



**CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS**  
**MAYOR'S OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**  
**JOSEPH A. CURTATONE**  
**MAYOR**

*HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION*

KRISTENNA CHASE, *PRESERVATION PLANNER*  
SARAH WHITE, *PLANNER & PRESERVATION PLANNER*

**Case #:** HPC 2018.051  
**Date:** June 19, 2018

**Recommendation:** *Denial; Certificate of Non-Applicability*

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**PRESERVATION STAFF REPORT**

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**Site:** 27 Columbus Avenue

**Applicant Name:** Peter Sisk  
**Applicant Address:** 27 Columbus Avenue  
**Owner Name:** Per Sisk & Victoria Goodheart  
**Owner Address:** same as above

**Petition:** Peter Sisk, Owner, seeks permission from the Somerville Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) to alter the gutters and repair fascia and brackets

**HPC Hearing Date:** June 19, 2018

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**I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

**Subject Property:** The subject is located on the north side of Columbus Avenue across from Bonner Avenue in a late 19<sup>th</sup> Century residential neighborhood near Union Square. ( See Form B for details.)

**Proposal:** The Applicant proposes to replace the current wood gutters with half-round copper gutters and make other roof edge repairs.

**II. FINDINGS FOR ROOFS**



4. ***Preserve the architectural features that give the roof its distinctive character, such as cornices, gutters, iron filigree, cupolas, dormers and brackets. Downspouts should be inconspicuously located and should be painted to match the color of the siding.***

### Considerations of the Commission

1. **Retain and repair roof details such as wood gutters, crown and rake moldings, brackets, cornices, parapets, barge boards and gable-end shingles. Replacement, if necessary, should be in-kind.**

### **GUTTERS, EAVES, AND DOWNSPOUTS**

*In historic buildings, the profile of wood or copper gutters forms part at and often completes the traditional detailing of the eave of the building. For this reason, the replacement of wood or copper gutters with other gutter types is highly discouraged*

1. Modern aluminum and vinyl gutters have a different profile that is incompatible with the eave and rake detailing of historic buildings.
2. Determining the true condition of wood gutters generally requires the expertise of a carpenter rather than an aluminum gutter installer.
3. If considering replacement, consult with a professional who is trained and experienced with the restoration and installation of wood and copper gutters. The SHPC will not review applications for replacement of original gutters unless accompanied by a report prepared by such a contractor.
4. If modern aluminum or vinyl replacement gutters are found to be necessary, they **should match the proportions and profile of the original wood** or copper gutter as closely as possible.
5. Gutter screens and coverings should not be visible.
6. **Existing wood moldings, fascias, soffit boards, rake trim and other details should be replaced with the same material and profile.** Soffit ventilation, when added to eaves, should be incorporated into the eave details rather than cut indiscriminately as pocket vents into existing woodwork
7. Downspouts should follow the exterior shape of the building and take a direct downward path as much as possible. They should be located as inconspicuously as possible.
8. Downspouts should be painted to blend with the adjacent color of siding or trim.

**Staff Findings:** No report from a wood gutter specialist was requested regarding the condition and feasibility of retaining the existing gutters. It should be noted that the proposed gutter is not inappropriate for the time period. There simply is no evidence that this house ever had copper gutters.

The existing wood gutters complement the curves and moldings of the elaborate Queen Anne massing. They blend with the rake moldings and cornices. The proposed ½ round copper gutter, while historically appropriate for the time period, does not continue the elaboration but rather is seen as an addition.

Staff finds that in all probability the use of wood gutters is original to the building and therefore more appropriate than the proposed copper ½ round gutters and therefore recommends repair or replacement in kind of the wood gutters. They further recommend that the Applicant devise a regular maintenance schedule for the wood gutters.

### **III. RECOMMENDATION**

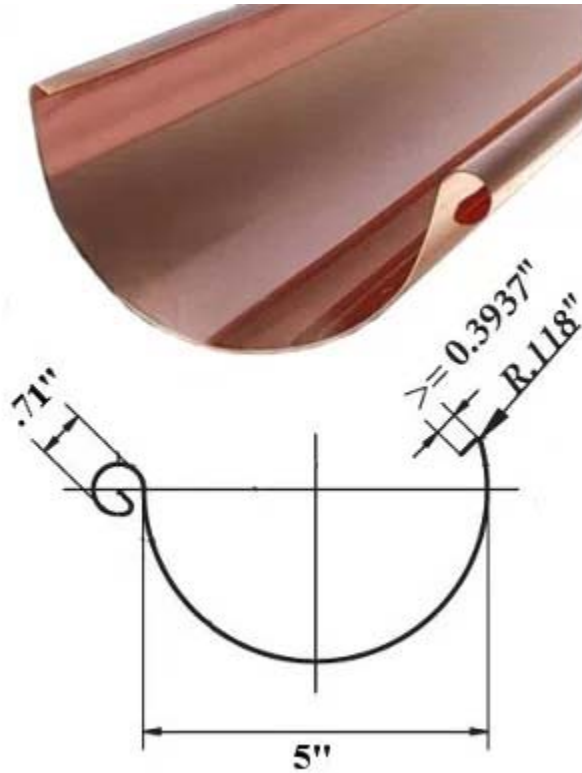
*Based on the information provided and an assessment of the proposal with the Somerville LHD guidelines and considerations of the Commission, Staff recommends **Denial of A Certificate of Appropriateness** and the issuance of **A Certificate of Non-Applicability** for the repair or replacement in kind of the existing wood gutters. Staff further recommends that the Applicant devise a regular maintenance schedule for the wood gutters.*

1. All appropriate building permits shall be obtained prior to the start of any work.
2. The rotted and damaged wood gutters shall be replaced in-kind to match the existing.
3. Historic Staff shall issue a sign-off upon completion of the project that this was done in accordance with the Certificate and approved plans.









B - BUILDING

ACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
107 STON STREET  
MA 02116

AREA

FORM NO.

Prospect  
Hill

240

Town

SOMERVILLE

27 Columbus Avenue

Name

Julia Gustin

Present

residential

Original

residential

Construction

1892

deeds / directories

Queen Anne

Subject

Exterior Wall Fabric

shingles

Outbuildings

Major Alterations (with dates)

Condition

very good

Moved

Date

Acreage

3616 sq. ft.

Setting

North side of Columbus Ave.,

across from Bonner Ave., late 19th

century residential neighborhood,

near Union Square, south side of Prospect Hill

Carole Zellie-1980 (Prospect Hill)

Recorded by

Gretchen Schuler - 1988

Organization

Somerville Historic

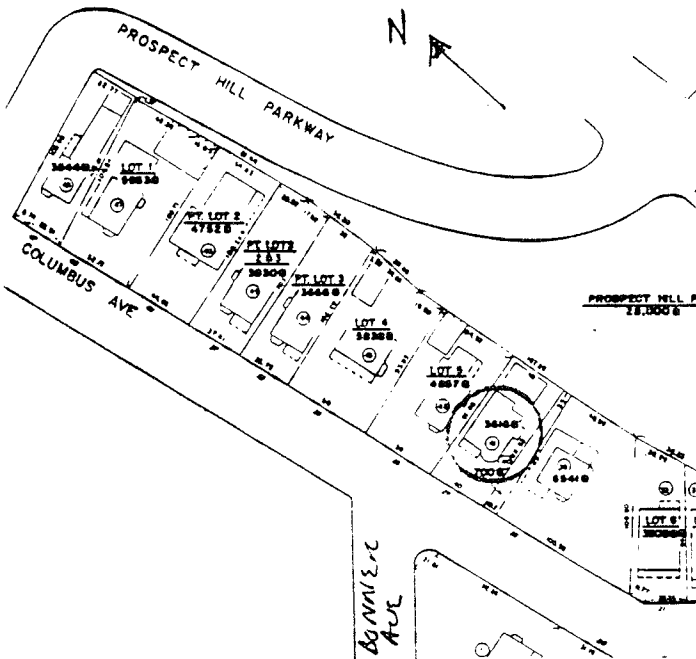
Preservation Commission

Date

April, 1988



relation to nearest cross streets and/or  
architectural features. Indicate all buildings  
on inventoried property and nearest  
section(s).  
date north



REFERENCE

QUADRANGLE

## **NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA STATEMENT (if applicable)**

The property is significant for :

- A - its representation of residential suburbanization in Somerville in the prosperous Prospect Hill area.
- C - its representation of a well conserved Queen Anne house near Union Square.

## **ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE Describe important architectural features and evaluate in terms of other buildings within the community.**

The use of various construction shapes create an interesting asymmetrical plan in this 1893 Queen Anne house. The butt shingles and slate roof give make an interesting textural effect. The two and one-half story dwelling has a hipped roof, cross gables, round corner tower with conical roof, an accentuated, large, pedimented dormer within a castellated third story balcony, and an enclosed entrance porch with full sidelights flanking the door over which there is a sunburst fanlike design.

Located on the north side of Columbus Avenue at the head of Bonner Street, the house is a focal point when approaching from Union Square.

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

Prospect Hill, one of the most substantial residential neighborhoods of Somerville, evolved throughout the late 19th century. Prior to that it was an agricultural community of farms. Columbus Avenue, once known as Warren Avenue, ran from Walnut to Bonner Street until the 1870s when it was continued through Bonner property to Washington Street. Its proximity to Union Square a center for commercial and transportation activity made it a desirable place to live. Columbus Avenue was and is half way to the top of Prospect Hill.

This property had been part of a large tract of land owned by William Bonner and later his sons, Charles and George Bonner. In the 1870s, many plans for subdivision were made including Bonner land. However, it was not until 1892 that Herbert S. and Julia Gustin purchased this lot from William H. Bonner. Gustin was a commercial merchant selling produce in Boston's Faneuil Hall.

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES**

1. Atlas of Middlesex County, Somerville: 1884 ("G.C. Bonner", land only), 1895 ("Julia Gustin").
2. City Directories, 1870s-1890s.
3. Registry of Deeds, Middlesex County: Book 2199 Page 54.