



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

MICHAEL F. GLAVIN  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

*HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION*

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**DETERMINATION OF SIGNIFICANCE STAFF REPORT**

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Site: 406 Mystic Avenue  
Case: HPC 2014.078  
Applicant Name: Cedarwood Development Inc.

Date of Application: September 8, 2014  
Recommendation: Not Significant  
Hearing Date: October 21, 2014

HPC received: September 8, 2014

**I. Historical Association**

*Architectural Description:* The aluminum-sided building two-and-half story late Queen Anne style 2-family house as indicated by the doors. The roof has the gable end toward the street and two centrally located windows, and with a hip roof cross gable surmounting a square bay over an angled bay. The gable protrudes over a two story bay.

The house is set upon a rusticated concrete block foundation.

The open front porch is concrete with pipe railings. The front doors are late 1960s metal doors, one with a fan window and one with two rectangular windows. The predominantly 1/1 windows are replacements. The original wrap around porch was removed in 1972 when the aluminum siding was installed.

A one-story shed roofed garage/barn is attached at the rear of the building connect by a partially enclosed staircase and has hinged wood doors. Toward the rear of the property there is a left angle turn with yet another structure set into the corner. This gable roof structure can be seen attached in the corner with a slightly higher roofline. A long low 1-story building on a



concrete pad has 4 doors and two windows. This portion of the structure has a stuccoed windowless gable end. The entire multi-section structure is covered with aluminum siding in 1972 except to the sections not visible from the main parking area.

*Historical Description:* The lot running between Grant Street and Taylor Street along Mystic Avenue was owned by Peter Gordon, teamster, who is first found in the 1876 City Directory as living on Mystic Avenue near Temple. Between 1880 and 1881, he gives up his job as teamster to become a dealer in poultry. He passed away between 1890 and 1895, when his wife Margaret is noted as dealing in poultry according to the City Directories. The 1890 City directory indicates that John T. Murphy, coffee roaster on Broad Street in Boston lived in the house with Peter Gordon and his family through 1915. Walter P. Gordon, son of Peter is noted as a driver in 1900. By 1903 he is listed as a manager at an unspecified business. Margaret continues the poultry business which is taken over by Walter by 1910. Walter runs the poultry business through at least 1945. He applied for a slaughtering license along with the likes of J. P. Squire and North Meat Packing in 1911 from the Board of Aldermen. The 1945 Register shows him at aged 73 still dealing in poultry. By 1950, he has retired.

A study of the maps reveal that the chicken house and attached barns and sheds had been enlarged, contracted and remodeled several times finally being converted to storage and offices with a garage attached at the rear of the house sometime between 1925 and 1933. The next gable-end section of the building. The portion with the poured concrete foundation – office/storage probably dates from 1963. The least visible section may date from the late 19<sup>th</sup> or early 20<sup>th</sup> century as shown on the 1925 Sanborn map.

The house at 406 Mystic is not the original one on the lot; this had been moved to 398-400 Mystic in 1917 when the current building was erected on a new foundation at the same location. While the house was being constructed, Walter P. Gordon lived at 396-400 Mystic Avenue with Frank E. LeSage, driver. Residents of 406 Mystic Avenue in 1924 and 1930 are Walter P. Gordon and his wife Mary E. The 1940 Directory has Walter P. (aged 68) and Martha C. Gordon (aged 29), school teacher. 1945 sees Walter P. Gordon (73), poultry; Gilbert S. (37), general manager; and Cecelia Gruber (34), housewife. They are all still in residence in 1950 with Walter P. (79), retired, and Gilbert S. (41) business and Cecelia Gruber (36) housewife. The house is vacant in 1955. 1960 sees Louis Coricchio (42), bricklayer and his wife Vera (42) who are both from Italy; and Irving B. Woodside (34), ties and his wife Gloria (34). In 1965 only two housewives are living there. Arlene Miller and Gloria Woodside. No men were mentioned at this address in the Register.

*Architect:* Unknown

*Context/Evolution:* The building is located on Mystic Avenue which has changed from a neighborhood that had been part of the Ten Hills Farm then the Jacques Brickyards until the 1890s. Other businesses besides the poultry business were H.M. Hillson Tinware Manufacturing on Taylor Street and the Williams Table and Lumber Company at 360 Mystic Avenue. Residential uses along Broadway were platted as early as 1884 but few houses were constructed until the late 1890s.

Mystic Avenue as a major arterial was not developed for residences. A number of small businesses and commercial uses were drawn to the automotive corridor. After World War II, housing developments were located a few blocks away along the Mystic Avenue.

*Summary:* Located on a local arterial, the c. 1917 house is much altered but retains its form. The henhouse/ poultry slaughter house has not been used as such for nearly fifty years. It has been much altered over the years.

### **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 406 Mystic Avenue 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 the lack of information regarding the owners of the property.

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## **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 406 Mystic Avenue begins around 1874 when the residence of Peter Gordon is first noted and his family's use of the site to trade in poultry beginning around 1881 through the early 1950s.

### ***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 house has not been moved.
- b. Design: The design of the extended structure has altered over the years from separate buildings to a single one. The addition of aluminum siding obscures the original fabric of the house but retains the forms of the various components.
- c. Materials: Concrete and aluminum over wood frame.
- d. Alterations: The structure consists of 3-4 components each attached to the other. The house has lost all architectural detail through the removal of the porches, and replacement windows and doors, as well as the aluminum siding. The garage is added to the rear of

the building. The hen houses/slaughter house/office/storage structures are unclear as to their history.

*Evaluation of Integrity:* The structure is an amalgam of several buildings into one structure and covered with aluminum siding. The structure does not convey one particular quality due to the disparate uses of its components.

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

406 Mystic Avenue is not part of a group of similar buildings and has no individual distinction.

*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 property is not a local landmark.

### **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 not find 406 Mystic Avenue historically or architecturally significant.

The subject building is not found historically and architecturally significant due to lack of information on the previous owners and numerous alteration to the buildings.

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### **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 1881-1917, 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 406 Mystic Avenue 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.**

**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 406 Mystic Avenue historically and architecturally significant.**







406 Mystic Avenue house – assessors photo.



Broom warehouse/office/storage with chicken house and garage showing attachment point to house.





Broom warehouse/office/storage with chicken house and garage.



406 Mystic Avenue showing the remains of the chicken slaughter house and the shed of the garage.

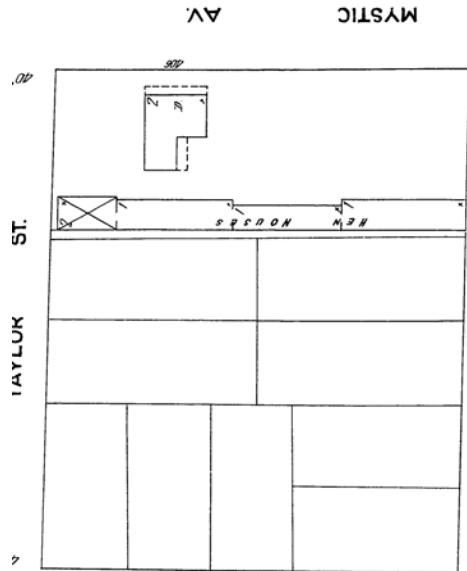




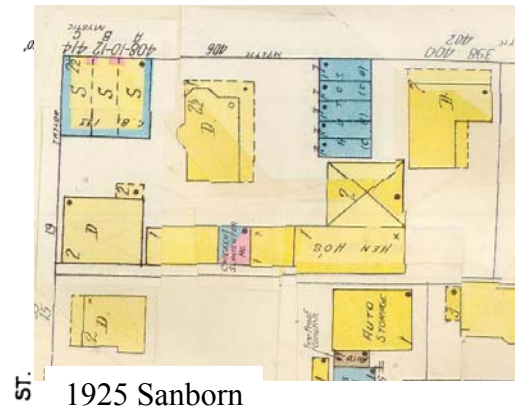
1884 Hopkins



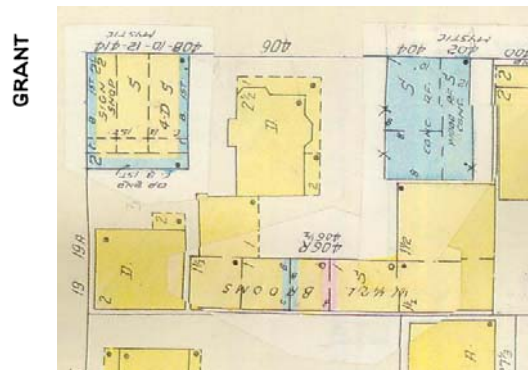
1895 Bromley



1900 Sanborn



1925 Sanborn



1958 Sanborn