



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

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

PLANNING DIVISION
HISTORIC PRESERVATION

STEP 1: DETERMINATION OF SIGNIFICANCE
STAFF REPORT

Site: 29 Lowell Street

Case: HP25-000061

Applicant: 29 Lowell St LLC

Owner: Anne Marie Noone

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

HPC Meeting Date: September 2, 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 (DRO). A Staff Report is not a determination/decision, nor does it constitute authorization in any form.

I. HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

Historical Context: The principal building at **29 Lowell Street** is a two-and-a-half-story detached worker's cottage located in the Spring Hill neighborhood, close to Porter Square (0.5 mi to Porter Square Station). The house was constructed prior to 1874, based on historic map information. Lowell Street runs between Highland Avenue (formerly Church Street) and Summer Street. This portion of Lowell Street is dominated by two (2) to three (3) story residential detached houses.

The Spring Hill section of Somerville is located in the south-west section of the City of Somerville. It runs northwest to southeast, and is roughly bounded by Somerville Avenue, Highland Avenue, Willow Ave, and Elm Street. The area is a mostly residential neighborhood, that saw substantial development through the late 19th century.

Spring Hill was sparsely developed and primarily an agricultural area until the late 19th century. Until the 1870s, access to Spring Hill was primarily via Milk Row (today's Somerville Avenue) and the few north-south streets. Between 1842 and 1870, Summer Street extended only between Central and Lowell Streets, with another segment partially built between Porter and Cherry Streets. In 1870, Summer Street was fully constructed between Union and Davis Square, allowing residential development of the area to accelerate as horsecar, and eventually, electric streetcar service was extended to the western edge of Spring Hill.

Lowell Street 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 and the first appearance of 29 Lowell Street on a historic map.

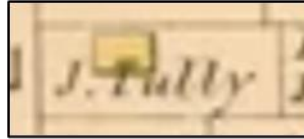


Above: 1874 Hopkins Map, Plate 41, 29 Lowell St highlighted, and a close up of the lot

We can see that this area has undergone further development on the 1884 Hopkins map below.



Above: 1884 Bromley Map, Plate 9, with 29 Lowell Street lot highlighted



On both the 1874 and the 1884 map, J. Tully is listed as the owner. His full name is most likely John Tully, husband of Margaret Tully, who appears as the owner on the 1895 map below.



Above: 1895 Bromley Map, Plate 17, with 29 Lowell Street lot highlighted

The map above shows the growth of Lowell Street over the past decade, as well as the change in ownership. It also appears that there has been a garage constructed on the lot, which is still present on the lot today.



Name	Year(s) of Residency	Occupation	Relationship	Residence Type
John Tully	1874-?		Likely husband of Margaret	owner
Margaret Tully	1874-?	housekeeper	widow	owner

Vincent Salvatore Polimeni	1917-1918	Printer		
Grace Polimeni	1917-1918		wife	
Eugenia Polimeni			daughter	

Little information on the Tullys was available. It appears that Margaret was an Irish immigrant, according to her death records, and census records from 1880 list her occupation as a housekeeper. Ownership most likely transferred to Margaret from John after his death, as the 1889 Somerville directory lists her as a widow.

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
CITY OF SOMERVILLE 480

RETURN OF A DEATH

FULL NAME **Margaret Russell** Registered No. **511**

Place of Death **Home for the Aged, 188 Highland Ave., Somerville** Date of Death **Dec. 7 1912**

Place of Residence **Home for the Aged, 188 Highland Ave., Somerville** Age **42** years **7** months **7** days

STATISTICAL DETAILS

SEX **Female** COLOR **White** BIRTH DATE **Dec. 15 1870**

BIRTH PLACE **Ireland** BIRTH NAME **Margaret Russell**

MARRIAGE DATE **John Tully**

DECEASED'S FULL NAME **John Tully**

BIRTH PLACE **Ireland**

NAME OF FATHER **Richard Russell**

BIRTH PLACE OF FATHER **Ireland**

MARRIAGE NAME OF MOTHER **Mary Lee**

BIRTH PLACE OF MOTHER **Ireland**

OCCUPATION **None**

PREVIOUS PLACE OF RESIDENCE **Dr. St. Donath**

ADDRESS **188 Highland Ave., Somerville**

PLACE OF BURIAL OR CREMATION **Holy Cross Cemetery** DATE OF BURIAL **Dec. 7 1912**

CAUSE OF DEATH **Pulmonary Tuberculosis**

SIGNATURE **Dr. St. Donath** M.D.

ADDRESS **18 Central St., Somerville**

SPECIAL INFORMATION **None**

FILED **Dec. 8 1912** William F. Mitchell

Source: Middlesex County, MA Probate Index, Vol.1&2, 1870-1909. Massachusetts, USA: 1912.

Camb.), house 53 Springfield
Tully Margaret, widow of John, house Lowell, near
Somerville avenue

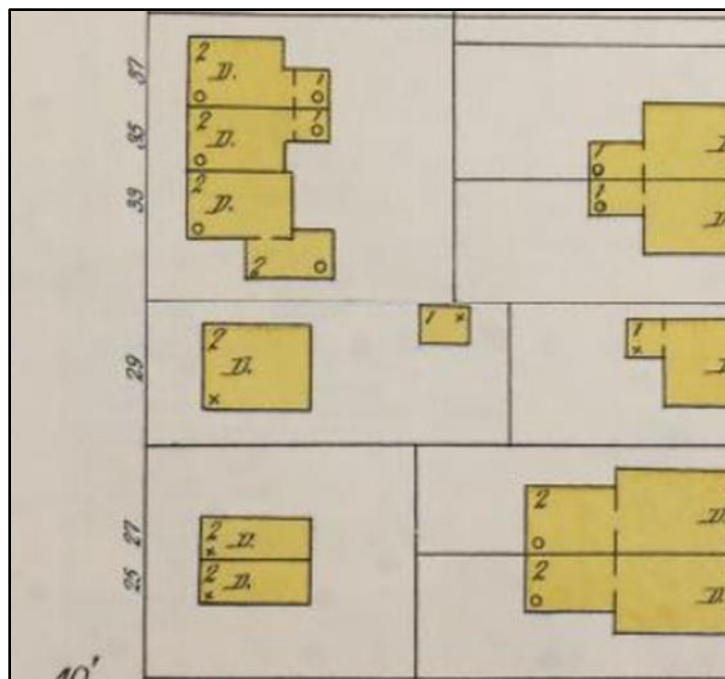
Source: Ancestry.com. U.S., City Directories, 1822-1995 [database on-line]. Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011.

The next confirmed residents of the house were Vincent Salvatore Polimeni and his wife, Grace in 1917. According to Vincent's draft registration card, he was likely an Italian immigrant and worked as a printer.

REGISTRATION CARD					
SERIAL NUMBER	2191		INDEX NUMBER	387	
1. Name <i>Vincent Salvatore Polimeni</i>					
2. Residence <i>29 Lowell St. Somerville Mass</i>					
Age in Years	35		Date of Birth	<i>July 1883 16 1883</i>	
RACE					
White	Negro	Oriental	Chinese	Indian	Japanese
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
U. S. CITIZEN					
Native Born	Naturalized	Citizen by Father's Declaration Before Naturalization		ALIEN	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		Declarant	Non-declarant
<i>No</i>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
13. Place of Birth of the U. S. or when under age two a place or places? <i>Italy</i>					
14. Present Occupation		15. Employer's Name			
<i>Printer</i>		<i>American Rubber Co.</i>			
16. Place of Employment or Business					
<i>Cambridge Mass</i>					
17. Name of Nearest Relative					
<i>Grace Polimeni</i>					
<i>29 Lowell St. Somerville Mass</i>					
I (OFFICER) THAT I HAVE VERIFIED ABOVE ANSWERS AND THAT THEY ARE TRUE					
P. M. F. C. G. <i>Vincent J. Polimeni</i>					
Printed Name, Address, and Signature of Officer					

Source: Registration State: Massachusetts; Registration County: Middlesex

On the 1900 map below, we can see the lot remains largely the same and that the neighboring lots also remain unchanged.



Above: 1900 Sanborn Map, Plate 37, with 29 Lowell St highlighted



Above: existing structure with garage visible

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. 29 Lowell Street

The period of relevance for the house starts prior to 1874.

- a. Location: This structure is in its original location. The building was constructed on-site sometime prior to 1874.
- Design: The house is a $2\frac{1}{2}$ story worker's cottage with a front-gabled moderately-pitched roof. The house is three bays wide and four bays deep. Right-side front entry hall. Two-story front porch with the second story porch enclosed. Front Elevation
 - The front elevation presents a moderately pitched gable with a slight eave overhang.
 - There is a two-story front porch where the first story is open and the second story porch is enclosed.
 - Set of seven (7) steps leads to the front porch.
 - Two one-over-one windows are visible on the first floor, nine one-over-one windows are visible on the second story enclosed porch, and a single one-over-one window is centered under the gable peak.

- Right Elevation

- The right elevation presents a moderately-pitched roof plane with a slight eave.
- The first story presents three (3) one-over-one windows; the second story four windows of the same type
- Gutters and downspouts are present as is a single chimney stack.

- Left Elevation

- The left elevation presents a moderately-pitched roof plane with a slight eave.
- The first story presents two (2) one-over-one windows; the second story two windows of the same type

- Rear Elevation

- The rear elevation presents a moderately pitched gable and slight eave
- A door is visible on the left side of the house on the first-story.
- A fire escape descends from the second story to grade
- One one-over-one window is visible on the first floor, two one-over-one windows are visible from the front of the second story, and one one-over-one window is visible from the top floor.

b. Materials:

- Foundation: Concrete block under porch; likely brick parged with concrete on main massing.
- Windows: Likely wood, with some vinyl on the second story
- Siding: Stucco with vinyl on front porches
- Trim: Wood or vinyl
- Roof: Asphalt shingles and brick chimney

c. Alterations: The windows are likely not original, possible vinyl replacement of porch; enclosed second story porch; original siding stucco-ed over; parging of likely brick foundation

d. Evaluation of Integrity of 29 Lowell 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 in terms of its massing and 2 ½-story worker's housing nature. Alterations have occurred to this structure, particularly the stucco-ing of the façade, which obscure some original details; however, the original massing and key architectural details such as the two-and-a-half 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 PRINCIPAL BUILDING at 29 Lowell Street meets any of the criteria stated above.
2. The HPC must specifically state why the PRINCIPAL BUILDING at 29 Lowell 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 PRINCIPAL BUILDING at 29 Lowell Street meets any of the criteria stated above.
2. The HPC must specifically state why the PRINCIPAL BUILDING at 29 Lowell 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 PRINCIPAL BUILDING at 29 Lowell Street is or is not “historically significant”.