



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

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ACTING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

PLANNING DIVISION
HISTORIC PRESERVATION

STEP 1: DETERMINATION OF SIGNIFICANCE
STAFF REPORT

Site: 11 Chester Place

Case: HPC.DMO 2022.40

Applicant: Jim Chen

Owner: Hong Ying Li

Legal Ad: *The Applicant seeks to demolish a principal structure constructed a minimum of 75 years ago.*

HPC Meeting Date: October 18, 2022

Top: Front elevation

Bottom, left: Left elevation

Bottom, middle: Rear elevation

Bottom, right: Right elevation



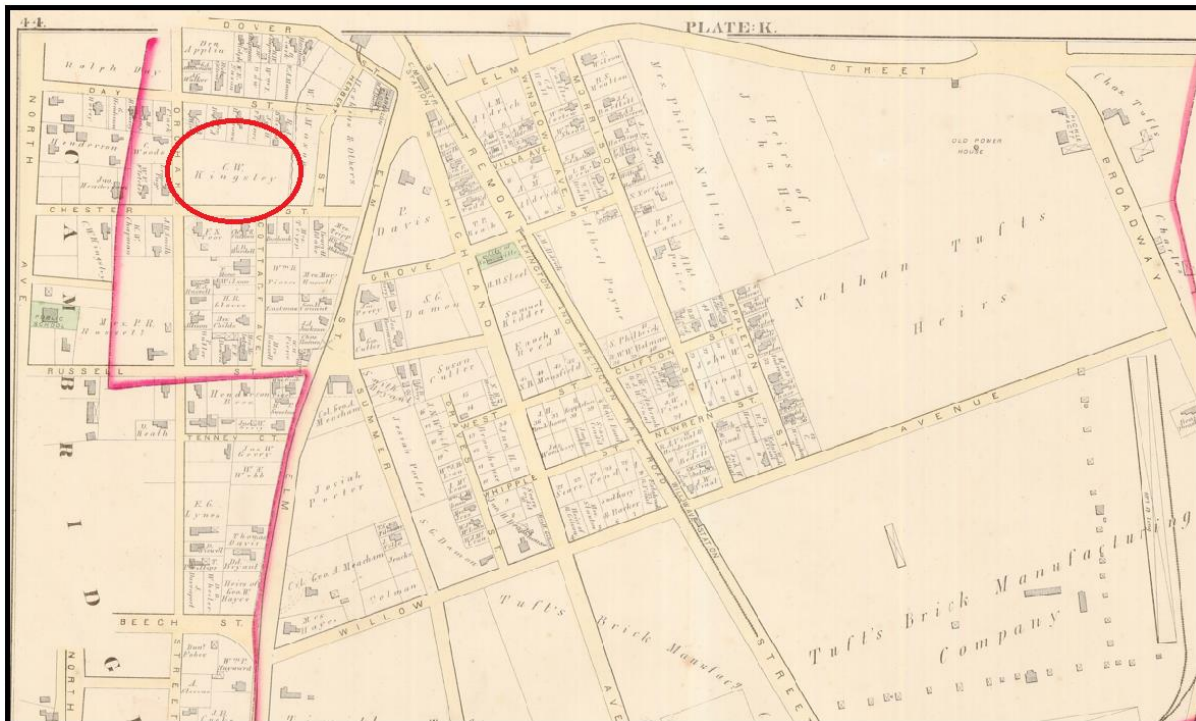
The purpose of a staff report is to provide the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) with additional information and professional assessments regarding properties that are proposed for demolition. These assessments are based on the criteria allowed for consideration by the HPC in accordance with the Demolition Review Ordinance (DRO). A Staff Report is not a determination/decision, nor does it constitute authorization in any form.

I. HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

Historical Context: 11 Chester Place is a two and ½ story building located adjacent to Davis Square. Chester Place is largely dominated by two ½ and three-story residential structures.

Chester Place provides a physical link documenting the Davis Square area's rapid post-Civil War development. Along with commerce came residential development with particularly noteworthy mansard houses built between Davis Square and the Somerville/ Cambridge line bordering Places such as Day, Orchard and Meacham Road as well as Chester Place. Prior to the Civil War, development of the Davis Square area lagged despite the introduction of the Fitchburg Railroad to nearby Porter Square, Cambridge in 1843 and the horse railway along Massachusetts Avenue between Harvard Square and Arlington in 1856-1857. The lots on Chester Place existed on paper as early as 1855 as part of the Chester W. Kingsley subdivision. Kingsley, as Cambridge's Water Commissioner, apparently had the "inside track" on land in northwest Cambridge and western Somerville that was ripe for development.

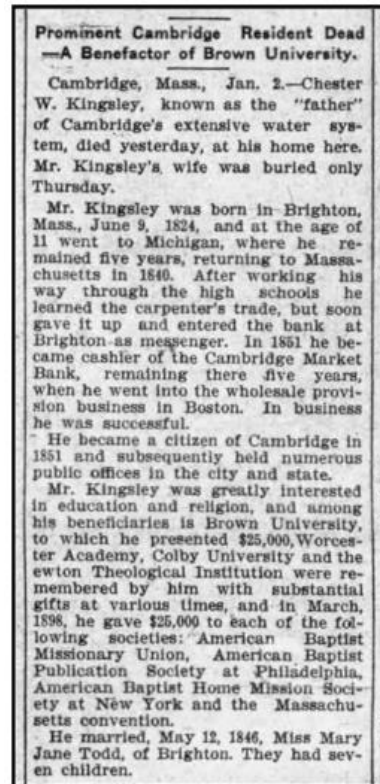
Kingsley did not start developing the area south of Davis Square until after the Civil War. Transportation developments during and after the Civil War paved the way for Davis Square's late 1860s and early 1870s growth. Ensuring the Davis Square area's long-term prosperity were the extensions of existing rail lines, including those of the Somerville Horse Railway (1863) and the Lexington and Arlington branch of the Boston and Maine Railroad (1870-1871).



Above: 1874, Plate K Hopkins Map, indicating location of Charles W Kingsley's property holdings

Plate K of the 1874 Hopkins Map shows that the land currently occupied by 11 Chester Place was owned by Charles W Kingsley and is part of a larger lot under Kingsley's ownership. Kingsley would own and develop 11 Chester Place and the neighboring lots from the 1870s through at least 1895, as his name is listed as the owner on the Hopkins and Bromley maps through 1895. It is likely he owned the property up until his death in 1904. Charles W Kingsley operated 11 Chester and the surrounding properties as rental properties. He, himself, lived with his family in Cambridge where he was a prominent member of the Cambridge community acting as Cambridge Water Commissioner, a member of multiple charitable social organizations and donor to local academic institutions.

By 1874, Chester Place had not been paved nor were any lots platted. It is by 1884, that we first see Chester Place has been paved and the surrounding lots platted and developed as depicted in the map below. This is the first physical depiction we have of 11 Chester Place. It is shown as a simple square building and matches the same layout as that of the neighboring properties owned by Kingsley.



Above: Excerpt from The Boston Globe, January 02, 1904

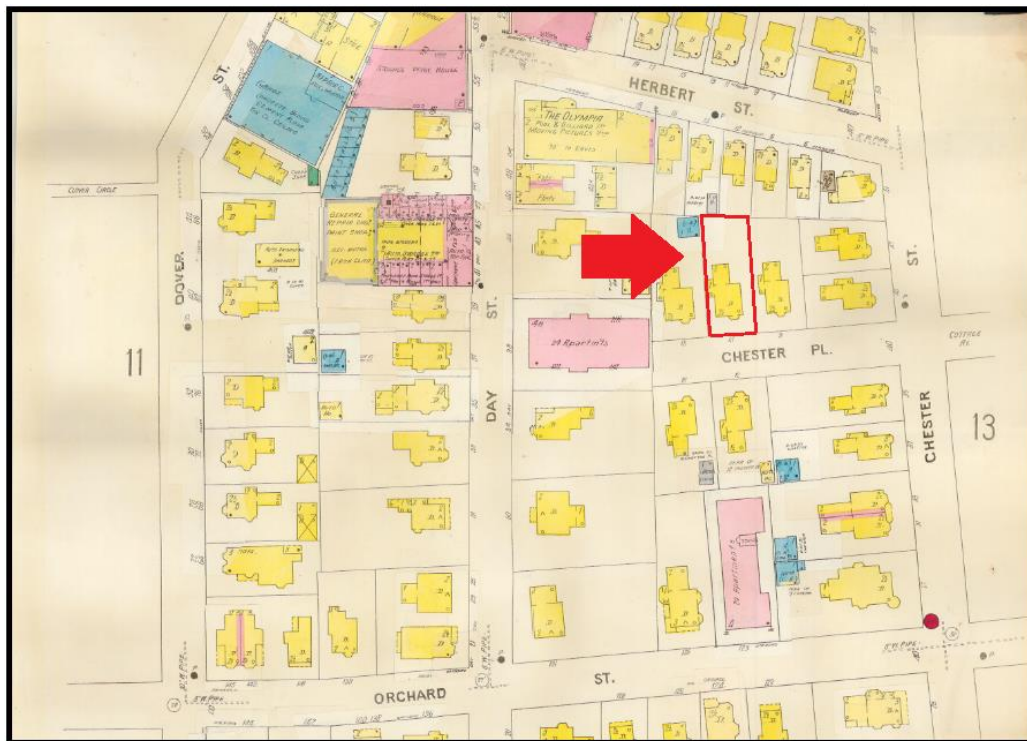


Above: 1884 Hopkins Map, Plate 14, specifying location of 11 Chester Place.



Above: 1895 Bromley Map, Plate 18, specifying location of 11 Chester Place.

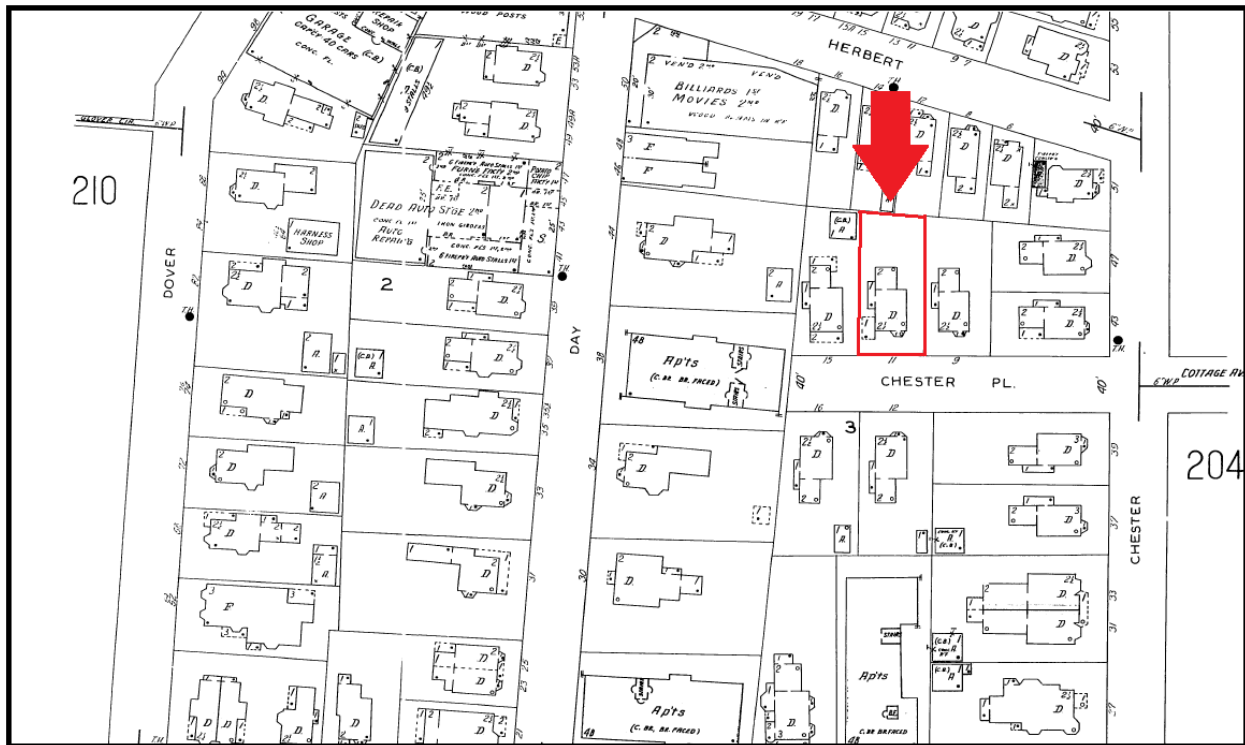
The 1895 Bromley Map shows additions have been added to the left and rear elevations, and a bay has been added to the front elevation. These changes are also visible on the two neighboring properties, the properties across the Place, and four of the properties facing on to Chester Place. This indicates that Kingsley was improving his properties simultaneously.



Left: 1925 Sanborn Map, Sheet 12, specifying the location of 11 Chester Place.

The 1925 Sanborn Map may depict the individual sale of some properties as four of the original nine properties owned by Kingsley along Chester Place and Place have now constructed rear structures of varying materials and sizes. Given that Kingsley implemented uniform improvements to his properties this could indicate that the properties were sold after his death in 1904.

The Sanborn Map also provides additional details to the construction of 11 Chester Place. The main portion of the house, originally shown in the 1884 Hopkins Map, is 2 and ½ stories, while the rear addition is 2 stories, and the lean-to on the left is a single story.



Above: 1933-34 Sanborn Map, Sheet 203, specifying the location of 11 Chester Place.

By 1933-34, a porch had been built on the left front corner of the building. This porch was later enclosed, which is its current state.

Further research resulted in the following information on the tenants or owners over the decades at 11 Chester Place. The names that have been found show the property was inhabited by working-class individuals. A list of all residents is provided on the next page.

Name	Year(s) of Residency	Occupation	Relationship	Residency Type
Griffin, Maria Louise Miss	1890 - 1896			B
Bachelder, John	1890 - 1893	Music teacher		B
Mason, Ella F Mrs.	1890 - 1895	Copyist (E Camb.)		H
Hesseltine, Alfred A	1896	Salesman		B
Watson, Edward P	1898 - 1905	Tailor, Bookkeeper		B.h.
Tripp, G R	1900	Dressmaker	Roomer of Ed P Watson	
Watson, Ed P	1900	Salesman	Husband of Gertrude Watson	R
Watson, Gertrude	1900		Wife of Ed P Watson	
Watson, Philip B	1900		Son of Ed P & Gertrude Watson	
Thompson, John T	1907 - 1911	Comp		H
Macinarrie, Alie	1910	Servant	Servant to John F Thompson	
Thompson, John F	1910	Printer (Axes Paper)	Husband of Winnifred Thompson	R
Thompson, Winnifred	1910		Wife of John F Thompson	
Kelley, George L	1912	Instructor at Harvard		H
Albee, Herbert C S	1913	Shipper		H
Cobbleigh, Ellen M Mrs	1918			H
Berry, John R	1918 - 1920	Travelling salesman (Bond House)	Husband of Florence Berry	R
Berry, Florence L (nee Rogers)	1918 - 1920		Wife of John R Berry	
Rogers, Alice M	1920		Mother-in-law to John R Berry	
Conner, Ella C	1927 - 1930	Stenographer		Res
Seelig, Charles E	1925 - 1930	Carpenter	Husband of Mary E Seelig	H
Seelig, Mary E	1925 - 1940	Stenographer - bank	Wife of Charles E Seelig	

II. ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

Please see the section immediately below which discusses location, design, materials, and any alterations as the same information would be written here, just in longer form.

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.

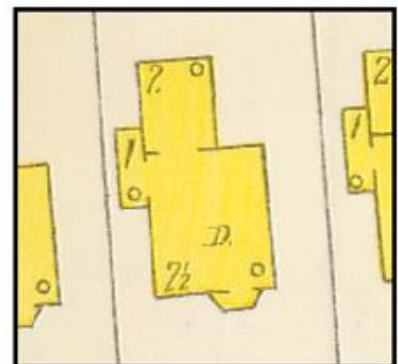
Comparing the historic map with satellite images of the current property we can determine the degree to which the structure has been altered.



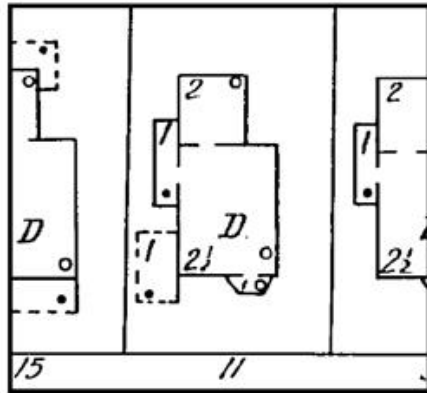
Above: Fig 1



Above: Fig 2



Above: Fig 3



Above: Fig 4



Above: Fig 5

Fig 1: 1884 Hopkins Map, close-up of 11 Chester Pl

- The 1884 Map is the first time the current structure is shown. It is a plain square building.

Fig 2: 1895 Bromley Map, close-up of 11 Chester Pl

- A bay has been added on the front elevation.
- An addition on the left and rear elevations has been constructed.

Fig 3: 1925 Sanborn Map, close-up of 11 Chester Pl

- The Sanborn Map shows no additional work on the building, but it does indicate that the building projection first seen in the 1895 Bromley Map is one-story, the rear most portion of the building is two floors, and the original massing constructed in 1884 is 2 ½ floors.

Fig 4: 1933 – 1934 Sanborn Map, close-up of 11 Chester Pl.

- A porch on the front left corner of the property has been constructed.

Fig 5: Satellite image of 11 Chester Pl

- The porch on the left front of the building has been enclosed.
- No further additions are visible through these images, showing that the building largely retains the same massing as in 1933-1934.

1. 11 Chester Place

The period of relevance for the property starts c.1884

- Location: It is likely that both structures are in their original location and were built on-site.
- Design: The primary structure is two and ½ stories, wood framed, with jerkinhead gable facing the Place; wood shingles and scalloped shingles on the front elevation between the gable ends; on the front elevation there is a one-story bay, a hooded front door with corbels, a wood front porch with steps leading to the front entrance, and a modern wood ramp leading to the entrance to the right of the front porch; on the left elevation there is a one story lean-to and a one story enclosed porch at the front left corner; on the rear there are porches at the first and second floor connected by stairs, the first floor porch has screens; to the left of the stairs is a small lean-to shed; on the right elevation is a wood porch and stairs leading to a side entrance; fenestration consists of one one-over-one, double-hung, replacement sash windows and on the second floor of the right elevation and rear are either horizontal sash windows or casement windows; brick chimney.

- c. Materials: Wood shingle siding and wood clapboard; aluminum replacement front door; wood porches; wood ramp; brick chimney stack; asphalt shingle roof; concrete or concrete with brick parging foundation.
- d. Alterations: Rear porches; addition of the porch on the right elevation; modern wood ramp on the front elevation; replacement windows and doors; rear lean-to; the enclosure of the porch on the front left corner; and casement or horizontal sash windows on the sides and rear of the second floor.
- e. Evaluation of Integrity of 11 Chester Place Based on the observations of the building and a study of the historic maps, it is Staff's position that the building largely retains the integrity of its original form. Alterations have occurred to this structure; however, they minimally obscure original architectural details; the original massing remains largely intact.

III. FINDINGS

For a Determination of Significance, the subject building must be found either (i) importantly associated with people, events or history and/or (ii) historically or architecturally significant. The Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) must make these findings. The portions of the Demolition Review Ordinance (DRO) related to these findings are included below:

A. HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

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.

1. The HPC must make a finding as to whether or not the STRUCTURE at 11 Chester Place meets any of the criteria stated above.
2. The HPC must specifically state why the STRUCTURE at 11 Chester Place does or does not meet the threshold for historic significance under finding "a".

B. HISTORICAL & 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, and therefore it is in the public interest to be preserved or rehabilitated rather than to be demolished.

1. The HPC must make a finding as to whether or not the STRUCTURE at 11 Chester Place meets any of the criteria stated above.
2. The HPC must specifically state why the STRUCTURE at 11 Chester Place or does not meet the threshold for historic significance under finding "b".

If the HPC makes the above finding, the HPC must state their reasons why they take this position.

IV. VOTE

1. When bringing the matter to a vote, the HPC must include the reasons why the STRUCTURE at 11 Chester Place is or is not “historically significant”.