



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

DETERMINATION OF PREFERABLY PRESERVED STAFF REPORT

Site:	35 Moreland Street
Case:	HPC 2015.003
Applicant Name:	Kevin Slattery
Date of Application:	January 6, 2015
Date of Significance:	February 17, 2015
Recommendation:	Preferably Preserved
Hearing Date:	March 17, 2015



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

I. Meeting Summary: Determination of Significance

On Tuesday, February 17, 2015, the Historic Preservation Commission, in accordance with the Demolition Review Ordinance (2003-05), made a determination that the c. 1874 single-family dwelling at 35 Moreland Street is Significant. Per Section 2.17.B of the Demolition Review Ordinance 2003-05. This decision is found on the following criteria:

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

and

- (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 / or

- (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. 1874. The dwelling at 35 Moreland Street does not appear on the 1860 Walling Map of Boston and Vicinity but can be found on the 1874 Hopkins Atlas of Somerville, Plate 36-37.

The structure was determined 'Significant' due to an association of the property with the broad architectural, cultural, economic and social history of the City due to its association with laborers and the early development of Winter Hill and representative of 19th century workers housing stock due to the remaining integrity of the structure with regard to original form, and massing and the early development of that section of Winter Hill.

In accordance with *Criteria (i)*, listed above, the Commission agreed with Staff findings, due to its association with laborers and the early development of Winter Hill

In accordance with *Criteria (ii)*, listed above, the Commission agreed with Staff findings, due to the remaining integrity of the structure with regard to original form, and massing and its association with laborers. It is representative of 19th century workers housing stock and the early development of that section of Winter Hill.

II. Additional Information

Additional Research:

- The Owner of Record per 1877 City Tax records was Edwin R. Sawyer. His large Greek Revival house, originally located at the corner of Broadway and Sycamore Street was relocated to Browning Road. Beyond his business as a coal merchant, he was on the Board of Directors of the National Bank of North America. His wife, Flora A. Sawyer was a member of the Appalachian Mountain Club. 35 Moreland Street was rental property. The size of the lot until after 1895 and the presence of a stable or barn indicate that the property may have had agricultural uses.
- No new information has been found about the residents of the building. Pre-1903 Directory research is limited to the five years of City Directories available and searchable on Google Books and archive.org. This information was included in the Determination of Significance Report.
- The Owner offered the building for sale and presented evidence of the offers received that were ultimately withdrawn due to structural defects and the costs of rectifying them.
- A structural report produced by Frank van den Elzen of Tiger Home Inspection noted deficiencies in both the attic and the basement. Bowing of the walls indicate that joists may have been removed from the framing. Photographic evidence of movement of joists from their original location in the basement was also submitted. See attached.
- The Owner said that he had attempted to pull the building together using cables and toggles but was unsuccessful.

Comparable Structures:

There are a number of single-family dwellings with a modest 1½ story massing located throughout the City. Comparable groupings of workers housing are generally of a later date. While there are also comparable dwellings located along Kent Court, some of these have a high foundation and some have a slightly earlier construction date. Comparable structures within the City include:

- 25 Clyde Street (LHD)

- 342 Lowell Street (LHD)
- 60 Linden Avenue (LHD)
- 80 Properzi Way
- 27 Dane Avenue
- 37 Fiske Avenue



Top: 25 Clyde Street (1860); 342 Lowell Street (1861); 60 Linden Avenue (1861),
Bottom: 27 Dane Avenue (c.1874); 80 Properzi Way (c.1850), 37 Fiske Avenue (1866)

Predominant differences between the comparable dwellings and the subject dwelling are the number of windows, the level of architectural integrity, and the heights of the brick foundation. These comparable dwellings have construction date between 1852 and 1874. Most of the comparable structures have similar size and massing, a center-hall entry, and a similar fenestration pattern.

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 simple form and massing of this single-family dwelling represents workers housing. Workers housing is marked by its simplicity and its unassuming presence. The Moreland Street streetscape was largely unbuilt until the last decade of the 19th century. As such, this house is the smallest of the houses on the street, over-shadowed by the larger buildings constructed on a denser scale in what had been the side yard of the house. The buildings on either side are also indications of the development of Moreland Street over time. These types of buildings are however, consistent with housing for the middle and working classes.

Workers cottages and farm houses are scattered throughout the city. These can be found in such compact neighborhoods such Duck Village, Hinckley/Magoun and other groupings near the industrial and transportation hubs. Winter Hill industries were located closer to the Mystic and included brick making and tanneries. Middle class development concentrated on the southern side of the Winter Hill, while the upper classes lived near the top of the Winter Hill on Broadway.

- 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 Commission found that integrity of this dwelling is retained within the location and form, as well as, to a moderate degree, integrity of design. The structure retains integrity of location through siting and orientation as well as through spatial relationships to other buildings along Moreland Street.

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

Working class housing constructed in response to mid-nineteenth century industrialization is of local significance. Dependent upon the actual age of the structure as well as construction methods, this building could represent more than local history.

The Commission determined that this structure is historically and architecturally significant associated with the broad architectural, cultural, economic and social history of the City due to its association with laborers and the early development of Winter Hill and as a representative of 19th century workers housing stock due to the remaining integrity of the structure with regard to original form and massing, and with the early development of that section of Winter Hill.

- 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 building is clearly visible on Moreland Street but is made to seem smaller by the later buildings on either side of it. It is the only building of its age and style on left on Winter Hill.



35 Moreland Street is the one and one-half story white house in the foreground.



35 Moreland Street is the one and one-half story white house in the foreground.

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 extremely rare within the City and likely within the surrounding communities as well. While there are other working class neighborhoods in the City such as 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 parcel Significant due to an association of the property with the broad architectural, cultural, economic and social history of the City due to its association with laborers and the early development of Winter Hill and representative of 19th century workers housing stock due to the remaining integrity of the structure with regard to original form, and massing and the early development of that section of Winter Hill. Significance is also due to the ability of the subject parcel to convey integrity regarding location and form as well as, to a moderate degree, design. The additional information provided and consideration criteria (a-e) listed above convey that this type of dwelling is found in a few neighborhoods throughout the City and has minimal architectural detail typical of buildings of its age and purpose. Therefore, Staff finds the potential demolition of 35 Moreland Street 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 rarity of this type of residential dwelling within the City, its association with laborers and the early development of Winter Hill, and its ability to convey the life of 19th century workers by the representative character of the housing stock through the remaining integrity of the structure with regard to original form, and massing and through its location, the early development of that section of Winter Hill. **Staff recommend that the Historic Preservation Commission find 35 Moreland 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).

