



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: 9 Olive Avenue

Case: HP23-000071

Applicant: Robert DiPierro

Owner: 9 Olive Ave Development LLC

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

HPC Meeting Date: January 16, 2024

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: 9 Olive Avenue is a two-and-a-half-story workers cottage in the Winter Hill neighborhood of Somerville. The area surrounding Olive Avenue is dominated by two- and three-story residential structures of a similar footprint.

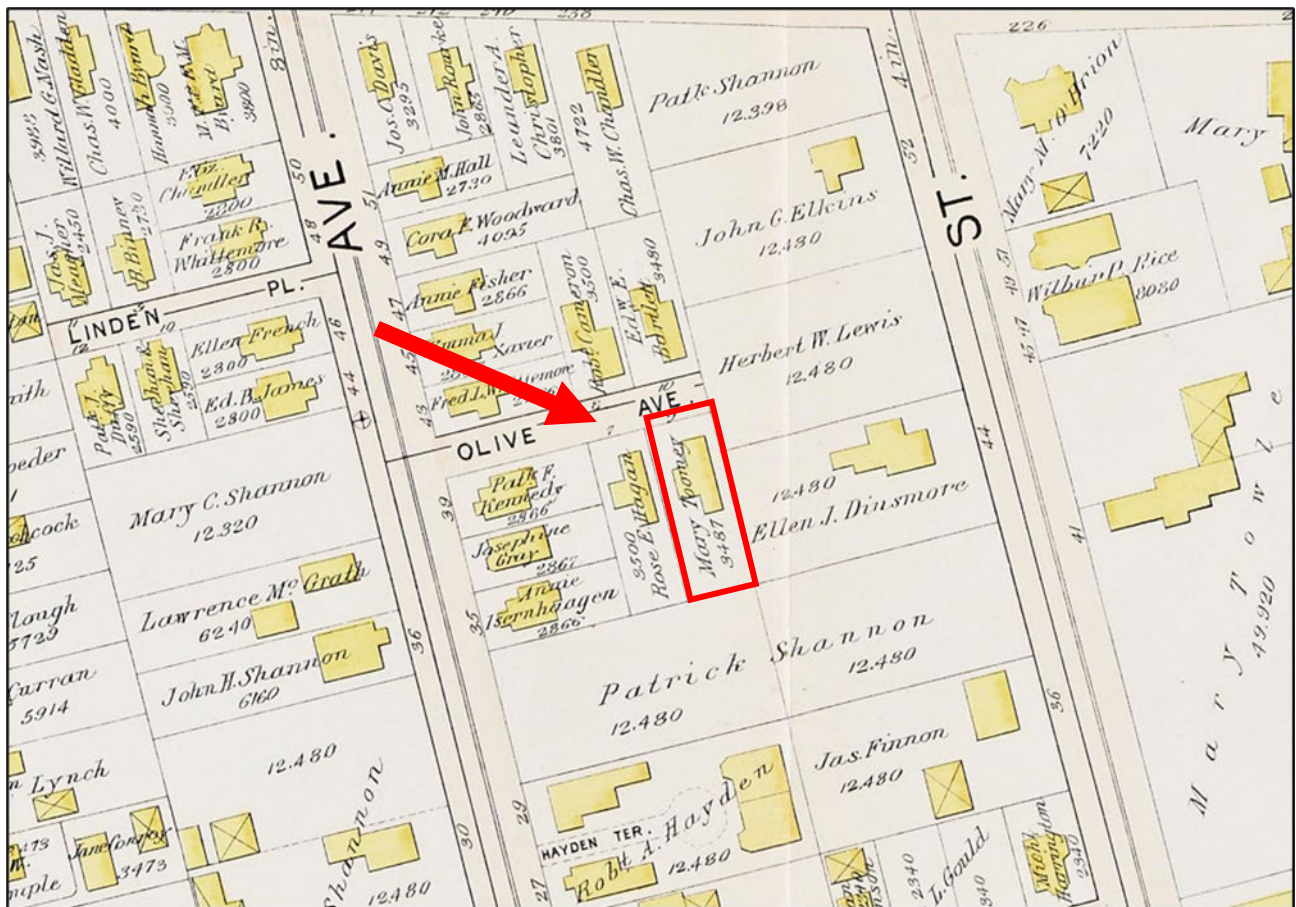
Winter Hill was originally an agricultural area, due in part to the area's well-drained soil, and by 1800, the area contained large tracts of agricultural land for farming and grazing. By 1840 offices, shops, and taverns began popping up along Winter Hill Road (which later became Broadway), signaling the beginning of a shift in the area's economic practices.

By 1845, economic development in the western part of Winter Hill was in full effect, largely thanks to Warren Pollard's slate quarry near Vernon and Central Streets. Supplies were delivered to this site by locomotive tracks that were laid between Boston and Lowell in 1835. These tracks first supported cars of stone and other materials to the quarry before a passenger station opened near the site shortly after, helping bring regularly scheduled passenger transportation to the area.

During the 1850s and 1860s, the area underwent significant residential development, stimulated by the increased access to transportation. The area had undergone improvements in steam rail services provided by the Boston, Fitchburg, and Maine Railroads. In 1858, two horse car lines were introduced, allowing for more accessible travel between West Somerville and Charlestown and Boston.

From the mid 1800's to early 1900's, the area formerly known as Winter Hill Road, now known as Broadway, saw the construction of large single-family homes. It was evident that the area wanted a certain look, as Somerville's City Beautification Society, established in 1889, lobbied for the introduction of parks, trees, boulevards, and ordinances meant to prevent construction of cheap tenements on small lots.

Both 9 Olive Ave the lot, and Olive Avenue itself first appear during this time period. The 1874 map below demonstrates the early commercial and residential development of the area surrounding 9 Olive Ave, demonstrating there was already a large amount of residential development already in place during this time period.



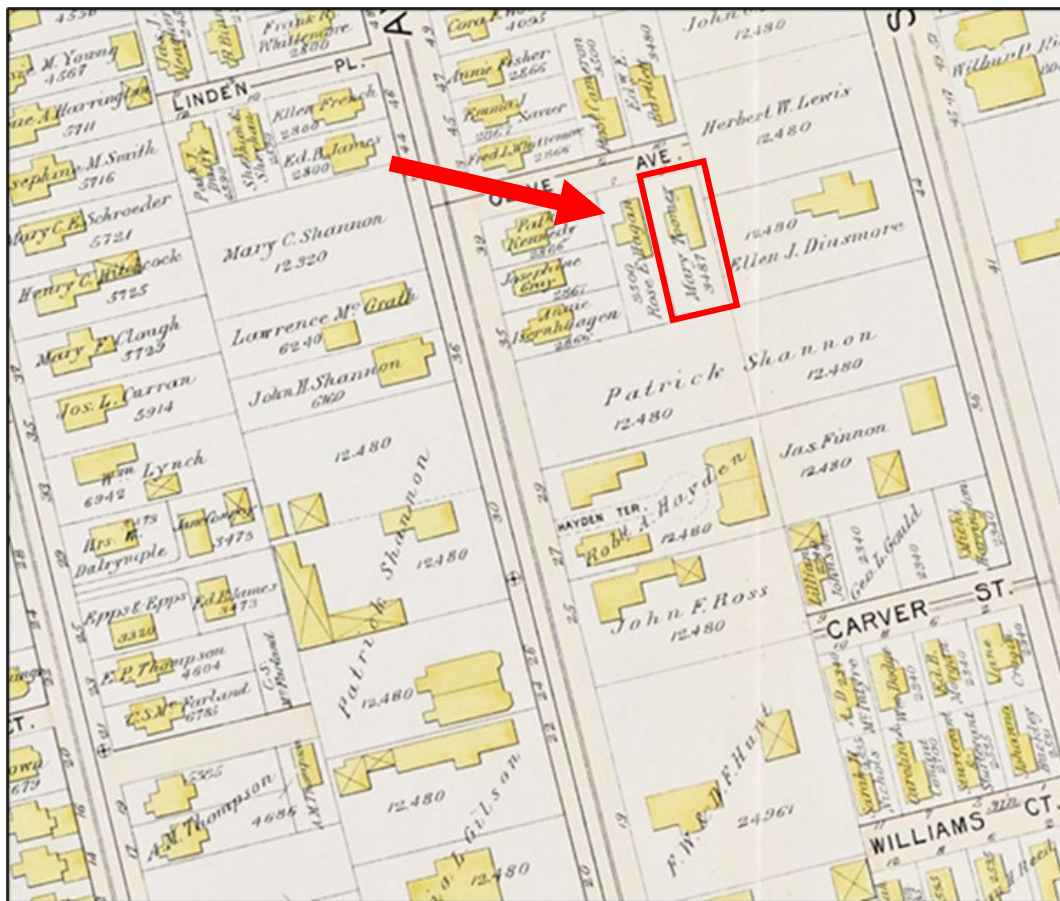
Above: 1874 Hopkins Map, Plate 17, with 9 Olive Ave in frame

The 1874 Hopkins map shows that Mary Toomey is listed as the owner and was likely the first resident.

Mary Toomey, who owned the home from at least 1874 through 1902 or later, was a widow who likely rented out rooms in the house as part of her income source, since other unrelated residents lived there at overlapping times.

Between 1885 and 1900, the intersection of Pearl, Medford, and Marshall Streets became an important commercial center, completely transitioning the area from an agriculture-based economy to more of a business and industrial-based economy. Additional commuter stations began appearing in the area during the same time period, allowing for more commercial and residential development.

Olive Ave was missing from the 1884 Hopkins map.



Above: 1895 Bromley Map, Plate 17, with location of 9 Olive Avenue indicated.

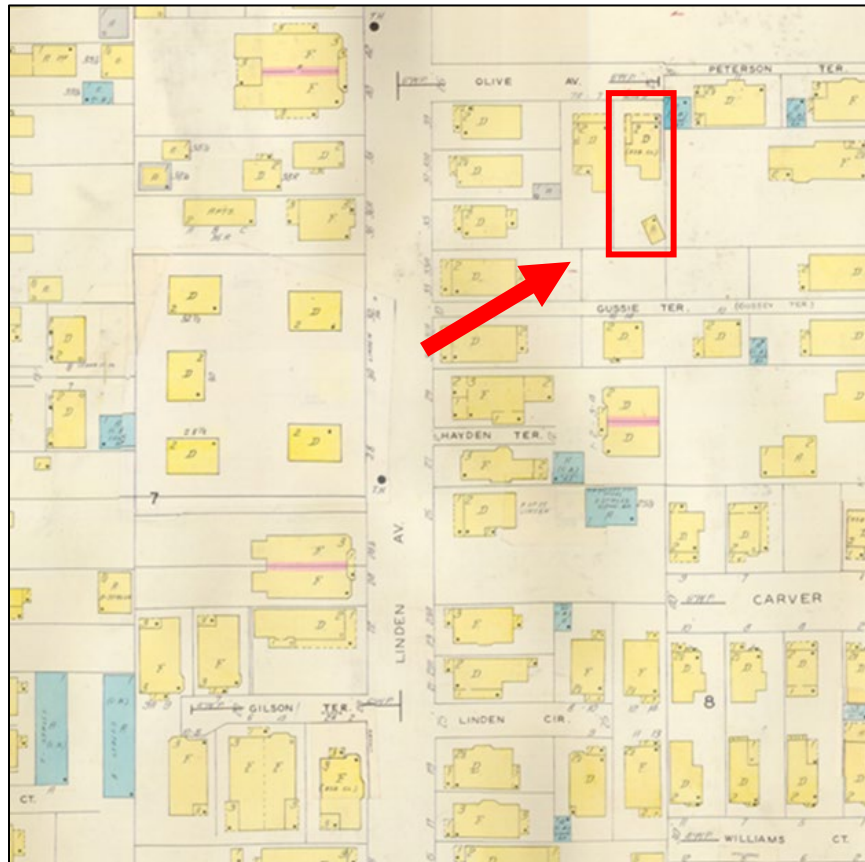
The 1895 Bromley Map shows the area surrounding 9 Olive Ave to still mostly be residential development.

After 1900, apartment buildings began popping up and replacing many of the businessmen's homes of the previous decades, reflecting the growing working-class population. Most of the large houses and mansions that previously occupied Broadway were done away with and the new construction in the area consisted mostly of four or five story apartment buildings, as the area became less agricultural and more industrial.



Above: 1900 Sanborn Map – 1925 additions, Plate 027, with location of 9 Olive Avenue indicated.

The map above shows that in 1925, the surrounding area was still mostly the same. There is a change in the footprint on this map from the previous versions. This change is likely the result of the addition of a wrap-around porch, which covers the front and right elevations of the building.



Above: 1938 - 1959 Sanborn Map, Plate 257, with location of 9 Olive Avenue indicated.

The 1938 Map above shows the house has the same footprint, but now has an additional accessory, structure in the rear yard. This accessory structure is also a wood-framed building as evidenced by the yellow color used by the cartographer.

Below is a table containing verified residents and the time periods they were confirmed to live at 9 Olive Avenue through old newspapers, phone records, the census, and other public records.

Name	Year(s) of Residency	Occupation	Residence Type
John C Hogan	1893 - 1902	electrotype finisher	renter
Gertrude La Barron	1902 - 1903		
Mary Toomey	1874 - 1902	widow	homeowner
Daniel Beckwith	1918	machinist	
John Joseph Begley	1917-1918		

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.

1. 9 Olive Ave

The period of relevance for the house starts in 1874.

- a. Location: This structure is in its original location. The building was constructed on-site in 1874
- b. Design: The house is a 2 ½ -story front gable, wood-framed workers cottage that is 3 bays wide with a left entry hall, covered wrap-around porch and right side wing.
 - Front Elevation
 - The structure has a symmetrical front-gabled, high pitched roof
 - Covered front porch
 - Wooden stairway with mid to late 20th century iron railings leading into entryway
 - First floor includes aluminum or wood one-over-one double-hung sash windows. On the second story are three of these same type of windows of with the right most window a smaller size. The ½ -story window under the gable peak is a triptych window with double-hung sash on either side and large stationary window in the center.
 - Rear Elevation
 - Two story, slightly shorter, section of building on rear with a deep eave.
 - The aforementioned rear portion of the building has a larger enclosed second floor with the first story containing wood pillars creating an almost overhang covered area.
 - Fenestration on the first story there are a double horizontal sliding sash window on the first story. On the second story there are at least four one-over-one double hung sash windows
 - Wooden bulkhead door with access to basement
 - Wooden staircase and porch leading to rear door.
 - Right Elevation
 - Fenestration includes four aluminum or wood one-over-one double-hung windows and two fixed square windows.
 - Wrap around porch comes along this side of the building.
 - A portion of porch has been enclosed.
 - Left Elevation
 - Fenestration includes four one-over-one double-hung windows on the second story with one of these windows smaller than the other three.
 - At least two one-over-one double-hung windows on the first story.

c. Materials:

- Foundation: Likely brick with concrete parging
- Windows: Likely aluminum, and some wood windows
- Entry door: Likely wood, fiberglass, and aluminum leading into entryway foyer
- Siding: asbestos shingle
- Trim: Wood & likely aluminum
- Steps: Wood
- Roof: Brick chimney. Asphalt shingles

d. Alterations: Modern replacement of doors and windows. Based off the information provided in the maps and newspapers, a wrap-around porch was added to the property around 1920.

1. Evaluation of Integrity of 9 Olive Ave: 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 form, massing, and detailing from when it was constructed in 1874 as well as the integrity of later additions such as the wrap-around porch. Alterations, such as updated windows, have occurred to this structure which obscure some original details: however, the original massing and key architectural details of a two-and-a-half story workers cottage remain 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 9 Olive Avenue meets any of the criteria stated above.
2. The HPC must specifically state why the STRUCTURE 9 Olive 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 STRUCTURE at 9 Olive Avenue meets any of the criteria stated above.
2. The HPC must specifically state why the STRUCTURE at 9 Olive 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 STRUCTURE at 9 Olive Avenue is or is not “historically significant”.