



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: 199 Elm St

Case: HP24-000120

Applicant: Picker Construction – Pablo Picker

Owner: Wisdom Publications

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

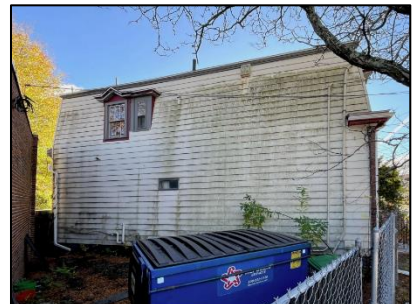
HPC Meeting Date: March 18th, 2025

Top: *Front elevation*

Bottom, left: *Left elevation*

Bottom, middle: *Rear elevation*

Bottom, right: *Right elevation*

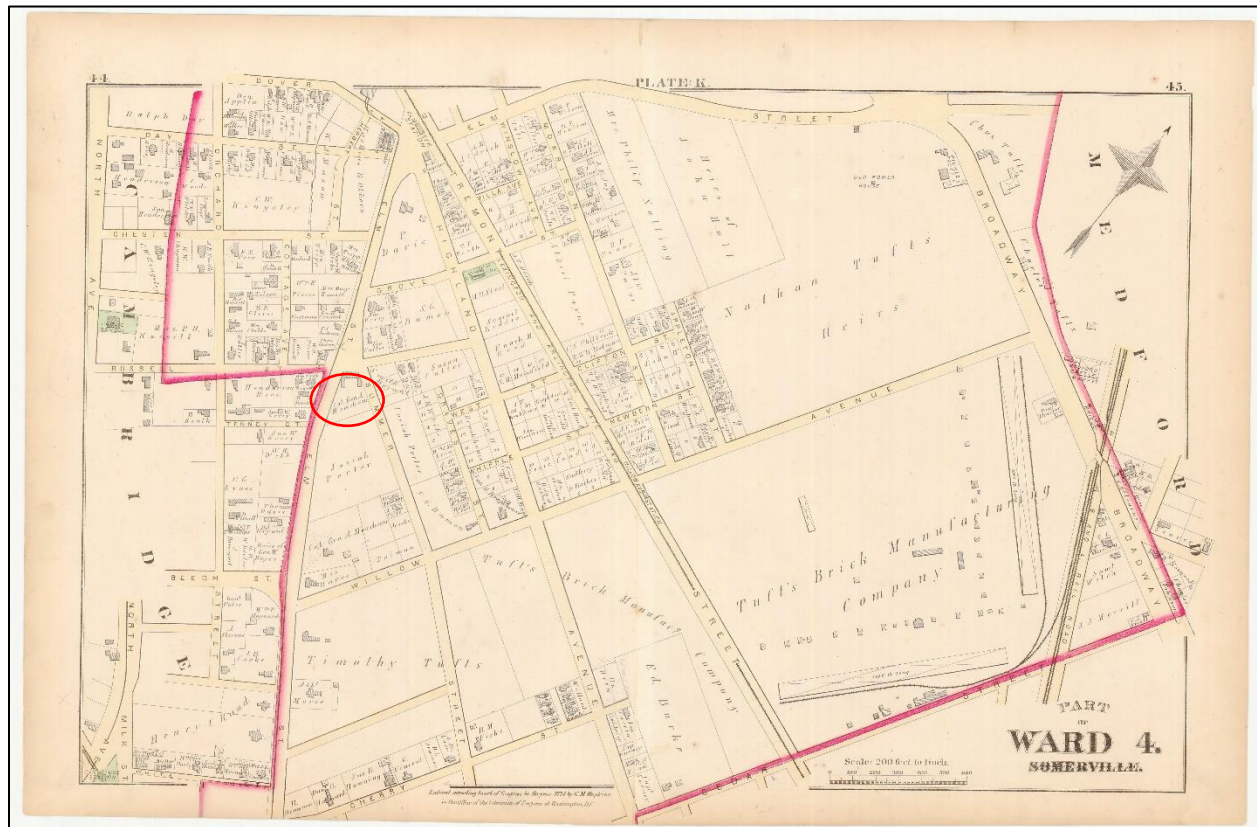


The purpose of a staff report is to provide the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) with additional information and professional assessments regarding properties that are proposed for demolition. These assessments are based on the criteria allowed for consideration by the HPC in accordance with the Demolition Review Ordinance

I. HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

Historical Context: 199 Elm St is a two-story building located adjacent to Davis Square. Elm St hosts a mix of residential and commercial buildings and uses.

In the eighteenth century, Somerville was still part of Charlestown and this area in particular was minimally populated save for a handful of homesteads and grazing land. Only a form of today's Elm Street, then a continuation of Milk Row (today's Somerville Avenue), ran near the location of present-day Davis Square. This key artery connected the town of Medford through to Boston and brought traders and farmers from the northern markets. Davis Square later developed as a commercial and residential area in the mid-19th century after the extension of streets and steam rail lines to the western section of Somerville.



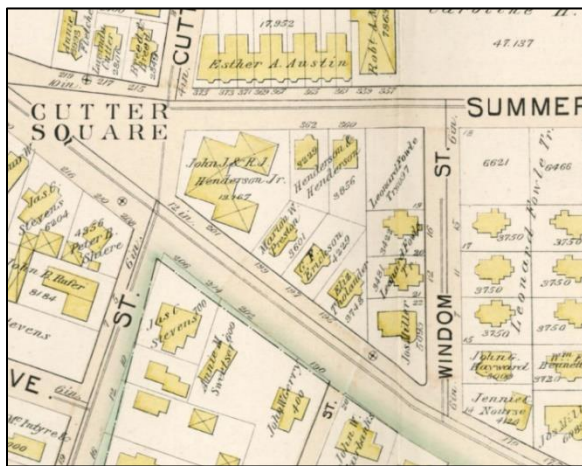
Above: 1874 Hopkins Map, with the subject property circled

Davis Square (at the intersection of Holland Street, Highland Avenue, Elm Street, College Avenue, and the Lexington and Arlington Branch of the Boston and Maine Railroad) grew rapidly as a residential and commercial area after the Civil War. Davis Square became recognized as the center of trade in the general area once known as "West Somerville" encompassing the western section of the city. (see *Beyond the Neck*)

In 1874, the land is owned by Col. George Meacham (see 1874 Hopkins Map). George Meacham was a partner in the Porter Cattle Market and owned land to later become a 43-lot subdivision in the Somerville and Cambridge area, though the subdivision was plotted in 1847, the



1884 Hopkins Map



1895 Bromley Map

construction did not begin until after the Civil War. It is likely that the parcel was developed under the Henderson Brothers based on the historic maps.

No further information was found on this owner. By 1895, 199 Elm St is shown as being under separate ownership under Marion Preston. Further information on Marion Preston was not found, and it is likely that the house was rented to tenants during that time, based on the information in the tenant log (below).

Log of Tenants:

Name	Year(s) of Residency	Occupation	Relationship to Head of Household	Residency Type
Hosley, Danforth	1884	Tinsmith	Head of Household	B.
Woodman, Arthur	1885	None listed		
Lakeman, Nellie	1887 - 1914	Dressmaker, stenographer	Head of Household	B.
DeGrandmont, Arthur W. D.	1919	Elk (?)		

Lakeman Nellie M. Miss, dressmaker, 199 Elm, h. do.

Woodman Arthur H., house 199 Elm [do.
Woodman Charles E., attendant McLean Asylum, boards

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.



Top Left: 1884 Hopkins Map

- This is the first time the structure appears on a historic map. It is depicted as a wood framed square building.

Top Right: 1895 Bromley Map

- A bay has been added to the side and front of the structure.

Bottom Left: 1925 Sanborn Map

- A one-story rear addition has been added to the structure.

Bottom Right: Google Earth View, present day 199 Elm St

- A second story has been added to the existing one-story rear addition
- A second two-story addition has been added to the rear of the structure.
- The bay windows at the front and side have been removed

1. 199 Elm Street

The period of relevance for the house starts c. 1874

- a. Location: It is likely that this structure is in its original location and built on-site.
- b. Design: The house is a two-story mansard. The front elevation shows two front entryways on the right and left side of the building with a large window flush to the façade between the two doorways. The front elevation is brick faced and vinyl siding on the second story. There are two six over six double hung windows on the second story, with a wall dormer. The right elevation has five (5) six over six double hung windows and vinyl siding. The rear elevation has a two-story addition, back entryway and shed-type structure with door. The left elevation is largely siding, with one six over six double hung window, a one over one double hung, and a small window on the first story. The second story windows have a gothic gable-style dormer roof.
- c. Materials: Wood framing, brick façade, vinyl siding, brick foundation, asphalt roof. The front steps are a brick with a concrete foundation and metal rails. Metal fence in front of structure, back ramp and entryway steps constructed of wood. Windows and doors appear to have been replaced.
- d. Alterations: A two-story addition has been added to the rear of the building. The original bay windows on the front and side of the building have been removed. A second entryway has been added to the front façade.
- e. Evaluation of Integrity of 199 Elm Street: Based on the observations of the 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 architectural and structural details; however, the original massing and architectural details remain intact.

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

The HPC must make a finding as to whether the STRUCTURE at 199 Elm Street meets any of the criteria stated above.

The HPC must specifically state why the STRUCTURE at 199 Elm 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 199 Elm Street is or is not “historically significant”.