



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

DETERMINATION OF PREFERABLY PRESERVED STAFF REPORT

Site:	22 Woodbine Street
Case:	HPC 2016.011
Applicant Name:	Michael LoPresti
Date of Application:	March 3, 2016
Date of Significance:	April 19, 2016
Recommendation:	Preferably Preserved
Hearing Date:	May 17, 2016

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

I. Meeting Summary: Determination of Significance

On Tuesday, April 19, 2016, the Historic Preservation Commission voted unanimously (4-0) to determine the c. 1895 single-family dwelling at 22 Woodbine Street 'Significant' because the building, per Section 2.17.B of the Demolition Review Ordinance 2003-05, is "at least 50 years old, and is or has been determined by the Commission to be a significant building or structure after a finding that the building or structure is either:

- i. "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 of Massachusetts, or
- ii. "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, and therefore it is in the public interest to be preserved or rehabilitated rather than to be demolished."



According to *Criteria 2.17.B*, listed above, historic map and directory research identifies the structure as a c. 1890 workers cottage constructed as a rental by Nathan or Daniel Simonds.



In accordance with *Criteria (i)*, the Commission found the subject building associated with the broad architectural, cultural, economic and social history of the City and significant due to its associations with the working class development of the City in the Albion Magoun neighborhood.

In accordance with *Criteria (ii)*, the Commission also found the subject building historically and architecturally significant due to its integrity as a workers cottage, which is clearly visible in its scale, massing, form, its place within a group of similarly important buildings and an intact representative of 19th century working- class housing stock and represents some of the earliest working class residential development on this neighborhood.

The period of significance for 22 Woodbine Street begins before 1895 with its construction in a neighborhood of similar buildings owned by the Simonds family and constructed for working class families. Its significance continues into the present day as the use of this structure remains consistent.

II. Additional Information

Additional Research:

- Woodbine Street does not exist on the 1880 U. S. Census. Bernard Hagan and family appear as the last residents on Albion Street (now 23 Woodbine Street) after Andrew C. Berry and family were listed (now 6 Centre Street, building razed), indicating that Albion took a couple of turns and ended there. Hagan is listed as a laborer from Ireland. No other residences existed on what is now Woodbine Street.
- The 1900 U. S. Census shows the working class nature of Woodbine Street. The majority of the population hailed from Ireland, while Germany and Canada also were represented. The residents held a wide variety of jobs. There were four cigar makers, two cabinet makers and two laborers. Each of the following jobs were held by a single resident: shirt factory stitcher, dry goods shipping clerk, stove repairer, upholstery goods refinisher, piano teacher and tuner, bookbinding agent, shoe machinist, sawyer, tailor, house painter, milk wagon driver, plumber, solderer in a jewelry factory, and an apprentice in a paper office.
- The Derby Desk Company was located directly across railroad tracks on the corner of Central and Vernon Streets. According to the Somerville Board of Trade, 1912, the company was *"the largest manufacturing industry in the world devoted exclusively to the manufacture of office furniture. Occupying ten acres of floor space, it has made and sold over two million desks, and designed special and artistic furniture for the principal banks, libraries, public institutions, and corporations throughout the United States."* The owner of the Derby Desk Company lived on Westwood Road.
- Noted Baseball Hall of Famer, 'Pie' Traynor grew up next door at 20 Woodbine Street. *"Harold Joseph "Pie" Traynor (November 11, 1898 – March 16, 1972) was an American professional baseball player, manager, scout and radio broadcaster. He played his entire Major League Baseball career (1920–37) as a third baseman with the Pittsburgh Pirates. He was inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1948."*
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pie_Traynor

Comparable Structures:

Beyond the collection of workers housing on Woodbine Street, there are a number of single-family dwellings with a modest 1½ story massing located throughout the City. Intact neighborhoods of workers cottages from the third quarter of the 19th century are not common.

Comparable structures within the City include:

- 25 Clyde Street (LHD)
- 342 Lowell Street (LHD)
- 27 Dane Avenue
- 80 Properzi Way
- 37 Fisk Avenue
- 31 Richardson Street

Predominant differences between the comparable dwellings and the subject dwelling are orientations toward the street, heights of basements, and the shapes and sizes of the ells. They were all constructed for workers and inhabited by families for generations. For the most part they are well-maintained and retain much of their original character. Properzi Way, Dane Avenue and Fisk Avenue are located in existing neighborhoods of workers housing of earlier dates than the Woodbine Street structures.



Top: 25 Clyde Street (1860); 342 Lowell Street (1861); 80 Properzi Way (c.1850).

Bottom: 27 Dane Avenue (c.1874); 37 Fisk Avenue (1866); 31 Richardson Street (c. 1850).

II. 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 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 this single-family dwelling represents an increasingly rare residential building type within the City. The Woodbine streetscape is predominantly composed of workers housing similar to the form and massing of the subject parcel, and together, the buildings that form this streetscape illustrate an important part of story of the suburbanization and industrialization of the city in the third quarter of the 19th century.

As industries developed along the rail and river corridors of Somerville, housing for the workers also developed in close proximity to their places of work and those with easy access to public transportation. Slaughter houses, glass factories, and furniture factories were located along these corridors. These streets would have been undesirable to middle management and building owners who preferred to build above and away from the noise and pollution of the rail lines and their businesses on Somerville's many hills.

While many of the remaining industrial buildings are being adapted for reuse, the housing associated with these businesses is being demolished for larger structures. The destruction of the workers neighborhoods removes the context and the history of Somerville, a city proud of its connections with the working class.

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 one-family dwelling is retained within the location and form, as well as integrity of design. The structure retains integrity of location through siting and orientation as well as through spatial relationships to other buildings along Woodbine Street. The building is a good example of workers' cottage which with its neighbors and gives witness to the lives of its residents.

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

Somerville prides itself on its working class heritage. The elimination of the historical evidence of this history belittles the importance of an entire class of people without whom the City as it is today would not exist. This closely built neighborhood developed at a time when much of Somerville was becoming fully developed and the last least desirable parcels were used along the nearby railroad proximate to the Derby Desk Company.

The neighborhood is also significant as the boyhood home of Pie Traynor, who has been inducted in the Baseball Hall of Fame.

The Commission found the building significant for its associations the broad architectural, cultural, economic and social history of the City especially in regard to the working class development of the City in the Albion Magoun neighborhood.

The Commission also found the subject building historically and architecturally significant due to its integrity as a workers cottage, which is clearly visible in its scale, massing, form, its place within a group of similarly important buildings and an intact representative of 19th century working- class housing stock and represents some of the earliest working class residential development on this neighborhood.

The period of significance for 22 Woodbine Street begins before 1895 with its construction in a neighborhood of similar buildings owned by the Simonds family and constructed for working class families. Its significance continues into the present day as the use of this structure remains consistent.

- 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 highly visible on Woodbine Street and is located centrally in the neighborhood. While Woodbine Street is not heavily travelled by vehicular traffic, Emerson Street is a favorite pedestrian and cycling route Lowell Street through Grand Junction Park to Central Street.

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

Workers housing set within a clear neighborhood of similar buildings is becoming increasingly rare as developers buy up the small houses suitable for single families with yards for the children to play in order to construct larger buildings that disrupt the context and proportions of these districts of pocket-sized homes.

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?

Somerville prides itself on its working class heritage. The elimination of the historical evidence of this history belittles the importance of an entire class of people without whom the City as it is today would not exist. This closely built neighborhood developed at a time when much of Somerville was becoming fully developed and the last least desirable parcels were used for workers housing next to the nearby railroad proximate to the Derby Desk Company and the Somerville Junction train station.

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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 period of significance for 22 Woodbine Street begins before 1895 with its construction in a neighborhood of similar buildings owned by the Simonds family and constructed for working class families. Its significance continues into the present day as the use of this structure remains consistent.

Its location on the center of the neighborhood is the key to perception and integrity of the district. Any alteration of massing and form will distort the proportions of the remaining buildings on the street. The additional information provided and consideration criteria (a-e) listed above convey that this type of dwelling is now becoming rare in many neighborhoods throughout the City, as is the associated streetscape, and has minimal architectural detail characteristic of the building type,. Therefore, Staff finds the potential demolition of 22 Woodbine Street detrimental to the heritage of the City.

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.

Somerville prides itself on its working class heritage. The elimination of the historical evidence of this history belittles the importance of an entire class of people without whom the City as it is today would not exist. This closely built neighborhood developed at a time when much of Somerville was becoming fully developed and the last least desirable parcels were used for workers housing next to the nearby railroad proximate to the Derby Desk Company and the Somerville Junction train station.

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In accordance with the Demolition Review Ordinance (2003-05), Section 4.D, Staff find the potential demolition of the subject structure detrimental to the heritage of the City, and consequently in the best interest of the public to preserve or rehabilitate. Therefore, due to the reasons noted above, **Staff recommend that the Historic Preservation Commission find 22 Woodbine Street 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).



22 Woodbine Street, aerial view



22 Woodbine Street, Streetscape



Derby Desk Company located on the opposite side of the railroad tracks from Woodbine Street
Somerville, Mass.: The Beautiful City of Seven Hills. Its History And Opportunities. Somerville Board of Trade. 1912



Somerville Junction Station located off Central Street opposite the Derby Desk Company

