



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

TOM GALLIGANI
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

PLANNING DIVISION
HISTORIC PRESERVATION

STEP 1: DETERMINATION OF SIGNIFICANCE
STAFF REPORT

Site: 42 Vinal Avenue (**ACCESORY STRUCTURE ONLY**)

Case: HP24-000104

Applicant: Morse Constructions

Owner: Same as Applicant

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

HPC Meeting Date: December 17, 2024

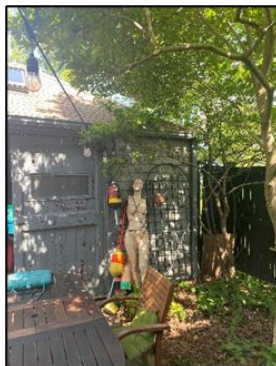
Top: Front elevation (entire lot)

Bottom, left: Front elevation (accessory building)

Bottom, left-middle: Front elevation (accessory building)

Bottom, right-middle: Front-left elevation (accessory building)

Bottom, right: Left elevation (accessory building)



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

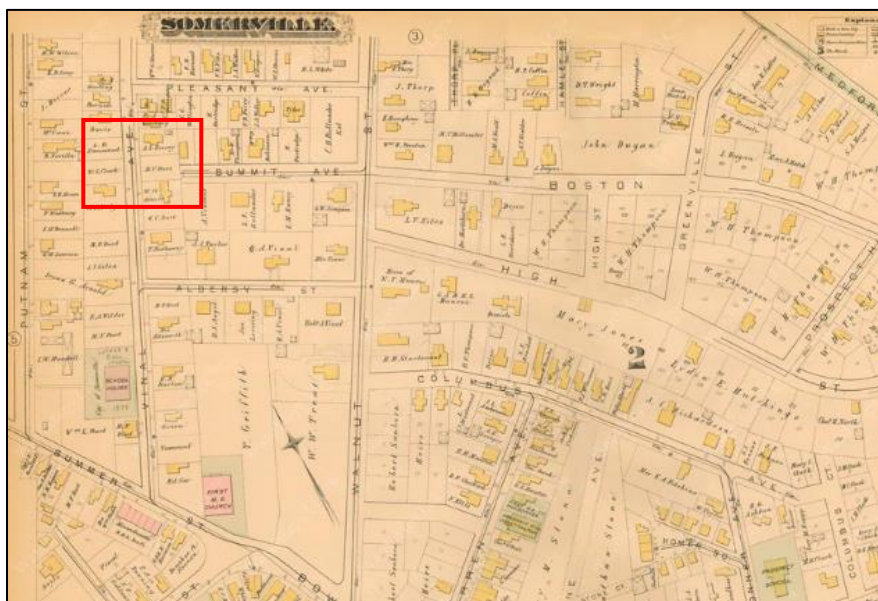
Historical Context: The **accessory building** at **42 Vinal Avenue** is a one-story wood framed structure located in the Prospect Hill neighborhood, close to Union Square. It is on the same lot as the single-family two-and-one-half-story (2.5) house, constructed in 1884, that faces Vinal Avenue. Vinal Avenue is a south-bound one-way street running between Highland Avenue (formerly Church Street) and Summer Street. This portion of Vinal is dominated by two (2) to three (3) story residential detached houses.

The Prospect Hill section of Somerville is located in the south-central section of the City of Somerville. It is bounded by Highland Avenue/McGrath Highway, Washington Street and School Street. The area is a residential neighborhood, that evolved through the late 19th century.

After the Civil War, real estate speculators began purchasing large tracts of farmland on the southern and western slopes of Prospect 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. Substantial industry was located just south of the area along Washington Street and Somerville Avenue.

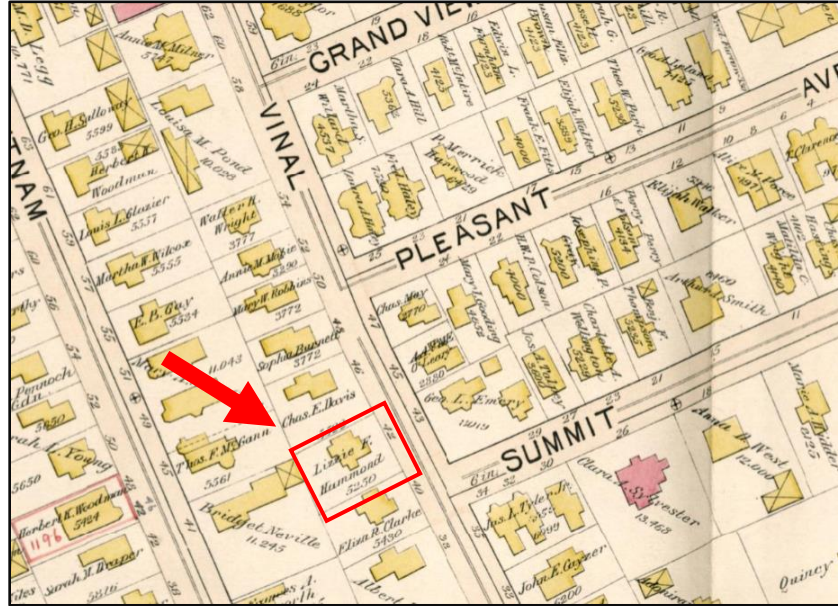
Vinal Ave and the surrounding area had achieved significant residential development by 1884 and connected Central Hill to Summer Street near Union Square. The proximity to transportation and the centers of activity made this area desirable and marketable to answer the need for increased housing.

In the 1884 Hopkins map below we can see the beginnings of this post-Civil War residential development in the area. Although the 42 Vinal Ave lot has not yet been created, residential development in the surrounding area has already made significant progress.



Above: 1884 Hopkins Map, Plate 4, with area that will become the 42 Vinal Ave lot highlighted

While other records do show that the principal house was constructed in 1884, this is likely after the 1884 map was published. The 1895 Map below shows the 42 Vinal Ave lot has been created and contained the principle building by this time. However, the accessory building does not appear, indicating it likely had not been constructed yet.



Above: 1895 Bromley Map, Plate 1, with 42 Vinal Ave lot highlighted

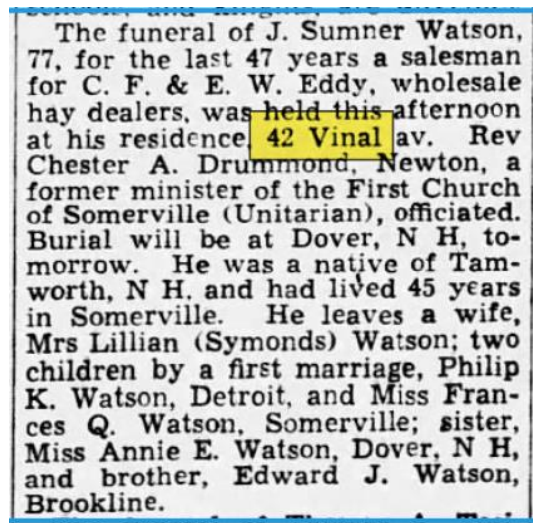


Lizzie F. Hammond is listed as the owner on the 1895 map. Below is a table of confirmed residents of the principal building of the property.

| Name | Year(s) of Residency | Occupation | Relationship | Residency Type |
|--|----------------------|--------------------|----------------------------|------------------|
| J. Albion Briggs | 1889 | | | Business address |
| Elizabeth F. Hammond | 1890 - 1895 | | Widow of George P. Hammond | owner |
| William C. Hammond | 1893 - 1895 | student | | |
| Joseph Summer Watson | 1896 - 1936 | Traveling salesman | | |
| Mabel S. Watson | 1896 - 1920 | | wife | |
| Lillian Symonds Watson (Maud L. Symonds) | 1930 - 1936 | | Second wife | |
| Philip Kimball Watson | 1917 - 1918 | Army (drafted) | son | |

| | | | | |
|-------------------|-------------|-------------|----------|--|
| Frances Q Watson | 1917 - 1933 | illustrator | daughter | |
| Warren Edgar | 1889 | | | |
| Mary Gunn | 1905 - 1906 | housekeeper | | |
| Annie Low | 1924 | Milliner | | |
| Florence M Wiggin | 1925 - 1929 | Widow | | |
| Alice Cheever | 1927 | Secretary | | |
| Paul L Lambert | 1939 | | | |

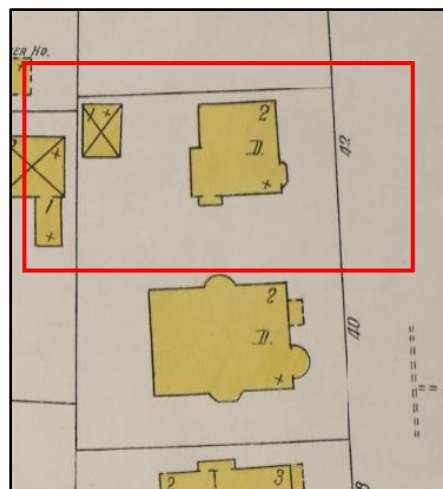
After Elizabeth Hammond, Joseph Watson purchased the home in 1896. He resided there with his family until his death, which, according to a Boston Globe obituary, was in 1936.



Above: The Boston Globe, Dec 29, 1936 -Page 15

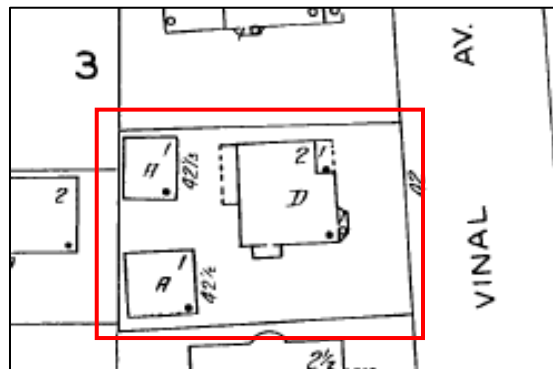
Records from past phonebooks and city directories list additional residents of the home living there at the same time as the Watson Family, indicating that they likely rented out rooms in the house.

During his time as the homeowner, we see accessory structures appear on the site. In the 1900 map below we see a structure pop up, but not the structure relevant to this report, as it is on the wrong side of the lot.



Above: 1900 Sanborn Map, Plate 27, with 42 Vinal Ave highlighted

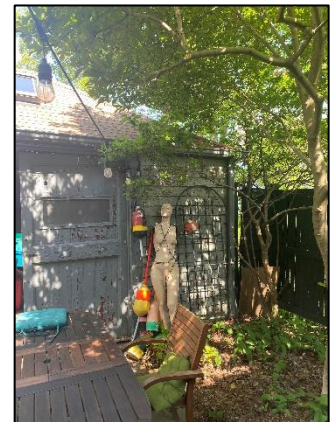
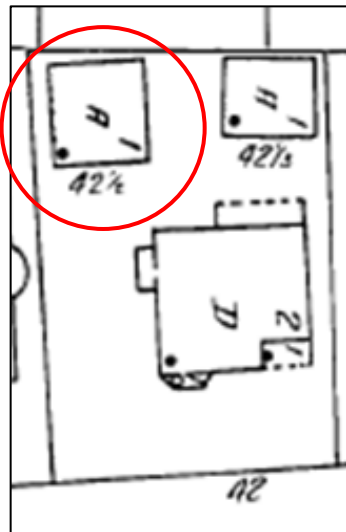
Finally, on the 1933-1934 map below, the relevant accessory structure appears, while the 1900 accessory structure still remains on the lot.



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. 42 Vinal Avenue (Accessory Building)

The period of relevance for the house starts c.1900 - 1934

- a. Location: This structure is in its original location. The building was constructed on-site sometime between 1900-1934.
- b. Design: The house is a one-story wood-framed shed
 - Front Elevation
 - Symmetrical front elevation
 - Hipped roof with ridges
 - Metal skylight
- c. Materials:
 - Foundation: Built on grade, wood flooring
 - Windows: Likely wood
 - Siding: Wood
 - Trim: Wood
 - Roof: Hipped with ridges. Asphalt shingles. Metal skylight
- d. Alterations: None
- e. Evaluation of Integrity of the accessory building at 42 Vinal Ave: Based on the observations of the accessory building and a study of the historic maps, it is Staff's position that the building retains most of the integrity of its original form. Alterations have occurred to this structure which obscure some original details; however, the original massing and key architectural details such as the two-story workers cottage features 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 ACCESSORY STRUCTURE at 42 Vinal Avenue meets any of the criteria stated above.

2. The HPC must specifically state why the ACCESSORY STRUCTURE at 42 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 ACCESSORY STRUCTURE at 42 Vinal Avenue meets any of the criteria stated above.
2. The HPC must specifically state why the ACCESSORY STRUCTURE at 42 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 ACCESSORY STRUCTURE at 42 Vinal Avenue is or is not “historically significant”.