



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

THOMAS F. GALLIGANI, JR.
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

PLANNING, PRESERVATION & ZONING (PPZ) DIVISION
HISTORIC PRESERVATION

STEP 1: DETERMINATION OF HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE
STAFF REPORT

Site: 128 Central Street

Case: HP24-000122

Applicant: Pro Touch Home Improvements
INC – Nilton Dornelas

Owner: Nilton Dornelas

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

HPC Meeting Date: March 18th, 2025



Above: 128 Central Street front 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. IMAGES OF PROPERTY / AREA

There are several other gable front residential buildings Italianate architectural features in the neighborhood including 125 & 127 Central Street. The subject residence, contrary to similarly styled homes in the neighborhood, is predominately in its original form. The subject residence has a full-width one-story porch with square columns, a wide eave, and classic bracketed cornice.

Below: Aerial view of 128 Central and area. See below photo for building identification.



Below: 128 Central Street, front elevation



Below: 128 Central Street front right



Below: 128 Central Street left elevation



Below: 128 Central Street rear elevation



Below: 128 Central Street rear left



The images below are of two properties directly opposite from 128 Central Street and are provided for comparison. Though built a few years apart from 128 Central, 125 Central (below, right) and 127 Central (below, left), are also gable-fronted. All three structures share similar

form and massing and Italianate style details (steeply pitched gabled roofs, three-bay wide construction, deep eave and one or windows under the front gable peak, rear ells. 125 Central presents a front bay and front oriel (second story, front). 127 likely had at least a first story bay to the right of the (now double) entry hall.)

Below: 127 Central St. (right) and 125 Central St. (Left)



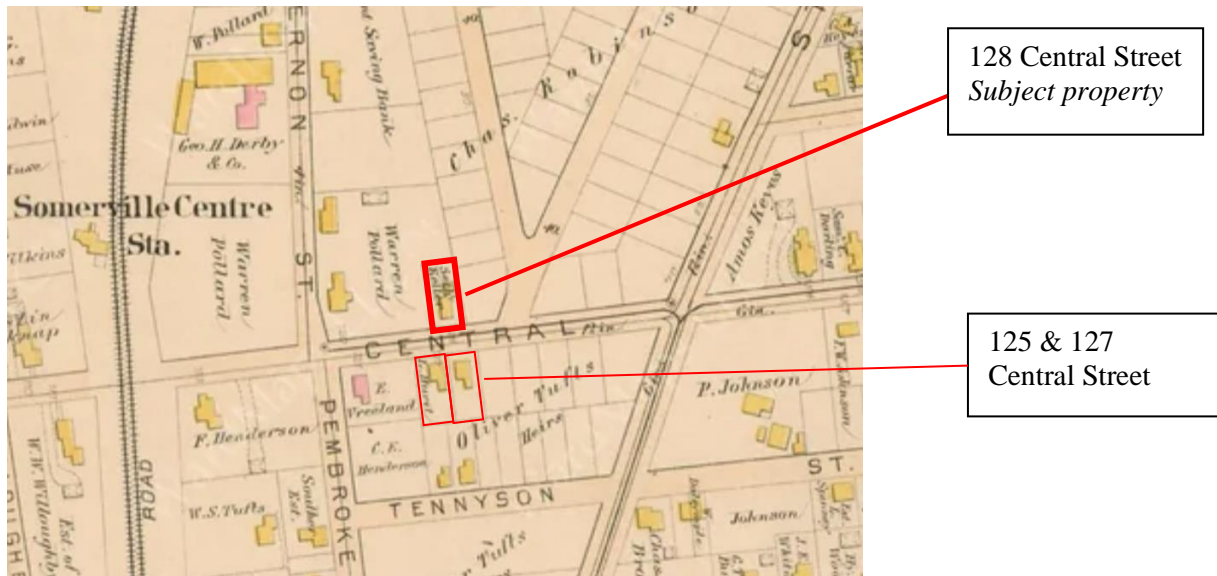
III. HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

Historical Context: 128 Central Street is a Gable front family style home with Italianate and Greek revival features built c.1880.

The style of 128 Central Street is one that was commonly used as railroads expanded and commerce grew especially in New England. Gable-front houses were particularly well-suited for narrow urban lots as areas began to rapidly expand in the northeast, especially those in proximity to railroads like the subject property. Houses such as 128 Central often housed one- or two-family units or a single family with boarders taken in. Houses such as these were built predominantly for working class families.

The 1884 Hopkins Map shows 128 Central Street in its original form, as well as the similar properties of 125 & 127 Central Street, all of which are outlined in red below. Also in proximity to the subject property is the Somerville Centre (railroad) Station. Urban lots were beginning to be subdivided, but a large portion of the neighborhood, thought platted, had not yet been developed at this point in time, especially in comparison to the density that is present today.

Below: Portion of the 1884 Hopkins Map



On the 1895 Bromley Map, Mary Keeler, was listed as the owner of 128 Central Street. According to Somerville City Directories, it appears that Mary and her family were living at the residence and her husband, Charles Keeler, was operating his bookkeeping business at the residence as well. The subject property is highlighted in red below.

Below: Portion of the 1895 Bromley map



Below: Portion of the 1900 Sandborn map



Below: 1917 City Directory listing for 128 Central St.

110	SOMERVILLE [1917] DIRECTORY	
Central—con		105 William W Weaver
36 Abigail P Hazelton		105 Charles E Piper
36 William B Fleming		108 G Arthur Pearson
40 Charles M Hemenway		108 Leon Soule
49 John H Fitzgerald		108 Joseph A Lutz
53 Theodore H Locke		108 Frank G Young
58 Adelbert B Carpenter		108 Thomas G Snow
60 Mrs Catherine Grimshaw		108 Carl W Chapin
60 James R McMinn		111 Harriet Willoughby
60 Andrew M Greenwood		113 George T Willoughby
61 William W Follansby Jr		119 J Frank Mixer
62 Gabriel Farrell		120 Silas P Fales
62 Florence M Grow		120 Elmer B Parker
62 James H Ellis		121 Fred Allen
62 Mrs James Ellis		125 Lyman C Hurd
62 Mrs Harriett L Henry		126 Laurin A Woodward
62 Mrs Georgianna Ellis		126 Guy S Woodward
65 George Willis Clark		127 Lot J Mulqueeney
65r Charles L Clarke		127a William A Gerish
66 Dominic F Keegan		128 Charles W Keeler
67 Ernest D Elwin		129 David S Day

IV. 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 begins between 1880 - 1884

- a. Location: The structure is in its original location.
- b. Design: 2 ½-story front gabled, wood-framed structure with a full width porch held up by square columns with a classic bracketed cornice. Slightly steep pitched roof. The building is composed of main massing with subservient two-story gable-roofed rear addition. Covered front porch extant on the front façade.

Front elevation: three bays wide with three bays presented on the first and second stories. Single window centered under gable peak. Covered front porch running width of façade and accessed by three steps.

Right elevation: largely windowless façade except for the second story rear of the main massing. Square bay at rear of first story.

Left elevation: two bays deep, windows symmetrically placed across façade. Polygonal bay on first story at rear of elevation.

Rear elevation: First and second story of main massing present one window each. Two-story rear addition presents windowless backside, but a right elevation with an open deck accessed by a set of steps, two windows and access door.

- c. Materials: Asbestos shingle siding, wood front steps with metal rails; asphalt shingling on roof; brick foundation; wood decking on front porch and rear deck; appear to be wood rails and balusters flanking the front portico; wood door; wood pilasters with capital details around the front door and front first story façade; window material unknown; brick chimney stack; wood detailing (cornices, eaves, capitals).
- d. Alterations: Windows appear to have been replaced at different points in time. The rear deck was a later addition.

Evaluation of Integrity: 128 Central Street retains integrity of location, original form and massing, deep eave and strong cornice. Original window openings and right-side entry hall remain extant on the front elevation. Original and later bay windows also remain extant.

V. 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.

1. The HPC must make a finding as to whether or not the structure at 128 Central Street meets any of the criteria stated above.
2. The HPC must specifically state why the structure at 128 Central Street does or does not meet the threshold for historic significance under finding “i”.

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.

1. The HPC must make a finding as to whether or not the structure at 128 Central Street meets any of the criteria stated above.
2. The HPC must specifically state why the structure at 128 Central Street does or does not meet the threshold for historic significance under finding “ii”.

VI. VOTE

When bringing the matter to a vote, the HPC must include the reasons why the structure at 128 Central Street is or is not “historically significant”.