



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

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

ALTERATION TO A HISTORIC PROPERTY STAFF REPORT

Site: 53 Moore Street c.1870 Mansard Cottage
Case: HPC 2013.075 Single Building Local Historic District

Applicant Name: Dr. Susan Miller, Owner
Applicant Address: 53 Moore Street, Somerville, MA 02143

Date of Application: April 30, 2014
Legal Notice: *Alter paving material of driveway; Visibility of ground floor rear window;*
Staff Recommendation: Certificate of Appropriateness
Date of Public Hearing: May 20, 2014

I. BUILDING DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION:

This 1 1/2 story, Mansard cottage, was built on a brick foundation. It retains its clapboard siding and architectural ornamentation of small paired brackets on the one-story, projecting bay and at the cornice line. The door hood is supported. The dormers are cut into the asphalt shingled mansard roof.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT/EVOLUTION OF STRUCTURE OR PARCEL:

Mead and Moore Street are part of the original subdivision was drawn up for Kendrick W. Chapman in 1872. Much of the area was developed by E. A. Kingman, real estate investor and Kendrick Chapman, carpenter during the 1870s. However, this lot was undeveloped when L. Roger Wentworth of Somerville sold to Sarah Jordan, wife of Charles Jordan of Vineland New Jersey. City Directories indicate that Granville M. Edwards, blacksmith lived here in the early 1890s. There is a converted garage/barn on the property that may have served as a blacksmith shop. In 1894 Jordan conveyed land and buildings thereon to Robert J. Melville and George C. Melville. Both Melvilles moved to Somerville in 1895 and worked for the railroad.



II. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1. Proposal of Alteration:

1. Widen driveway from 9' to 10' to match opening in the fence;

2. Remove existing concrete paving paving and Cape Cod berms;
3. Replace with Nicolok® Ridge Brick pavers in a herring-bone pattern approximately 21' to the gate of the inner fence and on the front path; and approximately 18' of gravel thereafter in the yard behind the gate and
4. Replacement windows and door not visible from the public right of way (see visibility report).

See the final pages for details and photos.

II. FINDINGS

1. Prior Certificates Issued/Proposed:

2002.029	Dr. Susan Miller	C/NA, C/A, Denial	1. Demolish back steps & landing leading down from 2nd floor; 2. Replace with spiral staircase; 3. Replace clapboard with new cedar boards; and 4. Rebuild front porch to same dimensions with details to match nearby porches.
2002.043	Dr. Susan Miller	C/A	1. Rebuild front porch and stairs with wood construction; and 2. Add rails, balusters and other details to match porch as shown in submitted photo (Exhibit A) of a nearby home with the height of the rails to match the existing porch.
2004.007	Dr. Susan Miller	C/A	1. Replace asphalt shingles with Owens Corning "Berkshire" architectural shingles.
2005.032	Dr. Susan Miller	C/NA	1. De-lead all window frames and sash; 2. Strip and repair existing windows; 3. De-lead barn and garage doors; and 4. Repair and replace trim in-kind as needed.
2008.014	Dr. Susan Miller	C/NA	1. Cut an opening into the right side of the garage behind the house.
2009.049	Dr. Susan Miller	C/A	1. Replace Gothic style wood picket fence for one with simpler pickets and a flat top around the yard at the front of the property.

1. Precedence:

- *Are there similar properties / proposals?*
 1. *Widen driveway to match opening in the fence.*
The Commission has granted Certificates of Appropriateness to either widen or lengthen driveways at 53 Atherton Street (2013), 85 Benton Road (2002), 23 Chester Street (2004), and 27 Columbus Avenue (2002).
 2. *Remove existing paving and Cape Cod berms;*
 3. *Replace with Nicolok® Ridge Brick pavers to gate and gravel thereafter; and*
The Commission has granted Certificates of Appropriateness to replace existing paving materials with various types of pavers at 53 Atherton Street (2013), 27 Columbus Avenue (2002), 11 Linden Avenue (2013), 25 Russell Street (2003), 45 Vinal Avenue (2007). 30 Bow Street (2001) was granted Certificate for an apron of granite pavers with a gravel driveway
 4. *Alterations to the house not visible from the public right of way.*
See memo describing the visibility of the rear of the house.

3. Considerations:

- *What is the visibility of the proposal?*

The proposed alteration to the driveway and front path are visible from Moore Street. See memo describing the visibility of the rear of the house.

- *What are the Existing Conditions of the building / parcel?*
 1. The driveway is poor repair and too narrow. There are two picket fences, one along the sidewalk and a second inner fence with a gate to control animals. The front path is concrete leading to wooden front steps. See photos at the end of the document.
- *Does the proposal coincide with the General Approach set forth in the Design Guidelines?*

GENERAL APPROACH

The primary purpose of Somerville's Preservation Ordinance is to encourage preservation and high design standards in Somerville's Historic Districts, in order to safeguard the City's architectural heritage. The following guidelines ensure that rehabilitation efforts, alterations, and new construction all respect the design fabric of the districts and do not adversely effect their present architectural integrity.

- A. *The design approach to each property should begin with the premise that the features of historic and architectural significance described in the Study Committee report must be preserved. In general, this tends to minimize the exterior alterations that will be allowed.*

The driveway and front path were not discussed on the Form B.

- C. *Whenever possible, deteriorated material or architectural features should be repaired rather than replaced or removed.*

The deteriorated concrete does not date to the period of significance of the house.

- D. *When replacement of architectural features is necessary, it should be based on physical or documentary evidence of the original or later important features.*

No features of the house will be replaced.

- E. *Whenever possible, new materials should match the material being replaced with respect to their physical properties, design, color, texture and other visual qualities. The use of imitation replacement materials is discouraged.*

The original material is unknown. There were no handrails in the historic photo.

- F. *The Commission will give design review priority to those portions of the property which are visible from public ways or those portions which it can be reasonably inferred may be visible in the future.*

The driveway and front path are visible from Moore Street, a public right of way.

HPC Guidelines for landscaping which includes paths and driveways state:

Landscape Features and Paving

1. *The general intent of this section is to preserve the existing or later essential landscape features that enhance the property.*

The major changes proposed are to the dimensions and material of the driveway. The existing character of the street is primarily that of an 1870-1900 suburb with a few incursions of various automotive related buildings and paving.

Generally speaking the current HPC Guidelines do not address driveways per se. However, it is clear that the Guidelines recommend that historic buildings not be obscured by changes in the landscape. "The Commission will give design review priority to those portions of the property which are visible from public ways or those portions which it can be reasonably inferred may be visible in the future." The Guidelines further state that "The general intent of this section is to preserve the existing or later essential landscape features that enhance the property." The paving "...can be seen as a transition feature between the structure and its ... surroundings."

2. *It is recognized that often the environment surrounding the property has a character, scale and street pattern quite different from that existing when the building was constructed. Thus, changes must frequently be made to accommodate the new condition, and the landscape treatment can be seen as a transition feature between the structure and its newer surroundings.*

Cars have taken over as the major means of transportation since this neighborhood was built. The current parking area may have been sufficient for a Model T but the owner finds it undersized and would like to get the cars off the street without driving over part of the garden when necessary.

3. *The existing landforms of the site should not be altered unless shown to be necessary for maintenance of the structure or site. Additional landforms will only be considered if they will not obscure the exterior of the structure.*

There are no alterations to the landform or pathways.

4. *The original layout and materials of the walks, steps and paved areas should be maintained if significant grade changes constitute an important feature of the structure or site. Consideration will be given to alterations if it can be shown that improved site circulation is necessary and that the alterations will accomplish this without altering the integrity of the structure.*

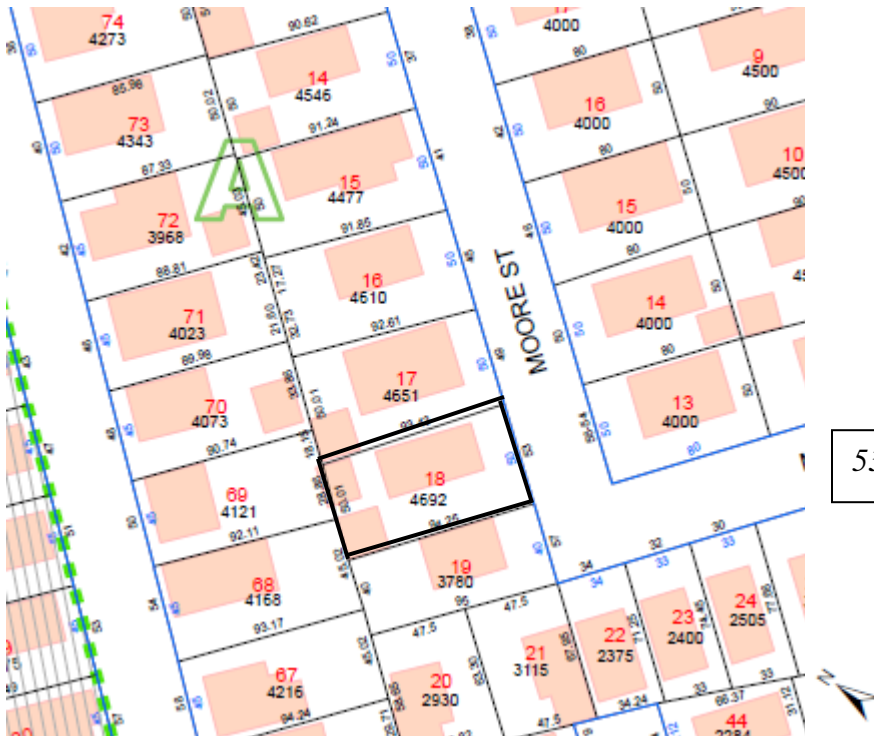
The materials will be changed from poured concrete to molded concrete blocks and gravel behind the second fence and gate. See photos.

The Applicant's proposal for a unit block paved parking area will fit in with the neighborhood, not detract significantly from the street, and would have no effect on the visibility or the layout. The installation of the pavers would clearly be modern.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Staff recommendation is based on a complete application and supporting materials, as submitted by the Applicant, and an analysis of the historic and architectural value and significance of the site, building or structure, the general design, arrangement, texture, material and color of the features involved, and the relation of such features of buildings and structures in the area, in accordance with the required findings that are considered by the Somerville Historic District Ordinance for a Historic District Certificate. This report may be revised or updated with new a recommendation or findings based upon additional information provided to Staff or through more in depth research conducted during the public hearing process.

Staff determines that the alteration for which an application for a Historic Certificate has been filed is appropriate for and compatible with the preservation and protection of the 53 Moore Street Local Historic District; therefore **Staff recommends that the Historic Preservation Commission grant Dr. Susan Moore a Certificate of Appropriateness** for the installation of unit block pavers.



53 Moore Street



53 Moore Street, 2013