



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:	0 Morgan Street, 193 Beacon Street Garage
Case:	HPC 2016.024
Applicant Name:	Clayton Peabody
Date of Application:	April 8, 2016
Recommendation:	Significant
Hearing Date:	May 31, 2016

I. Historical Association *Taken from the 1990 Form B for 191 Beacon Street.*

Historical Context: *Ward II is located in the southeastern section of the City, bounded roughly by Somerville Avenue and Medford Street on the north and east and the boundary with Cambridge on the south and west. The area is a very densely settled section of the City bisected by the Fitchburg line of the B&M railroad (1836), and residential dwellings coexist with large industrial complexes along both sides of the right-of-way. Ward II, which abuts Union Square, also has some localized commercial development along its three important roads - Washington Street, Somerville Avenue, and Beacon Street.*



Between World War I and the Depression, the use of the automobile grew quickly, significantly changing land use patterns. Previously vacant and under-utilized land was developed with driveways, garages, gas stations and service stations. Yards were covered over by garages and driveways, sidewalks were interrupted by curb cuts. The increasing use of the automobile in everyday life for the average Somerville resident during the 1920s is evident in the large number of garages and service stations built during this period. As car ownership grew during the late 1910s and 20s, so did the need for shelter for cars. Most of the concrete block garages throughout the City were erected during this period. They were usually constructed with concrete block, often molded into the shape of rusticated granite blocks, although other shapes and materials, such as brick, metal and tile, were often included. Numerous prefabricated metal garages were also installed and are scattered throughout the city. The metal garages often appear at first glance

to be wood due to the clapboard shaped panels unlike the larger corrugated iron buildings like the two structures on Boston Avenue in Ball Square.

Evolution of Site: The area, which initially developed in the early nineteenth century, is, along with Industrial Park, the oldest industrial area in the city with the most well-preserved examples of Somerville's industrial past. No. 191 Beacon Street was built around 1925 which housed Roberts Manufacturing Company, a castings and metal manufacturing company which made slot machines. By 1933 the building was vacant. Sometime during the 1930s or 1940s the building was used as garage and a portion of the front of the building was removed to create the present canopy configuration. This building was determined not significant on November 17, 2015 by the Commission.

According to the 1930 and 1940 Census, Italian-born Leo Funai owned a convenience or variety store. He received a building permit in 1933 to partition 191 Beacon Street and a license for the storage of explosives from the 1935 Board of Aldermen. A store was also noted at 193 Beacon Street. A building permit was issued to L. Funai in November 1929 for the construction of a pitched roof 2-car garage with 2 doors and a concrete foundation. This appears to be the building now under consideration.



Catalog photo from *Carriage House to Auto House*, p. 51 by Roger Reed and Greer Hardwicke, Brookline Preservation Commission

Architectural Description: 0 Morgan Street/ 193 Beacon Street is a one-story pre-fabricated metal garage with 2 wood double-doors, each with 8 'lites' and four vertical panels. The siding is faux clapboard panels. There is a pitched red metal roof.

Summary: Originally erected in 1929 behind a store located at 193 Beacon Street and opening onto Morgan Street, this metal garage is a remnant of the late 1920s automotive culture.

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 **do not** find 0 Morgan Street/ 193 Beacon Street 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 NOT found importantly associated with the broad architectural, cultural, economic and social history of the City due to lack of information regarding the owners or the businesses located at 0 Morgan Street/ 193 Beacon Street.

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 0 Morgan Street/ 193 Beacon Street begins with its construction c. 1929 as a garage.

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 building has not been moved. It is located on a major local artery at the edge of a residential district on the Somerville Cambridge line.
- b) Design: The building is a prefabricated metal building with paneled garage doors each with 8 'lites'. The design is relatively unadorned as is appropriate for a utilitarian structure.
- c) Materials: The building is a metal prefabricated garage with wood doors.
- d) Alterations: There are no alterations.
- e) Evaluation of Integrity: The garage is a simple two car garage.

Does the subject parcel represent a distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction?

While the building has not been altered, it has lost the relationship to the store on Beacon for which it was built. It appears to be more closely related to the 1920s garages on Morgan Street.

Does the subject parcel represent an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community or region due to its singular physical characteristics or landscape?

The building is nondescript when seen from Beacon Street. It is most noticeable from Morgan Street due to its retention of the original paneled wood doors.

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 do find 191 Beacon Street/ 81 Park Street historically or architecturally significant.

The subject building is found historically and architecturally significant as a good example of the pre-fabricated metal garages constructed in the late 1920s. It retains its original doors and metal roof.

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, circa 1929, 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/atlas, 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 do NOT find 0 Morgan Street/ 193 Beacon Street 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 NOT found importantly associated with the broad architectural, cultural, economic and social history of the City due to lack of information regarding the owners or the businesses located at 0 Morgan Street/ 193 Beacon Street.

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 0 Morgan Street/ 193 Beacon Street historically and architecturally significant.**

The subject building is found historically and architecturally significant as a good example of the pre-fabricated metal garages constructed in the late 1920s. It retains its original doors and metal roof.

0 Morgan Street/ 193 Beacon Street



