



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

THOMAS GALLIGANI  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

PLANNING DIVISION  
HISTORIC PRESERVATION

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**STEP 1: DETERMINATION OF SIGNIFICANCE**  
**STAFF REPORT**

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**Site:** 8 Montrose Court

**Case:** HP24-000002

**Applicant:** ThoughtCraft Architects LLC – Mark Wilson

**Owner:** Rufus Roscoe LLC

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

**HPC Meeting Date:** March 19, 2024

**Top:** Front elevation

**Bottom, left:** Right elevation (view from community path)

**Bottom, middle:** Left elevation

**Bottom, right:** Rear 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:** 8 Montrose Court is a one- and three-quarter story, single-family residential structure built in ca. 1890. Montrose Court is a short dead-end street off the northern side of Montrose Street, which runs north of and parallel to Highland Avenue on the northern slope of Central Hill, directly adjacent to the former Boston & Lowell Railroad right-of-way.

Montrose Street and Montrose Court are primarily composed of single-family residential structures, with some two- and three-families.

The 1852 Draper map below demonstrates that much of the residential development in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in this area of Somerville clustered at the tops of Winter, Central, Prospect, and Spring Hills.



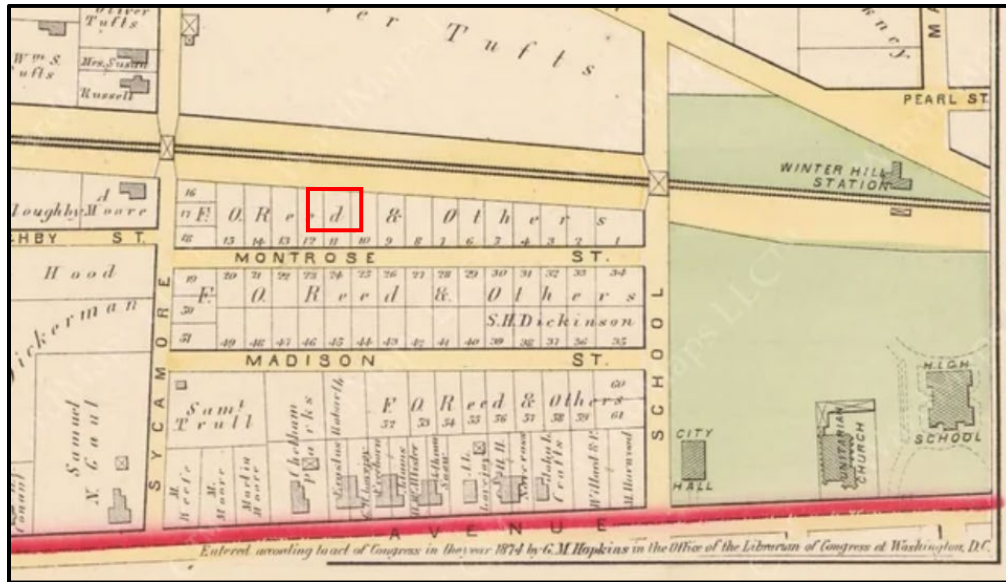
*Above: 1852 Draper Map with the approximate location of 8 Montrose Court indicated.*

In 1870, Central Hill was chosen as the then-town's<sup>1</sup> civic center and first public park. While Central Hill Park was later dissolved, Central Hill remains the location of the City's major civic building campus. By

<sup>1</sup> Somerville became a city in 1872.

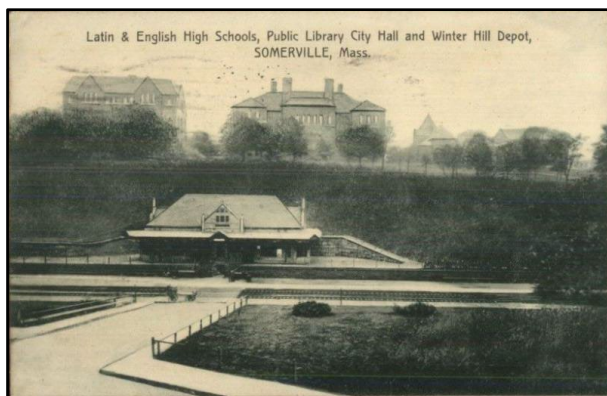


1874, residential construction flourished on the tracts of land south of Highland Avenue (shown as Church Street on the Draper map) stretching down to Somerville Ave (shown as Milk Street). The northern slope of Central Hill, however, remained comparatively undeveloped. As the 1874 Hopkins map below demonstrates, Montrose Street had been platted but remained vacant land held by F.O. Reed and other landowners.

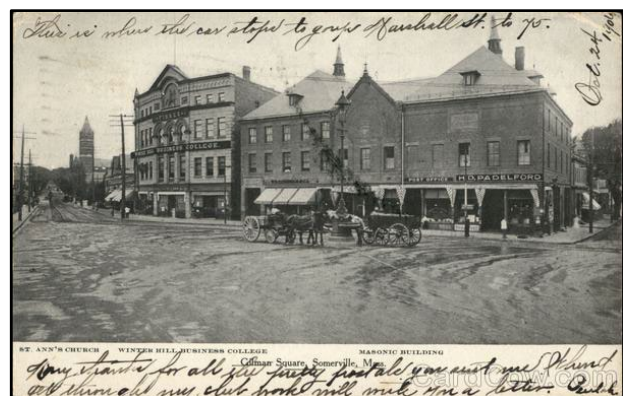


*Above: 1874 Hopkins Map with the approximate location of 8 Montrose Court indicated.*

Between 1885 and 1900, the intersection of Pearl, Medford, and Marshall Streets developed from a small commuter station along the Boston & Lowell Railroad (Winter Hill Station on map above) into an important commercial center. With the establishment of a granite station on the south side of the tracks, and an increased number of trains, the intersection became known as Gilman Square. Named for town clerk Charles E. Gilman, it featured the Masonic Apartments aka Stickney Building (since demolished) and Knights of Malta Building, which housed a pharmacy, athletic equipment store, and post office.



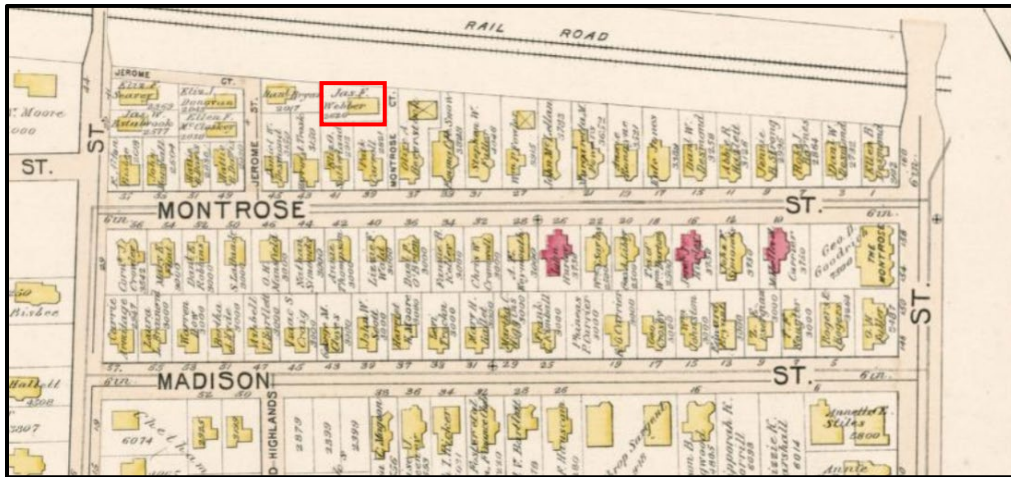
*Above: Winter Hill Station (ca. 1910)*



*Above: Knights of Malta Building & Stickney Building (1906)*

For a large photo showing Winter Hill Station and Gilman Square circa 1910, see the attachment to this memo.

The increased commercial activity spurred residential development in the surrounding streets, including Montrose Street. In 1884, there were only six houses constructed along Montrose Street, and Montrose Court had not yet been laid out. By 1895, there was a house on every lot on Montrose Street, including two at the end of Montrose Court – see Bromley Map below.



*Above: 1895 Bromley Map with the location of 8 Montrose Court indicated.*

According to survey records, Montrose Court was platted in 1889; an unknown housewright built the residential structure at 8 Montrose Court shortly thereafter.

English immigrant and cabinet-maker James F. Webber is the first listed owner, but records indicate that he was an absentee owner and resided on Pembroke Court.

Czech immigrants Frank and Anna Komenda were the first family to own and reside in the house. Part of a wave of immigrants from Bohemia in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the couple arrived in the United States in 1883, according to naturalization records. While most immigrants to the United States from Bohemia in this wave moved to the Midwest, the Komendas settled on the East Coast and moved to Montrose Court in 1899. Frank was a tailor and Anna worked in textiles and they had two children. They moved to a house on Morrison Avenue in 1903.

Maine-born teamster Frank E Lincoln and Annie Lincoln (married 1887) along with their son Dana moved into the house in 1904. Frank was a member of the Somerville Lodge of Elks, a fraternal order; there is otherwise little historical information available about the Lincolns. They resided at Montrose Court until 1908.

George Kyle, and Irishman from New Jersey, and Rose Ann Kyle (married 1888), an Ireland-born immigrant, purchased the house in 1909. George was a baker and Rose Ann was a homemaker; they had four children. George Kyle died in 1913, but Rose Ann and her children continued to reside in the house into the 1920s. Her sons, George Jr, William, and John maintained blue-collar professions – sheet metal worker, machinist, and rail maker, respectively. Her daughter, Esther, worked as a packer in a bakery – possibly the same bakery as her father. Rose Ann Kyle died in 1926; Esther and her husband Charles F. Richard lived in the property for another year before moving to Belmont Place in the Spring Hill neighborhood.

It is important to consider the impact of the abutting Boston & Lowell Railroad tracks on the living conditions at 8 Montrose Court. By 1886, there were 59 week-day trains and 23 Sunday trains passing through Winter Hill Station and lumbering along the rails located mere feet from the property. Note the image on the right, depicting one of these trains carrying a carload of coal to fuel the engine. The Komenda, Lincoln, and Kyle families would have been subjected to deafening noise, acrid smell, and airborne soot from the engines. The railroad station was removed in the 1940s after passenger rail service was discontinued. It is now the site of the Somerville Community Path.



*Above: A train passing through Winter Hill Station (ca. 1900)*

Thomas E. Demont and Agnes C. Demont purchased the property in 1927, per deed records. Thomas was an auto mechanic who taught at the Somerville Vocational High School and Agnes was a homemaker. They had five children and lived in the house until their deaths in 1974.

Name	Residency Year(s)	Occupation	Relationship	Type
James F. Webber	-	Cabinet Maker	-	Owner (Absent)
Frank Komenda	1899 - 1903	Tailor	<b>Husband</b>	Owner
Anna Komenda	1899 - 1903		<b>Wife</b>	
Eleonara Komenda	1899 - 1903	Stenographer	Daughter	
Frank W Komenda	1899 - 1903	Student/Pharmacist	Son	
Randolph R Komenda	1899 - 1903	Student	Son	
Ruth V Komenda	1899 - 1903		Daughter	
Frank E Lincoln	1904 - 1908	Teamster	<b>Husband</b>	Owner
Annie Lincoln	1904 - 1908		<b>Wife</b>	
Dana Lincoln	1904 - 1908		Son	
George Kyle	1909 - 1913 (death)	Baker	<b>Husband</b>	Owner
Rose Ann Kyle	1909 - 1926 (death)	Homemaker	<b>Wife</b>	Owner
George A Kyle Jr	1909 - 1920s	Sheet Metal Worker	Son	
William C Kyle	1909 - 1920s	Machinist (Navy Yard)	Son	
John P Kyle	1909 - 1920s	Rail Maker	Son	
Esther Richards	1909 - 1927	Packer (Bakery)	Daughter	
Charles F. Richards	1919 - 1927	Freight Brakeman	Son-in-Law	Boarder
Agnes C. Demont	1927- 1974 (death)	Homemaker	<b>Wife</b>	Owner
Thomas E. Demont	1927- 1974 (death)	School Teacher	<b>Husband</b>	Owner
Edward L Demont	1927 -	Equipment Install	Son	
Dorathesa C Demont	1927-	Secretary	Daughter	
Thomas Demont	1927-		Son	
Robert Demont	1928 -		Son	
Gerard Demont	1934 -		Son	



## 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.

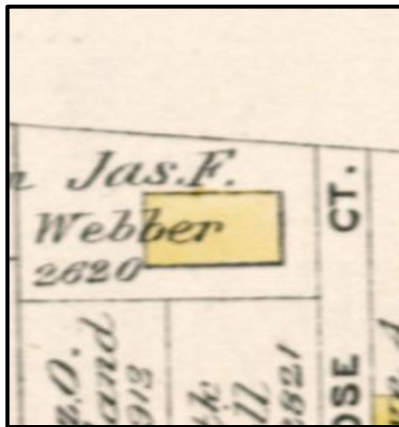


Fig 1

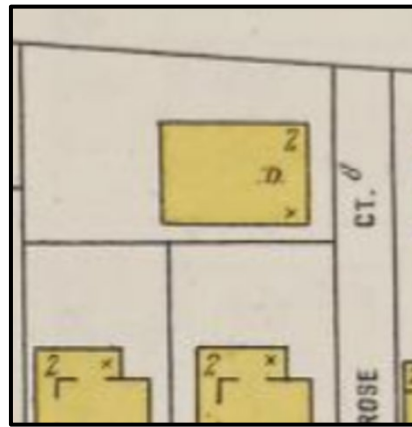


Fig 2

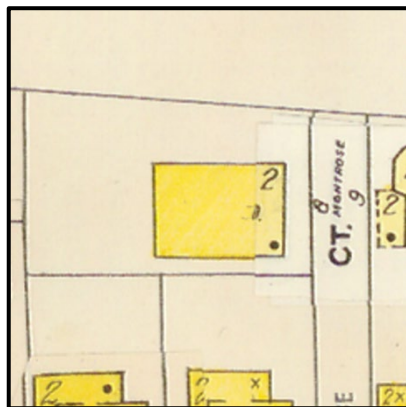


Fig 3

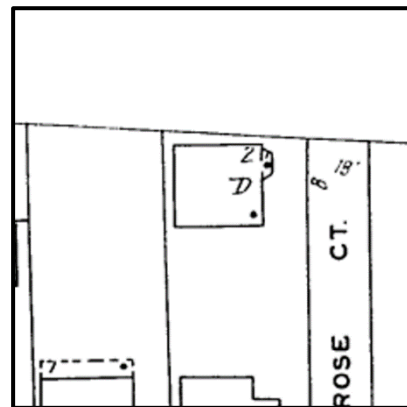


Fig 4

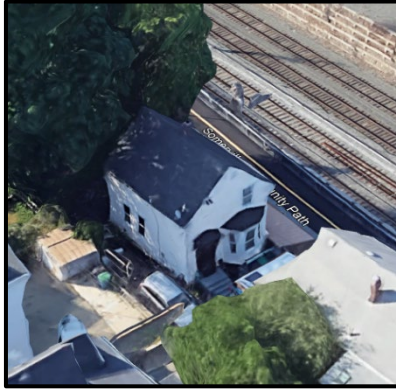


Fig 5



Fig 6

Figure 1: 1895 Bromley Map

- Shows the original footprint of the structure.
- Front-gabled one and three-quarter story structure.

Figure 2: 1900 Sanborn Map

- Shows the same footprint.

Figure 3: 1925 Sanborn Map,

- Shows the same footprint.

Figure 4: 1933 – 1934 Sanborn Map

- The lot lines of the property changed, indicating that the structure was on the same parcel at the Montrose Street-facing structure to the south.
- This map is the first time that the first story bay window appears.

Figures 5 &amp; 6: Satellite image of the property

- Addition: Bracketed door hood and stairs.
- Addition: rear deck (cannot be seen on satellite imagery but is shown in elevations submitted by the applicant).
- The lot lines now reflect the same configuration as shown in 1925 Sanborn.

## **8 Montrose Court**

The period of relevance for the property starts in 1895.

- Location:* The structure appears to have been shifted closer to the northern lot line sometime between 1925 and 1933 however, the building was likely constructed on-site.
- Design:* The structure is a one- and three quarter-story, wood framed, front-gabled residence with a moderately-pitched roof. It presents a left entry hall and was built in a modest Italianate style, as indicated by the roof pitch and short cornices on the gable returns.

### - Front Elevation

- The front elevation presents a moderately-pitched front gable with slightly overhung eaves without brackets, a deep cornice on the gable return..
- There is a bay window.
- Bracketed door hood over front entry door.

- A set of steps leading to the front entrance.
  - The first story bay presents three (3) one-over-one double hung windows, The upper story presents one one-over-one double-hung window and one small sliding window . A framed, louvered vent is located under the gable peak.
- Right Elevation
    - Moderately pitched roof.
    - Slightly overhung eaves without brackets .
    - Fenestration includes two one-over-one double-hung windows on the first story, symmetrically located; there are no windows on the upper story.
  - Left Elevation
    - Moderately pitched roof.
    - Slightly overhung eaves without brackets .
    - Fenestration includes two one-over-one double-hung windows on the first story set towards the rear; no windows on the upper story.
  - Rear Elevation
    - The rear elevation presents a moderately-pitched rear gable with slightly overhung eaves without brackets and short cornices on the gable returns.
    - The rear entrance exits on to a porch with stairs down to grade.
    - Fenestration includes one one-over-one double-hung window on the first story and two one-over-one double hung windows, symmetrically located, on the upper story.

c. Materials:

1. *Main Structure:* Vinyl clapboard siding over wood frame; vinyl trim; rear wooden porch and steps; concrete front steps; wood replacement front and rear doors; brick chimney stack; vinyl/aluminum windows; asphalt shingles on roof; painted brick foundation at the front, possible concrete parging of foundation at rear..

Alterations: Structure may have been shifted northward by 10-20ft between 1925 and 1933; front projecting bay added between 1925 and 1933;; rear deck added at some point after 1958. It is also likely that there was originally another window, possibly full-sized, double hung, located directly above the front entry, providing an architectural balance of elements on the front elevation. Additional alterations noted in the Materials section above in addition to the brick foundation being painted.

Evaluation of Integrity of 8 Montrose Court: 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 and later forms and massing. While some alterations have occurred to this structure it retains a high degree of integrity of original and later architectural elements.

### 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 8 Montrose Court meets any of the criteria stated above.
2. The HPC must specifically state why the STRUCTURE at 8 Montrose Court 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 8 Montrose Court meets any of the criteria stated above.
2. The HPC must specifically state why the STRUCTURE at 8 Montrose Court 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 8 Montrose Court is or is not "historically significant".

ATTACHMENT: Historic photographs of Winter Hill Station and Gilman Square, circa 1910.

# WINTER HILL STATION



The Boston & Lowell, Fitchburg Railroad, and Boston & Maine played formative roles in the evolution of Somerville and Medford into Boston suburbs. In 1845, the B&M was the first railroad serving Boston to offer a viable commuter fare – one that was competitive with the average 5-cent price of horse-drawn omnibus travel within the city of Boston. By offering such a rate, the B&M made the idea of owning a “country house” in locales such as Medford and Somerville an attractive and cost-competitive alternative to buying a smaller property in Boston. By the end of the nineteenth century, housing density had increased sufficiently to justify eight stations.



View of Winter Hill Station, looking southeast towards Central Hill Park with the Latin High School (built 1871; demolished 1928) on the site of the Somerville High School, shown circa 1910.  
Historic New England

Background photo: Historic Winter Hill Station facing Medford Street with Malta Temple/Signet Commandery No. 188, later Winter Hill Business College, on left and St. Ann's Church at center, circa 1910.  
Thomson & Thomson, Photographers  
Historic New England





Background photo: Gilman Square with Malta Temple Building on the left and Litchfield Block third building from the left, circa 1910. Thomson & Thompson, Photography, Inc. Platted alteration, artist unknown. Historic New England

# GILMAN SQUARE

Gilman Square developed in the late nineteenth century, along with Union Square, as the two competing commercial centers in Somerville. Located along the former Boston & Lowell (later Boston & Maine) Railroad, Gilman Square is at the nexus of Medford, Marshall, and Pearl Streets. Multi-story brick commercial and industrial buildings that surround the square were constructed between approximately 1887 and 1930. The mixture of industrial, commercial, and social functions led to a vibrant center of activity.

Examples of these building types include the Malta Temple/Signet Commandery No. 188, a Classical Revival-style building built in 1896. It became home to the Winter Hill Business College and later Fisher College during the early twentieth century. The building is an unusual surviving example of a commercial building with a meeting hall for social and charitable organizations, common in the nineteenth century.



A bronze raised plaque of a knight on horseback in the roof gable is a notable feature of the facade. The Public Archaeology Laboratory, Inc.

The Litchfield Block, at the corner of Marshall and Pearl Streets, was built in 1891, and designed to contain commercial use at ground level, with three floors of apartments above. It is a surviving representation of late nineteenth-century commercial architecture in Somerville.

Until 2018, the Gilman Square Station site was the location of a grocery warehouse owned by Reid Murdoch & Company of Chicago. The three-story, Art Deco-style, brick building was built in 1929 and expanded circa 1935. It had loading bays along the tracks for railroad cars and at one end for trucks.

A cast concrete sculpture of the brand's trademark lion's head was above the main entrance on Medford Street. Reid Murdoch & Company distributed Monarch food products. The Public Archaeology Laboratory, Inc.



Looking down Medford Street at Gilman Square, circa 1935. Historic New England