



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

THOMAS GALLIGANI
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

PLANNING DIVISION
HISTORIC PRESERVATION

STEP 1: DETERMINATION OF SIGNIFICANCE
STAFF REPORT

Site: 33 Vinal Avenue

Case: HP24-000045

Applicant: Niranjana Gawli

Owner: Thomas E. McAllister

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

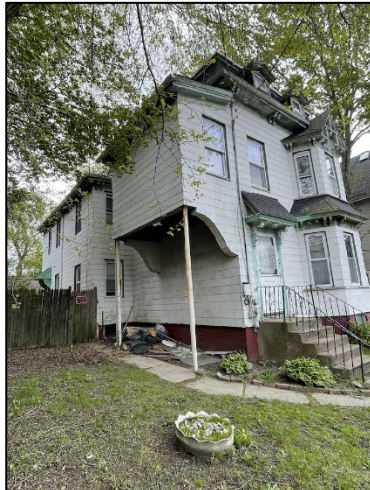
HPC Meeting Date: July 16, 2024

Top: Front elevation

Bottom, left: Right elevation

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: 33 Vinal Avenue is a two-and-one-third-story, two-family residential structure built between 1884 and 1895. Vinal Avenue is a south-bound one-way street running between Highland Avenue (formerly Church Street) and Summer Street.

Vinal Avenue is primarily composed of single-, two-, and three- family residential structures.

The 1852 Draper map below shows the approximate location of 33 Vinal Avenue at the western foot of Prospect Hill, which by mid-19th century had become a desirable location for the construction of businessmen's homes, but was otherwise sparsely occupied.



Above: 1852 Draper Map with the approximate location of 33 Vinal Avenue indicated.

After the Civil War, real estate speculators began purchasing large tracts of farmland (including the old Vinal estate) on the southern and western slopes of the hill and subdividing them. Larger houses and parcels were reserved for the crest of the hill, while a variety of cheaper housing was built to the west on Putnam and Prescott Street for the many laborers arriving in Somerville.



Above: 1884 Hopkins Map, Plate 4, with the location of 33 Vinal Avenue indicated.



Above: 1895 Bromley Map, Plate 1, with the location of 33 Vinal Avenue indicated.

By 1874, the parcel now known as 33 Vinal Avenue was platted and owned by an heir to the Vinal family, William Vinal Burt. To the rear of the parcel, along Summit Avenue and Aldersey Street, Second Empire style houses established a standard of style and expense which was upheld until the turn of the century.

When the house at 33 Vinal Street was constructed between 1884 and 1895—during Somerville's period of most rapid residential growth—it was also built in the Second Empire style to mimic those nearby houses of prominent citizens (for example, the Edward N. Jackman House and the Adoniram Taylor House).



16-18 Summit Avenue – Edward N. Jackman House



17 Aldersey Street - Adoniram Taylor House

Residents

The first known owner of the house at 33 Vinal Street was John E. Cayzer, a hatter born in England who was a member of the John Abbot Lodge of Masons. While records indicate that he owned the property from 1884 until his death in 1894 (at which point it was held in a trust until 1909), he never lived at the property. During his ownership, a various boarders occupied the property, which was large enough to be considered a two-family residence. These included Nicholas Greet, a crayon artist, and his wife Elizabeth, both immigrants from England; Charles Shepard, a salesman and elected School Committee member who operated his business from the property; and the music composer James C. Macy and his family.

In 1909, William E. Lamb, an immigrant from Ireland, and his sons, Thomas and Richard, purchased the property. Thomas and Richard, both salesmen, and their wives and children lived in the house from 1909 until 1914. Notably the Lamb family had a live-in servant, Hannah A. Riley, which may indicate the relative affluence of the family.

In 1914, Gilbert W. and Florence C. Skinner, husband and wife, purchased the property and moved in with their two sons, Carleton and Ralph. Gilbert was a conductor and baggage handler for the railroads, and Florence was a housekeeper who also served as an elections officer for the second precinct in Ward 3. The Skinner family shared the property with boarders (as this was a two-family property) in various professions, including Willard P Hall, a chauffeur and immigrant from Canada, his wife Lovisa R.

State of Things in Somerville.
The municipal election in Somerville went on quietly this morning. The vote is reported light in each precinct. When the polls opened the friends of William H. Brine, mayoralty candidate, supposed that Alderman Mentzer would throw enough votes over to the former to elect him. This hope was crushed during the morning hours, and Mr. Brine's adherents felt like giving up the contest. In ward 2, Albert K. Kerr, Independent, is making a strong fight against Councilman F. F. Dady, the regular nominee, and **Charles J. Shepard**, independent, is polling a large vote for the school board in opposition to Dr. Couch, the regular candidate for school committee. There appears to be no opposition to the regular nominees for the Board of Aldermen in any ward. In ward 3 Councilman O'Brien is not polling the full strength of the regular ticket. Somerville will vote "no" on the license question, and voters are being urged to put that ballot in the boxes.

The Boston Globe - December 6, 1887

WARD THREE
Precinct 1—Warden, John J. Shea, D; clerk, Jean M. Berry, R; inspectors, Norman H. Martin, R, Leo Graham, D, Cornelius B. White, D, Edward J. Crimmings, D.
Precinct 2—Warden, Louis E. Rose, D; clerk, Averil Chalmers Maynard, R; **inspectors, Florence C. Skinner**, R, Walter Hursh, R, Isadore S. Hayes, D, Helen G. Goss, D.
Precinct 3—Warden, Elton S. Sibley, R; clerk, William S. Shea, D; inspectors, Leighton W. Manning, R, E. Louise Walker, R, Arthur W. Keane, R, James T. Austin, D.
Precinct 4—Frederick A. Keppe, R; clerk, Katherine J. Kemp, D; inspectors, James P. F. Quigley, D, James H. Rooney, D, Henry A. Foley, R, Elizabeth, D.

The Boston Globe - August 19, 1926

Hall, and their daughter and son-in-law. The Skinner family and their boarders lived in the house until Florence's death in 1957 and the sale of the property in 1959.

After the Skinner family, the property would be owned by the Swinimer (1959-1960), Harriman (1960-1965), and McAllister (1965-present) families.

Name	Residency Year(s)	Occupation	Relationship	Type
William Vinal Burt	N/A – Vacant Lot			N/A
John E. Cayzer	1884 – 1909	Hatter		Absentee Owner
Austin A. Greer	1887	Driver	Husband	Boarder
Phelia E. Donnell	1887		Wife	Boarder
Nicholas S. Greet	1887 -	Crayon Artist	Husband	Boarder
Elizabeth Greet	1887 -		Wife	Boarder
Charles I. Shepard	1889 - 1899	Clerk	Lodger	Business
D. Henry Morrison	1889 - 1899	Saleman/Bookkeeper	Lodger	Boarder
James C. Macy	1889 -	Music Composer/Editor	Head	Boarder
Fred S. Macy	1899 - 1908	Physician	Son	Boarder
John E. Macy	1901 - 1905	Attorney	Son	Boarder
Burt H. Macy	1901 -	Clerk	Son	Boarder
Mrs Caroline S Kinney	1901 - 1905	Widow	Lodger	Boarder
William E. Lamb	1901 - 1902		Father	Absentee Owner
Thomas Lamb	1906 - 1909	Salesman	Head	Owner
Dorothy G. Lamb	1909 -		Wife	
Jean C. Lamb	1909 - 1914		Son	
Bessie J. Maclam	1909 - 1914		Sister-in-Law	
Hannah A. Riley	1909 - 1914		Servant	
Richard Lamb	1909 - 1914	Salesman	Brother	Owner
Electa M Lamb	1909 - 1914		Sister-in-Law	
Doris R. Lamb	1910 - 1913		Niece	
Gilbert W Skinner	1910 - 1913	Conductor/	Head	Owner
Florence C Skinner	1910 - 1913	Housekeeper	Wife	Owner
Carleton G Skinner	1914 - 1959	Maintenance Helper	Son	
Ralph K Skinner	1914 - 1957		Son	
Ella F. Carleton	1914 - 1930		Mother-in-Law	
Franklin E Applin	1914 - 1930	Machinist	Lodger	Boarder
Willard P Hall	1940 - 1950	Chauffeur	Head	Boarder
Lovisa R Hall	1915 - 1917		Wife	Boarder
Florence E Meskell	1919 - 1920		Daughter	Boarder
Wilbur B Meskell	1919 - 1920	Credit Manager	Son-in-Law	Boarder
Odilon Robichaud	1919 - 1920	Switchman	Lodger	Boarder
Katherine E Robichaud	1919 - 1920	Latesgirl	Lodger	Boarder
G Emery Welch	1920 -	Office Clerk	Lodger	Boarder
Eugene C Kernan	1920 -	Steward	Lodger	Boarder
Willard O. Swinimer	1930 -		Husband	Owner
Grace E. Swinimer	1930 -		Wife	Owner
Harold F. Harriman, Jr.	1959 - 1960		Husband	Owner
Marian A. Harriman	1959 - 1960		Wife	Owner
Henry P McAllister	1960 - 1965		Husband	Owner
Carol McAllister	1960 - 1965		Wife	Owner

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.

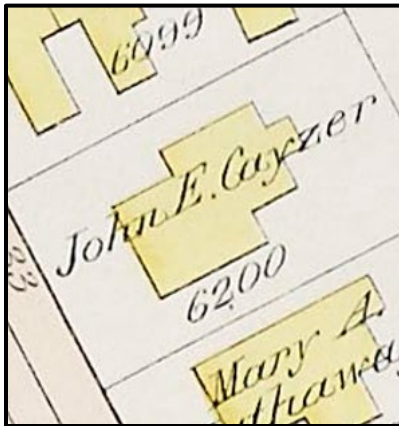


Fig 1

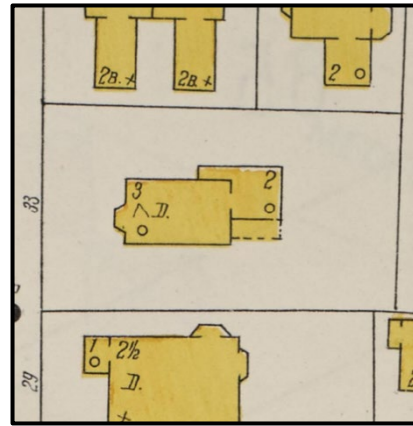


Fig 2

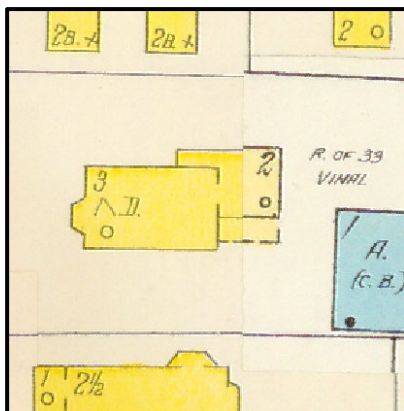


Fig 3

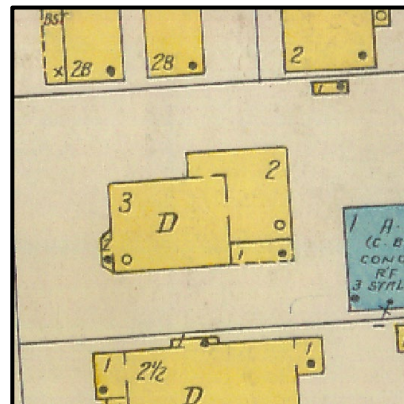


Fig 4



Fig 5

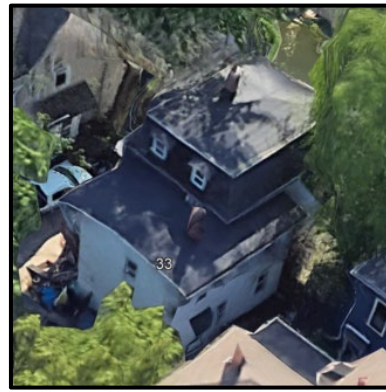


Fig 6

Figure 1: 1895 Bromley Map

- Shows the original footprint of the structure.
- Mansard roof and 2.3 story front massing; shallow gable roof and 2 story rear massing

Figure 2: 1900 Sanborn Map

- Removal of a small massing at the rear of the property, possibly a rear entry foyer.
- Possible addition of a two-story projecting polygonal bay with a gable hood (unclear if this was part of the original footprint).

Figure 3: 1925 Sanborn Map,

- Shows the same footprint.
- Addition of a rear concrete block garage at the rear.

Figure 4: 1938 – 1959 Sanborn Map

- The porch at the right rear of the property appear to have expanded to meet the width of the front massing.

Figures 5 & 6: Satellite image of the property

- Addition: second story massing on the left front of the structure with a slanted shed roof.
- Addition: small hood roof over the front door.

33 Vinal Avenue

The period of relevance for the property starts in ca 1890.

a. Location: The structure is in its original location and was built on-site.

b. Design: The structure is a two and one-third story mansard-roofed structure, with a shallow-pitch gabled rear massing and exterior roofed porch at the right rear. It was built in the French Second Empire style, as indicated by the mansard roof, the gabled dormer windows, and the bracketed eaves.

- Front Elevation

- The front elevation presents an asphalt-shingled mansard roof with a bracketed eave.

- There is a two story projecting polygonal bay with bracketed eaves on the first story and a trussed gable roof on the second story.
 - Asphalt-shingled door hood over front entry door.
 - A set of concrete steps leading to the front entrance.
 - The first story bay presents three (3) one-over-one double hung windows; the second story bay presents three (3) one-over-one double hung windows and there are also two (2) other one-over-one double-hung window on the second story; the third attic story presents two (2) one-over-one double hung dormer windows.
- Right Elevation
- The front massing presents an asphalt-shingled mansard roof with a bracketed eave and a double-wide two-window dormer; the rear massing presents a shallow sloped asphalt roof overhanging two stories of wooden exterior porch.
 - The front massing fenestration presents two (2) one-over-one double hung windows on the first story, two (2) one-over-one double hung windows on the second story, and a double-wide dormer with two (2) one-over-one double hung windows on the third attic story.
 - The rear massing fenestration presents two (2) one-over-one double hung windows on the first story and two (2) one-over-one double hung windows on the second story.
- Left Elevation
- The front massing has projecting addition on the second story with an asphalt-shingle shed roof, added sometime after the mid-20th century; the front massing also presents a asphalt-shingled mansard roof.
 - Slightly overhung eave on the second story projecting addition.
 - The rear massing presents a shallow sloped asphalt roof with a bracketed eave.
 - The rear massing also has a rear egress with a door hood.
 - Fenestration of the front massing includes no windows on the second story projecting addition.
 - Fenestration of the rear massing presents two (2) one-over-one double-hung windows on the first story and three (3) one-over-one double hung windows on the second story.
- Rear Elevation
- The rear elevation presents a shallow-pitched gable with no eave.
 - Fenestration includes one rear window.

c. Materials:

1. *Main Structure:* Asbestos shingle over wood frame; wood eaves; vinyl trim; rear wooden porch, railing, and steps; concrete front steps; aluminum replacement front and rear doors; brick chimney stacks; vinyl/aluminum windows; asphalt shingles on roof; painted brick foundation.

Alterations: In addition to the changes in materials as noted in the Materials section above, the structure has seen an expansion of the rear porch and the addition of a second story projecting massing on the left side.

Evaluation of Integrity of 33 Vinal Avenue: 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 some 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 33 Vinal Avenue meets any of the criteria stated above.
2. The HPC must specifically state why the STRUCTURE at 33 Vinal 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 33 Vinal Avenue meets any of the criteria stated above.
2. The HPC must specifically state why the STRUCTURE at 33 Vinal 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 33 Vinal Avenue is or is not "historically significant".