



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: 62 Elmwood Street

Case: HP25-000077

Applicant: Robert Traywick

Owner: Deed Robert Trustee

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

HPC Meeting Date: October 21, 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: 62 Elmwood Street is a two-story, single-family home located in the Teele Square neighborhood, northwest of Somerville. The Elmwood streetscape is characterized primarily by two-story, gable-fronted residential building stock.



Figure 1 1874 Hopkins map with approximate location of today's 62 Elmwood location

Elmwood Street first appears in the Somerville directories around 1877; however, records of subdivisions platted around the Teele Square area are evident in the 1874 Hopkins Map. At that time, West Somerville was largely undeveloped and used for agricultural purposes. In the century prior, colonial settlers such as members of the Tufts and Russell families owned farms and estates in this area.

Between 1870 and 1890, West Somerville experienced rapid development through the construction and improvement of both new and existing streets. In addition, the extension of the railway connection near Lowell Street, linking the Lexington–Arlington Branch with the Boston–Lowell line, crossed through Davis Square. Further, the increased accessibility provided by the advent of streetcars and trolleys encouraged large landowners and farmers to subdivide their properties, resulting in a transition from open, farm-centric land to residential development.

The maps of 1874, 1884, and 1895 (which is the first to depict the 62 Elmwood dwelling) effectively illustrate the steady transformation of the area between Holland Avenue and the Lexington–Arlington rail line from agricultural to developed.

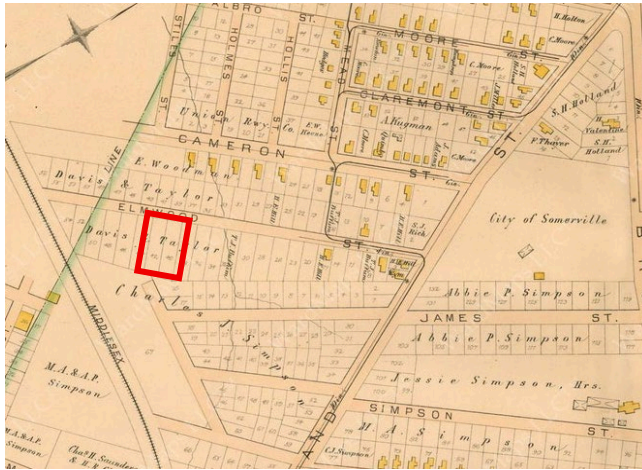


Figure 2 1884 Hopkins map marking approximate location of today's 62 Elmwood location

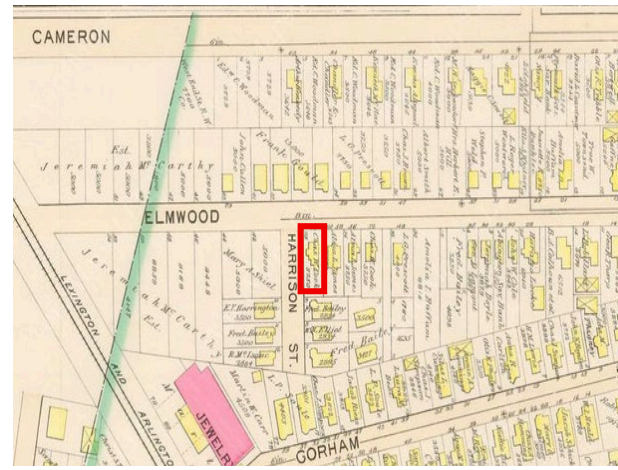


Figure 3 1895 Bromley map marking 62 Elmwood St

The table below records the residents and owners of 62 Elmwood Street from its first appearance in the 1874 Hopkins Map as a subdivided parcel to the present. The dwelling was constructed sometime between 1884 and 1895. The land was owned and subdivided by Davis & Taylor Co., a grain company that produced cornmeal and flour in mills located in Lawrence and maintained an office in Boston.

The first recorded homeowner on the 1895 map is Charles W. Cook; however, it is unclear whether he resided in the house, as no further information was found. The first identified resident was Isaac Yancey, an African American hostler originally from North Carolina. A hostler was originally a worker who tended horses at inns or similar establishments; later, the term referred to an employee who serviced locomotives in rail yards. There were no records indicating the specific industry in which Mr. Yancey was employed.

Following Mr. Yancey, records show two people boarding or rooming for a couple of years prior to the Cousins family moving in and residing there for a longer period. All members of the family were African American and originally from North Carolina and Virginia. This begins a long series of African American residents of the property at 62 Elmwood, an occurrence that we don't often see in our research of properties proposed for demolition in Somerville. The head of the family, William H. Cousins, was a carpenter. According to census records, the family moved to this area sometime between 1880 and 1900. Following the Cousins family, William H. Cutler (or possibly Butler, records show different spellings throughout the years), an African American horse dealer born in Massachusetts, lived there for a couple of years. According to the 1900 census, Mr. Cutler married Nellie Cutler (Butler) and had five children; however, no records were found confirming that all family members lived together at 62 Elmwood.

After Mr. Cutler, William O. Jones and his family lived for an extended period at this address. Mr. Jones and his family, like many prior residents of this house, were African American and originally from North Carolina and Virginia. According to census records, both William and Ruth appear to have moved to the Cambridge area in the early 1900s, prior to the birth of their daughter Bertha. The 1920 census records show William O. Jones as a *Pullman porter* and the owner of the house. A Pullman porter was a common job for Black Men between 1850s and 1960s. In this role they served passengers traveling across the country by rail. The Pullman car was a rail car named after George Pullman an American engineer and industrialist who designed and manufactured the "Pullman Sleeping Car"-a more luxurious and comfortable train traveling experience. Pullman Porters, often called only "George" rather than by their name ("George"

referring to George Pullman) were often underpaid and overworked. However, the creation of the “Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters” (BSCP) in 1925 became an influential organization in the Civil Rights Movement.



Figure 4 – 1943 photo of a Pullman Porter in uniform (Chicago) and a flyer of the “Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters” (BSCP)

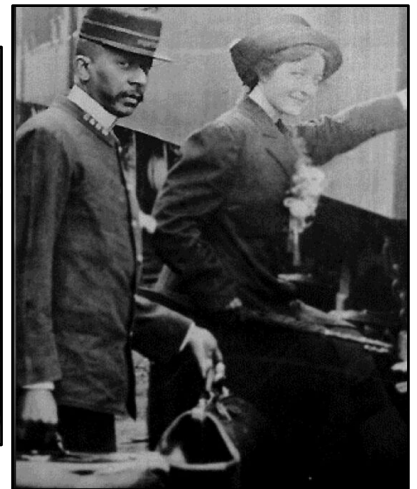
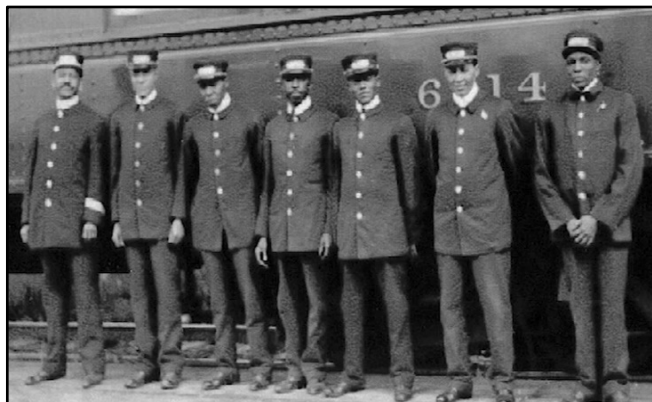


Figure 6 - Interior of Sleeping Car (top and bottom left); Group of Pullman Porter in front of sleeping car (middle); Photo of Pullman Porter holding bags while a passenger onboard (rights); Sleeping Car (bottom right)

After 1920, no records were found indicating who occupied the house until the 1945 deed, when Christie DeRosa is listed as the owner.

Table of residents/owners of 62 Elmwood Street

Name	Date and Place of Birth	Year(s) of Residency	Occupation	Relationship	Residency Type
Davis & Taylor	-	-	Grain Company Partnership	-	Owners of parcel sometime between (1874 - 1894)
Charles W Cook	-	-	-	-	Owner of parcel sometime between (1895 -)
Isaac B. Yancy	DOB 1872 North Carolina	Sometime between 1890s -1899	Hostler	Head	Rent
William Cruse	-	1900-1901	Laborer	-	Boards
William Byam	-	1902	Choreman	-	Rooms
William H. Cousins (Couzens)	DOB 1858 North Carolina	1900-1904	Carpenter	Head	Rent
Carrie Cousins	DOB 1865 Virginia	1900-1904	-	Wife	-
Leroy (Lee Roy) Cousins	DOB 1890 North Carolina	1900-1904	Student	Son	-
Louis H. Cousins	DOB 1897 Massachusetts	1900-1904	-	Son	-
John R. Mayo	DOB 1874 Virginia	1900-1904	Waiter Hotel	Brother-in-law	-
William H. Cutler	DOB about 1860 Massachusetts	1904-06	Horse Dealer	-	Rent
William O. Jones	DOB About 1871 North Carolina	Sometime between 1911-1920	Pullman Porter	Head	Owner
Ruth Jones	DOB About 1881 Virginia	Sometime between 1911-1920	Laundress	Wife	-
Stephen R. Jones	DOB About 1901 Massachusetts	Sometime between 1911-1920	-	Son	-
Bertha Jones	DOB About 1899 Massachusetts	Sometime between 1911-1920	-	Daughter	-
Christie Derosa					Per Deed 1945
Alfred and Marie D English					Per Deed 1945-1988
Avelino B. and Maria G. Rodrigues					Per Deed 1988-2013 Add of son in 2012
Pravin V., Lata T., and Shiv P. Mundkur					Per Deed 2013-2022
62 Elmwood Street LLC / Trustee Robert Deeb					Per Deed 2022-

Sources: <https://www.historictrains.org/collection/philippe-9z32w> ; <https://www.history.com/articles/pullman-porters>

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: Current front facade of locus facing Elmwood Street

Top Right: Current side view of the building at the intersection of Elmwood and Harrison Streets.

Middle Left: Current view of left side of locus from Elmwood Street.

Middle: Side/Back view of building from Harrison Street.

Middle Right: Full view of the rear entrance of the building.

Bottom left: Google map image from 2020 showing left elevation of from Elmwood St. perspective

Bottom Middle: Google map image from 2020 showing front elevation from Elmwood St. perspective

Bottom Right: Google map image from 2020 showing right elevation from Elmwood St. perspective

62 Elmwood Street

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

- a. Location: This structure is in its original location. The building was constructed on-site sometime between 1884-1895.
- b. Design: The building is a two-story, gable-fronted worker's cottage with a right-elevation cross-gable, subservient rear addition, and right-side hip-roofed entryway addition.
 - Front Elevation
 - Gable roof
 - Entry located in the right side from Elmwood St., with steps leading to entryway with railing in the side
 - Small vent above the second-floor window
 - Prior to the ongoing renovation this side of the building showed:
 - Two double-hung windows are symmetrically positioned one above the other.
 - Right elevation
 - Gable roof plane
 - Hip-roofed side entry.
 - Prior to ongoing renovation:
 - Hip-roofed entryway connected to cross gable on the main massing.
 - The addition behind the entryway showed a series of 6 louvered windows with a side entrance and steps leading to this entryway.
 - Left elevation
 - Siding removed and sheathing temporarily covered while under renovation.
 - Prior ongoing renovation:
 - 7 various sizes of double-hung windows asymmetrically distributed on the left elevation on the main massing
 - Anything on the left elevation of the rear addition?
 - Rear elevation
 - Gable roof with an entryway at street level
 - One opening of a window on the second floor. (Not picture prior ongoing renovation to note any other details).
- c. Materials:
 - Foundation: Main massing: likely concrete-parged brick or stone. Right elevation additions are likely concrete or concrete block.
 - Windows: Not currently identifiable, but windows seen on the 2020 Google street view were replacement windows.
 - Entry door: Wood, fiberglass, or metal with glass on upper half
 - Siding: Exposed wood sheathing; original siding not present; presently covered during renovation (previously vinyl per assessor's records).
 - Trim: No trim currently(Vinyl prior no removal which likely covered original wood trim)
 - Steps: Poured concrete with brick caps
 - Roof: Asphalt shingles
 - Chimney: Brick single stack chimney
- d. Alterations: Alterations include replacement of siding, windows (locations and type) front entry door doors. Hip-roofed right elevation entry, single-story right elevation addition with louvered windows; front steps

- e. *Evaluation of Integrity of 62 Elmwood:* Based on the observations of the building and a study of the historic maps, it is staff's position that the original massing, scale remain, however exterior components of the building have clearly been altered over time through the removal and replacement of original materials and through later additions.

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 Building at 62 Elmwood Street meets any of the criteria stated above.
2. The HPC must specifically state why the Building at 62 Elmwood 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 Building at 62 Elmwood Street meets any of the criteria stated above.
2. The HPC must specifically state why the Building at 62 Elmwood 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 Building at 62 Elmwood Street is or is not "historically significant".