



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

SARAH WHITE, *MDS-HP*
PLANNER & PRESERVATION PLANNER

June 23, 2020
Case: HPC 2019.083
Site: 23 Chester Street

ALTERATION OF A LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICT PROPERTY
STAFF REPORT

Site: 23 Chester Street
Historic Name: Perry-Page House

Applicant Name: Tamar & Jason Brown
Owner Name: same as applicant

Petition: Install ductless AC units

Recommendation: Conditional CA

HPC Hearing Date: June 23, 2020

I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1. Subject Property: The subject property is in the Chester Street Local Historic District (LHD). See the attached Form B for architectural and historical descriptions of the property.

2. Proposal: The Applicant proposes to install a ductless AC system to provide air conditioning to the second and third stories of the dwelling house. The system includes an exterior, slim profile condenser sited at ground level. Pipes will connect to this condenser system and travel up the façade of the house and enter the second and third story levels through a right elevation exterior wall.

The Applicants provided a narrative (attached) which describes their project and the reasons underpinning their choices.

II. FINDINGS

The section of Somerville LHD Design Guidelines that is applicable to the proposal at 23 Chester Street is found in Section B “Roofs”, Item 7 which reads as follows:

7. Utility equipment, such as television antennae, air conditioners, solar collectors and other mechanical units should be restricted to the rear of the property or on portions of the roof that are not visible from a public way. If no other placement is possible, air conditioning and other cooling units on street facades should be of the slim-line type or set flush with the surface of the building and painted the same color as the window trim.

Staff Assessment: The relevant portion of this section of the code is highlighted above. When it is not possible to place mechanicals on a roof, this is the portion of the design guideline that applies.

The Applicant proposes installing the condenser and piping along the back portion of the right elevation of the house (the Orchard Street side of the building). These mechanicals will not be readily visible from the front view of the house; the right portion of the front porch and a bay window on the right elevation of the building will mask the condenser and pipes from view.

In accordance with the guidelines, the Applicants propose a slim profile condenser for this project. While the Applicant does not propose painting the condenser, the Applicant offers to paint the pipes leading down the side of the house to the condenser.

Staff does not recommend painting the condenser the color of the window trim – in fact, Staff does not recommend painting the condenser at all. The window trim is already white as will be the condenser. Further, the condenser will be well-hidden by vegetation on the Orchard Street elevation of the property most months of the year and will be masked from the front view of the house by building components.

Staff **does** recommend that the pipes leading to the condenser from the second and third floors be painted. Staff had added a condition specifying that these pipes should be painted to match the color of the façade and trim of the house against which they rest.

III. RECOMMENDATION

Based on the information provided and an assessment of the proposal against the Somerville LHD guidelines, Staff recommends that the HPC approve a **CONDITIONAL CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS** for 23 Chester Street as follows:

1. Any building or mechanical permits needed to install the ductless AC system shall be obtained from ISD prior to the start of work.
2. The pipes leading from the condenser to the second and third story of the dwelling house shall be painted to match the color of the portion of the house (façade and trim) against which they rest.
3. Any changes to the proposal are subject to the review and approval of the HPC prior to execution.

We propose to install a Mitsubishi ductless system to provide air-conditioning to the second and third floors at 23 Chester Street. Our selected HVAC contractor, Sila Heating and Air Conditioning, proposes to furnish and install one multi-zone Hyper Heat 6 zone Mitsubishi ductless system. This system will supply 5 wall mounted heads to the rooms on the 2nd floor, with one floor-mounted unit to be installed in master bedroom on the 3rd floor. The proposal includes setting the condenser on a stand with all line sets to covered with covering (white). Line sets that are visible from the exterior can be painted to match the house. One head on second floor bedroom will have an exposed line set in an interior hallway to accommodate that bedroom. Lines set will be covered with slim duct covering. The system will be wired to the current electrical panel.

The images on the following pages show the proposed location for the air-conditioning condenser. The first image (see p.2) shows the condenser and its specifications. The second image (see p. 3) shows the floor plans of the house with a drawing indicating the placement of the condenser unit. Please note that in this image, there are two condensers sketched in. We propose to install **only one** condenser, for the ductless a/c. The second condenser sketched there would be for a high-velocity system to cool the first floor. We explored this possibility but have decided to wait and see if we can maintain comfortable indoor temperatures in the house, before going ahead with an air-conditioning installation for the first floor. The third image (see p. 4) shows the view of the proposed condenser location from the driveway at the back of the house. This is the side of 23 Chester that faces Orchard Street. The condenser will be located about 12” from the outside of the house. It will be set behind the plantings, directly underneath two kitchen windows.

We have chosen this system because it is our only option for installing air-conditioning in our house. We do not plan to undertake the gut renovation that would be required in order to install central air-conditioning. We investigated the possibility of installing a high-velocity air conditioning system throughout the house but learned that this would be possible only on the first floor of the house---in order to function properly, this system requires unfinished attic space for a condenser unit at the top of the house, which we do not have.

At present, we propose to install these air-conditioning units to cool living, working, and sleeping spaces on the second and third floors of the house; the first floor will not be air-conditioned at this time.

Please see the images on the following pages for details on the condenser and its placement.

Mitsubishi Ductless Heatpump

Condenser: MXZ-8C48NAHZ

Specifications: 48,000 Total System BTU's.

Product Height: 52 11/16 Inches

Product Width: 41 17/48 Inches

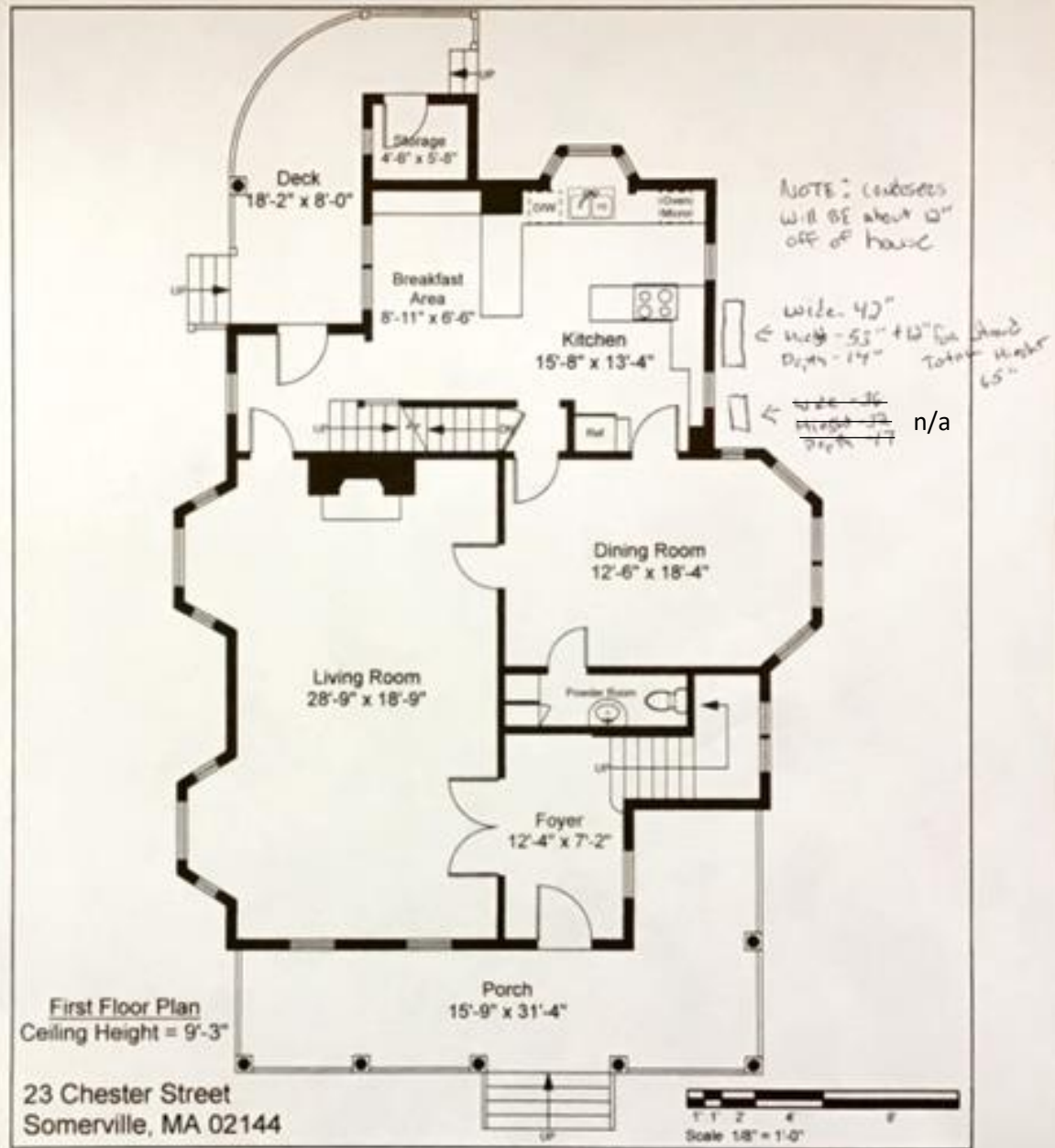
Product Depth: 14 Inches

Gas Connection Size: 5/8 Inch

Liquid Connection Size: 3/8 Inch



HVAC Proposal for 23 Chester Street
Tamar and Jason Brown, Homeowners



1		<p>Completed: October 2016</p> <p>Note: Dimensions are not guaranteed and are provided for informational purposes only. Individual room dimensions are not used to calculate overall square footage.</p>	
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HVAC Proposal for 23 Chester Street
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Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System

Scanned Record Cover Page

Inventory No:	SMV.205
Historic Name:	Perry, John - Page, Lemuel House
Common Name:	
Address:	23 Chester St
City/Town:	Somerville
Village/Neighborhood:	Davis Square
Local No:	
Year Constructed:	1867
Architect(s):	
Architectural Style(s):	Colonial Revival; Second Empire
Use(s):	Single Family Dwelling House
Significance:	Architecture
Area(s):	SMV.AV: Chester Street Historic District
Designation(s):	Local Historic District (10/31/1989)
Building Materials(s):	Roof: Asphalt Shingle Wall: Wood; Wood Clapboard



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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 - DMS SQ
 USGS BOSTON
 SCLTA

AREA

FORM NO.

Davis
 Square

205

AV



SOMERVILLE

23 Chester Street

ic Name John Perry - 1868

Lemuel Page - 1872

Present residential

Original residential

PTION

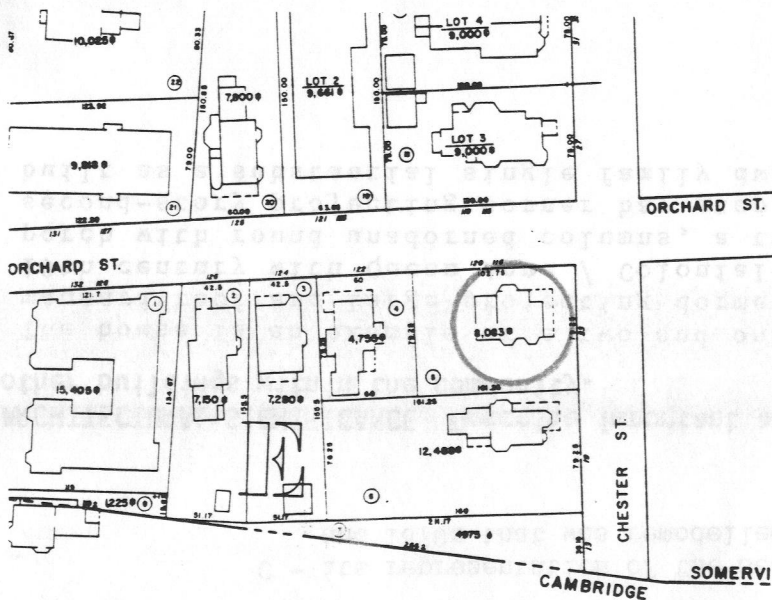
1867 - 1868

deeds / maps

Second Empire / Colonial Reviv

ect

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 clapboard

Outbuildings

Major Alterations (with dates)

Condition good

Moved Date

Acreage 8083 sq. ft.

Setting Southwest corner of Chester & Orchard, well maintained, tree-lined street of substantial single family dwellings

Recorded by Carol Zellie - 1980
 Gretchen G. Schuler - 1981

Organization Somerville Historic Preservation Commission

Date March, 1988

UTM REFERENCE

USGS QUADRANGLE

SCALE

NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA STATEMENT (if applicable)

The property is part of a district that is significant for:

- A - its association with the subdivision of land in the area, which was developed into a suburban residential area of Somerville.
- C - its representation of the Second Empire style popular in the 1860s and 1870s that was remodelled in the late 1890s or early 1900s.

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

The house is an example of a two and one-half story dwelling with a small mansard roof and large projecting dormers. Updating occurred in the late 19th century with Queen Anne / Colonial Revival details including a wrap porch with round unadorned columns, a two-story projecting side bay and a second-story projecting corner bay atop the wrap porch. The house was built as a substantial single family dwelling on a large corner lot.

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

Built on land that had been part of the Chester Kingsley Estate (after whom Chester Street was named), the house is representative of a late 19th century dwelling that underwent some architectural updating at the end of the 1800s. It also demonstrates the substantial single family dwellings that were built in the area for local and commuting business men and their families. Thus, the house is representative of the suburbanization of Somerville.

The land, on which this house was built, was part of a larger parcel sold by Chester Kingsley to Bradley C. Whitcher and Alonzo R. Smith in 1865. In 1867 Whitcher and Smith split their parcel and Whitcher retained this portion which he sold (with buildings according to the deed) immediately. The property changed hands two other times until it was purchased by Lemuel Page. Page, who is listed as a commission merchant working in Boston, owned and lived in this house until near the turn of the century.

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

1. Atlas of Middlesex County, Somerville; 1874 ("L. Page"), 1884 ("L. Page").
2. Directories of Somerville: 1870s, 1880s.
3. Registry of Deeds, Middlesex County, Book 954, Page 206; Book 1009, Page 506; Book 1032, Page 404; Book 1256, Page 361.

