



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

Joseph A. Curtatone

Mayor

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

KRISTENNA CHASE, *PRESERVATION PLANNER*
SARAH WHITE, *PLANNER & PRESERVATION PLANNER*

Case #: HPC 2017.087

Date: December 19, 2017

Recommendation: Preferably Preserved

PRESERVATION STAFF REPORT
for
Determination of Preferably Preserved

Site: 108 Gilman Street

Applicant Name: Bonnie McCarthy

Applicant Address: 13 Princeton Street, Medford, MA

Owner Name: Same

Owner Address: Same

Petition: Applicant seeks to demolish the c. 1840 post and beam residence.

HPC Hearing Date: December 19, 2017



I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1. **Subject Property:** The subject property is a c.1840 post and beam residence owned by Charles E. Gilman, first Town Clerk and City Clerk.

2. **Proposal:** The Applicant seeks to demolish the existing structure.

I. MEETING SUMMARY: Determination of Significance

On Tuesday, March 20, 2018, the Historic Preservation Commission voted unanimously (6-0) to determine the pre-1850 wood-frame building at 108 Gilman 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.”

The subject building is found importantly associated one or more historic persons and with the broad architectural, cultural, economic and social history of the City due to associations with Charles E. Gilman, the first Town (1842-1871) and City Clerk (1872-1882), and with working class families from 1882 to the present.

The subject building is found historically and architecturally significant due to its possible post and beam construction, early 19th century form and massing. The building is unusual in its simplicity of design and size due to its age and located in a group of later larger late Victorian Era buildings. It retains the integrity and form of an early 19th century house. It is prominently located at the corner of Gilman and Walnut Streets across from the Ed Leathers Park.

II. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

A site visit on March 27, 2018 revealed that the house is definitely of post and beam construction. Corner posts were clearly visible on the first and second floors as were beams on the second floor. The beams between the first and second floors were not visible, being located between the ceiling and floor. Beams in the attic showed evidence of being hand-hewn. This indicates that the building may be older than initially proposed. The building appears that it was raised up at one point to allow for full basement use, possibly in the 1920s when the building was also used for automotive purposes. Thick lower walls give way to a narrower wall type above grade. The side shed has salvage metal ceiling tiles lining the space. Lally columns support the structure.

Comparable Structures:

There are few structures to compare with the subject dwelling due to the combination of the age of the structure, and the construction technique. The properties below are known to be post and beam construction. All are earlier than 1800.



78 Sycamore Street, Oliver Tufts House, c. 1714 (LHD); 6 Kent Court, c. 1750 (LHD); 438 Broadway, Adams-Magoun House c. 1783 (LHD)



Above: 117 Washington Street, Samuel Ireland House, c. 1792 (LHD); 81 Eustis Street, Cooper Davenport Tavern, c. 1808 (LHD); 45 Nashua Street, unknown date, moved to current location.

Below: 461 Somerville Avenue, Jonathan Ireland House c. 1791.



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:

How does this building or structure compose or reflect features which contribute to the heritage of the City?

a) What is the remaining integrity of the structure? The National Park Service defines integrity as the ability of a property to convey significance.

- The exterior of the structure retains a high degree of architectural integrity and reflects the evolution of this. See determination of significance report for a summary of the historic architectural features of this structure.

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

- The subject building is found importantly associated one or more historic persons and with the broad architectural, cultural, economic and social history of the City due to associations with Charles E. Gilman, the first Town (1842-1871) and City Clerk (1872-1882), and with working class families from 1882 to the present.
- The subject building is found historically and architecturally significant due to its possible post and beam construction, early 19th century form and massing. The building is unusual in its simplicity of design and size due to its age and located in a group of later larger late Victorian Era buildings. It retains the integrity and form of an early 19th century house.

b) What is the visibility of the structure with regard to public interest (Section 2.17.B.ii) if demolition were to occur?

- The structure is prominently located at the corner of Gilman and Walnut Streets across from the Ed Leathers Park is set back from the street with a large front yard.

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

- The City of Somerville has few structures from the early days of Somerville. When Somerville separated from Charlestown in 1842, the population was a mere 1,013. Just 7 buildings are known to be constructed of post and beam and only 19 pre-1842 buildings are on the Local Historic Districts list

Upon a consideration of the above criteria is the demolition of the subject building detrimental to the architectural, cultural, political, economic, or social heritage of the City?

Staff finds that 108 Gilman Street is a rare example of early Somerville homes. While the building's early history is not known, its construction technique is rare and evidence of the construction early date.

III. RECOMMENDATION

*Based on the information provided and an assessment of the building, Staff recommends that the Historic Preservation Commission finds the property at 108 Gilman Street to be **PREFERABLY PRESERVED**.*





Corner post ground floor north



Corner post second floor south with beam visible, mid- 18th century newel post at top of stairs



Mid-18th century newel post and balusters.



Attic showing hand hewn timbers



Basement stairs with beam



Basement with parged beams and 1960s concrete block infill on wall by Washington Street



Shed with salvaged metal.

Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System

Scanned Record Cover Page

Inventory No:	SMV.497
Historic Name:	Gilman, Charles E. House
Common Name:	
Address:	108 Gilman St
City/Town:	Somerville
Village/Neighborhood:	Winter Hill
Local No:	
Year Constructed:	r 1840
Architect(s):	
Architectural Style(s):	No style
Use(s):	Single Family Dwelling House
Significance:	Architecture
Area(s):	
Designation(s):	
Building Materials(s):	Roof: Asphalt Shingle Wall: Wood; Wood Shingle



The Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) has converted this paper record to digital format as part of ongoing projects to scan records of the Inventory of Historic Assets of the Commonwealth and National Register of Historic Places nominations for Massachusetts. Efforts are ongoing and not all inventory or National Register records related to this resource may be available in digital format at this time.

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Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Massachusetts Historical Commission
220 Morrissey Boulevard, Boston, Massachusetts 02125
www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc

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FORM B - BUILDING

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
294 Washington Street, Boston, MA 02108

PI. WINTER
USGS - BOSTON
SHEET B

Area Winter Hill	Form no. 497
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own Somerville

Address 108 Gilman

Historic Name Charles Gilman House

Use: Original residential

Present residential

Ownership: ☒ Private individual
Private organization _____

Public _____

Original owner Charles Gilman.

DESCRIPTION:

Date ca. 1838-1845

Source map research, directory research

Style Federal

Architect _____

Exterior wall fabric shingle

Outbuildings _____

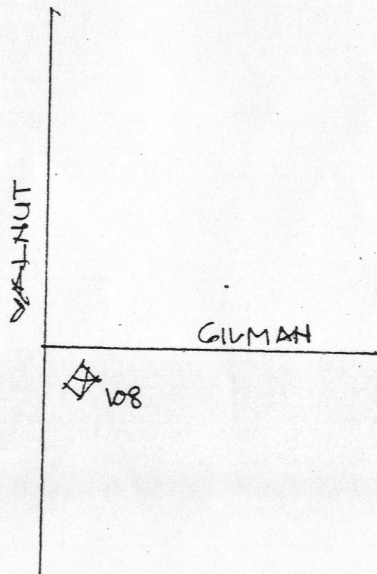
Major alterations (with dates) _____

Moved _____ Date _____

Approx. acreage less than one acre

Setting urban residential

location in relation to nearest
cross streets and other buildings
or geographical features.
Indicate north.



Recorded by Carole Zellie

Organization Landscape Research

Date 4/80

(Staple additional sheets here)

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE (describe important architectural features and evaluate in terms of other buildings within community)

Simple five bay facade, central entry house is one of the earliest surviving houses in the Gilman Square area.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE (explain the role owners played in local or state history and how the building relates to the development of the community)

Charles E. Gilman (1809-1888) was born in Shrewsbury. He held jobs with the Boston and Lowell Railroad and the New England Bank of Boston. He moved to Somerville in 1838 and was town and city clerk for over forty years. Gilman Square is named for him. Gilman owned considerable acreage in the Walnut Street area, and appears to have owned another later house on Walnut Street (1874 Atlas) however, this probably was his residence in the 1850s.

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

1857 Walling Map
Hopkins, G.M. Atlas of the City of Somerville, 1874
Samuels, E. Someraville Past and Present, 1897, p. 543