



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

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PLANNING DIVISION
HISTORIC PRESERVATION

STEP 1: DETERMINATION OF SIGNIFICANCE
STAFF REPORT

Site: 60 Bonair Street

Case: HP24-000047

Applicant: LaCourt Holdings LLC

Owner: Mouhab Rizkallah

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: 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*¹: 60 Bonair Street is a two-and-a-half story workers cottage in the Winter Hill neighborhood. Bonair Street is primarily occupied by two-and-a-half and three-story residential buildings.

Prior to the incorporation of Somerville as a town in 1842, the Winter Hill area benefitted from the railroad construction that began beyond the Charlestown Neck² in 1835 with the construction of the Boston and Lowell Railroad. This allowed more convenient transport in and out of Boston and allowed for the beginning of more development in Somerville.

In 1843, the Fitchburg Railroad began passenger service, allowing more residential development in the southern slopes of Prospect and Spring Hill to residential development, which began carrying over to other areas, including Winter Hill. Years later, in 1858, two horse car lines were established, connecting Winter Hill and West Somerville to Boston and Charlestown, allowing for further expansion of the area.

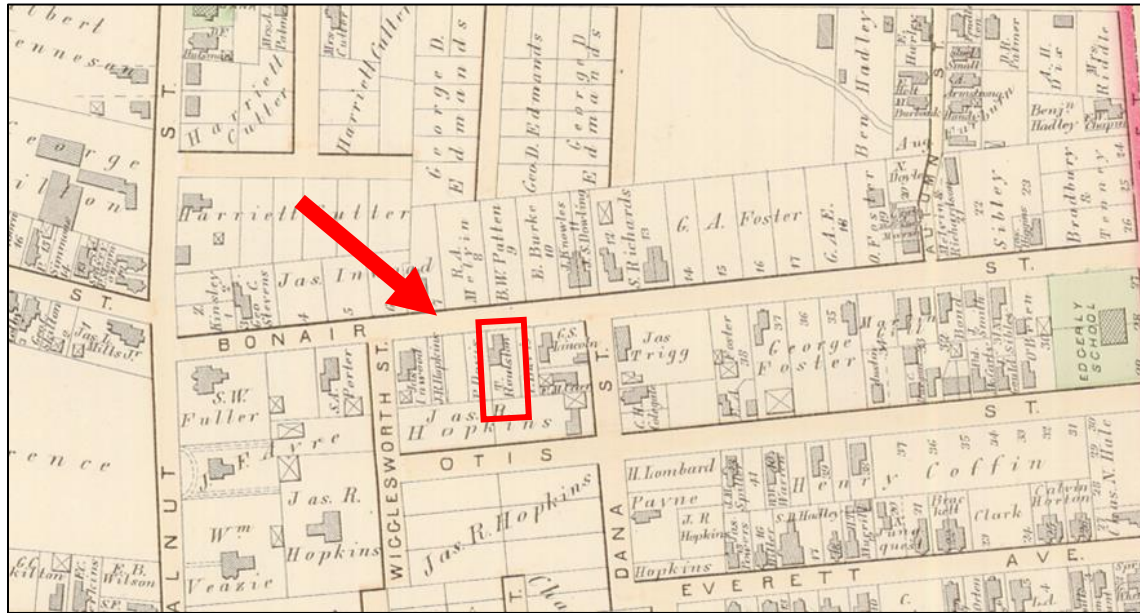
The construction of these passenger lines allowed for an increase in population and the subdivision of land into housing lots to take off in the early 1840s. Winter Hill was one of the first neighborhoods to experience this boom in residential development. Though clusters of substantial housing lots began appearing in the area, many of these lots remained unbuilt until after the Civil War. The value of land in the area increased significantly during this pre-Civil War time as well; land initially valued at around fifty to one hundred dollars per acre in 1842, for example, increased to two to three thousand dollars an acre by 1855 or about \$109,000 per acre in 2024 dollars.

Significant commercial development also took place during the 1840s. Small-framed buildings housing shops began popping up in Winter Hill, particularly along Winter Hill Road (present day Broadway), around the mid-nineteenth century, establishing the area as an early trade center.

Due to increased access to rail transportation, Somerville saw increased residential and commercial growth following the Civil War and the city transitioned from being largely agriculture and quarrying dependent to a more industrial and commercial based economy. Winter Hill was impacted by the Civil War growth of Somerville that extended from East Somerville to Davis Square. Residential development occurred during the early 1870s with much of the former quarry and orchard land in the area that the economy previously depended on being subdivided into housing lots. Transportation lines in this area in the form of passenger rails were continually expanded and improved, making Somerville a desirable location for speculators to develop housing tracts. In the late 1800s, the Boston and Maine Railroad built three new passenger stations in Somerville, one of which was Winter Hill Station (located near the present-day Gilman Square Station). These stations allowed for the increased platting, purchase, and construction of housing lots in the area.

¹ Zellie, Carole. *Beyond the Neck: The Architecture and Development of Somerville, Massachusetts*. Updated Edition ed., Landscape Research, 1990.

² The “Neck” was a narrow strip of land connecting the isthmus of Charlestown to the “mainland”, roughly in the area of Sullivan Square today. This area has now been substantially filled in such that the Neck no longer exists in its original form.



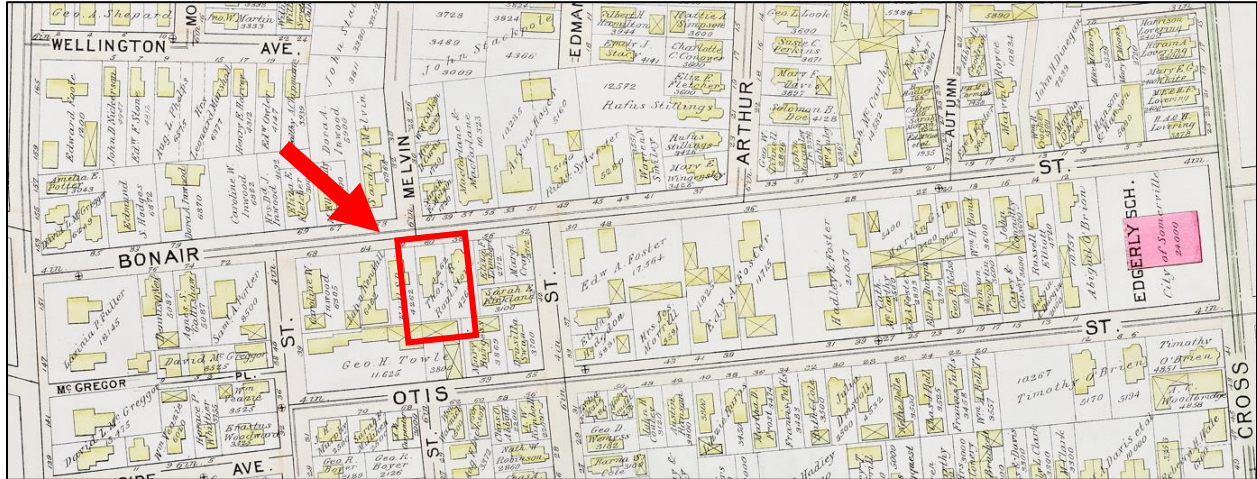
Source: 1874 Hopkins Map, Plate H

On the 1874 Map above, we can see that 60 Bonair Street was part of this post-Civil War development. The map demonstrates that by 1874, the area surrounding 60 Bonair Street was already experiencing significant residential development. Area residents were now also being served by a neighborhood school, the Edgerly School. Also on the 1874 Map, T. Roulstone, who further research identified as Thomas Russell Roulstone, is listed as the first known homeowner of the property.



Source: 1884 Hopkins Map, Plate 3

The 1884 Map above shows 60 Bonair Street and the surrounding. Thomas Russell Roulstone still owns the property, and a rear addition appears to have been added to the house. More houses have appeared in the area near the home, demonstrating the growing residential development in the Winter Hill area.



Source: 1895 Bromley Map, Plate 11

On the 1900 Map below, 60 Bonair Street and the surrounding area appear mostly the same.



Source: 1900 Sandborn Map, Plate 88

However, the 1925 Sanborn map below shows more houses have popped up in the neighborhood, with all the subdivided lots now being occupied with wood-framed (indicated by yellow color coding) houses, barns, and stables. 60 Bonair is a wood-framed building.



Source: 1900 Sanborn Map – 1925 Addition, Plate 88

On the 1938 – 1959 Sanborn map below 60 Bonair Street is in the same built-out state as the previous map.



Source: 1938 – 1959 Sanborn, Plate 48

Below is a table identifying residents and the time periods they were confirmed to have lived at 60 Bonair Street through old newspapers, phone records, the census, and other public records.

Name	Year(s) of Residency	Occupation	Relationship	Residence Type
Thomas Russell Roulstone	1874 - 1895	Ship Carpenter, Building		Homeowner

		Inspector, Councilman		
Elizabeth K. (Lizzie) Roulstone	1874 - 1883	Keeper of house	1 st Wife note that she was the first wife of TRR.	
Elizabeth A. Roulstone	? - 1947	nurse	2 nd wife and widow of Thomas Russell Roulstone	Homeowner
Arthur Russel Roulstone	1874 - ?		Son	
Forrest R Roulstone	1916 (unknown time frame but his residence 1916 is confirmed)	clerk	son	
Thaddeus Harrington	1877 - 1879			Tenant/ Renter
Roxie Roberts	1881 - 1883			Tenant/ Renter
E.V. Gilman	1883			Tenant/ Renter
Charles Gill	1885	printer		Tenant/ Renter
Anna A. Foster	1890 - 1895	nurse		
James W. Armstrong	1898 - 1900	Cabinet Maker		
George A. Whiting	1902	messenger		
William S Sherman	1906 - 1911	Yard Master		
Lillian E Sherman	1906 - 1925		Wife/widow	
Jennie W Sherman	1915 - 1925	Clerk	Daughter	
Charles Alpine	1916	1897		Tenant/ Renter
Joseph Clark	1924			
Alice S Clark	1915 - 1940	Clerk?	Wife/widow	
Ellis Clark	1927	clerk	Son	
Wallace M. Currie	1927 - 1940	sales		
Jennie E. Currie	1927 - 1940		wife	

Thomas Russel Roulstone was the first homeowner of 60 Bonair Street and owned the house until his death in 1895. He was an involved and well-known individual in his community, even serving as a City Councilman, Alderman, and a member of the Masons and Odd Fellows. He was noted as being a veteran of the Civil War. Below is his obituary, written in the *Boston Evening Transcript*, which lists some of his accomplishments.

Thomas Roulstone of Somerville.
Thomas R. Roulstone, building inspector, and a well-known resident of Somerville, died Thursday afternoon. Mr. **Roulstone** was an ex-councillman, an ex-alderman, a veteran of the war, a Mason and an Odd Fellow. He was born in Charlestown, Dec. 8, 1839, and lived there thirty years. In his early life he learned the trade of ship's carpenter at the navy yard. In 1862 he enlisted for nine months and served in Company H of the Fifth Regiment, known as the Charlestown Guards, and re-enlisted in 1864 for one hundred days. He attended all the national encampments of the Grand Army and had served as an aid on the staff of the department commander. He had been a member of Willard C. Kinsley Post a number of years. He took up his residence in Somerville in 1869 in Ward 3. He had been an Odd Fellow since 1874, being a member of Oasis Lodge. In 1890 he became a member of John Abbott Lodge of Masons of Somerville. The funeral will be held next Sunday afternoon and will be attended by the City Government, Odd Fellows, Masons and the G. A. R. post.

Source: Boston Evening Transcript, Fri, Oct 18, 1895 ·Page 3,

After his death, his second wife, Elizabeth A. Roulstone became the homeowner of 60 Bonair Street and owned the property until her death in 1947. Like her husband, she was involved in her community. She was a member of the Ernie Rebekah Lodge, serving as her chapter's treasurer.

pound fracture of the left arm.

**ERMINIE REBEKAH LODGE
INDUCTION, SOMERVILLE**

Erminie Rebekah Lodge held its first installation in the new hall, Thurston st, Somerville, right after a supper. The induction was under direction of Mrs Jennie M. Sheerar, district deputy president, assisted by Mrs Maude L. McVicar, deputy grand marshal; Mrs Emily G. McClearn, deputy grand warden; Miss Bessie Kenney, deputy grand chaplain; Mrs Pearl E. Colwell, deputy grand secretary; Mrs Ethel G. Young, deputy grand financial secretary; Mrs **Elizabeth** S. Norwell, deputy grand treasurer; Mrs Ada Cliff, inside guardian; Mrs Blanche Chapin, outside guardian.

The new list comprises Mrs Grace C. Dunlap, noble grand; Mrs Mabel P. Bruce, vice grand; Mrs Florence Mayhew, secretary; Mrs Grace G. Hollis, financial secretary; Mrs **Elizabeth** A. **Roulstone**, treasurer; Mrs Christabel E. Winslow, warden; Mrs Florence M. Noyes, conductor; Mrs

Source: The Boston Globe Tue, Oct 11, 1927 ·Page 2

She also was employed as a nurse during her time as the homeowner.

Take Off Their Hats to Nurses

While all this desperate work was going on up front, of course, there was a more or less unsteady stream of ambulances—you must figure the little road-lice poking their way, full of wounded, over crowded roads in the thickest kind of night, with no lights—and back in comparative safety the field hospitals were fixing the men up and sending them along to base hospitals.

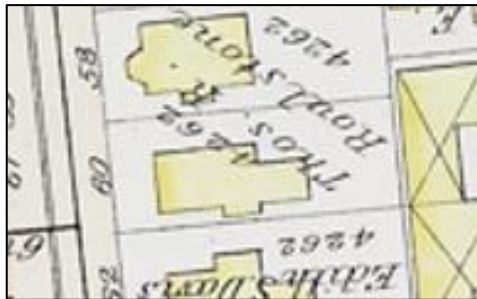
It was only comparative safety—that of the field hospitals. One night down in the third of ours, Mister Fritz came over with the usual bombing stunt, from Avions. The nurses were all bidden to beat it, but they refused. They stayed with their wounded right through; I don't know where they hail from, but here is the roll of honor of American women in this one case—Miss Clara L. Zaung, night chief; Miss Ruth Bridges, Miss Elizabeth Harland, Miss Elizabeth Roulstone, Miss Sybella T. Haviland, Miss Ross I. Hall, Miss Margaret Lowe, Miss Ethel Randall and Miss Della A. McNamara.

Most of our men, when they meet a nurse on the road, just plumb take off their hats, or caps, or calots—those fearfully useless "overseas" things—or helmets. And there is a significance to that greeting.

Source: The Boston Globe, Wed, Oct 23, 1918 ·Page 2

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.

The period of relevance for the house starts c.1874

- a. Location: This structure is in its original location. The building was constructed on-site sometime prior to 1874.
- b. Design: The house is a two-and-a-half story front gable, wood-framed workers cottage. The house had an addition that, based off of the building footprints shown on the historic maps, was constructed sometime between 1874 and 1884. Based off of the footprint of the house and the fact that tenants co-existed in the house as the same time as homeowners and their family members, it was likely a multi-family house.
 - Front Elevation
 - Two-and-a-half-story gable roof
 - Right side entry hall
 - Heavy eave and strong cornice return
 - Right Elevation
 - Four double-hung windows on right elevation
 - Small porch with one entry door on right elevation rear addition
 - The transition between the original structure and addition is visible
 - Left Elevation
 - Four one-over-one single-hung windows
 - Rear Elevation
 - Two one-over-one double-hung windows
 - Second floor deck with egress stair to grade
 - Double stepped-down flat-roofed addition
- c. Materials:
 - Foundation: Brick
 - Windows: Likely aluminum or vinyl
 - Entry door: Likely wood or composite with metal awning above
 - Siding: Vinyl with wood likely underneath
 - Trim: Vinyl with wood likely underneath
 - Steps: Brick with metal railings
 - Roof: Asphalt shingles and brick chimney on main massing; possibly rubber membrane on flat roof addition
 - Front wall: brick with decorative metal
 - Rear deck and stairs: undetermined material – likely wood or combination of wood and composite/vinyl.
- d. Alterations: Modern replacement of doors on the front elevation and windows on all elevations; rear deck and egress stairs; double-stepped down roof on rear addition; front wall with rails; metal front door awning; front steps and rails
- e. Evaluation of Integrity of 60 Bonair Street: Based on the observations of the building and a study of the historic maps, it is Staff's position that the building retains its original form

and massing. The current building footprint matches the footprint seen on historic maps. The strong cornice returns, deep eave, and wide fascia are architectural features that 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.

Principle Structure

1. The HPC must make a finding as to whether or not the principle building at 60 Bonair Street meets any of the criteria stated above.
2. The HPC must specifically state why the principle building at 60 Bonair Street does or does not meet the threshold for historic significance under finding “A”.

If the HPC makes the above finding, the HPC must state their reasons why they take this position.

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 principle building at 60 Bonair Street meets any of the criteria stated above.
2. The HPC must specifically state why the principle building at 60 Bonair Street 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

The HPC must take two votes:

1. The HPC must first vote whether or not the principle building at 60 Bonair Street is “Historically Significant”.
2. The HPC must then vote to adopt findings in support of the first vote.