant: October 13, 2016  
Hearing Date: November 15, 2016



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

On Thursday, October 13, 2016, the Historic Preservation Commission voted unanimously (4-0) to determine the c. 1874 dwelling at 19 Kent Court '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 both:

- 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, and
- 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."

According to *Criteria 2.17.B*, listed above, historic map and directory research identifies the structure as c.1874. The dwelling at 19 Kent Court is not present on the 1852 Draper Map of Somerville but can be seen on the 1858 Walling Map of the region.

In accordance with *Criteria (i)*, listed above, the subject building is found importantly associated with the broad architectural, cultural, economic and social history of the City due to the c.1874 construction date which illustrates continued working class development of the area; simple form and massing including the rear ell; and retaining the side fenestration pattern that illustrates one bay. This building is a mid-

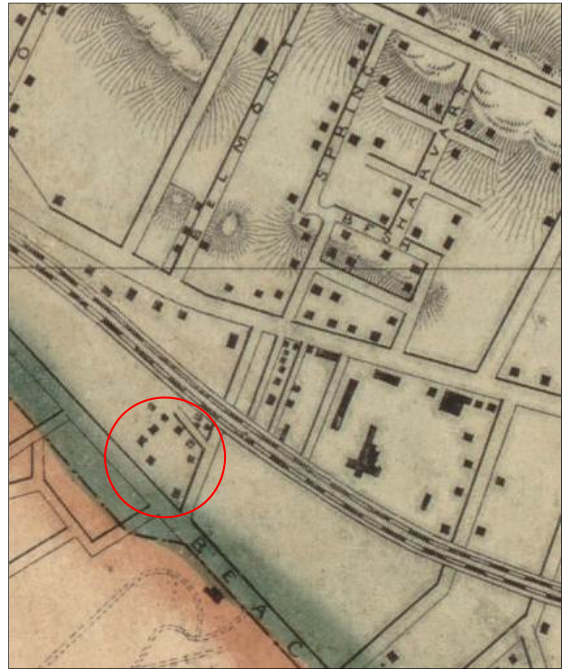
nineteenth century example of working class housing and is part of a collection of housing associated with the early development and industry of Somerville.

In accordance with *Criteria (ii)*, listed above, the subject dwelling is found historically and architecturally significant as a representative of mid-19<sup>th</sup> century working class housing stock due to the remaining integrity of the structure with regard to original form, massing, and visible side fenestration patterns. In addition, due to the location of the structure within a small collection of buildings that represent the same cultural context, this dwelling is significant within the context of the group of buildings which, together, represent the early development and industry of Somerville.

## II. Additional Information

### *Additional Information:*

- Kent Street connected Beacon Street with Somerville Avenue, then Milk Row, as early as 1813. The first passenger railroad station in Somerville opened in 1835 and in 1842, the Kent Street Station opened near the Harvard Branch railway spur. Nearby, Kent Court developed near the Fitchburg Railroad tracks before the Civil War.
- According to the 1858 Walling map, a small collection of mid nineteenth century structures along this portion of Kent Street and Kent Court appears to remain existent. Located near the Bleachery, these dwellings likely housed employees of the Bleachery, later industries that located in the immediate area, or the railroad. 45 Kent Street, a two-family, is identified as c.1830-1840 by the short eaves and windows.
- Another dwelling located at 6 Kent Court is identified as c.1750 and moved to its present location from Somerville Avenue. This structure has a gambrel roof, a five-bay façade that is one room deep and a rear lean-to. Several dwellings with raised basements along Kent Court appear similar to the workers cottages located near the brickyards, such as Clyde Street. Raised basements were often useful for cooking or for use as a shop. Another similarity is having three bays on the primary facade and the one room of depth for the main massing. This type of structure was small, inexpensive, easy to construct and often used in marshy areas where excavating a cellar was not practical.
- No new information has been found about the residents of the building. See determination of significance.
- Building permit files from Inspectional Services provide minimal information. Permits were found for siding and insulation.



*1858 Walling map with Kent Street and Kent Court circled in red*

### *Site Visit:*

Site visits illustrate that the subject structure is one of several small residential structures, located on Kent Street and Kent Court, which share the same historic context. The subject dwelling is within a close proximity to these dwellings and, together, these structures illustrate a period in Somerville that has been predominantly lost, other than a few interspersed dwellings along Somerville Avenue. In the past few years, 14, 18 and 20 Kent Court have been demolished. 14 is now a large gambrel-roofed single family. 18 and 20 have been demolished. A new building in the style of a double 3-decker has been designed for the location.



*Corner of Kent Street and Kent Court, 2013.*

*This streetscape illustrates an early period in the historical context and development of the City.*

*Comparable Structures:*

- 72 Dover Street
- 57 Meacham Road (LHD)
- 58 Meacham Road (LHD)
- 60 Meacham Road
- 8 Campbell Park
- 13 Campbell Park (LHD)
- 204 Morrison Avenue

Predominant differences between the comparable dwellings and the subject dwelling are the polygonal bay on the front façade, which is often one story instead of two, two versus three bays, and an open front porch. However, one similarity is the side projecting bay, though many of the comparable dwellings illustrate this projection with a cross-gable instead of a flat roof.







*Top: 72 Dover Street; 57 Meacham Road (LHD); 58 Meacham Road (LHD); 60 Meacham Road*  
*Bottom: 8 Campbell Park; 13 Campbell Park (LHD); 204 Morrison Avenue*

Predominant differences between the comparable dwellings and the subject dwelling are the polygonal bay on the front façade, which is often one story instead of two, two versus three bays, and an open front porch. However, one similarity is the side projecting bay, though many of the comparable dwellings illustrate this projection with a cross-gable instead of a flat roof.

### **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:*

*How does this building or structure compose or reflect features which contribute to the heritage of the City?*

The building is a 2½ story, side hall plan two-family dwelling with a front gable and an enclosed front stoop. This building likely has a third quarter of the nineteenth century construction date. It does not appear on the 1852 Draper Map but can be seen on the 1874 Hopkins Atlas. The main block is three bays in width and two bays deep with shallow eaves. There is also a rear ell with an enclosed side door. Alterations include replacement windows and doors, an enclosed entries, vinyl siding. The roof has asphalt shingles and the foundation appears to be composed of brick. In addition, it is part of a small collection of mid nineteenth century structures along this portion of Kent Street and Kent Court that

retain, at minimum, a moderate degree of historical significance and architectural integrity. While the subject dwelling has some alteration, the nineteenth century historical context is clearly represented.

- a) What is the remaining integrity of the structure? The National Park Service defines integrity as the ability of a property to convey significance.*

The subject structure retains a moderate level of historical and architectural integrity due to the pre-1874 date of construction; retention of simple form, massing, fenestration patterns; and as part of a small collection of mid nineteenth century working class housing that represents the early development and industry of Somerville.

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

With the population growth spurred by the industries located along transportation lines such as the railroads. This neighborhood is in close proximity to the Middlesex Bleachery, a coffin factory, the American Tube Works, the Daniel E. Chase Distillery and the Lowell Railroad Line. It was a major center of employment for immigrants. Along with the nearby housing on Kent Street and the base of Spring Hill, as a group, these houses show an aspect of local working class history. The subject dwelling is found historically and architecturally significant as a representative of mid-19<sup>th</sup> century working class housing stock due to the remaining integrity of the structure with regard to original form, massing, and visible side fenestration patterns. In addition, due to the location of the structure within a small collection of structures that represent the same cultural context, this dwelling is significant within the context of the group of buildings which, together, represent the early development and industry of Somerville.

- c) 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 Kent Court; a dead end street one would not expect much activity, however Kent Court is a major cut through for pedestrians avoiding a long section of Beacon Street on their way to shops and restaurants further down Beacon Street.

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

Dwellings from this time period and of this level of architectural integrity are frequent within the City and likely within the surrounding communities as well. While there are other working class neighborhoods in the City such Duck Village, Allen Street, Horace Street and Hinckley/Magoun, the houses are generally of a more recent era.

- 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?***

The Commission found the subject building Significant due to important associations with the broad architectural, cultural, economic and social history of the City per *criteria (i)* listed above, due to the pre-1874 construction date and Directory information which illustrates the continuous working class development of the area; the simple form and massing including the rear ell; and the retention of the side fenestration pattern that illustrates one bay configuration. This building is a mid-nineteenth century example of working class housing and is part of a collection of housing associated with the early development and industry of Somerville.

The Commission found the subject building Significant per *Criteria (ii)*, listed above, the subject dwelling is found historically and architecturally significant as a representative of mid-19<sup>th</sup> century working class housing stock, due to the remaining integrity of the structure with regard to original form, massing, and visible side fenestration patterns. In addition, due to the location of the structure within a small collection of buildings that represent the same cultural context, this dwelling is significant within the context of the group of buildings which, together, represent the early development and industry of Somerville.

Due to the pre-1874 construction date, the continuous working class development of the area; the simple form and massings, and the location of the structure within a small collection of buildings that represent the same cultural context, this dwelling is significant within the context of the group of buildings which, together, represent the early development and industry of Somerville, the Staff finds the potential demolition of 19 Kent Court 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 find 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 level of integrity, its association as an intact example of working class housing, and as part of a mid-nineteenth century collection of buildings, **Staff recommend that the Historic Preservation Commission find 19 Kent Court Preferably Preserved.**

*If the Historic Preservation Commission determines the structure is Preferably Preserved, the Building Inspector may issue a demolition permit at any time, 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).*

***19 Kent Court from the north***







Kent Street from the south.