



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

DETERMINATION OF SIGNIFICANCE STAFF REPORT

Site:	20 Kent Court
Case:	HPC 2014.054
Applicant Name:	Keith Glover & Attila Javor
Date of Application:	July 31, 2013
Recommendation:	Significant
Hearing Date:	August 19, 2014

I. Historical Association

Architectural Description: The building is a 1½ story, single-family dwelling with a gambrel roof, and an unidentifiable style. This building may have a mid-nineteenth century construction date, see the 1852 Draper Map. The front façade is three bays in width with a canopy over the entry door. The building appears to be two rooms deep. Alterations include an enclosed rear porch and shed dormer on the rear. The windows and doors appear to have been replaced, the roof is asphalt shingles and the foundation has been covered with a material that simulates cement block.

20 Kent Ct
(assessor photo)



Historical Description: The subject property is possibly illustrated on the 1852 Draper map (see below). The 1869 directory lists Patrick O'Neil as a laborer on Kent Court.



1852 Draper map with 20 Kent Court circled in red

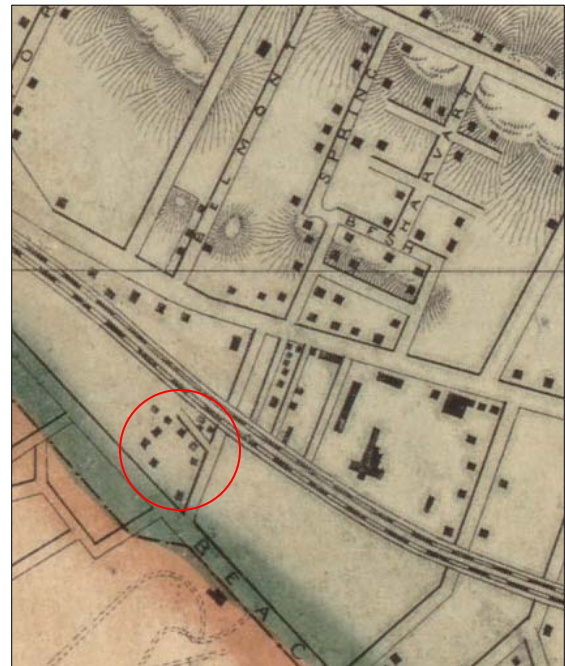
The 1874 (Plate J) and the 1884 (Plate 9) Hopkins maps list Mrs. O'Neill as the property owner and the map does not illustrate the rear porch addition. Mrs. O'Neil is a widow of Patrick O'Neil, a horse-shoe-er and Charles O'Neil also boards at this location. The Bromley Atlas from 1895 (Plate 4) illustrates this parcel (5200 square feet) as owned by Cath. O'Neil, presumably the same person from 1874. An 1897 building permit was granted to H.Roche for "one wood building for stable."

The 1900 Sanborn map (Sheet 38) illustrates the structure more clearly as a 1½ story building with a two-story stable at the rear of the lot that has a single-story addition at the east end. A 1928 building permit was granted to C.Razzaboni for a "building addition in front." By 1934, the Sanborn map (Vol. II, Sheet 264) notes that the building as one story and the only access structure is a single car garage at the east rear corner of the parcel. The updated Sanborn map (1934-1950) does not illustrate any changes.

Context/Evolution:

Kent Street connected Beacon Street with Somerville Avenue, then Milk Row, as early as 1813, according to *Beyond the Neck*. In 1835, the first passenger railroad station in Somerville opened and in 1842, the Kent Street Station opened near the Harvard Branch railway spur, which encouraged the development of the southern slope of Spring Hill. Nearby, Kent Court became located near the Fitchburg Railroad tracks after 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. Being located near the Bleachery, these dwellings likely would have housed employees of the Bleachery



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

and later industries that located in the immediate area or the railroad. The dwelling located at 6 Kent Court is identified in a Form B to have been constructed c.1750 and moved to its present location from Somerville Avenue. This structure has a gambrel roof, similar to the subject building, a five-bay façade that is one room deep and a rear lean-to. Additionally, several other dwellings located along Kent Court appear similar to the workers cottages located near the brickyards. Several are three bays wide and one room deep with high brick foundations, which were useful for cooking or for use as a shop. This type of structure was small, inexpensive, easy to construct and often used in marshy areas where excavating a cellar was not practical.



6 Kent Court, LHD

Summary:

The subject structure, likely c.1850, is a 1½ story gambrel-roof, gable-end dwelling in an unknown style. Remaining features include the simple form and massing, which includes an uncommon gambrel style roofline. Most other features appear to have been either removed or are covered over in modern materials. In addition, a small collection of mid nineteenth century structures along this south side of Kent Court appears to remain existent and relatively intact, which illustrates, at minimum, a moderate degree of historical significance and architectural integrity for this collection as a whole.

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 find 20 Kent Court 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 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.

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 20 Kent Court begins with the likely c.1850 date of construction as a modest single-family dwelling in an unknown style and continues into the present day as the use of this structure remains consistent.

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 subject structure is located along Kent Court south of Wilson Square, near Cambridge. The location has not been altered and the dwelling is sited to the left side of the lot. The location of this historic structure, as well as others along Court, illustrate an early to mid nineteenth century collection of housing associated with the early development and industry of Somerville.



Kent Court streetscape, photo 2013

- b. **Design:** The original form, massing, and fenestration pattern are still evident. There may be remaining architectural features that are not currently visible. While doors and windows have been replaced, and shake shingles cover the exterior structure, the building retains integrity of design.
- c. **Materials:** The materials that compose this structure are predominantly wood, with a likely a brick foundation (not visible), while asphalt shingles were added to the gambrel roof at a later period.
- d. **Alterations:** Various modern materials have been added to the building over the years. The enclosed rear porch is a later addition, though the date of this porch addition is not illustrated through historic map research.

Evaluation of Integrity:

The subject structure retains a moderate level of historical and architectural integrity due to the likely mid-nineteenth century date of construction; retention of form, massing, and fenestration, which illustrates an uncommon gambrel roofline within the City; and as part of a small collection of mid nineteenth century working class housing the represents the early development and industry of Somerville.

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 find 53 Kent Street historically or architecturally significant.

The subject dwelling is found historically and architecturally significant as a representative of mid 19th 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.

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, c. 1850-1874, 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 find 20 Kent Court 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 find 20 Kent Court historically or architecturally significant.**

20 Kent Court

