



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
MAYOR'S OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
JOSEPH A. CURTATONE
MAYOR

MICHAEL F. GLAVIN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

DETERMINATION OF SIGNIFICANCE STAFF REPORT

Site: 13-15 McGrath Highway
Case: HPC 2018.031
Applicant Name: Laben Realty, LLC
Date of Application: April 6, 2018
Recommendation: Not Significant
Hearing Date: May 15, 2018

I. Historical Association

Historical Context: The property at 13-15 McGrath Highway is bounded on the east by the railway and the west by McGrath Highway, major artery leading through Somerville to Cambridge and Boston. This section of the road was formerly known as Somerville Avenue. The neighborhood was home to many food packing and, distribution-related businesses from bakeries to slaughterhouses.



Evolution of Site: According to building permits a warehouse building was erected at 15 Somerville Avenue by E. Burtnett for the Clinton Corn Processing Company which according to the 1933 Sanborn Map was used as a factory. The 1945 building permit notes that office partitions were installed for Clinton Sales. The building is still noted on the 1989 Sanborn Map. Clinton Corn Processing Company used the building for the storage and distribution of corn syrup. By 1977, the building had become Thrifty Liquors and is now known as Sav-Mor Discount Liquor, known for its imaginative message board and rivalry with the McDonald's across the highway.

Architectural Description: 13-15 McGrath Highway is a 5-bay by 3-bay concrete block one-story structure with brick infill, a loading bay in the front, and metal panels forming a frieze containing the sign band that surmounts the building.



CITY HALL • 93 HIGHLAND AVENUE • SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS 02143
(617) 625-6600 EXT. 2500 • TTY: (617) 666-0001 • FAX: (617) 625-0722
www.somervillema.gov

Summary: 13-15 McGrath Highway is a circa 1930 factory/distribution building with little architectural detail from 1930.

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/atlasses, 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 **do NOT** find the building at 13-15 McGrath Highway 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.

The subject building at 13-15 McGrath Highway is NOT found importantly associated with the broad architectural, cultural, economic and social history of the City. No important associations were found.

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 13-15 McGrath Highway begins in 1930 as a warehouse/factory for the Clinton Corn Processing Company.

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 building is located on a major urban thoroughfare and have not been moved.
- b. Design: The building is a basic box. There are windows on one side only.
- c. Materials: The building is constructed of concrete with brick infill. A metal frieze surmounts the walls.
- d. Alterations: There is no record of the original appearance of the building.

Evaluation of Integrity: The original purpose of the building cannot be seen in the architecture. The current use is evident in the signage. The loading ramp is located away from the railway and on the parking side of the building.

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 the factory/liquor store at 13-15 McGrath Highway historically or architecturally significant.

The subject building at 13-15 McGrath Highway has no known associations with a reputed architect or builder, either by itself or in the context of a group of buildings or structures.

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 structures, circa 1916 and circa 1945, are 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/atlas, 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 the storage garage at 111 Prospect Street 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.**

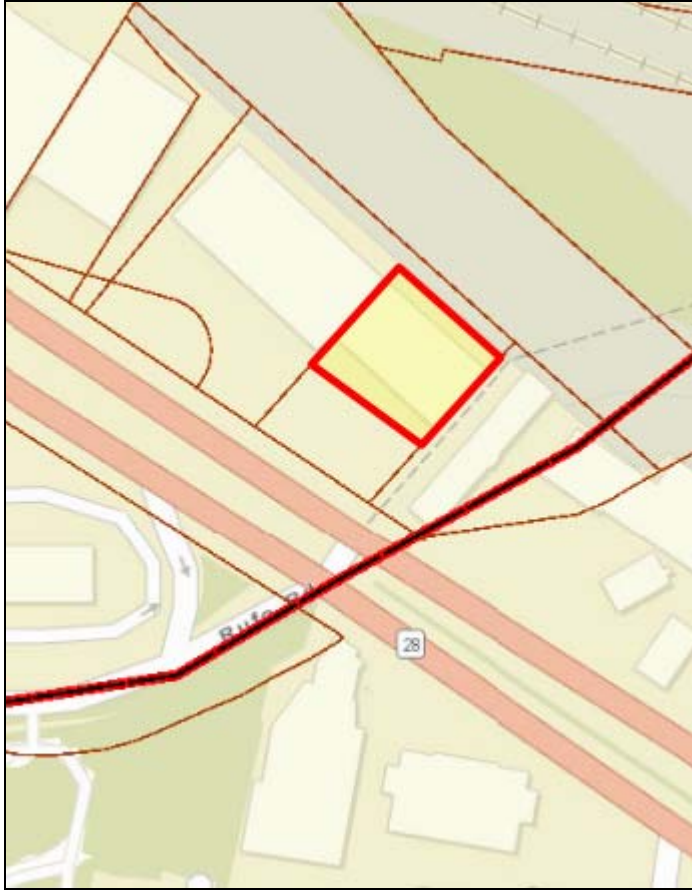
The subject building at 13-15 McGrath Highway is NOT found importantly associated with the broad architectural, cultural, economic and social history of the City. No important associations were found.

OR

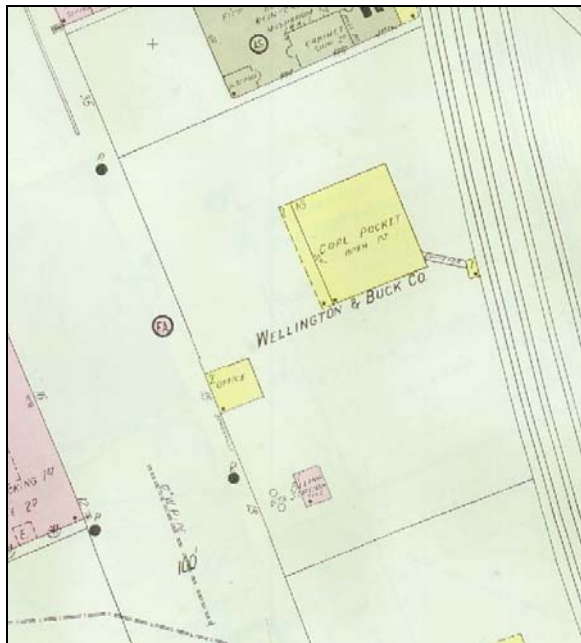
(b) In accordance with the *Findings on Historical and Architectural Significance*, which addresses period, style, method of building construction, and association with a reputed architect or builder, either by itself or in the context of a group of buildings or structures, as well as integrity, the ability to convey significance, **Staff recommend that the**

Historic Preservation Commission find the storage garage at 111 Prospect Street historically and architecturally significant.

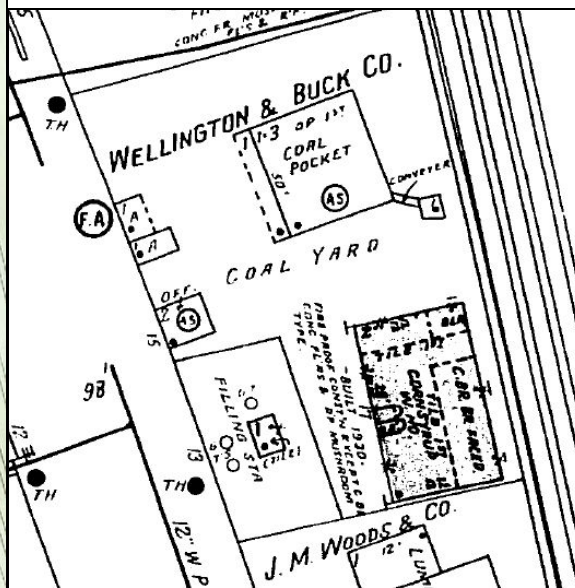
The subject building at 13-15 McGrath Highway has no known associations with a reputed architect or builder, either by itself or in the context of a group of buildings or structures.



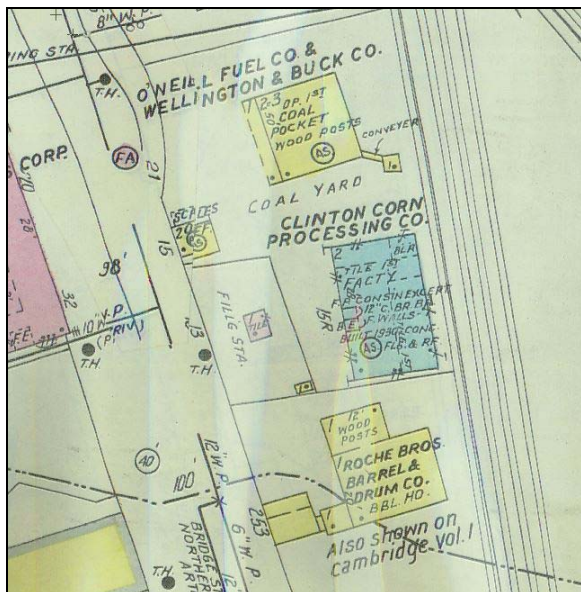
13-15 McGrath Highway



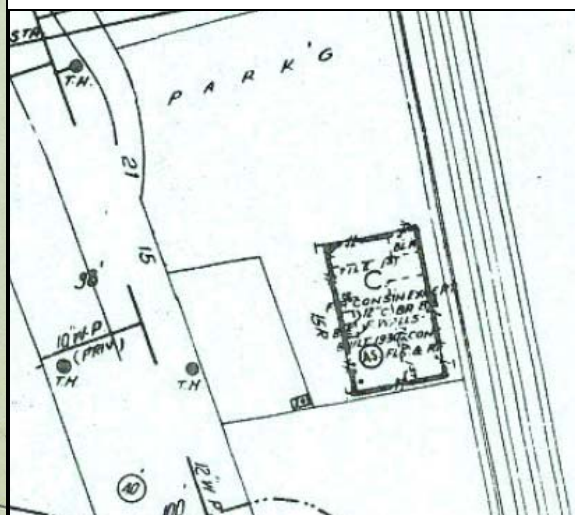
1925 Sanborn Plate 14



1933 Sanborn Plate 9



1958 Sanborn Plate 9



1989 Sanborn Plate 9

