



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: 587, 589 and 593 Somerville Avenue
Case: HPC 13.011
Applicant Name: Richard DiGirolamo, attorney for Vincent Pascale, owner
Date of Application: 4/3/13 HPC received: 4/3/13
Recommendation: Determination of Significance for 587, 589 and 593 Somerville Avenue
Hearing Date: 4/16/13

I. Historical Association

Architectural Description:

House at 589 Somerville Avenue: The five-bay, one and one-half story house is one of only a few remaining early houses in Somerville. Its Greek Revival center entrance with full side-lights and its massing are characteristic of the early construction date. The 6/1 sash and the three large dormers piercing the roof line are reminiscent of a later date of remodeling. There is a one-story, side ell. The shape and location of the chimneys indicate that they were probably for coal burning stoves and fireplaces rather than the earlier wood-fired



Storefront at 587 Somerville Avenue: The store front is a small single-story clapboard 3-bay wood building with an inset center entry, flanked by display windows with simple paneling beneath.



Garage at 593 Somerville Avenue: At the street edge, this is essentially a 2-bay by 1-bay rusticated concrete block garage with a stepped parapet and flat roof. The main façade has a garage door asymmetrically placed on the east side with a pedestrian door and bricked in window to the west.



On the east side are 2 blinded windows facing on to the parking area in front of the house at 589 Somerville Avenue.

Behind this is located another joined building with a gable end and brick side walls visible from the street. Ventilator stacks are located on the roof peak.

Historical Description: Ward II was sparsely developed until the mid to late 1800s when it became an important transportation and manufacturing center. The early industries of the Middlesex Dye and Bleachery Company (1801) and the American Tube Works (1852) established the development of the area and by the 1870s all the brick yards and farming land had been converted to manufacturing and food processing establishments. With this substantial industrial growth came the need for workers' housing. Also there were significant health and pollution concerns caused by the nature of the industries.



*While many of the important industries which were started here in the early days of the century are now almost forgotten one still flourishes after a life of seventy five years the bleachery on Somerville Avenue incorporated in 1821 as the Charlestown Bleachery It has changed proprietor ship and name several times since then being known as the Milk Row Bleachery the Somerville Dyeing and Bleaching Company and the Middlesex Bleachery and Dye Works Its latest owners were Messrs KM Gilmore and John Haigh the latter recently deceased The bleachery people form almost a community of their own and the narrative of their three quarters of a century if written would be very entertaining. **Somerville Past & Present p.33***

Somerville Avenue was Milk Row throughout the 19th century, a main thoroughfare from Union Square to Porter Square in Cambridge. The house was located directly opposite the Middlesex Bleachery and Dye Works, constructed ca. 1820. The house appears to have been set back from its construction. The lot size has not changed since the 1870s and has had at least one other building on it according to the 1874 map.

While the initial research found on the Form B filed at the Massachusetts Historical Commission states that this house, was built in the early 1800s. Deed and map research shows that it was more likely constructed around 1845-47 and is firmly associated with Edward Flanagan who was born in New York according to his death certificate. He is listed as in 1850 Census as living on Milk Row. Between 1845 and 1857, he is recorded as buying several plots of land. Deed Research shows that he bought land and a house from Thomas Rand, Jr in 1847, land from John C Burrage in 1849, more from George O. Brastow and from N Carlin in 1857. All of it is in the Brastow development platted by Alexander Wadsworth in 1843 which extended from Summer Street all the way down to Somerville Avenue.

At some point the house/property is associated with the name of E. Robinson (probably Enoch Robinson, locksmith and inventor or it could Ezra B Robinson, ship furnisher – both of them lived on Spring Hill) in the 1850s.

The 1860 Census lists an Edward Flanagan living in Somerville who worked at the Bleachery. He was 48 at the time. City Directories state that in the 1870s, Edward Flanagan, a laborer and Edward T. Flanagan, clerk at the Globe National Bank lived here.

By the time of his death in July of 1879, Edward Flanagan was a foreman at the Middlesex Bleachery. He was interred in Mount Auburn Cemetery. He left his wife Caroline C and at least 1 daughter, Mary R. who were living at 589 Somerville Avenue, and 2 sons; Lewis C, druggist and apothecary on Charles Street in Boston, and Edward T, clerk at the Globe National Bank. The Globe National Bank of Boston, charter number 936 was granted a Federal charter in 1865 and issued 16 types of notes according a website specializing in 19th century currency.

Edward T Flanagan also achieved some prominence becoming a Master of the John Abbot Lodge, first lodge of Free and Accepted Masons in Somerville, opened under a dispensation October 23 1857. George O Brastow and Enoch Robinson were officers. The charter members numbered nineteen brothers. For about two years they met in a small attic lodge room over Union Hall in a wooden building at the corner of Oak and Milk streets, now known as Beech Street and Somerville Avenue. Then for eight or nine years they met on the second floor of the same building. March 18 1869 the lodge moved to Union Hall building in Union square and October 4 1888 to the Stickney building in Gilman square. Edward T. Flanagan held the title of Master in 1887.

During the 20th century, the house continued to be home to workers. The 1903 Directory shows a Nelson J. Sanford, plasterer in residence at 589 Somerville Avenue, while the 1910 Directory indicates that Robert H Fietz, furniture manufacturer lived there. Carmine Carbone, grocer and baker has a store at 585 Somerville Avenue but lives at 587 from 1910-1915. This could be either the small building located at the rear of the property shown on the 1900 Sanborn, or he could have a second entry on 589 as there is a small circa 1874 addition shown on the side of the building.

Louis Guazzaloca, aged 32, arrived in New York in March 1912 on the “La Provence” a steamer (1905-1916) that was torpedoed in February 1916 while transporting troops. According to Ellis Island records, he was a US Citizen, married and living in Somerville. It was also noted that he could read and write. The 1915 City directory shows him to be in residence at 589 Somerville Avenue, at which time he is listed as dealing in boots and shoes and sharing the house with Frederick Fortini a shoemaker at 598 Somerville Avenue. By 1925, he ran a fruit shop at 587. The garage next door is run by Anthony Martinelli. The Board of Aldermen’s Minutes show that the garage had a 250 gal underground tank at 593 that was licensed to Paul J Cavicchi, and Louis Guazzaloca who transferred that license to Martinelli & Grover on several occasions. The Guazzaloca family lived at #589 through the 1960s.

During the 1940s and 1950s, various members of the extended family also lived there. The following family photos were found on line, showing the pride of ownership of Louis Guazzaloca.



Richie Flaherty & Louis Guazzaloca in the early 1960s.



Architect: Unknown

Context/Evolution: The house first appears on the 1852 Draper Map on Milk Row between Beech Street and Central Street. But it is most likely to have been constructed between 1845 and 1850. The 1874-1900 Atlases show the house as the only building on the site with the same lot boundaries that exist today.

Milk Row or Somerville Avenue has been a major thoroughfare through the City since the Colonial Era. Somerville has changed from being the hinterlands of Charlestown to a City in its own right. Every 10 years since its incorporation as a town, the population has just about doubled though 1900. Its streets show the layers of infill upon infill. Originally there were farms located along Milk Row, one of which was still in existence until the 1950s. As industries such as the Bleachery and new modes of transportation such as the Kent Street Station at the base of Spring Hill encouraged development of housing for both workers and commuters, the area became more densely settled. During the 20th century, immigrants set up businesses that catered to the motor trade and to their communities along the Avenue. There are still several of these small businesses still located along the major roads and throughout the neighborhoods.

According to the building permit records numerous additions and changes to the property were made by L Guazzaloca between 1912 and 1954 although the house itself remained essentially untouched. These changes indicated on building permits for 589 Somerville Avenue from 1912-1918 are located at the

current addresses of 587 and 593 Somerville Avenue. No information could be found about the clubroom, it might be the gable building located at the rear of the garage.

589 Somerville Avenue (house)

- 1912 – Construct one building for club room and 2 stores, flat roof (593)
- 1913 – Erect 1 wood store, flat roof (587)
- 1916 – Stable, wood bldg, pitched roof, cement foundation and fireres(?) (593)
- 1918 – Alter garage, one to be fireproofed (593)
- 1919 – Opening 2 more windows on side of house (not visible from the public right of way)
- 1929 – Asphalt shingles, flat roof, cement concrete (location unclear)

593 Somerville Avenue (garage)

- 1920 – One addition making total 20 cars
- 1934 – Repairs shop, cement blocks, put up partition & chimney

587 Somerville Avenue (store)

- 1929 – Lower store to sidewalk level, cement blocks
- 1941 – Additional 6' of brick or concrete
- 1954 – Certificate of occupancy

Summary:

The house is one of the oldest houses still on Somerville Avenue and a rare intact example of workers housing located in proximity to the Middlesex Bleachery, one of the major industries of the day. The only known older property on Somerville Avenue is #461 which survives from the 18th Century and in similarly well preserved condition. The concrete block garage and the 1912 storefront are common forms found throughout the City and are not of especial distinction.



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 589 Somerville 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, while Staff finds 587 and 593 to be less so.

The building at 589 Somerville Avenue is found historically and architecturally significant due to its association with Edward Flanagan who began as a laborer and became a foreman of the Middlesex Bleachery; his family who were also achieved some prominence; and with Louis Guazzaloca who also achieved some modicum of the American Dream as a descendent of an Italian immigrant family.

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 589 Somerville Avenue begins in the 1840s when Somerville was a new town. Its population more than tripled between 1842 and 1852, from 1,013 to 3,524 due to the growth of industry, modes of transportation, and the ambitions of developers such as George A Brastow. The success of the businesses were due not only to the vision of the developers and industrialists who made use of the water, fine sand and clay and the proximity of the railroad, but also to the workers who flocked to the city for work. There are 42 properties listed on MACRIS constructed around 1850, of which less than a handful are workers cottages and none of these are on major roads or as in good condition.

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 is on its original site on a major road. Although the house is squeezed between 20th century commercial infill buildings, its siting alone indicates that it predates all the other buildings in the vicinity. The small storefront is located close to the property line to the east and the garage building is on the western edge.
- b. Design: The design of the house is essentially intact; a side porch circa 1874 was constructed by its original owner. The front steps have circa 1920s brick probably constructed by the Guazzaloca family.

The 1913 storefront has had several small alterations over time. The garage structure is a combination of 2 buildings, one of a common type with rusticated cement block and the other is a gable end to the street, hidden behind the former.

- c. Materials: The house retains its wood siding, fenestration, and massing. The other buildings are also constructed of typical materials.
- d. Alterations: The house has very few alterations, all of minor effect. The garage building has windows infilled with flat cement blocks. The storefront has newer doors, panels and signage band.

Evaluation of Integrity:

Does the subject parcel represent a distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction? The parcel has been broken up and become crowded by the 20th century commercial buildings, but these are secondary to the feeling of age given by the original house.

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 eye is drawn to

the lone small house set back from the street which has a variety of auto and commercial uses along this stretch of road. It is clearly different in kind and history from the buildings surrounding it despite the paving of the front yard.

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 589 Somerville Avenue but do not find 587 and 593 Somerville Avenue to be historically or architecturally significant.

The house has the architectural distinction of a rare intact workers cottage associated with the Middlesex Bleachery, constructed in a vernacular style common to the period in which it was constructed. The garage and storefront do not have any particular architectural character that sets them apart.

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 1847*, 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 589 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 find 589 Somerville Avenue historically and architecturally significant.**



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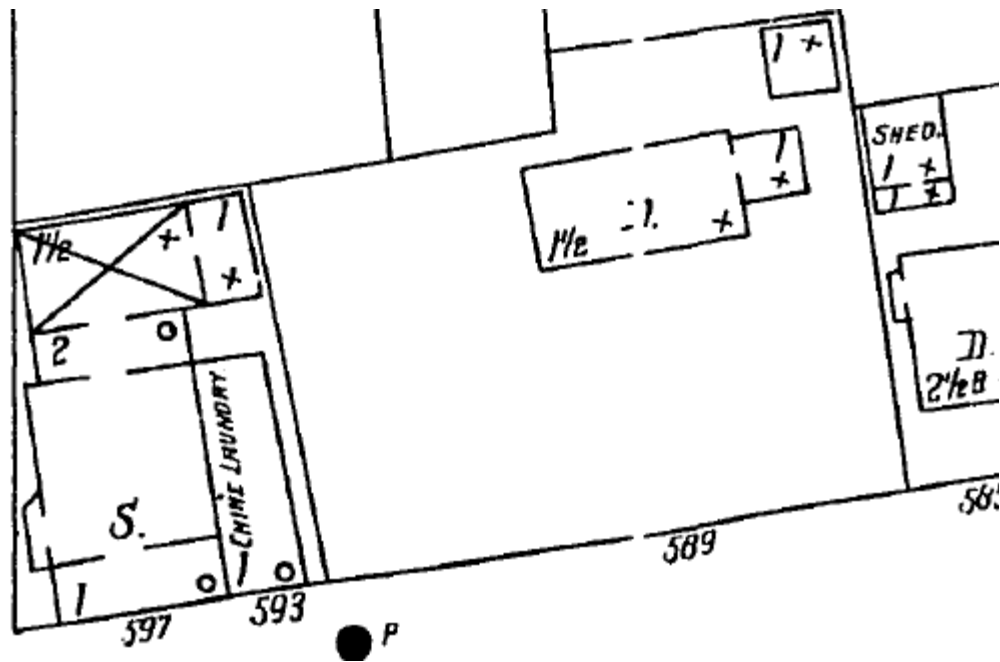
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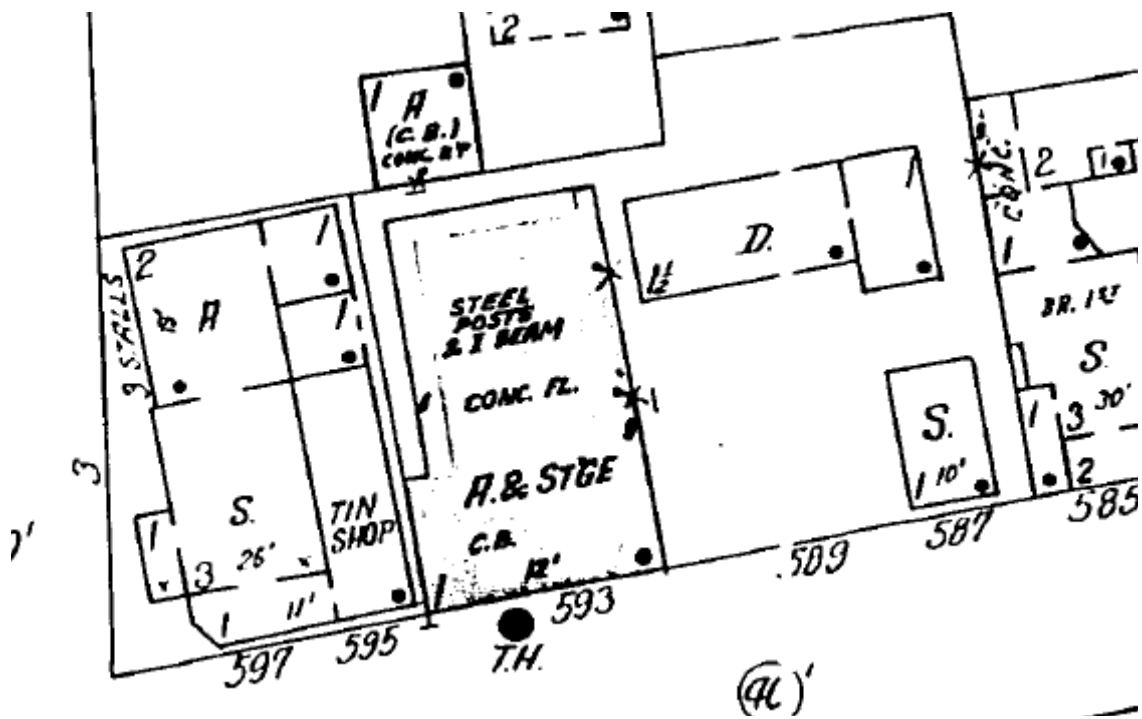
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