



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

THOMAS F. GALLIGANI, JR.
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

PLANNING DIVISION
HISTORIC PRESERVATION

STEP 1: DETERMINATION OF SIGNIFICANCE
STAFF REPORT

Site: 97 Highland Avenue

Case: HP23-000024

Applicant: Somerville Young Men's Christian
Association

Owner: Same as Applicant

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

HPC Meeting Date: October 17, 2023



Top: Front elevation

Bottom, left: Left elevation

Bottom, middle: Right elevation

Bottom, right: Rear elevation



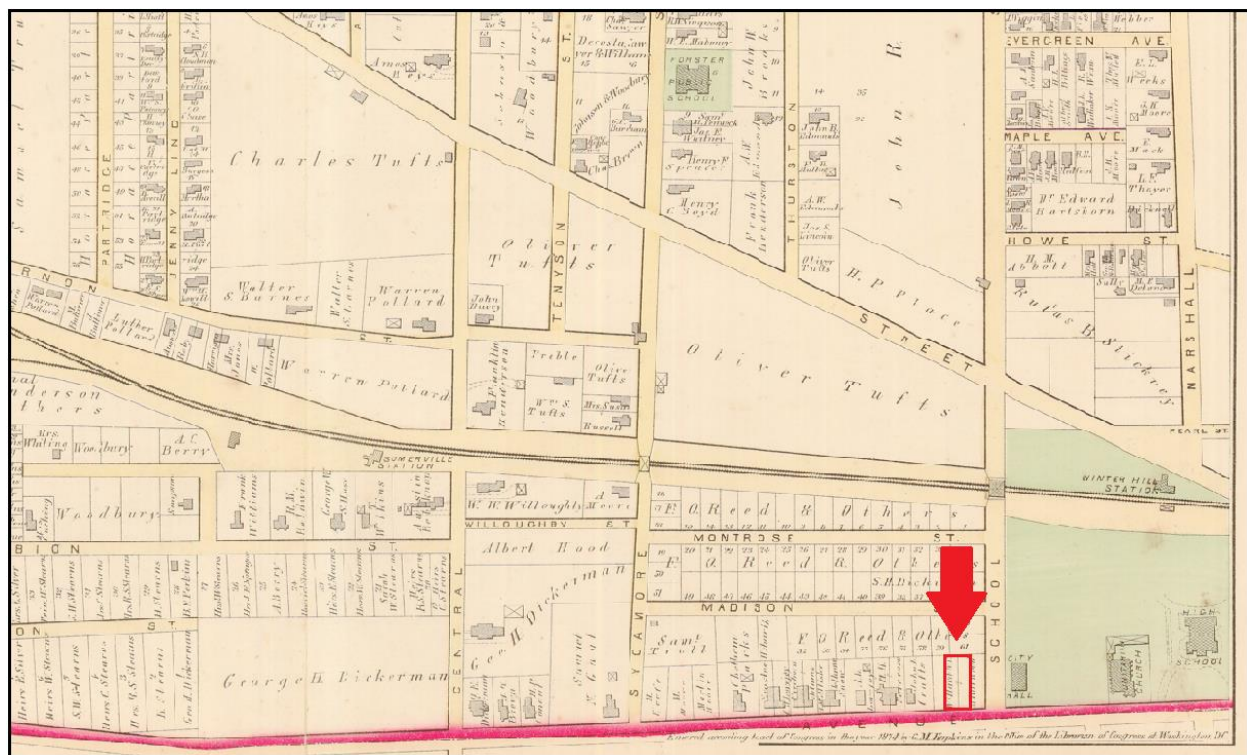
The purpose of a staff report is to provide the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) with additional information and professional assessments regarding properties that are proposed for demolition. These assessments are based on the criteria allowed for consideration by the HPC in accordance with the 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: 97 Highland Ave is a 2.3 story building located within the Central Hill neighborhood. This side of Broadway is largely dominated by residential and industrial structures.

Central Hill is a small area at the center of Somerville, bounded between Medford Street (north) and Highland Avenue (South). It is located at one of the highest points in the City.

Highland Avenue today is a primary thoroughfare for the City of Somerville, extending from just below the City Hall-High School Library complex at the summit of historic Central Hill to Davis Square in West Somerville. Originally Church Street, what Highland Avenue was called until the latter part of the 19th century, extended only as far as Central Street with pastureland continuing to West Somerville. Highland Avenue was constructed in increments from east to west and became the site of the city's civic center at its eastern end when it was completed westward to Davis Square towards the end of the 19th century. The first section was completed in the 1840s from east to west and extended only to Central Street. According to the 1852 Draper Map of Somerville, there were only a few houses and Somerville High School which is now City Hall.

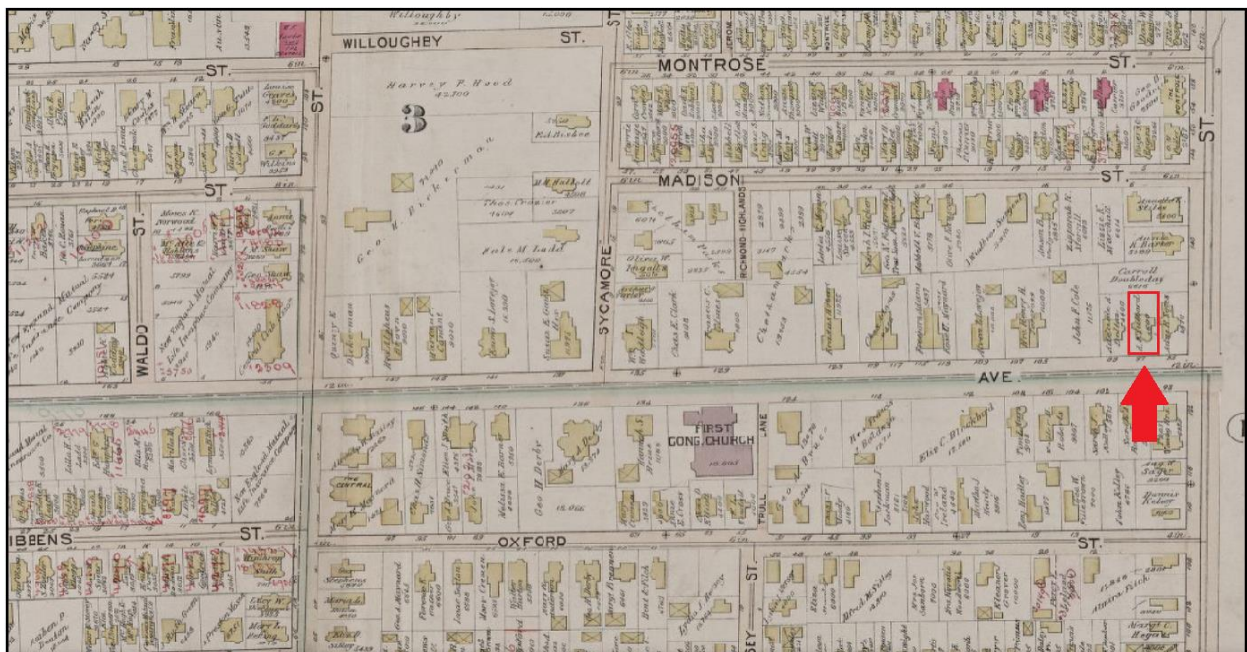


Above: 1874, Plate G, Hopkins Map, specifying the location of 97 Highland Ave.

In 1874, what is now 97 Highland Avenue was two separate, undeveloped lots, owned by Willard & P.M. Harwood. By 1884, the lots are unified into one large lot under the same ownership. Staff was unable to find information on this owner.

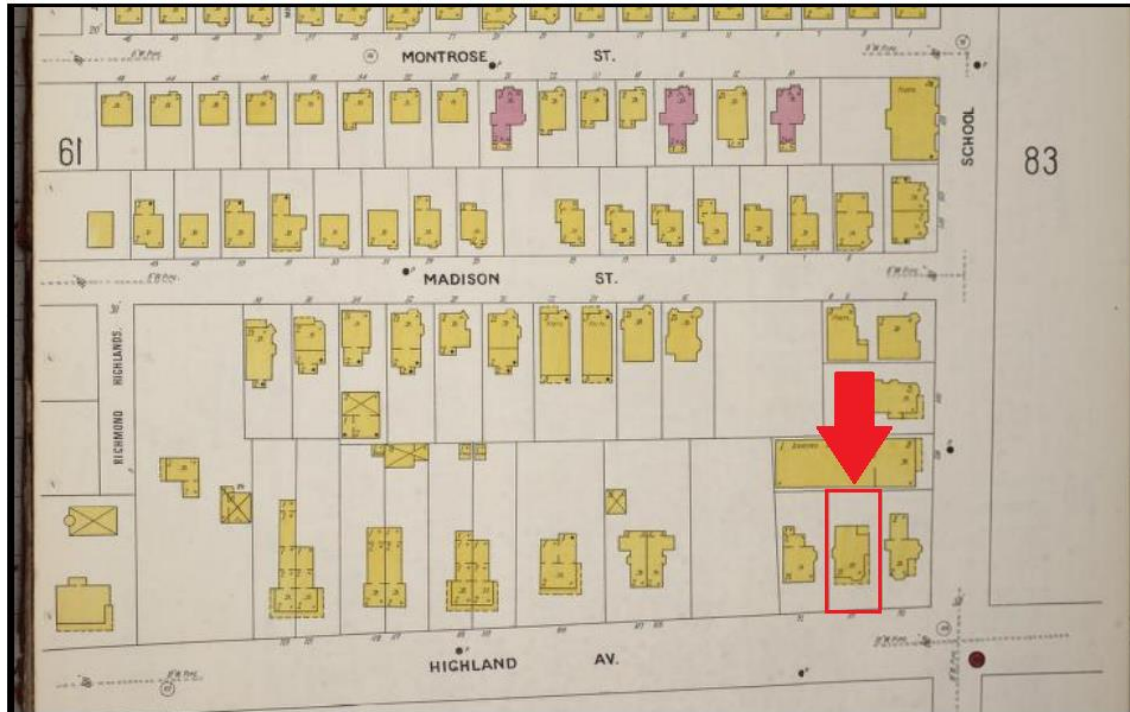


Above: 1884 Hopkins Map, Plate 11, specifying location of today's 97 Highland Ave and the lots in 1884 that made up what is 97 Highland



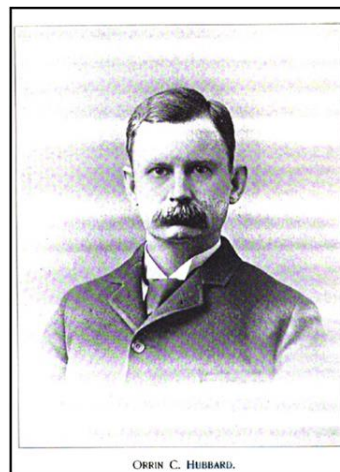
Above: 1895 Bromley Map, Plate 3, specifying location of 97 Highland Ave.

In 1892, Amasyllis F. Hubbard bought the lot and subdivided them into three lots. As depicted by the 1895 Bromley Map we know that by 1895 the three lots are developed, each with a singular residence. It is this subdivision that creates the lot at 97 Highland Ave. The City Directories first list the Hubbards living there in 1892 indicating the building was built in 1891/92. It is notable that the lot is listed as owned by Amasyllis Hubbard, a woman, rather than her husband Orrin C. Hubbard. Women, especially married women, typically did not own property in the early 20th Century. Amasyllis and her husband lived at the property with her mother, Rosella Faulkner and their daughter Amy. The structure at 97 Highland Ave is depicted in the 1895 Bromley Map to have a front bay, a bay on the left elevation, and what could be an ell or lean-to on the right elevation.



Above: 1900 Sanborn Map, Sheet 62, specifying the location of 97 Highland Ave.

We know from City Directories that Orrin C Hubbard owned and operated a very successful company called Lamson & Hubbard, which primarily made hats and ladies furs, with the story located at 92 Bedford St in Boston. He was very active in his community and was a member of the John Abbot Lodge, even having served as their high priest at one point; the Orient Council; and the Boston Lodge of Perfection (part of the Scottish Rite Masons). These organizations were fraternal charitable organizations. During the 1800s and early 1900s, Freemasonry and fraternal



Above: Photo from Somerville: Past and Present



Above: Excerpt from The Boston Globe, Feb 15, 1899

organizations in general, grew dramatically within the United States. This growth was a reaction to the lack of social services provided by the government. Masonic Lodges and fraternal organizations founded hospitals, orphanages, and homes for women and the elderly.



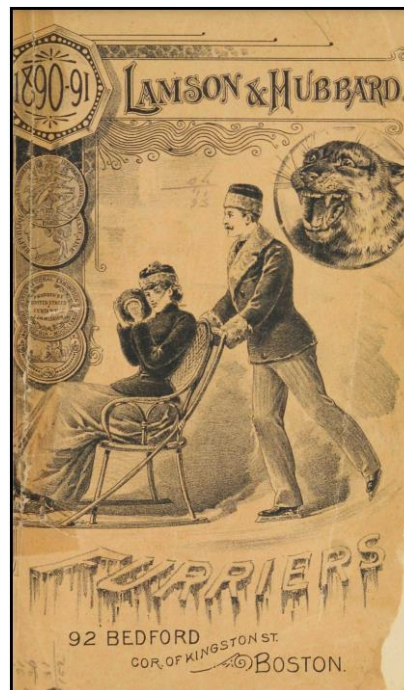
Above: Excerpt from *The Boston Globe*, Sep 15, 1898



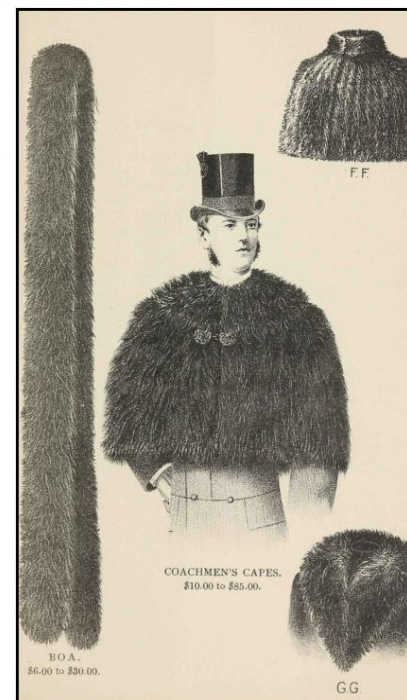
Above: Excerpt from *The Boston Globe*, June 11, 1890



Above: Ad for Lamson & Hubbard³



Above: Ad for Lamson & Hubbard¹



Above: Ad for Lamson & Hubbard²

¹ Lamson & Hubbard, *Lamson & Hubbard Manufacturing Hatters & Furriers Wholesale and Retail Illustrated Catalogue* (1889). <https://www.abebooks.com/first-edition/Lamson-Hubbard-Manufacturing-Hatters-Furriers-Wholesale/22674764070/bd>

² Ibid

³ The New York Public Library. (1915). *Smart cloth coats from Lamson & Hubbard* Retrieved from <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47e0-ef4a-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>

The next owner of 97 Highland Avenue was Bradley W Whitney, a Pastor at Union Square Baptist Church. He and his wife, Emma W, live on Highland Ave until 1919 when the property is sold to Julian C Arnould.

Julian C Arnould lived at the property with his wife Katelina Arnould between 1920 and 1927. In 1924, Katelina's parents, Elizabeth and George Buettel moved in with them after George retired. The Arnould's also had four boarders living with them between 1925 and 1927; Charles W and Mary Spear, Margaret Netz, and Mrs. Catherine B Arnold. They likely rented rooms to these boarders as a form of additional income. Mr. Spear, like Orrin Hubbard, was involved with the community through fraternal organizations such as the John Abbot Lodge of Somerville.



Above: Excerpt from The Boston Globe, March 16, 1905

IN LOWELL, MASS.—Mr and Mrs George Buettel of 97 Highland av on Thursday celebrated their golden wedding anniversary with a family dinner and outing at Wrentham, Mass. Their two daughters, Mrs Katherine B. Arnould and Mrs Theodor Seydel of Brookline, together with Mr Seydel and their two granddaughters, the Misses Irma and Olda Seydel, were of the party. Mr and Mrs Buettel were both born in Germany 73 years ago; they came to this country 36 years ago, first making their home in Needham, Mass. They have resided in this city 19 years. They were presented with a purse of gold by their daughters.

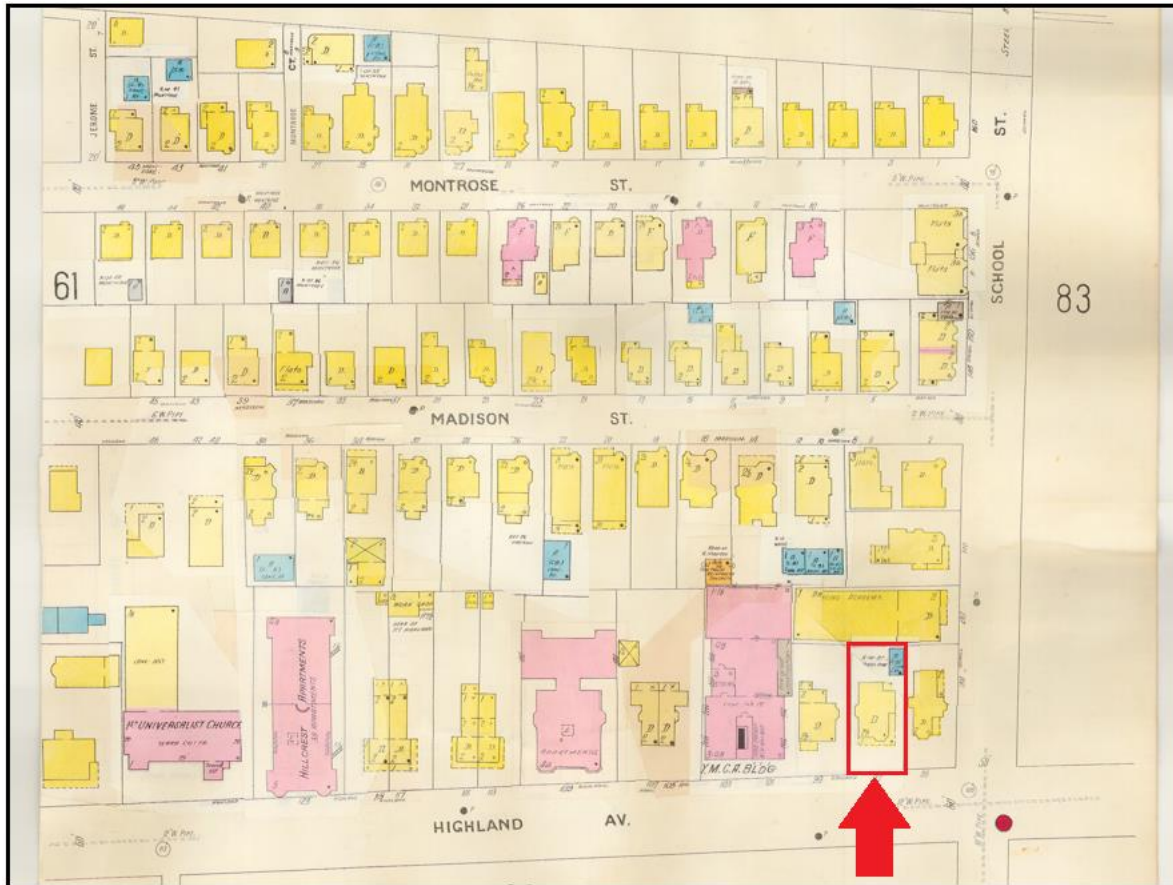
Above: Excerpt from The Boston Globe, June 30, 1923

MR AND MRS SPEAR NOTE ANNIVERSARY IN READING
READING, Dec 24—Mr and Mrs Charles W. Spear yesterday observed their golden wedding at their home, 14 Berkeley st. They were greeted by a large number of relatives and friends who came to offer congratulations and best wishes for many more happy years.
Among those present were Mrs Georgianna Wilson of Nahant, sister of Mrs Spear, who was the bridesmaid at the wedding. There were present also Raymond W. Spear of Reading and Mrs Frank H. Plimpton of North Wilmington, son and daughter of Mr and Mrs Spear, with their nine grandchildren. Two of the grandchildren, Miss Olive Spear of Reading and Miss Barbara Plimpton of North Wilmington, assisted in the reception and poured.
Charles W. Spear and Miss Mary J. Libbey of Arlington were married on Dec 23, 1884, in Boston, by Rev Frederick Baylies Allen of Trinity Church. They made their home in Somerville for several years, coming to Reading about eight years ago. Mr Spear was in the employ of Swift & Co for many years, retiring a few years ago. He is a past master of John Abbot Lodge, A. F. & A. M., of Somerville, and a past grand of Massachusetts Lodge 1, I. O. O. F., of Boston. He also is a member of the Neighborhood Betterment Association of this town. Both are enjoying good health.

Left: Excerpt from The Boston Globe, Dec 24, 1934

The Arnould's sold the property shortly after Katelina's parents passed away in 1927.

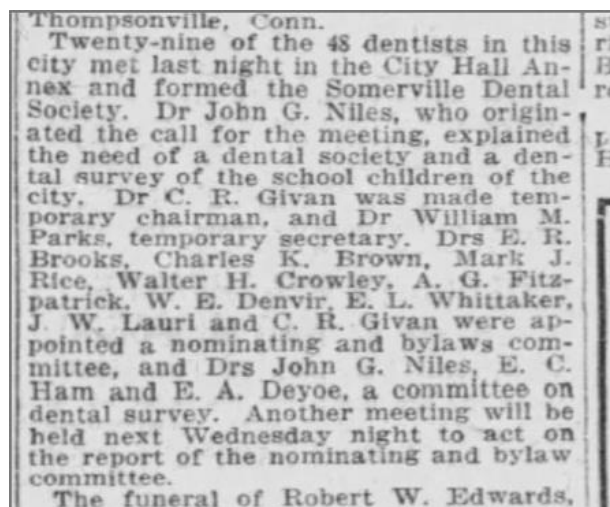
Between 1900 and 1925, during their ownership, the Arnoulds had a concrete block garage built in the rear of the lot. The Sanborn Map notes that this was a garage for a car which indicates that the Arnoulds, or the Buettels, owned a car. The construction of a garage is in line with the growing automobile market. Between 1900 and 1925 Somerville saw an increase in automobiles. Notably, between 1925 and 1927 the marshes of the Mystic River were filled in for the construction of the Ford Assembly Plant. As part of this, former barns and carriage houses were converted into automobile garages, or entirely new garages were built with the sole purpose of housing cars.



Above: 1925 Sanborn Map, Sheet 62, specifying the location of 97 Highland Ave.

The property next belongs to John G Niles, a dentist, and his wife, Olive C Niles. Dr. Niles was president of the Somerville Dental Society and led a movement for a dental survey of Somerville school children. John and Olive Niles owned the property until 1933.

Staff was unable to find exactly what happened to the property between 1933 and 1940, but we do know from a 1940 deed that the property is owned by the Somerville Mortgage Loan Company who sells it to Maida Morlian. There is a chance that the Niles were affected by the Great Depression and were unable to afford the house, at which time it was bought or repossessed by a local bank. Maida Morlian then sold the property in 1940 to Jules and May Saipe.



Above: Excerpt from *The Boston Globe*, May 28, 1920

Further research resulted in the following information on the tenants or owners over the decades at 97 Highland Avenue. A list of all residents is provided below.

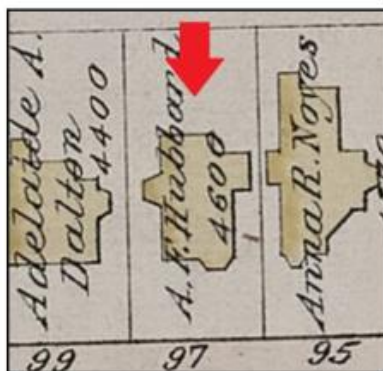
Name	Year(s) of Residency	Occupation	Relationship	Residency Type
Arnold, Catherine B Mrs.	1924-1927	MInr		H
Arnould, Julian C	1920-1927	Dye House	Husband of Katelina Arnould	h
Arnould, Katelina	1920-1927		Wife of Katelina Arnould	h
Austin, Harry O	1912	Salesman		B
Buettel, Elizabeth	1924-1927		Mother-in-law to Julian C Arnould	Res
Buettel, George	1925-1927	Retired	Father-in-law to Julian C Arnould	H
Faulkner, Rossella	1894-1903		Mother-in-law to Orrin Hubbard	H
Grimmel, Paul	1927	Draftsman		Res
Hubbard, Amasyllis F	1892-1903		Wife of Orrin C Hubbard	H
Hubbard, Amy L	1892-1903		Daughter of Amasyllis and Orrin Hubbard	
Hubbard, Orrin C	1892-1903	Hat & Ladies Fur Manufacturer	Head of Household	H
McSwiney, James C	1929	Dentist		
Netz, Margaret	1925-1927	Designer		h
Niles, John G	1929-1933	Dentist	Head of Household	
Niles, John O	1929-1933	Student	Son of John & Olive Niles	R
Niles, Olive C	1929-1933		Wife of John G Niles	
Rourke, Charles	1918	Sales	Husband of Esther Rourke	h
Rourke, Esther	1918		Wife of Charles Rourke	h
Spear, Charles W	1925-1927	Sales	Husband of Mary Spear	h
Spear, Mary	1925-1927		Wife of Charles W Spear	h
Whitney, Emma W	1917-1919		Wife of W Bradley Whitney	
Whitney, W Bradley	1905-1919	Pastor/Reverend at Union Sq Baptist Church	Husband of Emma Whitney	

II. ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

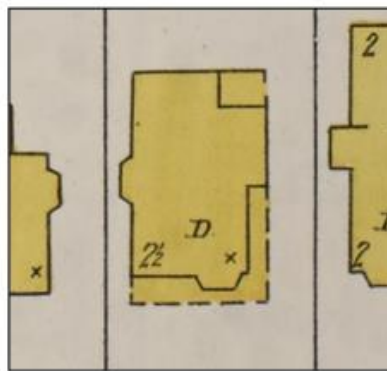
Please see the section immediately below which discusses location, design, materials, and any alterations as the same information would be written here, just in longer form.

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.



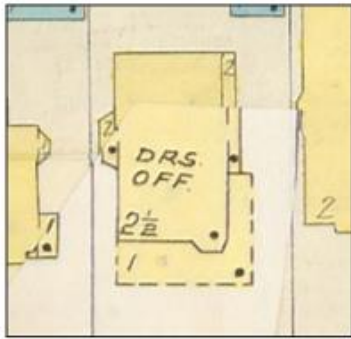
Above: Fig 1



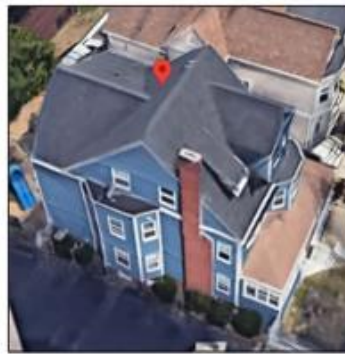
Above: Fig 2



Above: Fig 3



Above: Fig 4



Above: Fig 5



Above: Fig 6

Fig 1: 1895 Bromley Map, close-up of 97 Highland Ave

- Rectangular structure with bay on front right
- A bay on the left elevation
- Possible ell or lean-to on the right elevation

Fig 2: 1900 Sanborn Map, close-up of 97 Highland Ave

- Wrap around porch along front elevation to the right elevation up to ell or lean-to.
- Porch on rear, right corner

Fig 3: 1925 Sanborn Map, close-up of 97 Highland Ave

- One-story concrete block auto garage in right rear corner of lot

Fig 4: 1938 Sanborn Map, close-up of 97 Highland Ave

- Ell is or lean to is noted as two stories
- Bay on left elevation is two stories
- Wrap around porch now wider than the ell or lean-to
- Second addition, two-stories, next to the one-story addition in the rear.

Fig 4 & 6: Satellite images of 97 Highland Ave

- Porch has been partially enclosed
- Gable dormer topped two-story bay
- Shed dormer on front elevation next to gable dormer
- Rear porch enclosed
- Newer rear porch added on rear right corner

1. **97 Highland Avenue**

The period of relevance for the property starts c.1892

- Location: The structure is likely in the original location and built on-site.
- Design: The primary structure is 2.3 stories, wood framed, side gable facing with a two-story three sided bay topped with a gable dormer; front porch on the right corner leads to an asymmetrical entranceway; previous porch on the front elevation to the left has been enclosed; shed dormer on roof to the left of the gable dormer; fenestration consists of one-over-one double-hung sash windows; door appears to be a French glass door; wood

clapboard along the walls; asphalt shingle roof; left elevation shows an exterior brick chimney; two story, three-sided gable; fenestration includes one-over-one, double-hung sash windows; rear elevation shows a shingled covered porch on the rear right corner with entranceway to the rear; fenestration includes one-over-one, double-hung sash windows; right elevation shows a two story lean-to with a later shed dormer; the porch has been expanded for a small portion right before the lean-to; detailed arched window trim over center window below gable indicates a former sunburst window that has either been painted or enclosed; eave detailing has been removed or fallen off; fenestration includes one-over-one, double-hung sash windows and one oval window on the lean-to.

- c. Materials: Wood clapboard; vinyl or aluminum and glass front replacement door; wood or aluminum front porch and steps and landing on front; wood stairs; exposed brick chimney stack; shingle roof; concrete with brick parging foundation.
- d. Alterations: Replacement clapboard; replacement windows and doors; likely enclosure of sunburst window on right elevation; removal or loss of eave detailing on right elevation; enclosure of front and rear porches; shed dormer on front and right elevations; addition of rear porch; addition of enclosed side porch on right elevation.
- e. Evaluation of Integrity of 97 Highland Ave: 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; obscuring 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 97 Highland Ave meets any of the criteria stated above.
2. The HPC must specifically state why the STRUCTURE at 97 Highland Ave 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 97 Highland Ave meets any of the criteria stated above.
2. The HPC must specifically state why the STRUCTURE at 97 Highland Ave 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 97 Highland Ave is or is not “historically significant”.