



**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:	20 Kent Court
Case:	HPC 2014.054
Applicant Name:	Keith Glover & Attila Javor
Date of Application:	July 31, 2014
Date of Significance:	August 19, 2014
Recommendation:	Preferably Preserved
Hearing Date:	September 16, 2014



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

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

On Tuesday, August 19, 2014, the Historic Preservation Commission, in accordance with the Demolition Review Ordinance (2003-05), made a determination that 20 Kent Court is Significant. Per Section 2.17.B, this decision is found on the following criteria:

*Section 2.17.B - The structure is at least 50 years old;*

**and is both**

- (i) The structure is 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;*
- and**
- (ii) The structure is 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.*

According to *Criteria 2.17.B*, listed above, historic map and directory research identifies the structure as c.1852-1874. The dwelling at 20 Kent Court is not clear to have been present on the 1852 Draper Map of Somerville but is clearly present on the 1874 Hopkins map.

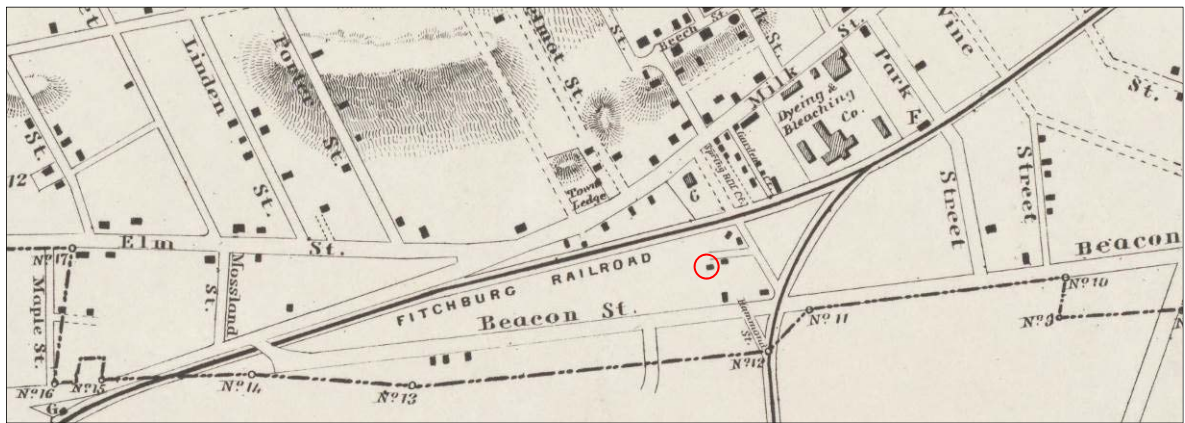
In accordance with *Criteria (i)*, listed above, the Commission agreed with Staff findings due to retention of form and massing, which includes an uncommon gambrel style roofline; as an early to mid-nineteenth

century example of working class housing, and as part of an early to mid nineteenth century collection of housing associated with the early development and industry of Somerville.

In accordance with *Criteria (ii)*, listed above, the Commission agreed with Staff findings, 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 fenestration pattern. 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.

## II. Additional Information

- Kent Court became located near the Fitchburg Railroad tracks after the Civil War. 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.



*1852 Draper map with 20 Kent Court circled in red*

- According to the 1858 Walling map, a small collection of mid nineteenth century structures is located along this portion of Kent Court. Located near the Bleachery, these dwellings likely housed Bleachery employees as well as employees for later industries that located in the immediate area for 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 (LHD) is identified as c.1750 and moved to its present location from Somerville Avenue. This structure also has a gambrel roof, but is larger with a five-bay façade. The building appears originally to be one room deep with a rear lean-to. Several structures on Kent Court appear similar to the workers cottages located near the brickyards, three bays wide and one room deep with high brick foundation.



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

- Additional directory research notes an Edward O'Neil, furniture polisher, in 1890 and Henry Roche in the first decade of the twentieth century. Further research indicates the Razzaboni family came to own this parcel beginning around 1940.
- Site visits illustrate that the subject structure is located at the end of the road and that the original historic context has been heavily altered. Although the surrounding built environment has changed dramatically, the south side of Kent Court is moderately intact with regard to form and massing. Many houses have material alterations, including 6 Kent Court (LHD). The subject dwelling shares a historical context with these other dwellings and, together, these buildings illustrate an earlier period in the development of Somerville. This is a unique streetscape within the city due to the form, massing, and dates of construction for these buildings.



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

*Comparable Structures:*

There are few structures that are comparable to the subject dwelling due to the gambrel shape of the roof, side-gable orientation to the street, potential early date of construction, and context within a group of buildings that share a historical context. However, there are a number of single-family dwellings with a modest 1½ story massing located throughout the City. While there are comparable dwellings located along Kent Court, these have a high foundation and have a slightly later construction date. Comparable structures within this general neighborhood include:

- 6 Kent Court (LHD)
- 14 Kent Court





*Top: 6 Kent Court (LHD); 14 Kent Court*

### **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 subject structure, c.1850-1874, is a 1½ story side-gable dwelling in an unknown style. The form, massing, and fenestration are largely intact, though there are some unusual features about this building such as the roof style. In addition, a small collection of mid nineteenth century structures along this portion of Kent Court appears to remain existent and to retain, at minimum, a moderate degree of historical significance and architectural integrity.

- 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 subject structure retains a moderate and possibly a high level of historical integrity due to the location within an intact collection of mid to late nineteenth century workers housing that represents the early development and industry of Somerville and is associated with the Middlesex Bleachery. The building retains a moderate and possibly a high level of architectural integrity due to the gambrel roof, side-gable orientation to the street, and potential early date of construction. There are various material alterations that make further original material difficult to determine.

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

Working class housing constructed in association with Middlesex Bleachery employees predominantly represents an aspect of local history. However, as the age of this structure may predate the 1852 Draper map and due to remaining moderate to high level of historical and

architectural integrity, this structure could date slightly earlier and therefore be of higher local or state significance.

- 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 Kent Court; however, this building is located at the end of the street, so there is not much pedestrian activity.

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

Mid-century dwellings with a gambrel roof are not commonly found within the City of Somerville. Further, the mid nineteenth century streetscape that this building is part of is also uncommon.

***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 parcel Significant due to retention of form and massing, which includes an uncommon gambrel style roofline; as an early to mid-nineteenth century example of working class housing, and as part of an early to mid-nineteenth century collection of housing associated with the early development and industry of Somerville. The structure was also determined 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 fenestration pattern.

The roof form, side-gable orientation, possible early date of construction, and context of associated structures raise this building to a higher level of significance and integrity than other buildings in a similar condition. Therefore, Staff finds the potential demolition of 20 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 historical and architectural integrity illustrated in the roof form, side-gable orientation, and potential early date of construction; association with the Middlesex Bleachery 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 20 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).*

*Aerial view of Kent Street and Kent Court; 53 Kent Street is outlined in red.*

