



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

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

PLANNING DIVISION
HISTORIC PRESERVATION

STEP 1: DETERMINATION OF SIGNIFICANCE
STAFF REPORT

Site: 45 Alpine Street

Case: HPC.DMO 2023.15

Applicant: David Kogan

Owner: Same as Applicant

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

HPC Meeting Date: August 1, 2023

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: 45 Alpine Street is a two-story front gable worker's cottage. The odd side of Alpine Street is dominated by two-story front gable structures. The property is located close to the borders of Spring Hill and Magoun Square neighborhoods.

While the western section of Powderhouse was affected by the post-Civil War growth of Davis Square, the eastern section grew more slowly. One large marshy tract, known as "Polly Swamp" provided a few home sites as early as 1850. Subsequent development of the immediate area occurred at the end of the 19th century when William Stearns subdivided the remaining lands of the family farm. Parts of the Stearns farm including Albion Street had a collection of Italianate businessmen's homes built by 1880.

Nothing further was built on the marshes or surrounding woodlands until the 1890s, when William Stearns sold off the remaining lots on Hudson, Alpine, and Albion Streets. Mansard cottages and two-family Queen Anne houses with simple trim were the standard house types chosen by builders.

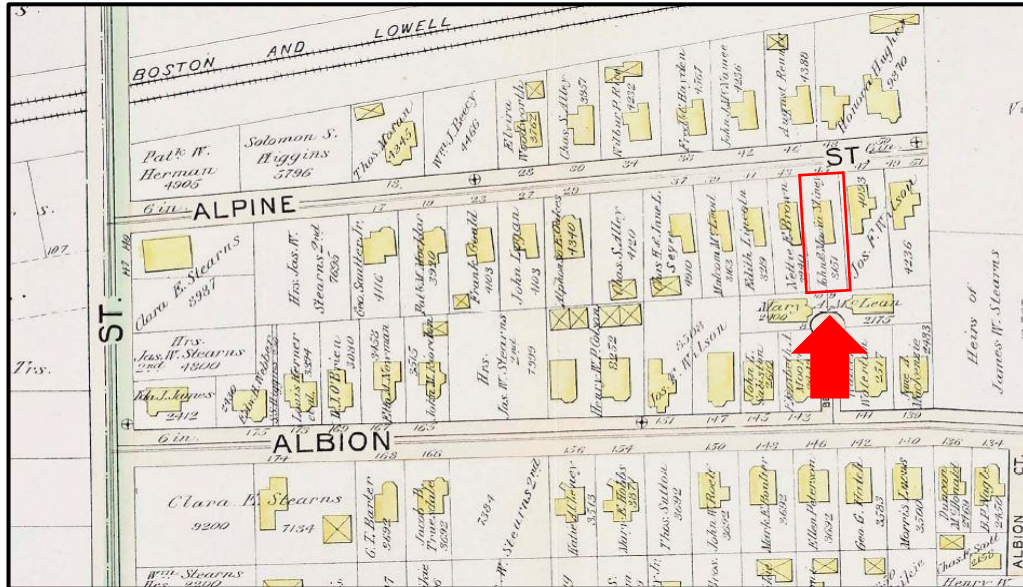


Above: 1874, Plate 31 Hopkins Map

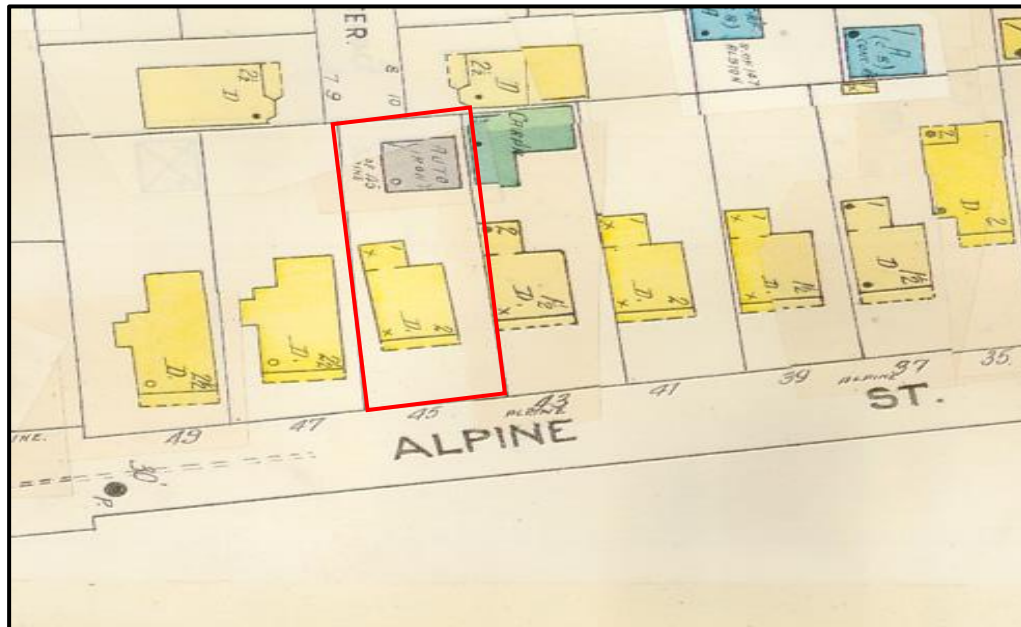
The 1874 Map shows that Alpine Street did not yet exist. Instead, the area was part of a large area of subdivided land between the railroad tracks and Hudson Street. The surrounding area was largely undeveloped though it had been subdivided into individual lots.

The 1884 Hopkins map shows Alpine Street as an established street with parcel numbers on the odd side of the street. The addressing of Alpine Street is different than what is on later maps (starting with 1895 map) and today. It appears that the lots are larger at this point in time and subdivided further during the late 1880s and early 1890s. The area at this time is still largely undeveloped.

The 1895 Bromley map shows that by this point in time, 45 Alpine Street has been constructed. Most of the surrounding lots had also been built out by this time. 37, 39, 41, 43, and 45 Alpine Street were constructed with the same layout indicating they were most likely built by the same individual/company. Though 45 Alpine Street first appears on the 1895 Bromley map, the building was most likely constructed between 1884-1890 because Somerville City Directories first list someone residing at this address in 1890. A construction timeframe of the late 1880s is likely.



Above: 1895 Bromley, Plate 12 specifying 45 Alpine Street



Above: 1925 Sanborn, Plate 31 specifying 45 Alpine Street

By 1925, an accessory structure has been built at the rear of the property. The structure is labeled with "Auto Iron" indicating that the building was used as an automobile garage that had an iron frame. That accessory structure no longer exists today. This map also shows that 37, 39, 43, and 45 Alpine Street still are identical in form (main massing, rear addition, and front porch).

The first listed owner in the records for 45 Alpine Street is 'John Sliney Sr.' as shown on the 1895 Bromley map. John Sr. lived at 45 Alpine St with his wife Maria Sliney and sons John Jr. and William Sliney. Census records show that Maria immigrated from Ireland and could not read or write. Newspaper archives indicate the family had a history of criminal activity including theft and assault. Both John and his wife Maria were arrested in the early 1890s. One newspaper article even notes the family's history of committing crimes. See appendices for greater details.

Further research resulted in the following information on the tenants or owners over the decades at 45 Alpine Street. The names that have been found show the property was inhabited by working class individuals. A list of identified residents who resided at 45 Alpine Street at some point in time is provided below.

Name	Year(s) of Residency	Occupation	Relationship	Residency Type
John Sliney Sr.	1890-1896	Gardener & Laborer	Husband to Maria	H
Maria Sliney	1890-1902	Cleaner	Wife to John Sr.	H
John Sliney Jr.		Laborer & Brass Worker	Son to John and Maria	B
William Sliney	1891-1901	Brass Worker	Son to John and Maria	B
Charles William Watson	1917-?	Military		

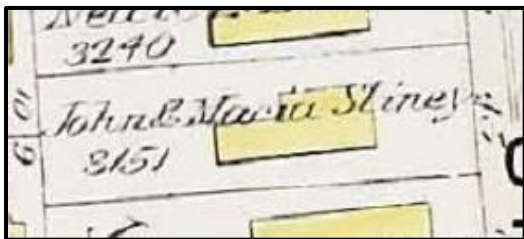
H = Owner and B = Border, one who rents from the owner but also resides with the owner at the property.

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: 1895 Bromley map, close up of 45 Alpine Street

- The 1895 map shows that the structure had a rear addition that was original to the structure.

Fig 2: 1933-1950 Sanborn Map, close up of 45 Alpine Street.

- A rear accessory structure is apparent. First appears in the 1925 Sanborn map, indicating this structure was built sometime between 1900-1925.

Figs 3-6: Current photos of 45 Alpine Street.

- The photos of the extant structure show that other than material changes, replacement windows & doors and the addition of a rear cinder block chimney, the overall shape of the structure has had no alternations since it was built in the late 1800s.

1. 45 Alpine Street

The period of relevance for the house starts c.1890

- a. Location: This structure is in its original location. The building was constructed on-site in the late 1880s.
- b. Design: The house is a two-story front gable, wood-framed worker's cottage with a covered porch located on the front elevation.
 - Front Elevation
 - Windows are of different sizes and asymmetrically placed.
 - Covered porch with one entry door behind a storm door.
 - Right Elevation
 - Two bays deep
 - Windows are extant on first story, likely in original location
 - Left Elevation
 - Main massing is two bays deep. Single-story rear addition extends toward the back of the lot from this side of the structure.
 - Not original fenestration. New window on rear addition and second floor.
 - Rear Elevation
 - Main massing is two bays wide.
 - Symmetrical second story windows
 - A single story rear addition extends out towards the back of the lot.
 - Later addition of cinder block chimney on rear addition.
- c. Materials:
 - Foundation: Brick with some sections concrete parged; some portions of brick foundation are painted sections of the brick foundation painted over
 - Windows: Not original; likely aluminum or vinyl
 - Entry door: Modern with storm door
 - Siding: Asbestos shingle
 - Trim: Likely aluminum or vinyl
 - Steps: Wood
 - Roof: Asphalt shingles; one brick chimney on main massing; cinder block chimney on rear addition.

- d. Alterations: Modern replacement of doors and windows on all elevations, asbestos shingles, vinyl/metal trim; windows on front elevation re-oriented and enlarged or made smaller.
- e. Evaluation of Integrity of 45 Alpine Street: Based on the observations of the building and a study of the historic maps, it is Staff's position that the building retains most of the integrity of its original form and massing. Alterations have occurred to this structure which obscure some original details (such as the vinyl/aluminum trim covering the original wood trim board).

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.

Residential Structure

1. The HPC must make a finding as to whether or not the STRUCTURE at 45 Alpine Street meets any of the criteria stated above.
2. The HPC must specifically state why the STRUCTURE at 45 Alpine Street 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.

Residential Structure

1. The HPC must make a finding as to whether or not the STRUCTURE at 45 Alpine Street meets any of the criteria stated above.
2. The HPC must specifically state why the STRUCTURE at 45 Alpine Street does 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 45 Alpine Street is or is not “historically significant”.

V. APPENDIX

SOMERVILLE

In court today, **John Sliney**, charged with assault, was fined \$3 and was placed under bonds to keep the peace for six months.

A special meeting of the Board of Aldermen will be held next Monday evening to draw jurors.

Most of the City Hall officials are on vacations, but will return to business next week.

Efforts are being made to correct the error in punctuation made on the Charles G. Pope schoolhouse on Washington st. A period has been placed after the mayor's name. No one seems willing to take the responsibility of eliminating the period.

The Boston Globe – August 28, 1891

Maria Sliney in the Tombs.

Inspector Knox arrested **Maria Sliney**, 45 years old, of Somerville, yesterday afternoon for shoplifting in the store of J. Henry Norcross. Her husband, son and herself are said to have a bad record in Somerville. She was out on probation. She was committed to the toms.

The Boston Globe – July 16, 1893

Form 1 4673 REGISTRATION CARD		ORDER No. 400 No. 14
1	Name in full Charles William Watson	Age, in yrs. 23
2	Home address 45 Alpine St Somerville Mass	
3	Date of birth February 18 1894	
4	Are you (1) a natural-born citizen, (2) a naturalized citizen, (3) an alien, (4) or have you declared your intention (specify which)? Natural Born Citizen	
5	Where were you born? Cambridge Mass. U.S.A.	
6	If not a citizen, of what country are you a citizen or subject? Citizen U.S.A.	
7	What is your present trade, occupation, or office? Orthopedic 28	
8	By whom employed? Phelps & Co	
	Where employed? Adams Square Boston	
9	Have you a father, mother, wife, child under 12, or a sister or brother under 12, solely dependent on you for support (specify which)? Wife and child	
10	Married or single (which)? Married Race (specify which)? Caucasian	
11	What military service have you had? Rank None	
12	Do you claim exemption from draft (specify grounds)? No 9	
<p>I affirm that I have verified above answers and that they are true.</p> <p>621 Charles William Watson</p> <p>(Signature of registrant)</p>		

20-5-19 A
REGISTRAR'S REPORT

1 Tall, medium, or short (specify which)? **Tall** Slender, medium, or stout (which)? **Slender**

2 Color of eyes? **Brown** Color of hair? **Brown** Bald? **No**

3 Has person lost arm, leg, hand, foot, or both eyes, or is he otherwise disabled (specify)? **None**

I certify that my answers are true, that the person registered has read his own answers, that I have witnessed his signature, and that all of his answers of which I have knowledge are true, except as follows:

J. Francis Keating
(Signature of registrar)

Precinct **2-WARD-5**

City of **SOMERVILLE**

State **MASSACHUSETTS**

JUN 5 1917
(Date of registration)

Charles Watson's WWI Draft Card, 1917