



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: 8 Mt. Pleasant Street
Case: HPC 2013.090
Applicant Name: Lolastar LLC

Date of Application: November 19, 2013
Date of Significance: December 19, 2013

Recommendation: Preferably Preserved
Hearing Date: January 21, 2014



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

I. Meeting Summary: Determination of Significance

On Thursday, December 19, 2013, the Historic Preservation Commission, in accordance with the Demolition Review Ordinance (2003-05), made a determination that 8 Mount Pleasant Street 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.1841. The dwelling at 8 Mount Pleasant Street is clearly located on the 1852 Draper Map of Somerville.

In accordance with *Criteria (i)*, listed above, the Commission agreed with Staff findings due to the retention of several architectural details that continue to illustrate the Greek Revival style as well as later details that note style updates in the Gothic Revival and Queen Anne styles, as an early c.1841 example of a modest cottage associated with the first subdivisions beyond the Charlestown Neck for Boston



businessmen, and as a rare surviving example that likely predates the 1842 Somerville town division from Charlestown.

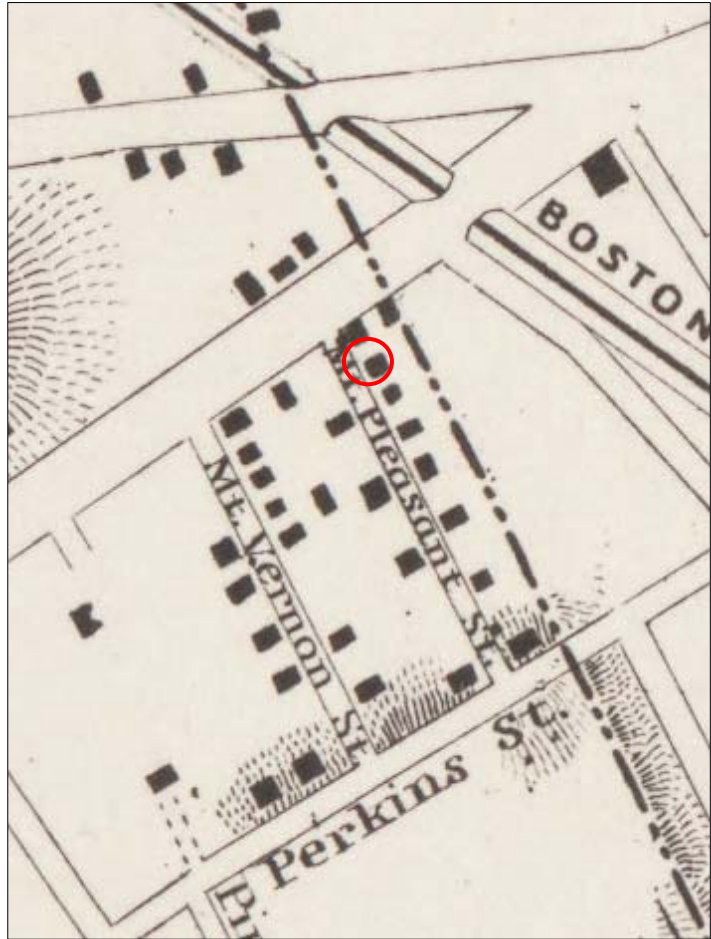
In accordance with *Criteria (ii)*, listed above, the Commission agreed with Staff findings due to the retention of original architectural features, later added features, and the high degree of historical integrity due to the original form, massing and fenestration pattern, which are characteristic of the period of construction, as well as location, which represents the first wave of modest suburban expansion into Somerville, likely prior to the town division.

II. Additional Information

Additional Research:

- Deed research and tax records indicate that this lot was originally part of an 1840 subdivision and sold to Perkins Norton in 1841. Norton, a Charlestown trader, is listed in the first Somerville tax polls of 1842, which indicates a house is already located at this site. Therefore, the house likely predates the 1842 Somerville town division.
- Mt. Pleasant and Mt. Vernon streets were both once part of the Stearnes estate and platted in 1840. Early subdivision activity was concentrated between the Charlestown line and Cross Street. After 1846 many new East Somerville residents, such as those located along Mt. Pleasant and Mt. Vernon streets, were Boston businessmen. During the 1860s and 1870s, new Somerville industries attracted laborers due to the adjacent factories along Washington Street, which incentivized a wave of working class house construction.
- Census data does not provide new information but does confirm that Perkins Norton was a resident of Charlestown in 1860 and 1870. However, Staff could not confirm Norton at this address. Census data for Daniel Worthen did turn up any information for this area.
- Building permit files from the Inspectional Services Division for this address were not able to provide new information in that there was not a file for this address.

1852 Draper Map, subject building circled in red



Site Visit:

Site visits illustrate that the subject structure is isolated from the residential structures that share the same context. However, while the subject dwelling is near adjacent residential structures on the south side, there is no real appearance of a streetscape on this side and end of this block.



Aerial view of 8 Mt. Pleasant Street

Comparable Structures:

There are few structures that are comparable to the subject dwelling due to the age of the structure, the early historical context this structure represents and the retention of architectural details from this time period. However, there are a number of single-family dwellings with a modest 1½ story massing located throughout the City. While there is an intact comparable example located at 53 Kent Street, structures of this age are not often as intact as this example. Other comparable structures within the City and this general neighborhood include:

- 25 Clyde Street (LHD)
- 12 Hinckley Street
- 80 Hinckley Street
- 53 Kent Street



*Top: 25 Clyde Street (LHD); 12 Hinckley Street; 80 Hinckley Street
Bottom: 53 Kent Street*

Predominant differences between the comparable dwellings and the subject dwelling are the orientation of the building, architectural detail, and height of the brick foundation. Other than 53 Kent Street, the comparable dwellings have a slightly later construction date. Most of the comparable structures have a side-hall entry, some with a porch, open or closed, 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:

- a) How does this building or structure compose or reflect features which contribute to the heritage of the City?*

The subject structure, c.1841, is a 1½ story gable-end dwelling in the Greek Revival style. There are a number of remaining architectural features, such as the cornice return and vergeboard, window casings, and front entry transom. The c.1841 date of construction as a modest single-family dwelling in the Greek Revival style is associated with suburban development beyond the Charlestown Neck. During the 1860s, this parcel became associated with working class housing for laborers of new Somerville industries along Washington Street.

- 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 level of architectural integrity due to the retention of original architectural features as well as later added features, which, together, illustrate how the structure has stylistically evolved. The structure retains a high degree of historical integrity due to the original form, massing, and fenestration pattern, which is characteristic of the period that this suburban cottage was constructed. Although this building is not part of a cohesive streetscape, the location of this building is important as a representative of the first wave of modest suburban expansion into Somerville, prior to the town division.

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

Early suburban development housing beyond the Charlestown Neck represents an aspect of local history. However, this structure also represents working class housing for laborers of new Somerville industries, which is also an aspect of local history.

- 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 on Mount Pleasant Street; however, due to the humble massing of this structure, the building is not prominent from Broadway.

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

Dwellings from this time period and with a moderate level of architectural integrity are rare within the City and likely within the surrounding communities as well.

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 the retention of several architectural details that continue to illustrate the Greek Revival style as well as later details that note style updates in the Gothic Revival and Queen Anne styles, as an early c.1841 example of a modest cottage associated with the first subdivisions beyond the Charlestown Neck for Boston businessmen, and as a rare surviving example that likely predates the 1842 Somerville town division from Charlestown. Additionally, this is an uncommon and moderately intact example of the first wave of modest suburban expansion into Somerville, likely prior to the town division.

Therefore, Staff finds the potential demolition of 8 Mt. Pleasant 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

level of integrity, association with the first wave of modest suburban expansion into Somerville, likely prior to the town division, and retention of several architectural details that continue to illustrate the Greek Revival style as well as later details that note style updates in the Gothic Revival and Queen Anne styles, **Staff recommend that the Historic Preservation Commission find 8 Mt. Pleasant 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).

8 Mt. Pleasant Street

