



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

THOMAS F. GALLIGANI
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

PLANNING DIVISION
HISTORIC PRESERVATION

STEP 1: DETERMINATION OF SIGNIFICANCE
STAFF REPORT

Site: 142 Cross Street

Case: HP24-000095

Applicant: JAC Investments LLC

Owner: Same as applicant

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

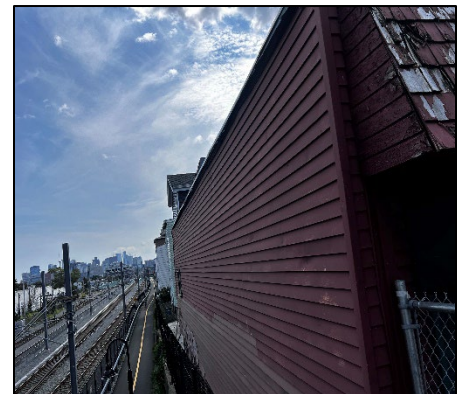
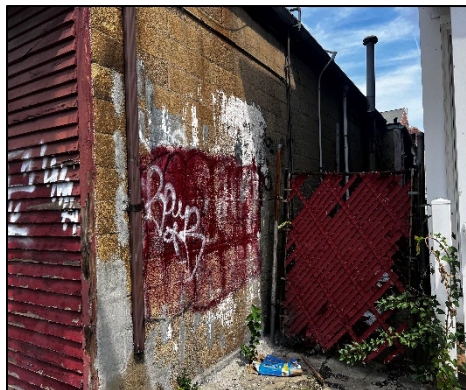
HPC Meeting Date: March 18, 2025

Top: Front elevation

Bottom, left: Right elevation

Bottom, middle: Rear elevation

Bottom, right: Left 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.

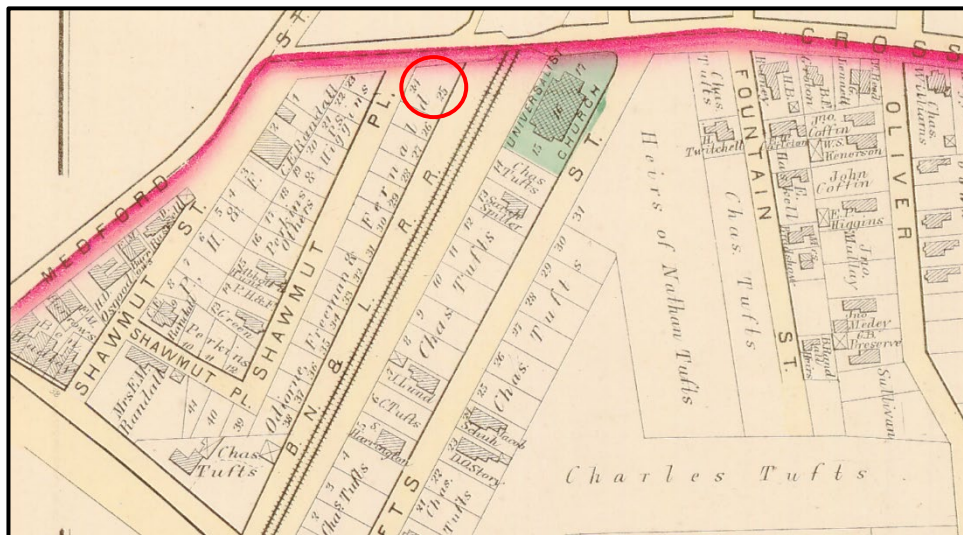
I. HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

Historical Context: 142 Cross Street is a one-story commercial building located in East Somerville. The odd and even sides of Cedar Street as well as adjacent side streets are dominated by residential structures.

East Somerville once had two drumlins or hills. These hills created the northern and southern natural boundaries of the area. Both were taken down and used as landfill between 1870 and 1900. A substantial portion of the neighborhood was clay land and swamp. The tidal swamplands were drained by the outlet of the Miller River (since filled). The area later became suitable land for industrial land uses.

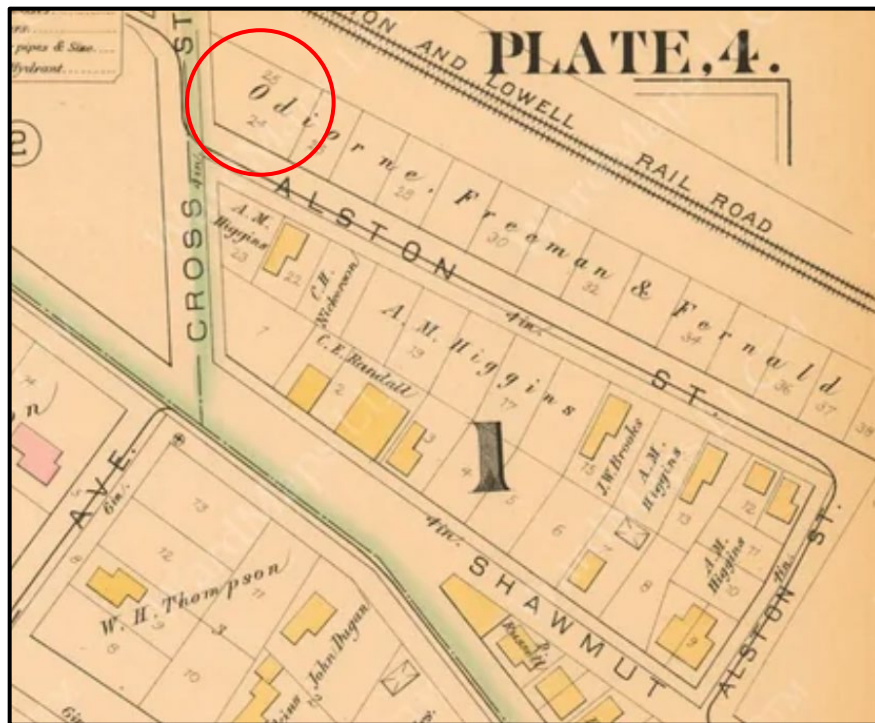
Early settlement in East Somerville (which was part of Charlestown until 1842) concentrated along a few main roads, including present-day Cross Street, which played a key role during the American Revolution. Prior to the Revolution, a small number of houses were built along present-day Washington Street. The area saw skirmishes as it connected Bunker Hill to General Washington's headquarters. The Runey pottery was an early industry in the area. The arrival of railroads in the mid-19th century significantly impacted the area's residential character, leading to denser development and plans for commuting-focused housing.

1874 Hopkins
Map – Plate
B&C



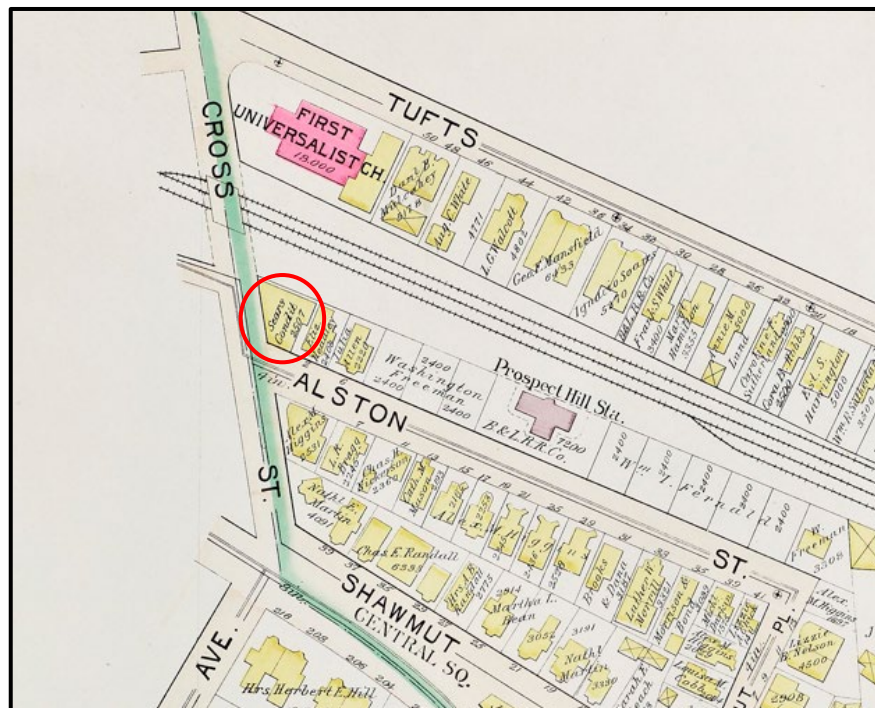
The 1874 Hopkins Map shows that this section of Cross Street and adjacent streets exist and are platted. Development is scattered at this time with concentrations of buildings near Medford Street and Fountain/Oliver Streets. The 1874 map shows that this parcel was owned by Odiorne, Freeman, and Fernald. No building existed on the parcel at this point in time. Note that current day Alston Street was then named Shawmut Place.

1884 Hopkins
Map – Plate 4



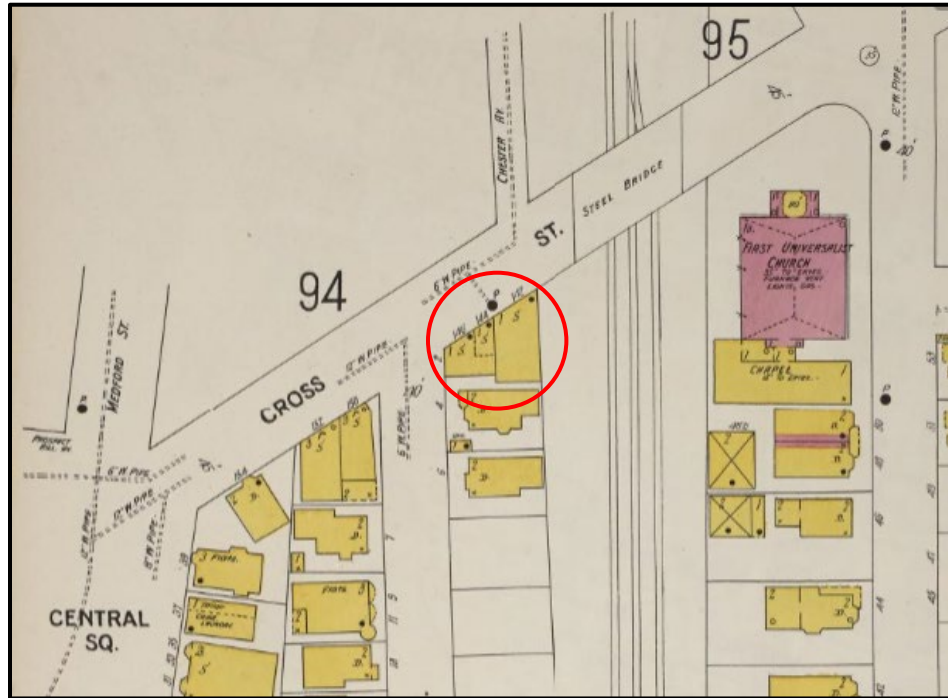
The 1884 Bromley Map shows this section of Cross Street is still in the same state as what is shown on the 1874 Hopkins Map. The address of 142 Cross Street does not exist and it appears the parcel now has an Alston St address. The parcels on that section of Alston Street are still owned by Odiorne, Freeman, and Fernald.

1895 Bromley
Map – Plate 8



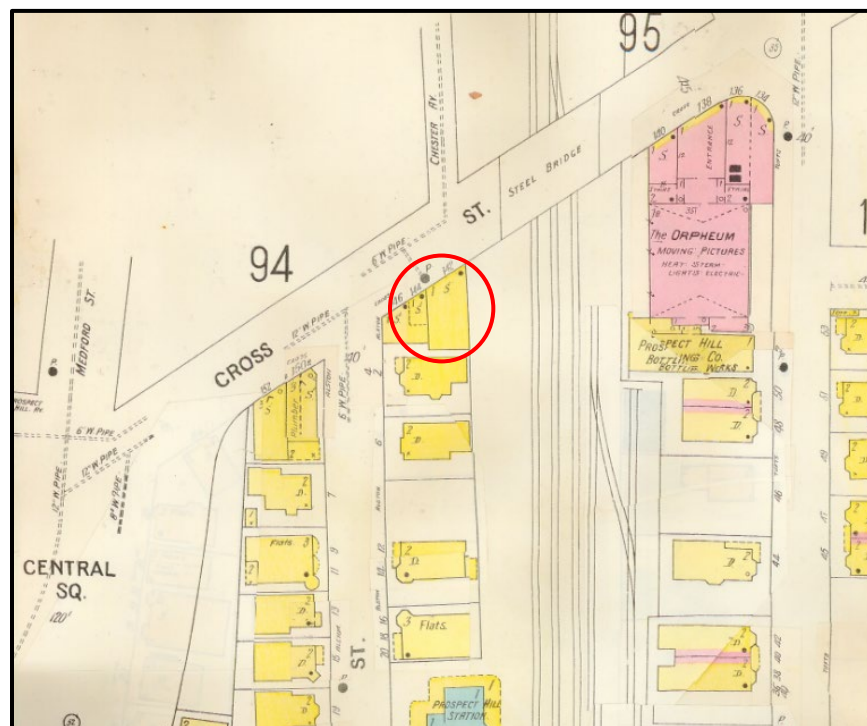
The 1895 Bromley Map shows a structure on the parcel, owned by Sears Condit. Nearby adjacent streets have been developed, but Alston Street, though platted, still had undeveloped parcels. The Bromley Map (above) also shows that the Prospect Hill Station had been constructed.

1900 Sanborn
Map – Plate 99



The 1900 Sanborn map (above) shows a that the one-story building on the subject property has been split up into two stores. The dotted line most likely represents an internal partition. The address of 142 Cross Street is now noted on the right-hand side of the parcel. According to city directory information on people who worked at this location, it most likely housed a small grocery store. Note that this map depicts a ‘Central Square’ which no longer exists as a neighborhood ‘square’ in Somerville.

1925 Sanborn
Addition – Plate
99



The 1925 Sanborn addition map (above) shows the parcel in the same state of development as the 1900 Sanborn map. More of Alston Street has been developed and down the street from 142 Cross Street is “The Orpheum Moving Pictures” movie theater. This theater was converted from a church and opened in 1916. The Church on this site (whose brick edifice still stands along Cross Street), was the third home of the Universalist Church on the same parcel. The Universalist Church then moved to 125 Highland Avenue between 1916 and 1923 after vacating its Cross Street location.

People who worked at 142 Cross Street:

Name	Year(s) at location	Occupation	Residency in Somerville	Residency Type
Richard D. Groombridge	1899	Grocer	206 Medford St	Homeowner
Ernest C. Wallace	1899	Clerk	206 Medford St	Boarded
Fred R. Maynard	1900	Clerk	Lived in Cambridge	Homeowner
Clarence A. Smith	1900-1910	Butter and Eggs	25 Monroe St	Homeowner
Stephen B. Smith	1900-1902	Clerk	25 Monroe St	Boarded
George M. Small	1902-1903	Clerk	7 Kingston St	Boarded
Elisha H. Bearse	1903-1910	Clerk & Manager	258 Medford St (1903-1904) 20 Dell St (1903 onward)	Boarded at 258 Medford St Homeowner at 20 Dell St
Ralph Bearse	1905	Clerk	20 Dell St	Boarded
Seth K. Ames	1911-1919	Butter and Eggs	Lived in Melrose	Homeowner
George A. Colbath	1911-1919	Manager	91 Hudson St 52 Prichard Ave	Homeowner

Staff were not able to determine the name of the store with the time available to them for research. At some point in time the store was converted into a bar/restaurant. At one point it was Donovan’s, Cicero’s and then Kerry’s before it was the restaurant Mr. B’s Italian Restaurant. Mr. B’s has since been closed for some time. The building remains vacant.

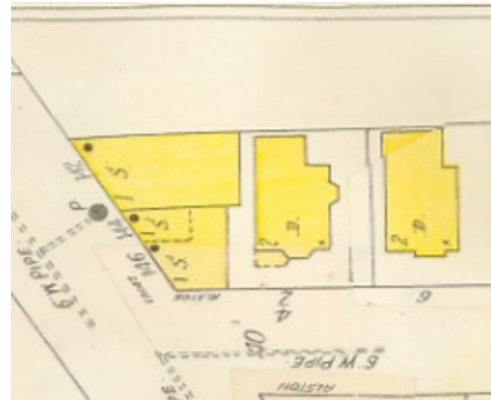
II. ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

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.



Above: Figure 1



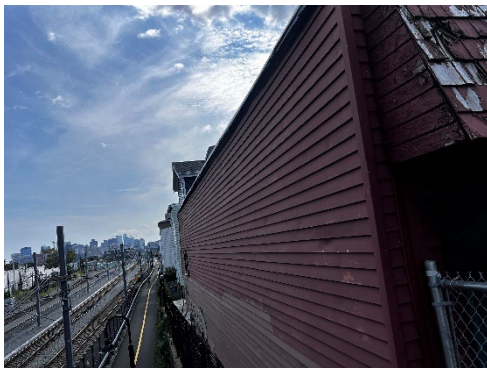
Above: Figure 2



Above: Figure 3



Above: Figure 4



Above: Figure 5



Above: Figure 6

Figure 1: 1895 Bromley Map

- Shows the building's footprint when it was first constructed.

Figure 2: 1925 Sanborn Addition Map

- Shows the building divided into what appears to be two storefronts and an interior partition (dotted line).

Figure 3: Front elevation

Figure 4: Rear elevation

Figure 5: Left elevation

Figure 6: Right elevation

1. 142 Cross Street

The period of relevance for the house starts c.1884-1895

- a. Location: This structure is in its original location on the corner of Cross and Alston Streets. The building was constructed on-site sometime between 1884 and 1895. According to building permit records, the building underwent a remodel in 1947.
- b. Design: Single-story, wood-framed early 20th century commercial building
 - Front Elevation: Brick facing, aluminum or wood siding, painted wood, asphalt or asbestos shingles
 - Rear Elevation: Cinder block
 - Right Elevation: Brick facing, aluminum or wood siding, painted wood, asphalt or asbestos shingles
 - Left Elevation: aluminum or wood siding
- c. Materials:
 - Foundation: Concrete
 - Windows: Wood framed
 - Entry door: Later addition front door
 - Siding: Aluminum or wood siding and cinder block rear walls
 - Frame: Wood framed
 - Steps: None
 - Roof: Flat roof (rubber) with faux 20th century mansard-style element attached to the edge of the roof
 - Chimneys: None
- d. Alterations: The building underwent renovations in 1947 to most likely be converted to a restaurant/bar use from store(s).
- e. Evaluation of Integrity of 142 Cross Street: Based on the observations of the building and a study of the historic maps and permit history, it is Staff's position that the building does retain its original massing but as it has undergone numerous renovations over the years, the building overall does not retain integrity of its original built form.

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 142 Cross Street meets any of the criteria stated above.
2. The HPC must specifically state why the STRUCTURE at 142 Cross 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 142 Cross Street meets any of the criteria stated above.
2. The HPC must specifically state why the STRUCTURE at 142 Cross 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 142 Cross Street is or is not “historically significant”.