



**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 PREFERABLY PRESERVED STAFF REPORT**

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Site:	589 and 593 Somerville Avenue
Case:	HPC 2013.011
Applicant Name:	Richard DiGirolamo, Agent for Owner, Vincent Pascale
Date of Application:	Wednesday, April 3, 2013
Date of Significance:	Tuesday, May 21, 2013
Recommendation:	Preferably Preserved (#589) NOT Preferably Preserved (#593)
Hearing Date:	Tuesday, June 18, 2013



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

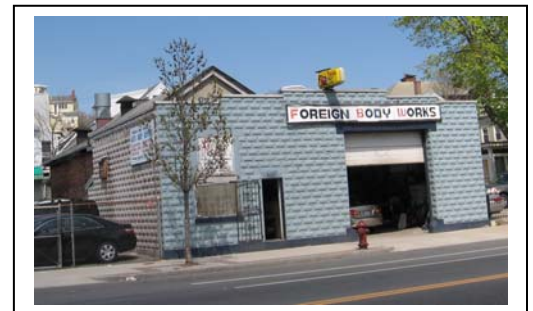
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**I. Meeting Summary: Determination of Significance**

On Tuesday, May 21, 2013, the Historic Preservation Commission, in accordance with the Demolition Review Ordinance (2003-05), made a determination that 589 and 593 Somerville Avenue are 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**

- (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 / or**
- (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 at 589 Somerville Avenue as ca.1845. Based upon building permits, the garage structure at 593 Somerville

Avenue was constructed between 1912 and 1934. The dwelling at 589 Somerville Avenue is present on the 1852 Draper Map of Somerville which was based upon an 1846 survey. The garage has a more complex history, starting when the automobile became more affordable in 1918 to when the automobile became a necessity.

In accordance with *Criteria (i)*, listed above, the Commission agreed with Staff findings, due to the association of this structure with the Flanagan and Guazzaloca families. Edward Flanagan was closely associated with the Middlesex Bleachery, a major business in the 19<sup>th</sup> century; his son Edward T. Flanagan was associated with the Freemasons and with the banking industry in Boston. The Guazzaloca family with their fruit store at 587 Somerville Avenue, and ownership of an automotive business at 593 Somerville Avenue followed a typical immigrant track to become part of the City's culture. The one-and-a-half-story dwelling is unique on the Somerville Avenue streetscape which, in the context of today's busy corridor, illustrates the worker's housing of the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century when land was not at such a premium.

In accordance with *Criteria (ii)*, listed above, the Commission agreed with Staff findings, due to the ability of the subject parcel to convey significance regarding location and form as well as, to a moderate degree, integrity of design.

## **II. Additional Information**

Staff was requested to find more information about the gable end structure behind the concrete block garage and the clubhouse mentioned in the building permits.

### *Additional Research:*

- Directory research does not reveal the presence of any clubhouse on the property in 1912-1915. The clubs listed are more established groups such as the Oddfellows, the Masons, the Heptorean Club, the Central Club and the Webcowit Club. None of these clubs invited recent immigrants to participate.
- The only known relative of Louis Guazzaloca's wife, Josephine Razzaboni, is Carl Razzaboni, who owns the skate and bicycle shop on Somerville Avenue. Carl stated that the relatives who would know anything had all passed on and that he had no knowledge of the clubhouse.
- Building permit files from Inspectional Services do not provide further relevant information.
- Board of Aldermen's minutes reveal that permits for the storage of flammable materials had been issued starting in 1918.

### *Site Visit:*

A site visit conducted on Monday June 10, 2013 revealed that only one brick wall remains of the garage building. The rest of the gable end is supported by a steel I-beam, which is supported on the opposite side by concrete block. Portions of the cement floor show discontinuities formed by various alterations to the structure over time. The fence may be 19<sup>th</sup> century and is significantly intact. The sections removed to add parking are still located on the premises.

Vincent Pascale, Owner, said that he believed that the back portion had been a stable and that at one time the structures had been a truck garage. He has owned the buildings since 1965.

Staff was also allowed access to the basement of the house but not to main portion of the dwelling. The typical slate rubble foundation was limed and topped with brick above ground level. Beams were cut with a cross-cut saw and had been twinned for strength due to termites. The Owner said that a small section of the cellar had been set aside and enclosed for the storage or production of wine, according to one of the Guazzaloca daughters who had visited several years prior.

The windows that enclose the side porch were constructed as sliders, which also could have been used as a storefront prior to construction of the existing store located closer to the street.

#### *Comparable Structures:*

Several houses in East Somerville and on Spring Hill can be found on the 1852 Draper Map. However, few buildings date as close to the mid-1840s with regard to the list of Somerville Local Historic Districts. None of these follow exactly the same plan and, stylistically, are very different – ranging from Gothic Revival to Greek Revival. Staff knows of only one other relatively intact

#### *Dover Street, looking south toward Cambridge*



441 R Somerville Ave – 1840 - LHD



65-67 Perkins St - 1840- LHD



53 Kent St - 1848

house from early

Somerville, which is located on a major thoroughfare (53 Kent Street) and also associated with the Bleachery. Other houses from this era located on Somerville Avenue, Beacon Street or Broadway have been altered, demolished or moved. Worker cottage styles also vary.



25 Clyde St - 1850- LHD

Regarding concrete block garages, there are numerous similar structures throughout the City. Brick has traditionally been used for larger, more ornate garages. However, there is only a single remaining wall and gable of a building whose purpose is not clear.

### **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*



74 Franklin St - 1848- LHD



80 Franklin St - 1848- LHD



52 Franklin St – 1848 -Razed

*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 form and massing of the house is typical of its period, yet unique. The building is compact and has original windows, a chimney, and door casings. The house is closer in style to vernacular buildings of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century than those on Spring Hill or Mount Vernon Street. The enclosed porch/storefront adds to the understanding of the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century age of the structure.

While the form and massing of the garage building is typical, the cryptic rear portion of the structure raised unanswerable questions. Since the original gable structure is so fragmented and there has been no relationship to any clubs established, these questions remain unanswered. This structure does not add to the understanding of this aspect of the City's history, nor to the evolution of Somerville Avenue.

- 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 Commission found that integrity of this single-family residence is retained within the location and form, as well as, to a moderate degree, integrity of design. The structure retains integrity of location through siting and orientation as well as through spatial relationships to other buildings along Somerville Avenue. The main massing component, 1½ story center hall entry with symmetrical dormers remains unchanged.

The garage, as it currently stands, was constructed in stages and does not have a coherent or distinctive integrity, but does serve to demonstrate the ubiquity of automotive businesses along major corridors.

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

The Commission determined that this house is 'Significant' due to a historical association of the property with Edward Flanagan, laborer and later foreman of the Middlesex Bleachery; his family who also accomplished some level of prominence; and with Louis Guazzaloca, who achieved some modicum of the American Dream, as a descendent of an Italian immigrant family; and the architectural style, which conveys significance regarding location, design and materials.

The clubhouse/garage was determined 'Significant' because various parts of the building were not clearly understood and needed further research to determine their purpose and level of significance regarding evolution.

- 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 visible on Somerville Avenue with two buildings, a garage and a store located along the streetfront, while the house is set back and partially obscured by other buildings. Located on the former Middlesex Bleachery site, this parcel is across the street from Conway Park.

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

This single family house is a rare find. There are less than 10 properties, within the City, known to be workers housing of this period which remain relatively intact (see images above).

The main portion of the garage is typical of 1915-1935. Information could not be found about the brick wall portion of the building to determine purpose, frequency or rarity.

***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 a historical association of the property with Edward Flanagan, laborer and later foreman of the Middlesex Bleachery; his family who were also achieved some prominence; and with Louis Guazzaloca, who achieved some modicum of the American Dream, as a descendent of an Italian immigrant family; and the architectural style, which conveys significance regarding location, design and materials.

The clubhouse/garage was determined 'Significant' because various parts of the building were not clearly understood and further research was necessary to determine their purpose and level of significance regarding evolution. The additional information found did not lead to any particular significance beyond the expected automotive.

Significance is also due to the ability of the subject parcel to convey integrity regarding location and form as well as, to a moderate degree, design. The additional information provided and consideration criteria (a-e) listed above expresses that this type of dwelling is rare in any neighborhood within the City. The garage consists of two different buildings, neither of which are completely intact, and have no specific character that conveys a specific association.

Therefore, Staff finds the potential demolition of the house at 589 Somerville Avenue detrimental to the heritage of the City but does not find the potential demolition of the garage at 593 Somerville Avenue detrimental.

#### **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 house at 589 Somerville Avenue detrimental to the heritage of the City and consequently in the best interest of the public to preserve or rehabilitate. **Staff recommend that the Historic Preservation Commission find 589 Somerville Avenue Preferably Preserved.**

Staff does not find the potential demolition of the garage at 593 Somerville Avenue detrimental, to the heritage of the City and consequently not in the best interest of the public to preserve or rehabilitate. Therefore, due to the frequency of this type of commercial structure, **Staff**

**recommend that the Historic Preservation Commission do not find 593 Somerville Avenue 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).*

*587-589 Somerville Avenue aerial view*

