



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

STEP 1: DETERMINATION OF SIGNIFICANCE
STAFF REPORT

Site: 11 Auburn Avenue

Case: HP23-000043

Applicant: David Einis

Owner: 11 Auburn Street LLC

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

HPC Meeting Date: November 21, 2023

Top: Front elevation

Bottom, left: Left elevation

Bottom, middle: Rear elevation

Bottom, right: Right elevation



The purpose of this 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 Auburn Avenue is a two-and-a-half story, two-family residential structure built in approximately 1870. The odd side of Auburn Avenue is comprised almost entirely of two-and-a-half story front-gable houses built during this period.

In the early 19th century, industry in East Somerville centered on the brickyards along Washington Street and the Runey Pottery near Cross and Flint Streets. In the mid 19th century the Boston and Lowell Railroad bisected the neighborhood, with a station along Washington Street at Joy Street serving the brickyards and a passenger station near Sullivan Square. The arrival of passenger service to this area facilitated land speculation and residential development in proximity to the stations. During this period of growth, the land west of Cross Street—which includes present-day 11 Auburn Avenue—remained undeveloped farmland until after the Civil War.

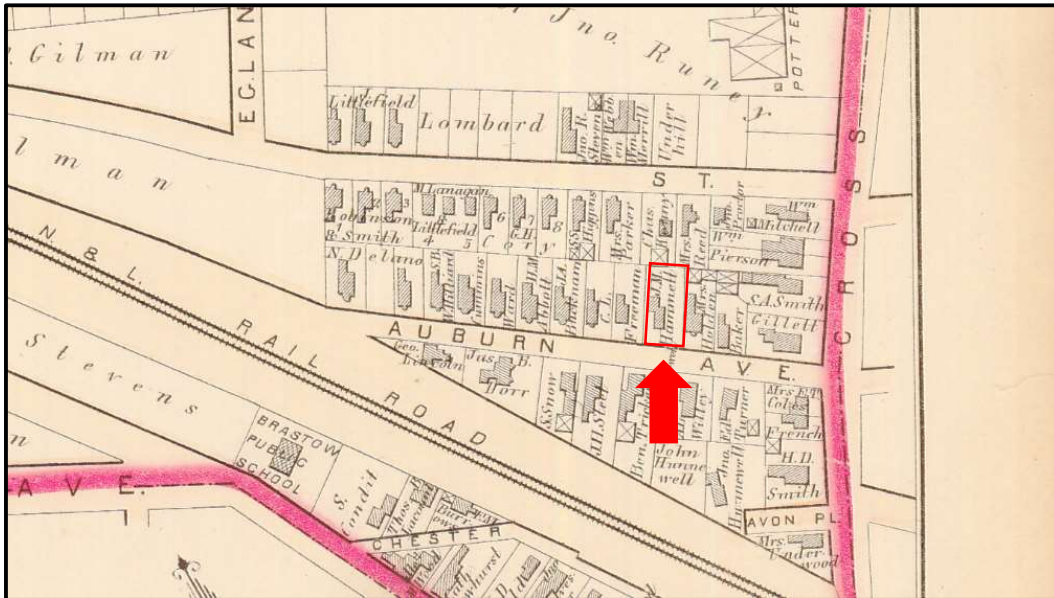


Above: 1852 Draper Map with general location of 11 Auburn Avenue indicated.

The 1852 Draper map above demonstrates that much of the residential development in the first half of the 19th century was concentrated along Washington Street and in proximity to the passenger station of the

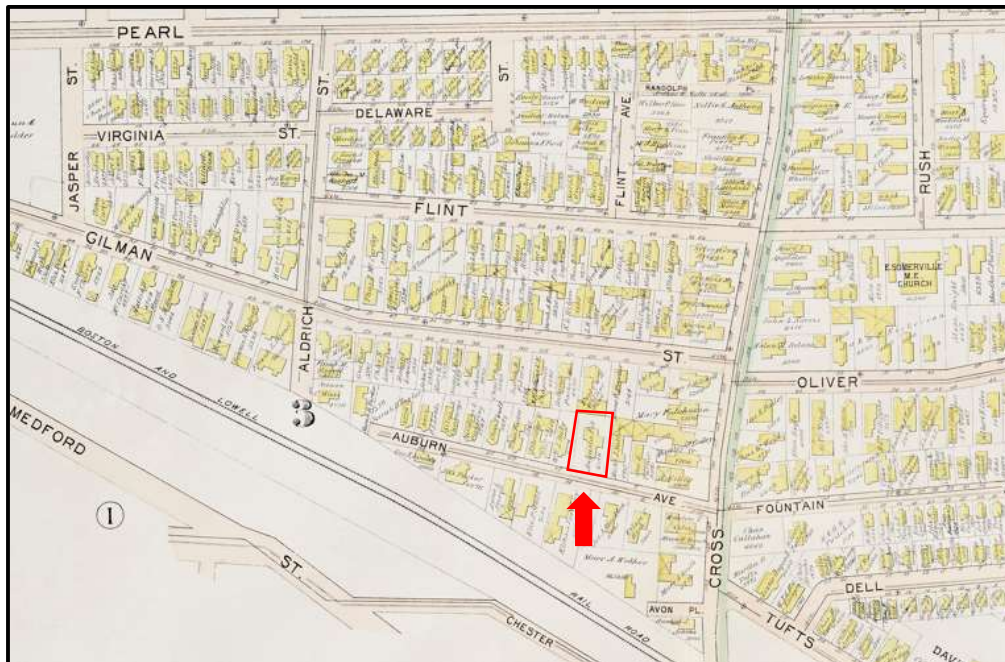
Boston-Maine Railroad. The approximate location of Auburn Avenue (which had not yet been formally laid out) is shown in red.

By 1874 (as demonstrated by the 1874 Hopkins map below), Auburn Avenue had been developed with approximately 12 residences along the odd side of the street and seven along the even side.



Above: 1874 Hopkins Map Plate H - 33 with location of 11 Auburn Avenue indicated.

By 1895 the entire western side of Cross Street, between Pearl Street and the Boston & Lowell Railroad, had been developed.



Above: 1895 Bromley Map Plate 9 with location of 11 Auburn Avenue indicated.

During this period (mid-century to post- Civil War), residential construction in East Somerville reflected elements of Greek Revival, Gothic Revival, and Italianate styles, with later additions reflecting Queen Anne-style. The homes on Auburn Street were intended for workers; any decorative features would likely have been relatively limited compared to the homes of businessmen on the earlier-developed side of the neighborhood. Still, some traces of these styles can be seen in the present day along Auburn Street. The gable returns under the eaves at 18, 21, and 33 Auburn Avenue are elements of Italianate style, as are the steep pitched gables at 7 Auburn Avenue. The lancet windows at 24 Auburn Avenue are reflective of Gothic Revival and the entry porches present at 15 and 22 Auburn Avenue are common in Italianate and other types of Victorian-era architecture.

The first listed owner of the structure is “J.M. Hammett” as shown in the 1874 Hopkins map which refers to John L. Hammett, a book merchant, and his wife, Martha Hammett. The couple and their four sons occupied the building from its construction ca. 1870 until 1875 when the building was sold to Francis C. Perkins (the Hammett family then moved to Perkins Street on the other side of East Somerville neighborhood).

John L. Hammett was successful in the school-supply business; he opened a store at 37 Brattle Street in Cambridge which later relocated as his business, the J.L. Hammett Company, grew to be one of the largest suppliers in the country. He is also known for inventing the blackboard eraser from blocks of wood and sheepskin.



Above: Boston Globe Excerpt May 5, 1922.

Hammett closing its stores

J.L. Hammett Co., the country's oldest school supply firm, is closing its 52 retail stores nationwide after 141 years. The Braintree-based company, whose founder invented the blackboard eraser, will continue to sell merchandise on its website, The Patriot Ledger of Quincy reported. The family of company president Richmond Holden Jr. was among the investors who bought the company from John L. Hammett in 1890. He declined to comment on the number of employees who would lose their jobs. Hammett retail stores are in 17 states, including Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Maine. (AP)

Above: Boston Globe Excerpt January 1, 2005

Francis C. Perkins, dry goods merchant and a deacon of Perkins Street Baptist Church, owned the building from 1875 to 1883 (per deed records) but did not occupy the building, making him an absentee landlord. Renters included the Tarbox and Clark families. Emma Kendall (widowed) purchased the building in 1883 and lived there with her three sons until her death in 1887.

Augustus W. Fix, a veteran of the Battle of Gettysburg, and his wife Augusta Fix purchased the house in 1888 and lived there until their deaths in 1919 and 1915 respectively, along with their daughter, Christine Hochheim (nee Fix), their son-in-law William A Hochheim, and their grandchildren.

SOMERVILLE.

The following Grand Army veterans, many of whom participated in the battle of Gettysburg, will leave the city for the jubilee reunion to be held at Gettysburg next week: George H. Clapp, James H. Chase, Dennis M. Dalley, Thomas C. Dame, John H. Dussault, Augustus W. Fix, George H. Goss, George M. Houghton, Benjamin F. Johnson, Andrew McCaffery, Caleb A. Page, George W. Peckham, S. P. Ridley, H. B. Sellon, Edwin J. Smith and Oren S. Webb.

Above: Boston Globe Excerpt June 28, 1913

Salvatore Dischino, an Italian immigrant and retail merchant, purchased the property from Christine Hochheim in 1924 and lived there with his wife Concetta and their seven children. The Doran family are also recorded as being boarders during this time. The house was under the ownership of Somerville Cooperative Bank by 1939 and the Dischino family is listed as renting a house on Boston Street in the 1940 Census (and Salvatore's occupation changed to "laborer"), so it can be speculated that there was a foreclosure, given the economic context of the Great Depression.

Julio F. Camacho, who immigrated from Portugal with his parents when he was 2 years old and grew up on nearby Joy Street, purchased the property with his wife Hazel Camacho from the Somerville Cooperative Bank in 1939. They raised three daughters – Catherine, Hazel, and Julie – and lived in the house until their deaths in the 1990s.

A list of all residents of the house and their occupations is provided below. The address of the house changed over time – known initially as 5 Auburn Avenue while owned by the Hammett, Perkins, and Kendall families, then 13 Auburn Avenue when owned by the Fix/Hochheim family, and was known as 11 Auburn Avenue by the time it was purchased by Salvatore Dischino.

Name	Year(s) of Residency	Occupation
Camacho, Catherine L.	1939 -	Student
Camacho, Hazel A.	1939 - ca 1999	Keeping House
Camacho, Hazel J.	1939 -	Student
Camacho, Julie A.	1945 -	Student
Camacho, Julio F.	1939 - 1996	Inspector
Clark, Herbert L.	1881	At School
Clark, Melissa M.	1880	Keeping House
Clark, William S.	1880	Brick Mason
Dischino, Anna	1930 - ca. 1935*	
Dischino, Arthur	1926 - ca. 1935*	
Dischino, Assunta	1924 - ca. 1935*	
Dischino, Christopher	1924 - ca. 1935*	
Dischino, Concetta	1924 - ca. 1935*	
Dischino, Helen	1934 - ca. 1935*	
Dischino, Joseph	1924 - ca. 1935*	
Dischino, Louis	1924 - ca. 1935*	
Dischino, Salvatore	1924 - ca. 1935*	Retail Merchant
Doran, Agnes C.	1929	Stitcher
Doran, Frank H.	1929	Weatherstripper
Fix, Augusta	1888 - 1915	
Fix, Augustus W.	1888 - 1919	Wood Carver
Hammett, Charles	ca. 1865 - 1875	Student
Hammett, Hiram	ca. 1865 - 1875	Student
Hammett, John	ca. 1865 - 1875	Store Clerk
Hammett, John L.	ca. 1865 - 1875	Book Merchant
Hammett, Martha	ca. 1865 - 1875	Keeping House
Hammett, William	ca. 1865 - 1875	Store Clerk

Hochheim Jr., William A.	1888 - 1924	Student
Hochheim, Christine F.	1888 - 1924	Clerk
Hochheim, Henry H.	1888 - 1924	Student
Hochheim, William A.	1888 - 1924	Musician
Kendall, Arthur B.	1883-1887	Clerk
Kendall, Charles R.	1883-1887	Brush Maker
Kendall, Emma	1883-1887	Keeping House
Kendall, William T.	1883-1887	Letter Carrier
Kenny, Julia	ca. 1865 - 1875	Domestic Servant
McGrath, Frank G.	1929	Weatherstripper
Murdoch, Grovner T.	1887	Grocer
Tarbox, Albion J.	1879	Milkman
Tarbox, Fred A.	1879	Baker

*It is unclear how long the Dischino family lived in the house – Salvatore lived there per the 1930 Census but the family was later renting a house on Boston Avenue per the 1940 Census.

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.

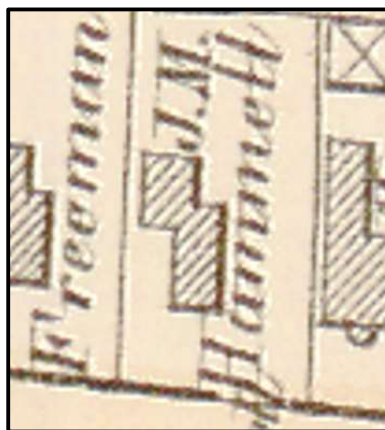


Fig 1

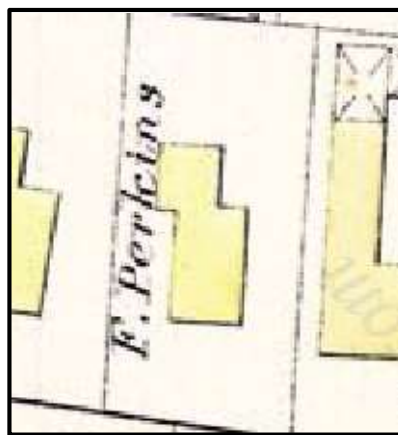


Fig 2

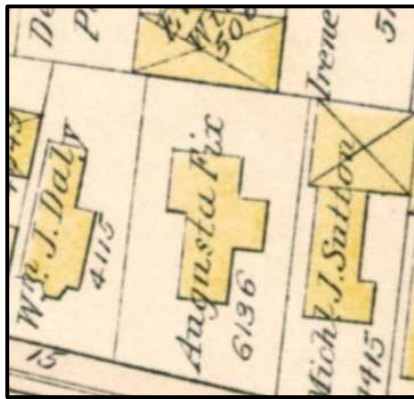


Fig 3

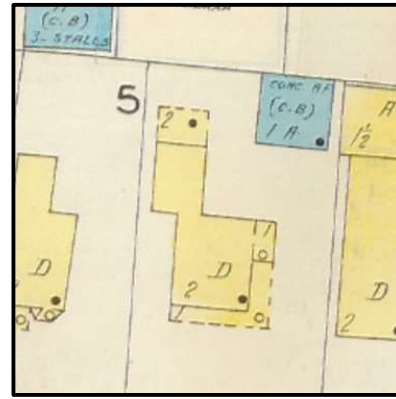


Fig 4



Fig 5

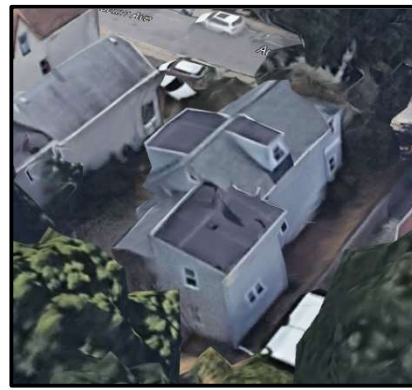


Fig 6

Figure 1: 1874 Hopkins Map

- Shows the original footprint of the structure
- Front gabled with a slanted shed-roof rear massing

Figure 2: 1884 Hopkins Map,

- Shows the same footprint

Figure 3: 1895 Bromley Map,

- Addition: bump-out on right elevation of the structure – which remains today and can be seen in Figure 5.

Figure 4: 1938 – 1959 Sanborn Map

- Addition: porch wrapping around the front and right side of the building
- Addition: porch at rear of rear wing
- Hollow concrete outbuilding, likely for the storage of vehicles, has been constructed.

Figures 5 & 6: Satellite image of the property

- Removal: porches from the front right side and rear
- Addition: front porch has been enclosed and second story added above the porch, obscuring the original facade

- Addition: shed dormers to right and left elevations to make additional living space in the attic half-story
- Addition: porch has been added at right side of the rear wing.

11 Auburn Avenue

The period of relevance for the property starts ca 1870

- a. Location: It is likely that the house is in its original location and was built on-site.
- b. Design: The primary structure is a two and a half story, wood framed, front-gabled residence with a rear addition with a shallow pitched roof.

- Front Elevation

- Front gable presents bracketed eaves
- The two-story enclosed porch the front porch was added mid-20th century and enclosed sometime thereafter; this obscures the original façade.
- Shingle siding including fish scale shingles on the enclosed porches; fish scale siding under front gable.
- Front fenestration includes a set of four one-over-one double-hung sash windows on the first floor, and a set of six of these windows on the second floor. A single six-over-one double hung window is placed under the apex of the gable roof. Original bay distribution on front façade was likely two to three wide with a left side entry hall (still extant)
- Concrete front entry steps with mid-to late-20th century aluminum or iron railing.
- modern wood front entry door with stained glass window.

- Right Elevation

- Single story, side addition with hipped back portion of right elevation (added sometime between 1884 and 1895)
- Fish scale shingles do not extend past the enclosed two-story front porches.
- Two-story wood porch and exterior stairs have been added to the rear addition.
- Shed dormer with two windows in line with the location of the bay.
- Fenestration includes 14 one-over-one double-hung windows and along the foundation are two basement windows with iron bars.

- Left Elevation

- Two-story addition on the left rear corner with left-pitching roof; fish scale shingles do not extend past the enclosed two-story front porches.
- Fenestration includes four one-over-one double-hung windows on the first floor and one of these on the second floor; there is one basement window with iron bars.
- Shed dormer with one window has been added to the roof.

- Rear Elevation

- Shallow pitched roof
- Fenestration includes two one-over-one double-hung windows (not original).

- c. Materials:

1. *Main Structure:* Vinyl clapboard siding; wood eaves and brackets wood porch and stairs on the rear right elevation; wood replacement front door, concrete steps to front door, brick chimney stack; vinyl/aluminum windows; asphalt shingles on roof, concrete or concrete parged brick foundation; concrete steps.
- d. *Alterations:* Front porches added and enclosed first and second story; right side of front wrap-around porch and rear porch added and later removed; wood porch added to rear right elevation; shed dormers added to right and left sides of roof; replacement of vinyl siding; replacement of front door; replacement of windows; fish scale siding is later addition; concrete front entry steps.
- e. *Evaluation of Integrity of 11 Auburn Avenue:* Based on the observations of the building and a study of the historic maps, it is Staff's position that the building, with the exception of the front enclosed porches, largely retains the integrity of its original form. Alterations have occurred to this structure which obscure some original architectural details; however, several features including the eave brackets, side entry hall, strong eave returns and the original massing remain 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.

Residential Structure

1. The HPC must make a finding as to whether or not the STRUCTURE at 11 Auburn Avenue meets any of the criteria stated above.
2. The HPC must specifically state why the STRUCTURE at 11 Auburn Avenue 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 PRINCIPAL STRUCTURE at 11 Auburn Avenue meets any of the criteria stated above.
2. The HPC must specifically state why the PRINCIPAL STRUCTURE at 11 Auburn Avenue 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 PRINCIPAL STRUCTURE at 11 Auburn Avenue is or is not "historically significant".