



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:	510 Somerville Avenue
Case:	HPC 2014.011
Applicant Name:	Douglas Beaudet
Date of Application:	March 5, 2014
Recommendation:	Not Significant
Hearing Date:	April 15, 2014

I. Historical Association

Context/Evolution: Somerville Avenue, as well as Washington Street, was originally a 17th century trade route used by farmers to transport products and produce to markets in Boston and Charlestown. While Somerville Avenue was sparsely developed in 1852, by the mid to late 19th century, this corridor is substantially subdivided and moderately developed. Commercial and residential growth related to Union Square is historically tied to the expansion of the railroad service, beginning in 1835 with the opening of the first passenger railroad station on Washington Street. As Union Square continued to grow and expand, development continued to infill and encroach west down the Somerville Avenue corridor.

Historical Description: The subject property is first illustrated on the 1884 Hopkins map as 510 Somerville Avenue and under the ownership of M.Finnegan. Directories from the late 19th century do not identify an M. Finnegan. However, the 1884 directory lists a dry goods store, J.M. Bradbury & Co., at 512 Somerville Avenue. Other references identify the boot/shoe retail establishment of James Lynch at #510; a carpenter, Joseph Tattan who boards at 512; and Michael Tattan, owner of a dry goods



store who also has a house on-site. This could be the dwelling located to the right of #510, as this

1884 Hopkins Map, Plate 8



was originally under the ownership of M.Finnegan. The 1895 Bromley map (Plate 4) illustrates that the parcel is owned by John Harrington with addresses of 510 and 512, and that the structure is divided in half, which often means different uses on either side. The 1900 Sanborn map (Sheet 55) illustrates the structure is divided into three stores and that the building is two-stories in height, while continuing to list the same two addresses. The 1903 directory lists Frank Borges, a hairdresser at #512, and Joaquin and Joseph Borges as residing at #508, which is not listed on the 1900 map. By 1915, there is a grocer on-site, Thomas Frizell, who also lives at this location, as well as Joaquin Borges and Frank Walsh, a driver. The property is under ownership of Evaline Razzaboni by the end of 1924, and by 1925, the property is used by Henry Razzaboni, a grocer. The 1930s list a butcher at #510, Napoleon Razzaboni; a laborer at #512, Dennis O'Connell; and Henry Razzaboni also continues to operate at this location. Various building permits for accessory structures were issued in the early portion of the twentieth century, all of which have since been demolished, and a permit for dormers was issued in 1929. The 1933 Sanborn map (Vol. 1/Sheet 10) notes the western half of the structure is a dwelling while the eastern portion is a store. A second two-story rear addition is also illustrated. The 1940 directory lists several members of the Razzaboni family as well as the Flaherty family as residing at #512. Henry Razzaboni continues to work as a storekeeper. The 1945 directory continues to illustrate a variety of residents which includes members of the Costa, Parachiso (also spelled Paradiso) and Razzaboni families. The storefront was most recently remodeled in 1983.



Architectural Description: The historically mixed-use building is c. 1884 and is a 2½ story side-gable structure with multiple rear additions that expand the width of the structure. The rear plane of the roof is comprised of two identical shed dormers (c. 1929) that are not visible from the street. The style is undetermined due to the number of changes and lack of architectural detail; however, the depth of the eaves and period of construction suggest the Italianate style. A brick foundation is visible on various façades of the main structure including the rear additions.

Windows and doors have all been boarded upon the rear façade; however



previously replaced and several windows appear several window casings still exist. The house is

entirely clad in shake shingles.

Summary: The subject building represents the commercial growth and infill development of Somerville Avenue, which is a result of the mid to late 19th century expansion of Union Square along the Somerville Avenue corridor. This structure was constructed c. 1884 and maps illustrate that, historically, this building has always been a mix of commercial and residential uses. The building appears to retain the original side-gable form, 2½ story massing and fenestration pattern of the second story, but has seen significant alterations with regard to the storefront, windows, doors, and rear additions. Additionally, the only architectural details noted are the depth of the eaves and several window casings.

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/atlas, 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 510 Somerville Avenue not 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.

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 510 Somerville Avenue begins with the c. 1884 date of construction and continues into the present day as this structure continues to house a mix of commercial and residential uses that extends west from Union Square along Somerville Avenue.

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 along Somerville Avenue, west of Union Square. The location has not been altered and the structure is at the front of the parcel along the left side lot line. The surrounding streetscape is a mixture of historic structures, twentieth century infill development, a redevelopment site, and parking lots. This context provides minimal continuity for the period of significance regarding this structure.

- b. Design: The original side-gable form, 2½ story massing, and second story fenestration pattern are still evident. Architectural details are only existent in the remaining window casings and depth of the eaves.
- c. Materials: The materials that compose this structure are predominantly wood, with a brick foundation. Windows, doors and the storefront have all been replaced over the years. Asphalt shingles were also added to the roof at a later period. The exterior is sheathed in wood shingles, which were likely wood clapboards originally.
- d. Alterations: Material alterations include the storefront, windows, doors, and rear additions. The first rear addition may have been constructed as early as c. 1884, while the second rear addition is c. 1933 and later additions are post 1950. The storefront was most recently modified in 1983 according to building permits.

Evaluation of Integrity:

The subject structure retains a low to moderate level of historical and architectural integrity due to changes in the surrounding streetscape which further remove historical context, lack of original materials and existent detail, and variety of alterations. The original side-gable form, 2½ story massing, and second story fenestration pattern are still evident.

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 510 Somerville Avenue historically or architecturally significant.

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, c. 1884, 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 do not find 510 Somerville 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 do not find 510 Somerville Avenue historically or architecturally significant.**

510 Somerville Avenue

