



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

STEP 1: DETERMINATION OF SIGNIFICANCE
STAFF REPORT

Site: 25 Appleton Street

Case: HPC.DMO 2021.10

Applicant: Kwesi Acquaaah

Owner: 25 Appleton, LLC

Proposal: *Demolish all structures*

HPC Meeting Date: April 26, 2021

Top: front elevation

Bottom, left: accessory structure

Bottom, right: rear of main structure

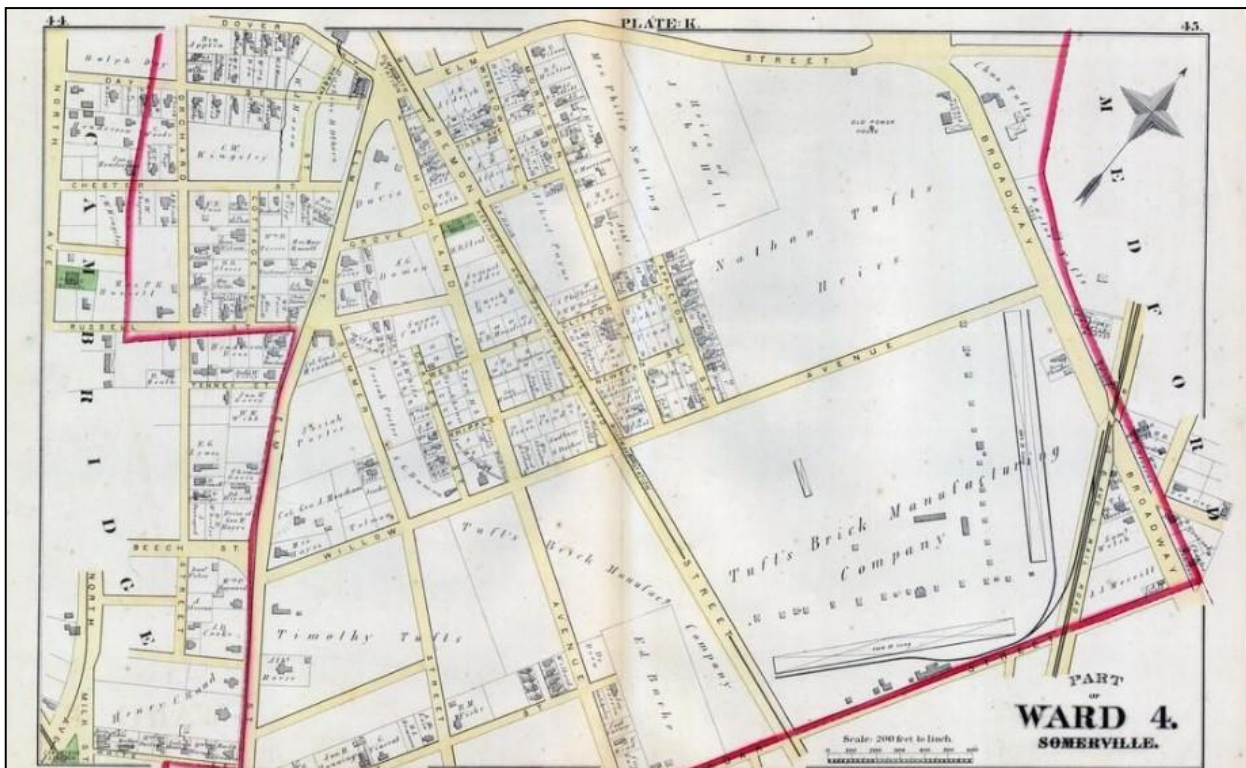


I. HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

Historical Context: 25 Appleton Street is a two-story, Second Empire, concave Mansard-roofed residential structure located on a street where the Mansard style reigns. The Appleton Street streetscape is dominated by two-and three-story Mansard residential structures presenting each of the major Mansard roof forms: concave, straight, and straight-with-flare.

In the 1860s after the Civil War, the area that includes 25 Appleton Street was subdivided by local farmers and realtors for speculative development purposes. The general area of this subdivision was referred to as “Pleasant Hill”. As nearby Davis Square further developed and became a transportation hub, potential homebuyers were attracted to this area in part due to the transportation facilities; steam and street railways were available and stations were located in Davis Square. The Willow Avenue Station was constructed in the 1870s, its presence further stimulating development interest in this area.¹

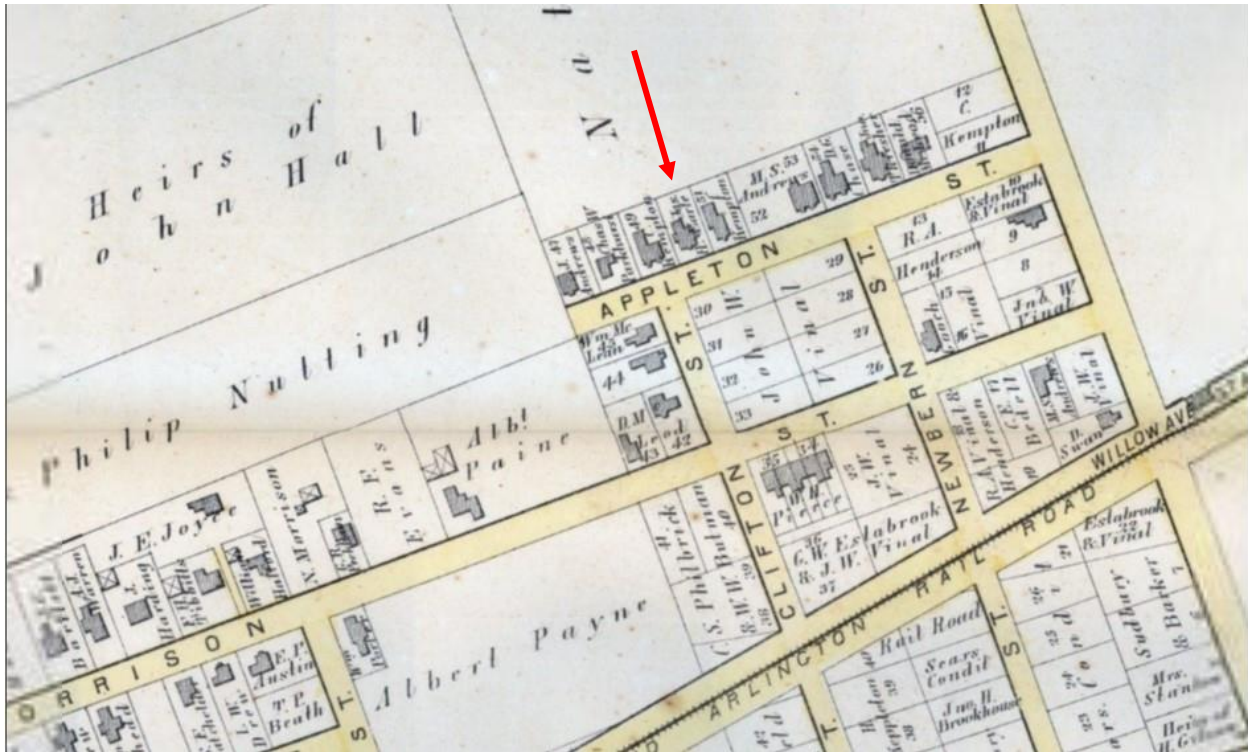
Readily-accessible 19th-century maps of the property begin in 1874 with the Hopkins map. The large image of Plate K below shows that a significant portion of the land in this area was under the ownership of very few individuals and remained undeveloped and unplatted. Tufts Brick Manufacturing Company is a prominent landowner in the area. Brickmaking was a major industry in Somerville in the 19th century.



While some of the brickworkers' housing near the brickyards were constructed of brick, the use of brick in the City was largely relegated to chimneys and foundations, along with municipal buildings and residential rowhouses.

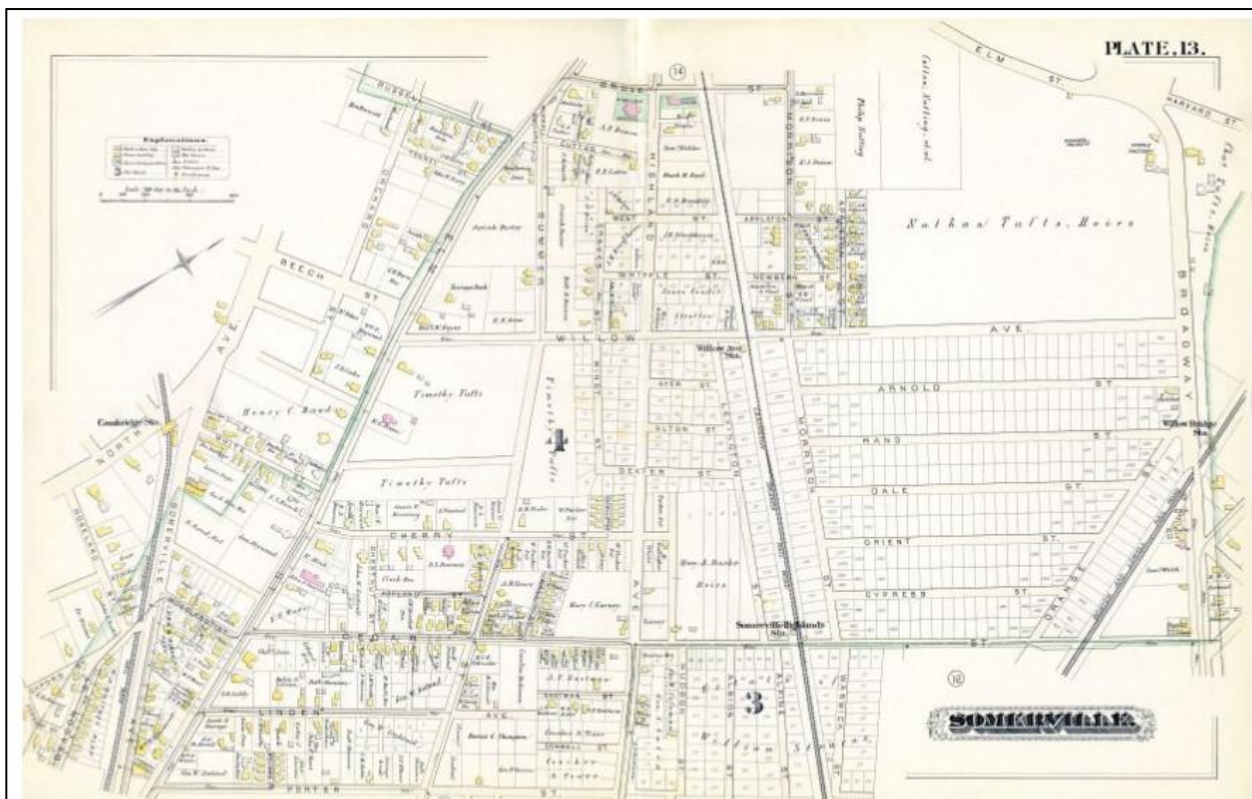
¹ MACRIS file smv_521

A closeup of this same plate shows today's 25 Appleton Street under the ownership of J. H. Earle.



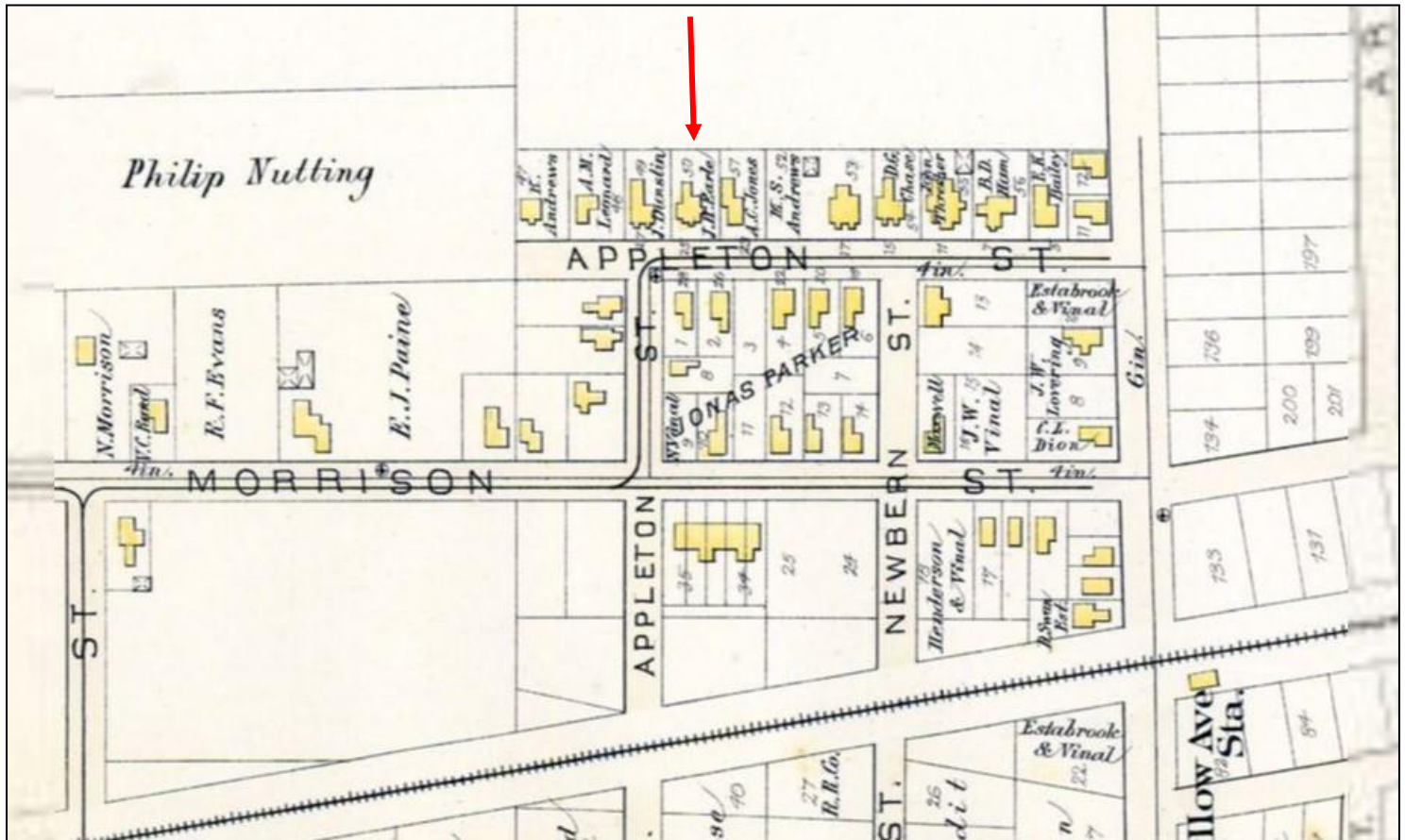
The shape of the structure on the map also shows that the left jog and right bay were extant in 1874. The small protrusion at the right front of the building form indicates that a second bay was likely present in the location of the modern double window on the right side of the front façade.

The features noted above are also evident on the 1884 Hopkins map, large and close-up versions shown below. The property remains under the ownership of J.H. Earle. By 1884, the area around Appleton Street

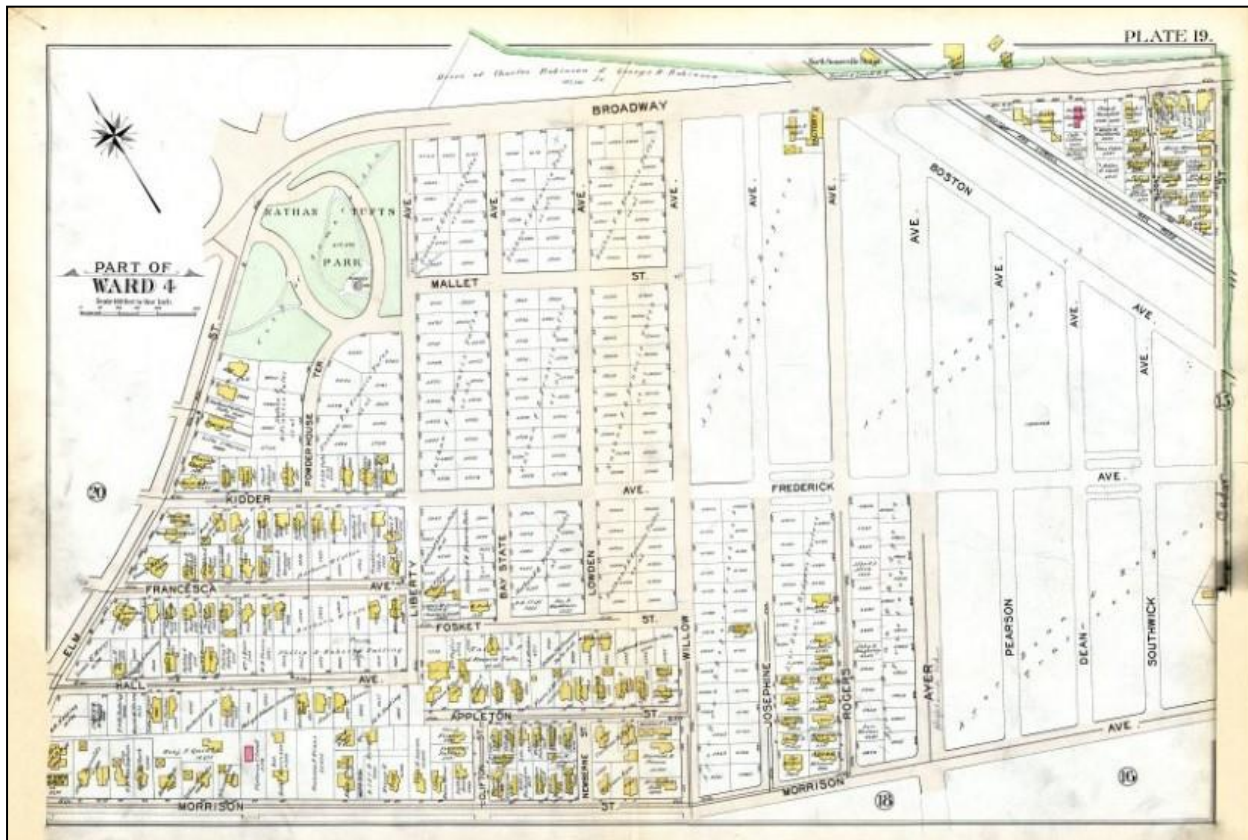


has changed significantly. The Tufts Brick Manufacturing Company has closed, the land on which it was found has been platted into building lots and streets have been laid out.

A closeup of the 1884 Hopkins Plate 13 shows that previously vacant lots opposite 25 Appleton have now been built out. The massing of 25 Appleton, complete with the building components noted on the 1874 map, remains intact.



The 1895 Bromley map (below) shows a change in ownership from J.H. Earle to Susan Fermer (which may also have been "Farmer"). The large tract of land behind Appleton Street that had long been in the possession



of the Nathan Tufts Heirs, has been platted into building lots and streets laid out. Some housing construction has begun.

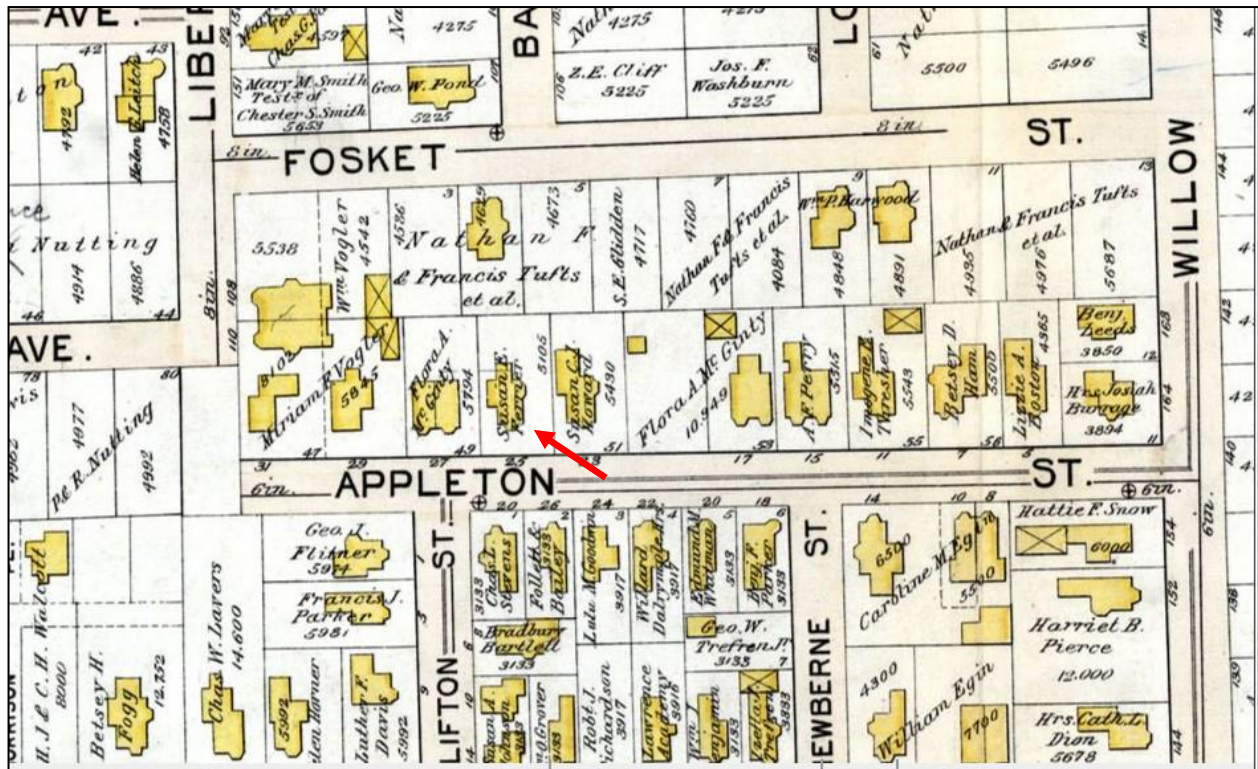
Most striking about the information contained on the 1895 Bromley map is that most of the properties on Appleton Street, including the subject property, are under the ownership of women. Property ownership by women in the US had been restricted by law since the colonial period. Before 1855 in Massachusetts, while *unmarried* women were allowed to own property in their own name, earn a salary, and enter into contracts, *married* women were not. In 1855, Massachusetts passed the Married Women's Property Act allowing them to own real and personal property, earn a salary, sue, control their earnings, and make wills.²

While it is unclear to Preservation Planning Staff as to the marital status of the female property owners of Appleton, the preponderance of female property ownership on this street alone is remarkable for the time. Of the 21 lots on Appleton Street in 1895, 13 of them were owned by 10 women. Some of these women, such as Flora McGinty, owned more than one lot, each containing a residential structure. Others, such as Carline M. Egin, owned one lot containing four residential structures. It is also likely that some of these residential structures held more than one family. In the case of other structures, it was likely that some women rented rooms to boarders.

The following constitutes the female property owners on Appleton at the time of the 1895 map:

² Chused, Richard H. "Married Women's Property and Inheritance by Widows in Massachusetts: A Study of Wills, Probated Between 1800 and 1850". *Berkeley Women's Law Journal*. 1986, p.45.

1. Miriam Vogler
2. Flora McGinty
3. Susan Fermer (25 Appleton)
4. Susan Howard
5. Imogene E. Thresher
6. Betsey D. Ham
7. Lizzie A. Boston
8. Hattie Snow
9. Caroline M. Egin
10. Lulu M. Goodwin



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.

The period of relevance for the house begins c.1874 but quite possibly earlier. The first recorded map date found is 1874

Residential Structure

- a. **Location:** The structure is in its original location.
- b. **Design:** House: Second Empire. (Concave) Mansard roof with Italianate double-bracketing details. Two-story left elevation jog integrated into Mansard roof.

General: Two gabled dormers with strong returns are present on all elevations of the Mansard roof except left elevation which presents only one which is within the jog; deep lower eave; double brackets along lower cornice on all elevations. Single brick chimney stack extant.

Front elevation. Two bays wide, both stories. Left side front entry hall. The open front porch was constructed in 2014, photographic evidence from Google street view shows.

Right elevation. Two bays deep; first story bay with three windows and panel details above and below windows; single story shed roof addition with entry door.

Left elevation. Two bays deep, both stories. Window hood extant on first story window.

Rear elevation. Two bays wide, both stories; later hip-roofed, single-story rear addition.

- c. **Materials:** Wood frame; brick foundation; asbestos siding; window sash material unclear, possibly fiberglass or vinyl; brick chimney stack; wood trim and detail (cornice, brackets, panels, window hood); asphalt shingle roofing; 2014 front porch materials unknown.
- d. **Alterations:** asbestos siding, possibly installed over wood clapboard; single-story rear, hip-roofed addition; modern double window with transoms to the right of the front entry door; front porch post-dates construction of house; photographic evidence from 2014 Google street view shows that a portion of the front brick foundation under the porch was removed and cinder blocks installed in their place; right elevation single-story addition; right elevation window closed in (see photo below).



Evaluation of Integrity: 25 Appleton Street retains a high degree of integrity in terms of original massing, form and design, architectural components and detailing, and original material. Later alterations allow the building to continue to be read as a very intact Second Empire Mansard. 25 Appleton contributes significantly to a very intact, mid-19th century streetscape that consists of numerous Mansard residential structures of the same period.

Outbuilding

The age of the accessory structure on the property is unclear to Preservation Planning Staff. No outbuildings show up on the historic maps of this site in 1874, 1884, or 1895. This outbuilding is wood-framed and flat-roofed with two entry doors, windows, and wood shingling. It may have been a single-car garage that was then converted into a shed/work area.

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 RESIDENTIAL STRUCTURE at 25 Appleton Street meets any of the criteria stated above.
2. The HPC must specifically state why the RESIDENTIAL STRUCTURE at 25 Appleton Street does or does not meet the threshold for historic significance under finding “a”.

Outbuilding

1. The HPC must make a finding as to whether or not the OUTBUILDING at 25 Appleton Street meets any of the criteria stated above.
2. The HPC must specifically state why the OUTBUILDING at 25 Appleton 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 RESIDENTIAL STRUCTURE at 25 Appleton Street meets any of the criteria stated above.
2. The HPC must specifically state why the RESIDENTIAL STRUCTURE at 25 Appleton Street does or does not meet the threshold for historic significance under finding “b”.

Outbuilding

1. The HPC must make a finding as to whether or not the OUTBUILDING at 25 Appleton Street meets any of the criteria stated above.
2. The HPC must specifically state why the OUTBUILDING at 25 Appleton Street does or does not meet the threshold for historic significance under finding Ba”.

IV. VOTE

1. When bringing the matter to a vote, the HPC must include the reasons why the RESIDENTIAL STRUCTURE at 25 Appleton Street is or is not “historically significant”.
2. When bringing the matter to a vote, the HPC must include the reasons why the OUTBUILDING at 25 Appleton Street is or is not “historically significant”.