



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

TOM GALLIGANI
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

PLANNING DIVISION
HISTORIC PRESERVATION

STEP 1: DETERMINATION OF SIGNIFICANCE
STAFF REPORT

Site: 80 Curtis Street

Case: HP24-000059

Applicant: Anthony Seretakis

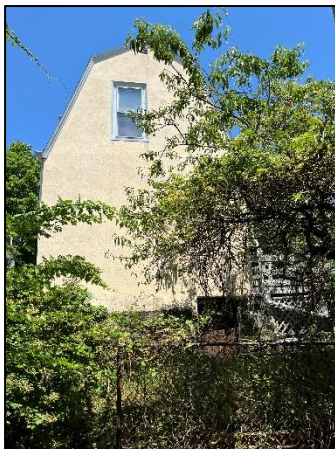
Owner: Same as Applicant

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

HPC Meeting Date: August 6, 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: 80 Curtis Street is located within the Teele Square neighborhood. Teele Square, like the rest of West Somerville, was largely undeveloped until the end of the 19th century. Unlike most of the rest of Somerville, the area comprising West Somerville was relatively flat, and for most of the 18th and 19th centuries it was used for farming and dairying.

Teele Square developed around the site of the early 19th century homestead of Jonathan Teele, for whom the square is named. In 1867, Holland Street was extended from Davis Square and the irregular intersection that it created when it met Broadway became the nucleus of a commercial center in West Somerville.

As buildable land in the other parts of Somerville became scarcer, and as streetcar and trolley service became more available, many of the large landowners and farmers in West Somerville sold their property for residential development. The West End Street Railway car shop was constructed in 1885 at the western end of Broadway at Alewife Brook Parkway, and by 1900 maps show most of the area around Teele Square platted, but only a few houses built.

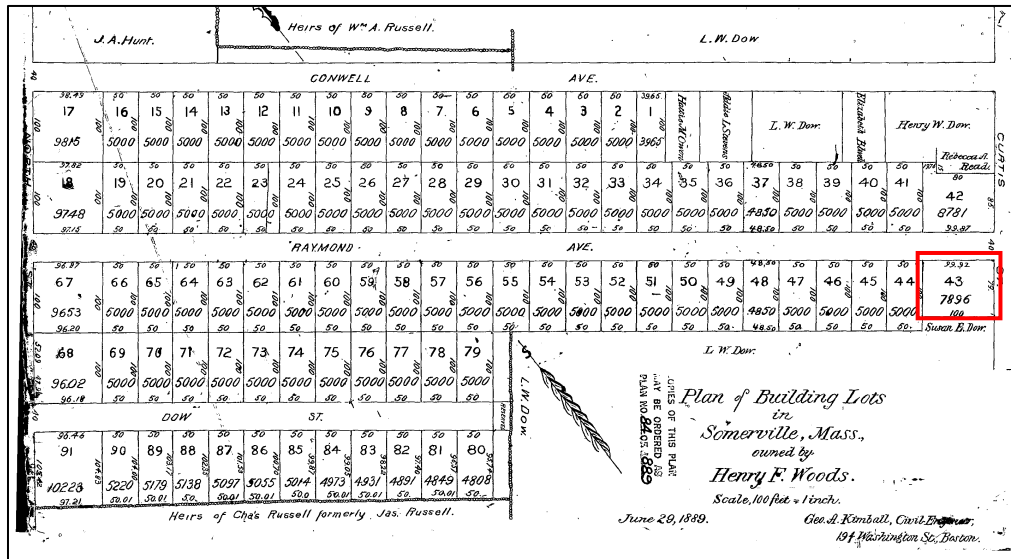
Curtis Street, which extends north from Teele Square, was originally a rangeway, and not used as a street until the mid-nineteenth century.

The earliest maps accessed to date, the 1874 Hopkins, Plate L, demonstrate that this area of Somerville was sparsely populated. Most of the land in this area at that time was divided between large estate holdings and smaller areas platted into housing lots for the purpose of speculative real estate development. The land currently occupied by 80 Curtis Street was owned by a Lorenzo W. Dow, a farmer, and was part of a larger lot under his ownership.



Above: 1874, Plate L Hopkins Map, indicating location of Lorenzo Dow's property holdings

By 1889, ownership of the building plot that would become 80 Curtis Street, shown as Lot 43 on the map below, had been passed to Henry F. Woods. Historical records indicate that Mr. Woods was a businessman who served as president of the Boston Commercial Exchange (a precursor to the Boston Chamber of Commerce) and engaged in real estate speculation.

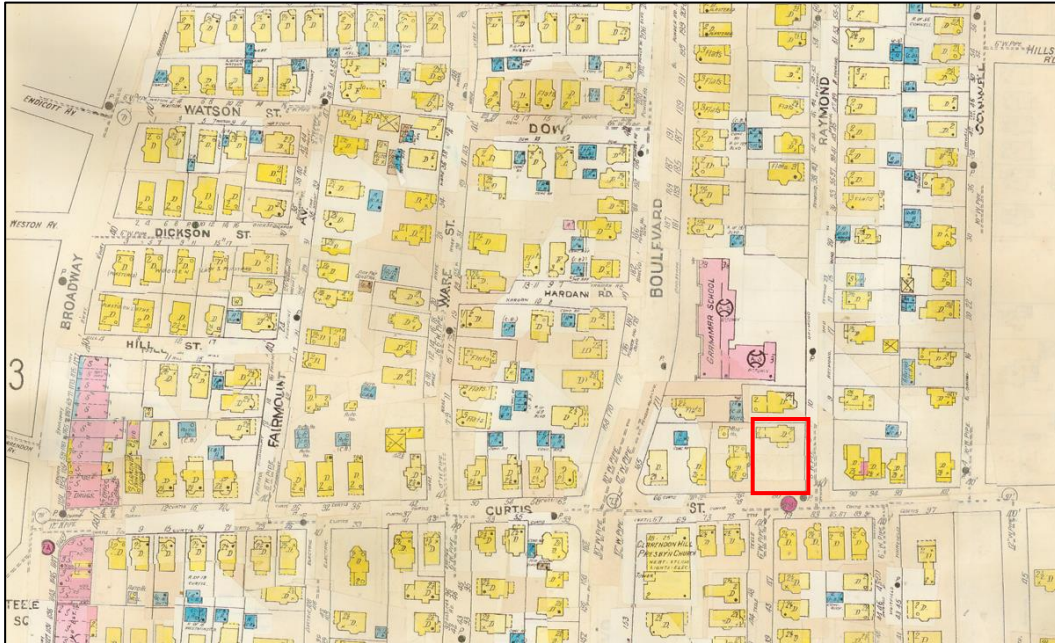


The structure at 80 Curtis Street first appears on historical maps on the 1895 Bromley map, indicating that it was built between 1889 and 1895 and was among the first cluster of houses built to the north of Teele Square.



Above: 1895 Bromley Map, Plate 23, specifying location of 80 Curtis St.

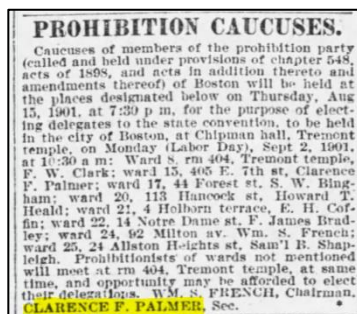
The structure, a gambrel-roofed cottage, was built at the beginning of a period of rapid growth for this area known as Clarendon Hill. Over the next 30 years, Powder House Boulevard would be completed, and all of the lots along Curtis Street and Conwell and Raymond Avenues would be built out, as demonstrated by the 1925 Sanborn map below. Development of the neighborhood also included the construction of a grammar school, now known as the West Somerville Neighborhood School.



Above: 1925 Sanborn Map, Plate 4, specifying location of 80 Curtis St.

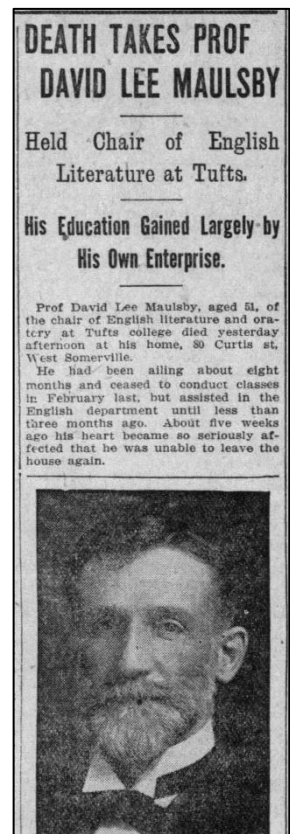
Deed records show the first owner of the structure to be John F. Ayer, a lumber dealer who would serve as president of the Bay State Historical League, who gave the house to his daughter Lillian and her husband David Lee Maulsby in 1903.

David Lee Maulsby was the departmental chair of English literature at Tufts University and an accomplished academic. Born in Baltimore, he graduated with master's degrees from Tufts and Harvard and received a PhD from University of Chicago (with a thesis on Emerson). He also served as the director of the Somerville boys' club. Lillian Maulsby (née Ayer), who married David in 1889, was the superintendent of the Mount Pleasant Home for Aged People in Roxbury. They lived at the property with their two sons, William and Francis, and David's sister Harriet and mother Marie, from 1895 until David's death in 1910.



The Boston Globe - August 9, 1901

Clarence F. Palmer, an architect and prohibition advocate, was the next owner of the property, according to deed records. He and his wife Jennie, a homemaker, lived at the property from 1912 until 1946. During their residency, there were also lodgers at the property, according to the city directories. These included Christina M. Farrar and Ethel N. Leonard, both nurses, and C. Sherman Keene, a musician.



The Boston Globe - August 19, 1910

In 1946, the Palmers sold the property to Donald W and Eva R Dickie, husband and wife.

In 1947, the Dickies sold the property to Lawrence J and Bridget M Collins, immigrants from Ireland. Lawrence, a plasterer by trade, and Bridget lived at the property with their two sons until their deaths in 1966 and 1983, respectively. Shortly before her death, Bridget passed the property down to her son John D. Collins, who lived at the property with his wife Mary J. Collins until the 2010s.

Name	Residency/Ownership Year(s)	Occupation	Relationship	Type
John F Ayer	ca. 1890 - 1903	Lumber Dealer	Husband	Absentee Owner
Vashtie E Ayer	ca. 1890 - 1903		Wife	
David Lee Maulsby	1895 - 1910 (death)	Professor	Husband	
Lillian F A Maulsby	1895 - 1911	Superintendent	Wife	Owner (1903-1911)
William S Maulsby	1895 - 1911	Student	Son	
Francis A Maulsby	1895 - 1911	Student	Son	
Harriet W Maulsby	1895 - 1911		Sister	
Marie C. Maulsby	1903 - 1905 (death)		Mother	
Clarence F Palmer	1912 - 1946	Architect	Head	Owner
Jennie W Palmer	1912 - 1946	Homemaker	Wife	Owner
Christina M Farrar	1917 - 1920	Nurse	Lodger	Boarder
C Sherman Keene	1920	Musician	Lodger	Boarder
Ethel N Leonard	1920	Nurse	Lodger	Boarder
Donald W Dickie	1946 - 1947	Saleman	Husband	Owner
Eva R Dickie	1946 - 1947		Wife	Owner
Lawrence J Collins	1947 - 1966 (death)	Plasterer	Husband	Owner
Bridget M Collins	1947 - 1983 (death)	Homemaker	Wife	Owner
James L Collins	1947 -		Son	
John D Collins	1947-		Son	Owner (1982 – 2020)
Mary J Collins	1993 -		DIL	

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

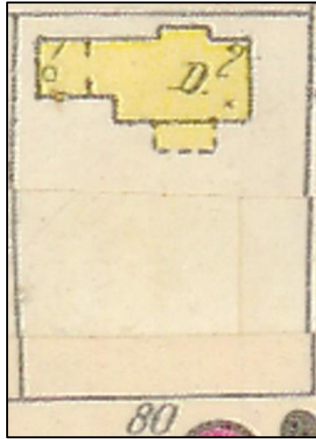


Fig 2

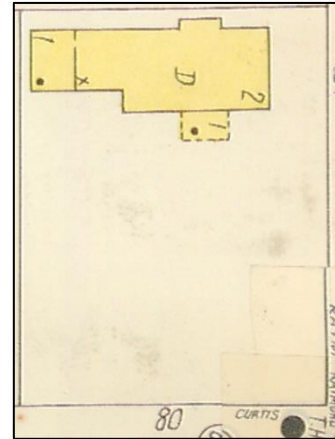


Fig 3



Fig 4

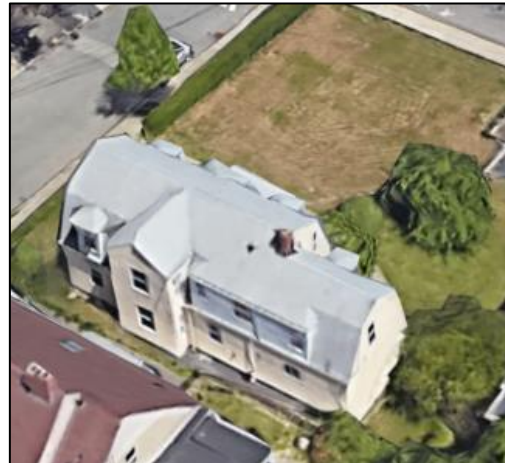


Fig 5

Fig 1: 1895 Bromley Map, close up of 80 Curtis Street

- Shows the original footprint of the structure.
- Gambrel roof 1¾-story main massing with dormers and a 2-story rear gable wing; gambrel roof 1¾-story rear left massing with dormers,

Fig 2: 1925 Sanford Map, close-up of 80 Curtis Street

- Shows the same footprint.

Fig 3: 1938-59 Sanborn Map, close-up of 80 Curtis Street

- Shows the same footprint.

Fig 4 & 5: Satellite images of 80 Curtis Street

- Shows the same footprint.
- Dormers at the left rear massing may have been expanded.
- The front porch/entryway is covered, which may have been an alteration.
- A porch has been added at the front of the left rear massing.

1. **80 Curtis Street**

The period of relevance for the property starts ca.1890

- a. Location: The structure is in its original location and was built on-site.
- b. Design: The primary structure is a one and $\frac{3}{4}$ story, gambrel-roofed, masonry cottage residence with a rear two-story gable and a left rear one and $\frac{3}{4}$ story, gambrel-roofed massing.
 - Front Elevation
 - The front elevation presents an asphalt-shingled gambrel roof with three hipped dormers – one centered double dormer and two single dormers; the front of the left rear massing also presents an asphalt-shingled gambrel roof and a single hipped dormer.
 - There is also a covered front entryway in the center of the front massing, with steps leading thereto flanked by railings on both sides.
 - There is a porch at the front of the left rear massing with steps leading thereto flanked by railings on both sides.
 - The fenestration includes one-over-one double hung windows on the bottom and top stories, and larger single-pane windows for the front entryway.
 - Right Elevation
 - The right elevation presents the side of the gambrel-roof.
 - The fenestration includes two symmetrical one-over-one double hung windows on the first floor, and a centered one-over-one double hung windows framed by thin double-hung flankers on either side.
 - Left Elevation
 - The right elevation presents the side of the gambrel-roofed left rear massing, smaller in width than the right elevation.
 - The fenestration includes no windows on the bottom story and a single one-over-one double hung window on the top story.
 - Rear Elevation
 - The rear elevation presents a shingled gambrel roof.
 - There is a hipped single dormer at the right rear, and a long shed dormer at left rear that does not appear to be original.
 - There is a two-story gable wing projecting from the rear center of the structure.
 - The fenestration includes one-over-one double hung windows on the bottom and top stories.
- c. Materials: Stucco masonry exterior except for the front hipped dormers and the rear shed dormer which have vinyl clapboard; asphalt shingles, wood or aluminum replacement front door; vinyl replacement windows; vinyl gutters; concrete parged foundation; concrete steps and iron railings.
- d. Alterations: Shed dormer appears to have has been added to the rear of the left rear massing; a front open porch has been added to the front of the left rear massing; the front centered entryway may have altered.

- e. *Evaluation of Integrity of 80 Curtis Street* 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 form. Alterations have occurred to this structure which obscure some original architectural details; however, the original massing remains 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 80 Curtis Street meets any of the criteria stated above.
2. The HPC must specifically state why the STRUCTURE at 80 Curtis Street 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 80 Curtis Street meets any of the criteria stated above.
2. The HPC must specifically state why the STRUCTURE at 80 Curtis 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

1. When bringing the matter to a vote, the HPC must include the reasons why the STRUCTURE at 80 Curtis Street is or is not "historically significant".