



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

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HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

DETERMINATION OF SIGNIFICANCE STAFF REPORT

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

Date of Application: November 19, 2013
Recommendation: Significant
Hearing Date: December 17, 2013

I. Historical Association

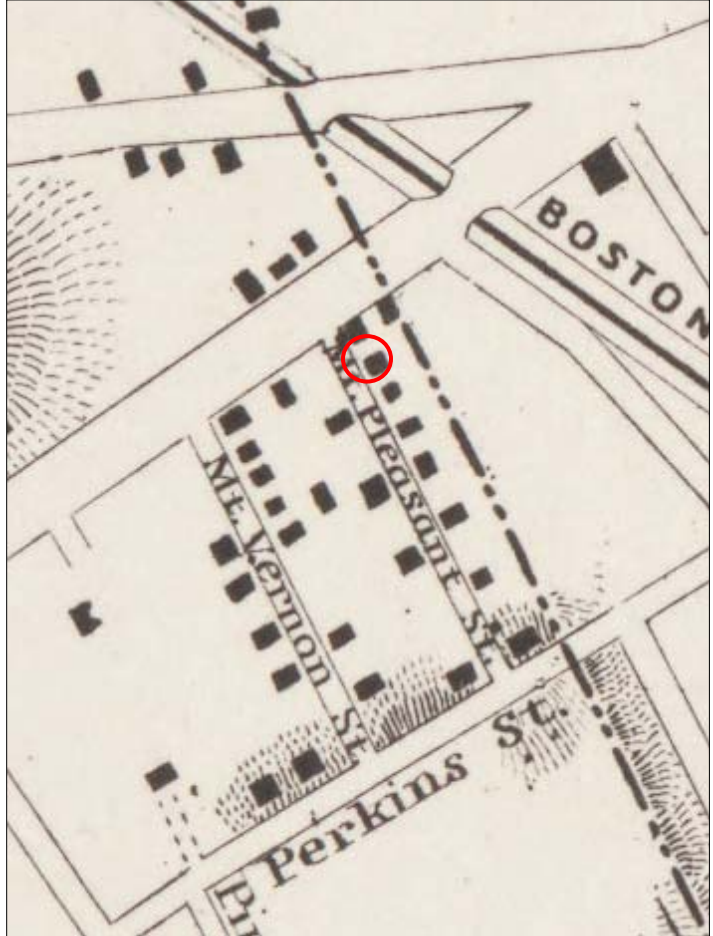
Architectural Description: The subject structure is listed on the National Register as a rare surviving example of a 1½ story gable-end dwelling with a rear ell composed of brick. This structure is c.1841 and illustrates the Greek Revival style due to the door transoms, window casings, and the depth of the eaves. The structure notes a side-hall interior plan and a granite foundation. The front façade retains the original three bay fenestration pattern including window casings and door transoms while the right side façade continues to illustrate the original four bay fenestration pattern of the main massing which includes surviving window casings. The left side façade and rear ell both illustrate changes to the original pattern but the form and massing is still evident. There is also a smaller second addition at the back of the rear ell, which extends the width of the building, including the width of the porch. Later additions that alter the style of the building include the decorated



8 Mt. Pleasant Street, Photo 2012

vergeboard and front porch columns which note the Gothic Revival and likely Queen Anne styles.

Historical Description: The following information is primarily from the survey Form B. 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. The property was sold in 1849 to Daniel Worthen, a distiller, who continues to own the property through 1884. The rear ell is illustrated on the 1874 map. In 1905, the house is under ownership of Frank Yuill, a teamster, and by 1925, Vicinzo Lombardi, a laborer. The house was brought into the current Avellani family in 1964.



1852 Draper Map, subject building circled in red

Context/Evolution: 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.

Summary: Mt. Pleasant and Mt. Vernon streets were both once part of the Stearnes estate and platted in 1840. The structure is c.1841 and primarily illustrates the Greek Revival style with a side-hall interior plan and three-bay primary façade. The house may predate the



8 Mt. Pleasant Street, Photo 2012

1842 Somerville town division from Charlestown as tax polls indicate a house owned by Perkins Norton already exists. The subject structure is listed on the National Register as a rare surviving example of an early suburban cottage, among the first subdivisions beyond the Charlestown Neck.

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 8 Mt. Pleasant 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 found importantly associated with the broad architectural, cultural, economic and social history of the City due to the retention of several architectural details that continue to illustrate the original Greek Revival style as well as later details that note style updates in the Gothic Revival and likely Queen Anne styles, as an early (c. 1841) example of a modest cottage associated with the first subdivisions beyond the Charlestown Neck for Boston businessman, and as a rare surviving example that likely predates the 1842 Somerville town division from Charlestown.

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 8 Mt. Pleasant Street begins with the c.1841 date of construction as a modest single-family dwelling in the Greek Revival style that is associated with suburban development beyond the Charlestown Neck. This period extends to the 1860s when this parcel became associated with working class housing for laborers of new Somerville industries along Washington Street.

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 on Mt. Pleasant Street in East Somerville very close to Broadway and the Boston border. The location has not been altered and the dwelling is sited along the left side parcel line of the lot; however, as illustrated in the

aerial photo, several parking lots are located within the immediate vicinity of the subject dwelling, which severely deteriorates the quality of the streetscape.



Aerial view of 8 Mt. Pleasant Street

- b. Design: The original form, massing, and fenestration pattern are still evident as well as the gable form of the rear ell and shed form of the last addition. There are number of remaining architectural features, such as the depth of the eaves, window casings, and front door transoms. There are also some later architectural features that remain, such as the vergeboard and porch details. The exterior is clad in stucco, but the rear ell is composed of brick. While historic maps illustrate a wood frame building, there is the possibility of masonry beneath the stucco.
- c. Materials: The materials that compose the exterior of this structure are either wood or masonry covered with stucco; however, the rear ell is composed of brick. The foundation is cut granite and although the windows and front entry door have been replaced, the window casings on the front and right side façade as well as the entry door transoms remain and are original to the structure. Asphalt shingles were added to the roof at a later period.

- d. Alterations: The gable roof rear ell appears to have been constructed prior to 1874 while the rear shed addition is not illustrated until 1900. Windows, doors and roof material have been replaced but the casings, transoms and overall form are clearly evident. While the porch is illustrated on the 1900 Sanborn map, this is likely a later addition, along with other detailing such as the porch spindles and decorative vergeboard.

Evaluation of Integrity:

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.

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 8 Mt. Pleasant Street historically or architecturally significant.

The subject dwelling is found architecturally significant due to the retention of original architectural features as well as later added features. Together, these features illustrate how the structure has stylistically evolved. The structure retains a high degree of historical integrity, and therefore historical significance, due to the original form, massing, and fenestration pattern, which is characteristic of the period that this suburban cottage was constructed, as well as the location of this structure, which is representative of the first wave of modest suburban expansion into Somerville, likely prior to the town division.

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 listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

AND

(B) The structure, c. 1841, 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 8 Mt. Pleasant 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.**

AND

(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 together these characteristics evaluate integrity, or the ability to convey significance, **Staff recommend that the Historic Preservation Commission find 8 Mt. Pleasant Street historically and architecturally significant.**

8 Mt. Pleasant Street

