



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

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PLANNING DIVISION
HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ALTERATION OF A LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICT (LHD) PROPERTY
STAFF REPORT

Site: 56 Meacham Road

Case: HP26-000019

Applicant: Jackie Nice

Owner: Sun Sasongko

Legal Ad: *The Applicant seeks a Certificate of Appropriateness to alter an LHD property by replacing an existing rear deck with a smaller deck in the same location. The proposed deck is almost entirely screened by a cedar gate.*

HPC Meeting Date: June 2, 2026



The purpose of a staff report is to provide the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) with a professional assessment of alteration proposals made for Local Historic District (LHD) properties. These assessments are based on the Historic District Ordinance (HDO) in compliance with M.G.L. Chapter 40C, and the associated Design Guidelines. A Staff Report is not a determination/decision and does not represent findings. A staff report does not constitute authorization in any form.

I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Subject Property: The locus is the c.1874 Second Empire house known as the Simpson House. This property is located in the Davis Square neighborhood.

A full description of the property is provided in the attached Form B survey, conducted by the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC).

Proposal: The applicant proposes the following:

- Replace existing aging rear deck with a smaller area in the same location. The deck will use wood-like composite decking boards in a neutral brown tone with railing consisting of white rails and posts with black balusters. The railing style is compatible with the Victorian mansard character of the house.
- The work is located entirely at the rear of the property and does not alter any street-facing elevations. The deck area is fully screened by a 6 feet cedar gate. The deck will only be visible from the public way when the gate shown below is open.



Figure.7. Image of 56 Meacham Rd. prior to gate installation with location of proposed deck marked



Figure.8_Existing.rear.deck



Figure.9_ Newly.installed.gate?showing.no.public.way.visibility

II. FINDINGS

The HPC must make findings based on the Historic District Ordinance (HDO) in compliance with M.G.L. Chapter 40C, and associated Design Guidelines. Applicable regulations are discussed below.

A. Replacement of existing deck

The applicable Somerville LHD Design Guideline is *D. Porches, steps, trim and other exterior architectural elements*

Preservation Planning Assessment:

The existing rear wood deck shows plain balusters and decking in aging conditions, as shown in the pictures and indicated in the applicant's narrative. The applicant has included updated pictures (figure 3) of the no visibility of the deck from the public way, unless the backyard gate is open. The relevant portions of the Design Guidelines address the treatment of gutters and downspouts is Section II, D. Porches, steps, trim and other exterior architectural elements, item 1 read as follows:

- 1. Retain and repair porches and steps that are original or later important features, including such items as railings, balusters, columns, posts, brackets, roofs, ornamental ironwork and other important decorative items. If new pieces are needed, they should match as closely as possible the style, shape, scale and materials of the old. Avoid replacing wood posts and railings with metal ones, or wood porch decks with concrete.*

The applicant is proposing to reduce the size of the existing deck and add stairs to the patio. The existing deck will be replaced with wood-like composite board decking in a neutral brown tone, and the proposed railings will be white rails and posts with simple black balusters.

If the HPC votes to approve the replacement, recommended conditions appear below

HPC Determination:

- The HPC must determine if, based on a review of the documentation presented, the proposed project complies with the Design Guidelines.
- The HPC must structure their motion to include their own specific findings on the proposed project.

III. FINDINGS & VOTE

When bringing the matter to a vote, the HPC must state their findings and reasons for why they take their position.

IV. RECOMMENDED CONDITIONS

IF the HPC approves replacement deck for this property, Preservation Planning recommends the following conditions be attached to any Certificate of Appropriateness that the HPC might grant for this project:

1. The Applicant shall obtain all necessary permits for this project through the Inspectional Services Department (ISD). The Applicant must upload a copy of this Certificate to their BUILDING PERMIT application and obtain any necessary division/department signoffs.
2. This Certificate is for the above-described work only. Any changes to this proposal shall first be submitted to Preservation Planning at historic@somervillema.gov for review and approval PRIOR to implementation. Failure to do so will nullify this Certificate and delay final sign-offs/CO.
3. Work for which this Certificate is granted must commence within one year of issuance. If work does not commence within one year or pauses for a significant period of time such that the expiration date of the Certificate passes, the Applicant shall be required to apply for this Certificate to be re-issued. The Applicant shall contact Preservation Planning at historic@somervillema.gov for instructions.

Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System Scanned Record Cover Page

Inventory No:	SMV.197
Historic Name:	Simpson House
Common Name:	
Address:	56 Meacham Rd
City/Town:	Somerville
Village/Neighborhood:	Davis Square;
Local No:	
Year Constructed:	C 1874
Architectural Style(s):	Second Empire;
Use(s):	Single Family Dwelling House;
Significance:	Architecture;
Area(s):	SMV.N
Designation(s):	Local Historic District (10/31/1989);
Building Materials:	Roof: Asphalt Shingle; Wall: Vinyl Siding; Wood;
Demolished	No



The Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) has converted this paper record to digital format as part of ongoing projects to scan records of the Inventory of Historic Assets of the Commonwealth and National Register of Historic Places nominations for Massachusetts. Efforts are ongoing and not all inventory or National Register records related to this resource may be available in digital format at this time.

The MACRIS database and scanned files are highly dynamic; new information is added daily and both database records and related scanned files may be updated as new information is incorporated into MHC files. Users should note that there may be a considerable lag time between the receipt of new or updated records by MHC and the appearance of related information in MACRIS. Users should also note that not all source materials for the MACRIS database are made available as scanned images. Users may consult the records, files and maps available in MHC's public research area at its offices at the State Archives Building, 220 Morrissey Boulevard, Boston, open M-F, 9-5.

Users of this digital material acknowledge that they have read and understood the MACRIS Information and Disclaimer (<http://mhc-macris.net/macrisdisclaimer.htm>)

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Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Massachusetts Historical Commission
220 Morrissey Boulevard, Boston, Massachusetts 02125
www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc

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FORM B - BUILDING

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
80 BOYLSTON STREET
BOSTON, MA 02116

LHD - 10/31/89 (10)
PI-DAVIS SQ
USGS - BOSTON
SELTA

AREA

FORM NO.

Davis Square

197



SOMERVILLE

Address 56 Meacham Road

Historic Name Simpson

Present residential

Original residential

DESCRIPTION

pre-1874

Investigation maps / visual analysis

Mansard cottage

Architect

Sketch Map: Draw map showing property's location in relation to nearest cross streets and/or geographical features. Indicate all buildings between inventoried property and nearest intersection(s). Indicate north

Exterior Wall Fabric synthetic siding

Outbuildings

Major Alterations (with dates)

Condition fair

Moved Date

Acreage 2908 sq. ft.

Setting East side of well establish residential street of late 19th century dwellings of varying architectural elaboration.

Recorded by Gretchen G. Schuler

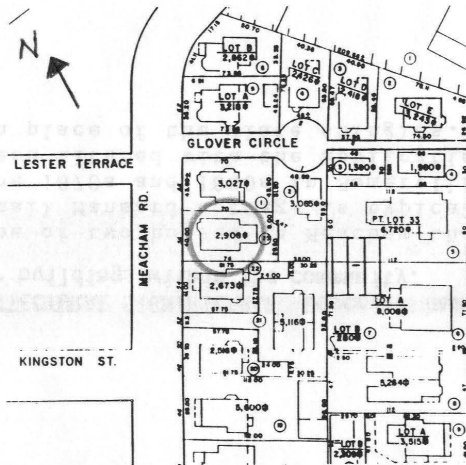
Organization Somerville Historic Preservation Commission

Date March, 1988

UTM REFERENCE

USGS QUADRANGLE

SCALE



SMV.197

NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA STATEMENT (if applicable)**ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE Describe important architectural features and evaluate in terms of other buildings within the community.**

One of two houses on Meacham that pre-date the 1890s development, this small Mansard cottage is typical of the modest housing that was built in the 1870s and 1880s in Somerville. The form is basic and this house has been altered with the application of synthetic siding and asphalt roofing in place of the slate shingles.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE Explain the role owners played in local or state history and how the building relates to the development of the community.

This is one of two houses that was built in the 1870s and pre-dates any development in the immediate area. Although the subdivision was laid out in 1847 by George Meacham there was no development until the 1890s, with the exception of the two mansard cottages, #56 and #64. Much of the land on Meacham Road was owned by Henry Glover and Charles H. Saunders of Cambridge in the 1870s and 1880s. Glover, a real estate investor from Cambridge built many of the houses, sold some, and retained others for rental income.

Much of the Davis Square area became home for railroad and streetcar commuters and is evidence of the suburban building boom of the late 19th century. Streetcar service along nearby Massachusetts Avenue to Porter Square and to Davis Square provided easy access to Boston and Cambridge for employment. This area was also home for many Somerville workers. By the 1870s Davis Square was evolving into a commercial center with several commercial blocks and good transportation with the Somerville Horse Railroad Company and the Boston and Maine Railroad.

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

1. Atlas of Middlesex County, Somerville: 1874 ("Simpson & Glover"), 1884 ("Simpson and Glover"), 1895 ("H.R. Glover").
2. City Directories, 1890s
3. Registry of Deeds, Middlesex County: Book 1262, Page 387.