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

THOMAS GALLIGANI
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

PLANNING DIVISION
HISTORIC PRESERVATION

STEP 1: DETERMINATION OF HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE
STAFF REPORT

Site: 13-15 Thorndike Street

Case: HP26-000053

Applicant: Creative Properties- Leon Navikas

Owner: ASCP, LLC

Proposal: *Demolish principal structure.*

HPC Meeting Date: November 17th, 2026



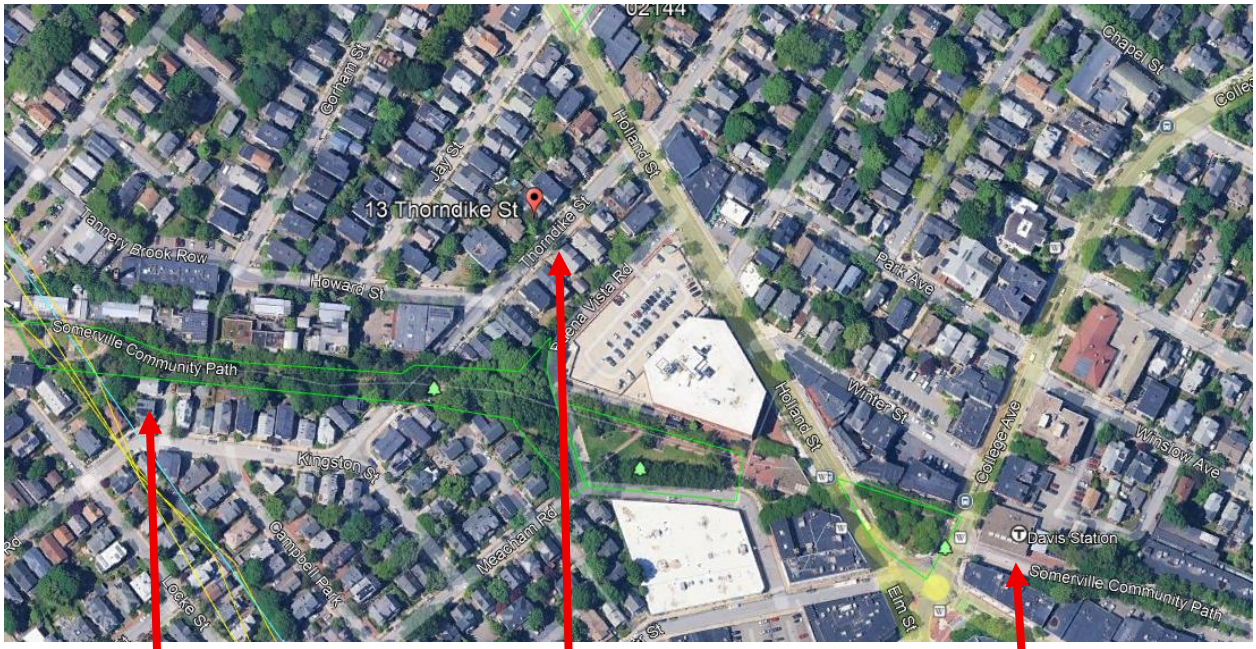
Above: *Front elevation of 13-15 Thorndike St*

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.

Date: November 17th, 2026
Case: HP26-000082
Site: 13-15 Thorndike Street

I. IMAGES OF PROPERTY / AREA

Below: *Aerial view of 13-15 Thorndike St and surrounding area.*

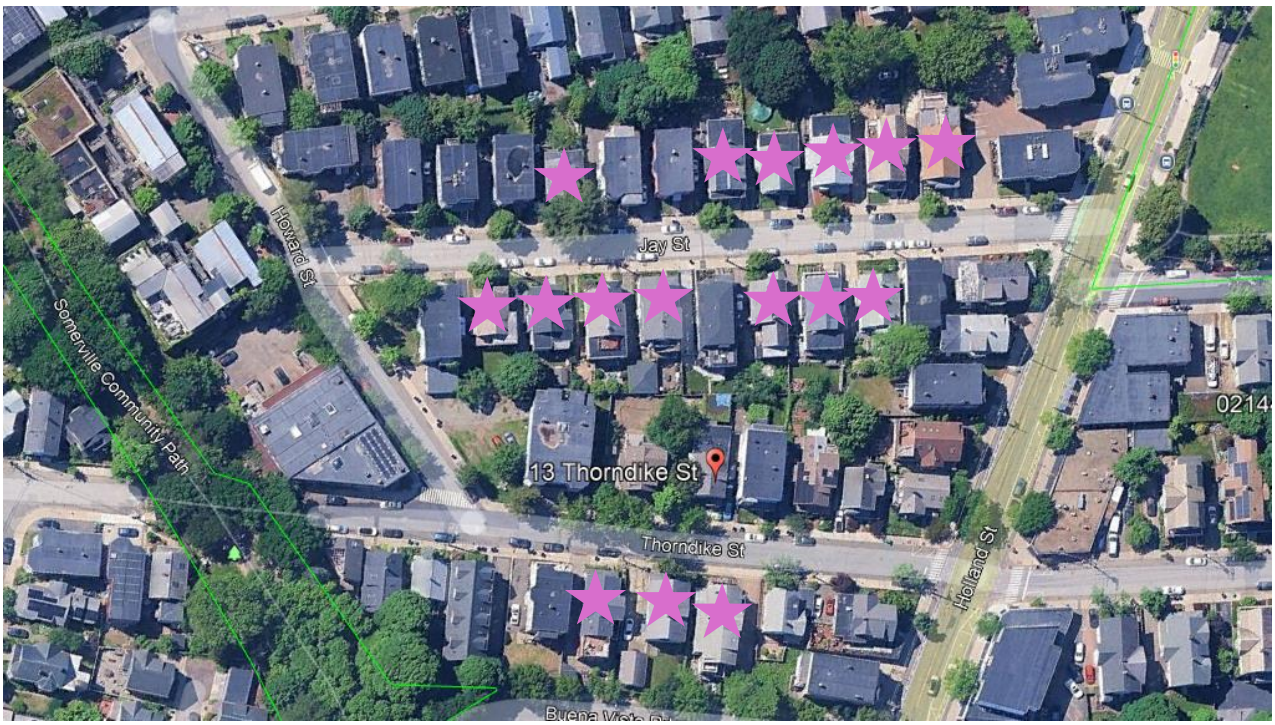


Somerville Community Path

Subject Property: 13-15 Thorndike St

Davis Square MBTA Station

Below: *Aerial view of 13-15 Thorndike St and similar dwelling units built during the same period marked with* ★



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Below: Photos of the Subject Property at 13-15 Thorndike St







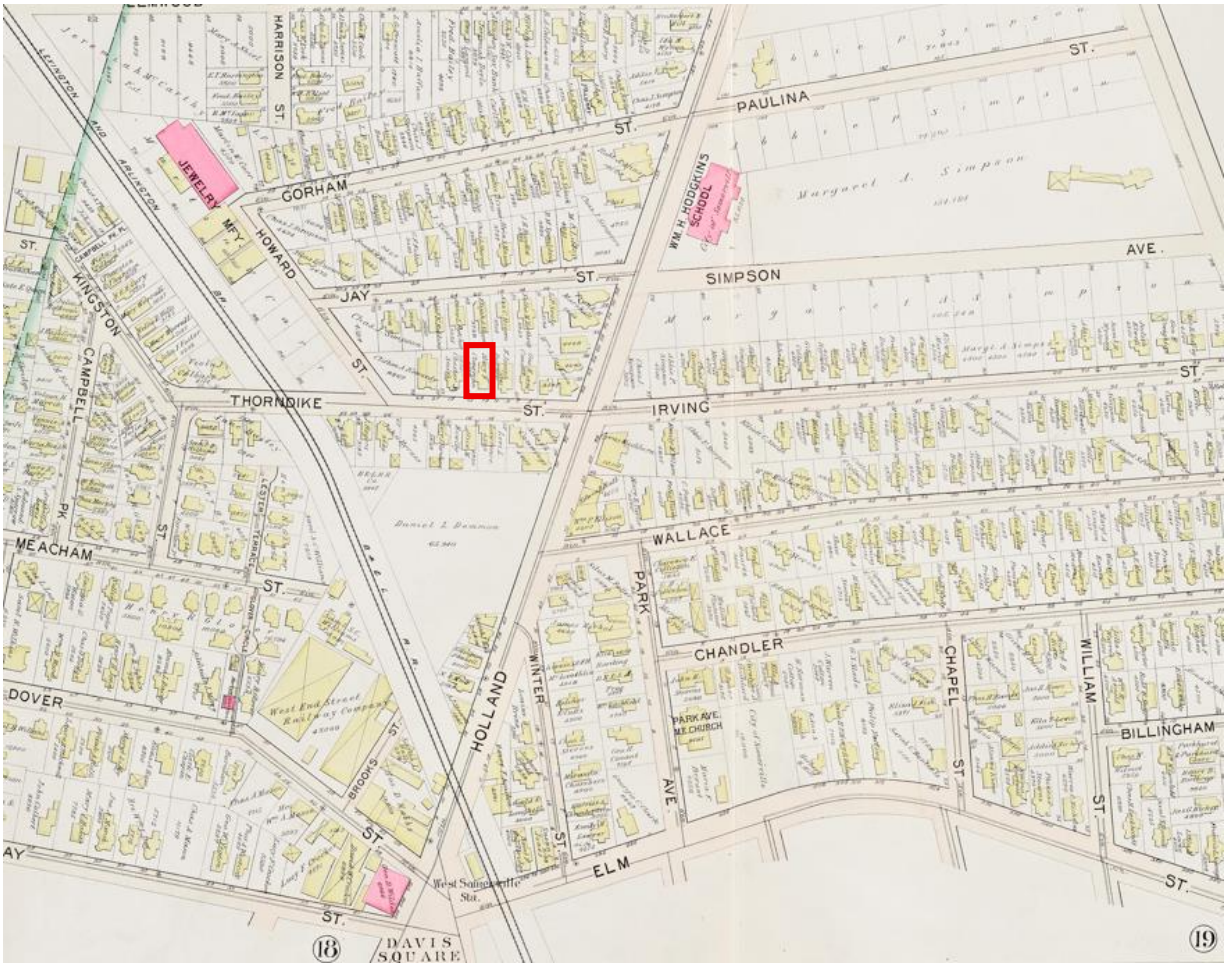
III. HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

Historical Context: 13-15 Thorndike Street is a residential duplex built between 1874 and 1895. The subject property is one of many duplex homes built between 1874-1900 around Davis Square.

13–15 Thorndike Street is a traditional New England two-family house with a classical-style entrance porch. The building's architectural style represents the evolution of residential architecture in West Somerville: a modest, functional house form designed for two households, with an asymmetrical façade and a shared architectural entrance. The structure has architectural features of the Italianate, Colonial Revival, and Greek Revival styles. This architectural style is connected to the history of Somerville's residential development, its traditional two-family housing stock, and the architectural character of the Davis Square neighborhood.

13-15 Thorndike Street is located north of Davis Square and was first shown on historic maps on the 1895 Bromley Map shown below. The Davis Square neighborhood had a rapid increase in density due to the expansion of the Boston & Lowell Railroad reaching Somerville in the 1830s, and Fitchburg Railroad in the 1840s. A branch through what became known as Davis Square opened in 1870. Following these railway expansions, Somerville experienced an influx of suburban growth. (as shown on the 1895 Bromley Map below)

Below: *Portion of the 1895 Bromley map*



From 1850-1890 several styles of architectural styles were popularized and built around Davis Square. Many multifamily homes, like 13-15 Thorndike combined Italianate (1850s-1880s) with Colonial and Greek Revival (1890-1920s). These multi-family dwellings served the growing residential density spreading from transportation hubs like Davis Square.

13-15 Thorndike was used as a rental property for most of its history, with a few owner-occupants. Frank E Kelly is listed in the 1889 Somerville City Directory as living at 15 Thorndike St. According to the 1900 Federal Census, Frank was born in 1867 in Ireland and was renting 15 Thorndike and working as a stone mason. He lived there with his wife Jane Kelly and their 3 sons; Daniel J, Francis J, and John E Kelly.

The 1889 Somerville City Directory listed Alexander W. Smith, John Robert Smith, and Wilfred Alex Smith as living at 13 Thorndike St. Alexander Smith was listed as working as a carpenter, Jogn Robert was listed as a clerk, and Wilfred was listed as a brakeman. Several members of the Smith family are listed as residents of 13 Thorndike until 1904.

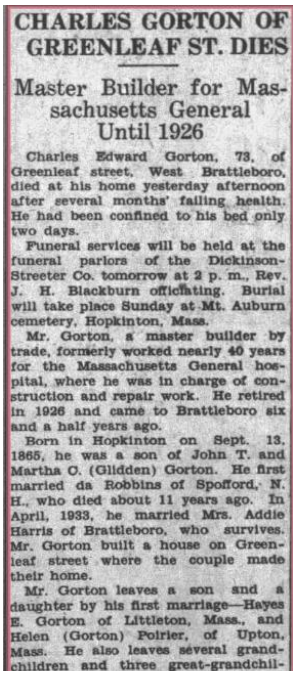
On the 1895 Bromly map, the owner of 13-15 Thorndike was listed as Mary F. Cloutman.

According to the 1900 Somerville City Directory, Frank E Kelly continued living at 15 Thorndike and Alexander, John Robert, and Wilfred Smith continued living at 13 Thorndike. Barnabus Freeman was listed as a resident at 15 Thorndike along with the Kelly family through 1902.

In the 1904 Somerville City Directory, George H. Chown, Charles E. Gorton, Martha A. Moore, and John Van Putten are listed as residents at 13 Thorndike St.
George H Chown, a brass finisher and laborer, lived at 13 Thorndike from approx. 1904-1909 with his wife Josephine and daughter Marian Alma Chown. Martha Moore was a widow who was listed in city directories as living at 13 Thorndike from approx. 1904-1906.

Charles H Dalton was listed as a renter of 13 Thorndike St in the 1910 Federal Census and the 1909 Somerville City Directory. He was born in 1883 in Massachusetts. His occupation was listed as a private Chauffer. His wife Josephine W Dalton also lived there. William P. French was his brother-in-law, who would later live at the home.

According to the 1910 Federal Census, Charles E Gorton owned and lived at 15 Thorndike St. He was born in 1865. He is listed as a carpenter at Mass General Hospital. His wife was Ida M Gorton and they had 2 daughters Ruth M and Helen Gorton. May E Tighe is listed as their servant in 1910 at 15 Thorndike. Ida M Gorton was born in 1871 in New Hampshire. His obituary in 1926 listed him as a 'Master Builder for Massachusetts General for nearly 40 years'.



CHARLES GORTON OF GREENLEAF ST. DIES

Master Builder for Massachusetts General Until 1926

Charles Edward Gorton, 73, of Greenleaf street, West Brattleboro, died at his home yesterday afternoon after several months' failing health. He had been confined to his bed only two days.

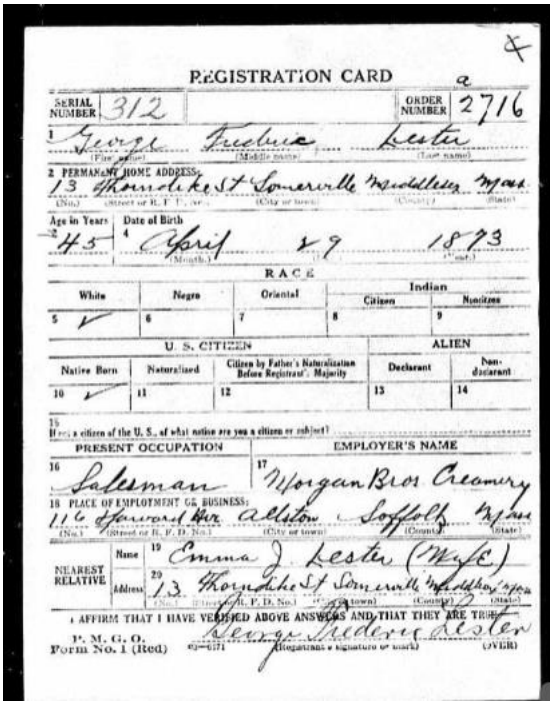
Funeral services will be held at the funeral parlors of the Dickinson-Streeter Co. tomorrow at 2 p. m., Rev. J. H. Blackburn officiating. Burial will take place Sunday at Mt. Auburn cemetery, Hopkinton, Mass.

Mr. Gorton, a master builder by trade, formerly worked nearly 40 years for the Massachusetts General hospital, where he was in charge of construction and repair work. He retired in 1926 and came to Brattleboro six and a half years ago.

Born in Hopkinton on Sept. 13, 1865, he was a son of John T. and Martha C. (Glidden) Gorton. He first married da Robbins of Spofford, N. H., who died about 11 years ago. In April, 1933, he married Mrs. Addie Harris of Brattleboro, who survives. Mr. Gorton built a house on Greenleaf street where the couple made their home.

Mr. Gorton leaves a son snd a daughter by his first marriage—Hayes E. Gorton of Littleton, Mass., and Helen (Gorton) Poirier, of Upton, Mass. He also leaves several grandchildren and three great-grandchil-

Above: The Brattleboro Aug 4, 1939 Charles Gorton Obituary



REGISTRATION CARD

SERIAL NUMBER 312 ORDER NUMBER 2716

1 George Frederic Lester

2 PERMANENT HOME ADDRESS: 13 Thorndike St Somerville Middlesex Mass

Age in Years: 45 Date of Birth: 4 April 17 1873

RACE

White	Negro	Oriental	Indian	
			Citizen	Nonitizen
5 ✓	6	7	8	9

U. S. CITIZEN			ALIEN	
Native Born	Naturalized	Citizen by Father's Naturalization Before Registrant's Majority	Declarant	Non-declarant
10 ✓	11	12	13	14

15 If a citizen of the U. S., of what nation are you a citizen or subject?

PRESENT OCCUPATION	EMPLOYER'S NAME
16 Salesman	17 Morgan Bros Creamery

18 PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT OR BUSINESS: 116 Harvard Ave Allston Suffolk Mass

NEAREST RELATIVE
Name 19 Emma J. Lester (Wife)
Address 20 13 Thorndike St Somerville Middlesex Mass

I AFFIRM THAT I HAVE VERIFIED ABOVE ANSWERS AND THAT THEY ARE TRUE.
George Frederic Lester
(Registrant's signature or mark)

P. M. G. O. Form No. 1 (Red) 2—6171 (OVER)

Charles H. Dalton and his family continued living at 13 Thorndike. In 1908, Dalton's brother-in-law, William French, purchased 13-15 Thorndike and moved into 13 Thorndike as well. William French worked as an attorney and continued living at 13 Thorndike until 1920. According to the 1920 Federal Census, William P French was born in Maine in 1875 and was 45 and single at the time.

George F Lester and his wife Emma J Lester are listed in the 1920 Federal Census as being renters of 13 Thorndike St. George Lester was born in Massachusetts in 1873. His occupation in 1920 is listed as a creamery salesman.

1920 Federal Census, Thomas Porter was listed as renting 15 Thorndike st with his wife Annie and their son Robert. Porter was born in Canada in 1864 and came to the US in 1900. His occupation was listed as a laborer in a machine shop.

Above: George F Lester's WW1 registration card

In 1921, William F French sold 13-15 Thorndike to Frank Palange and Joseph A Palange. In 1922, Frank Palange and Joseph A Palange sold the property to Irene Shapiro. In 1934, Irene Shapiro had the property deeded over to Home Owners Loan Corp.

In the 1930 Federal Census, Elodie Flewelling is listed as living at 13 Thorndike St with her husband George, their children Shirley and Norman, and Mother Evelyn Flewelling. In 1940, Home Owners Loan Corp sold the property to Elodie Flewelling, who would remain the owner of 13-15 Thorndike until it was sold in 1963.

13-15 Thorndike went through many owners and occupants throughout the late 1800's and 1900's. It served as a home to single men working in common trades like drivers, stenographers, masons, streetcar conductors, carpenters, and others. These residents reflect the demographic within Davis Square and other transportation hubs within Somerville during this period.

IV. ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

Please see the section 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.

The period of relevance for the house begins between 1874 - 1895

a. *Location:* The structure is in its original location.

b. *Design:* The structure is a two-family residential dwelling with side-by-side front entrances to each unit. The building has a rectangular wood-frame foot print, a prominent front-facing gable roof, and a classical portico held up my columns around the front entrance.

c. *Materials:* Vinyl siding, stone front steps with metal rails; asphalt shingling on roof; brick and concrete foundation; wood decking on front portico; wood door; wood cornice; window material unknown; brick chimney stack; wood detailing.

d. *Alterations:* Windows and siding appear to have been replaced with vinyl.

Evaluation of Integrity: 13-15 Thorndike Street retains integrity of location, original form and massing. The building does not retain original exterior materials or detailing besides the columns flanking the entranceway.

V. 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.

1. The HPC must make a finding as to whether or not the structure at 13-15 Thorndike Street meets any of the criteria stated above.

2. The HPC must specifically state why the structure at 13-15 Thorndike Street does or does not meet the threshold for historic significance under finding "*i"*.

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 of 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.

1. The HPC must make a finding as to whether or not the structure at 13-15 Thorndike Street meets any of the criteria stated above.

2. The HPC must specifically state why the structure at 13-15 Thorndike Street does or does not meet the threshold for historic significance under finding "*ii"*.

VI. VOTE

When bringing the matter to a vote, the HPC must include the reasons why the structure at 13-15 Thorndike Street is or is not "historically significant".