



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

GEORGE J. PROAKIS
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

PLANNING DIVISION
HISTORIC PRESERVATION

STEP 1: DETERMINATION OF SIGNIFICANCE
STAFF REPORT

Site: 40 Dickinson Street

Case: HPC.DMO 2020-18

Applicant: Honi R. Sanders & David A. Sanders

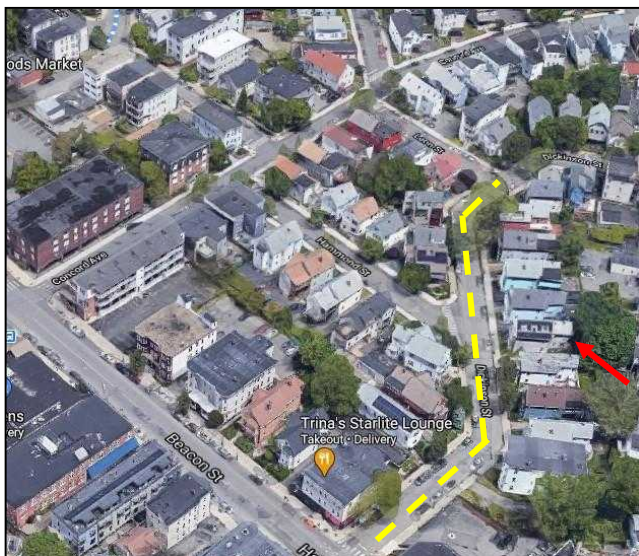
Owner: same as applicant

Proposal: *Demolish principal structure*

HPC Meeting Date: August 26, 2020



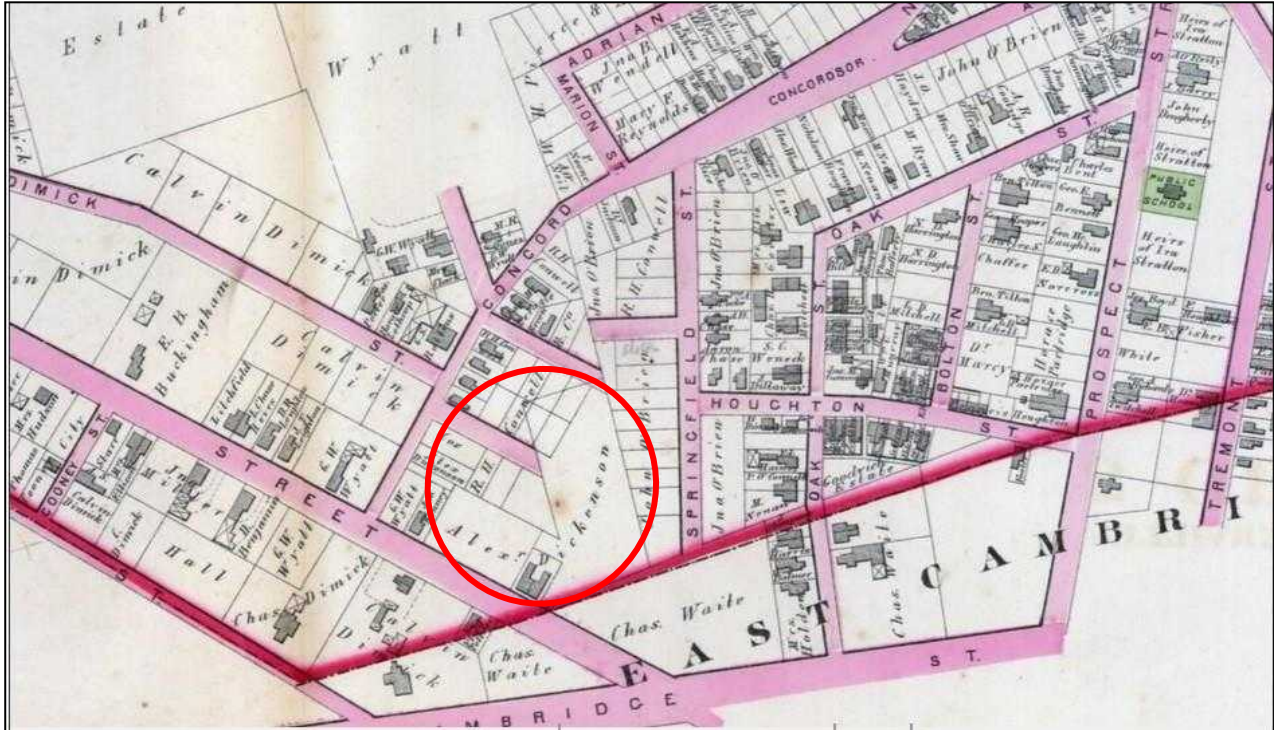
Above: 40 Dickinson, front elevation.



Left: Dickinson Street and surrounds. Aerial view. 40 Dickinson Street indicated with red arrow.

I. HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

The earliest cartographic reference to the Dickinson Street area found thus far is on the 1874 Hopkins Map of Somerville, plate E. At this time, Dickinson Street had yet to be laid out and the majority of the land forming the lower and upper portions of today's Dickinson Street was owned by the street's namesake, Alexander Dickinson.

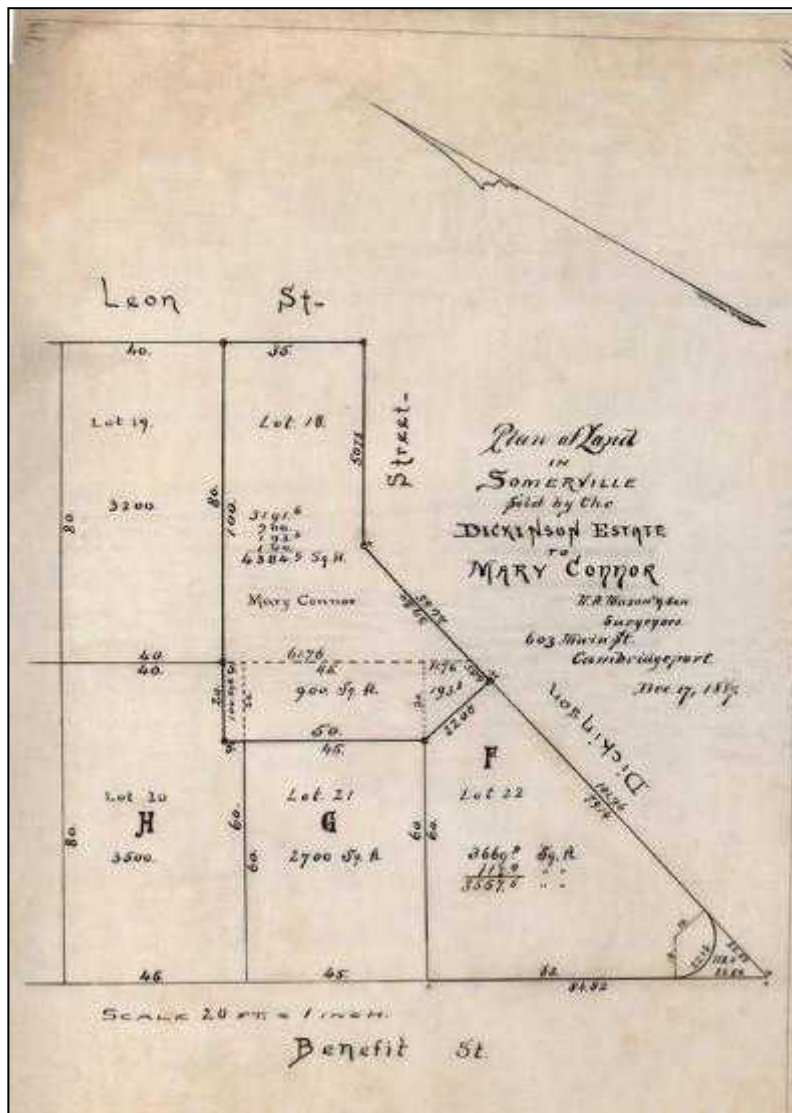


Above: Dickinson Street area, 1874 Hopkins Plate E. 40 Dickinson and its nearly identical brethren are built on land owned by the Street's namesake, Alexander Dickinson.

As can be seen in the image from the 1874 Hopkins plate above, Alexander Dickinson owned a large swath of land that bordered today's Beacon Street as well as today's Hammond Street and Leon Street.

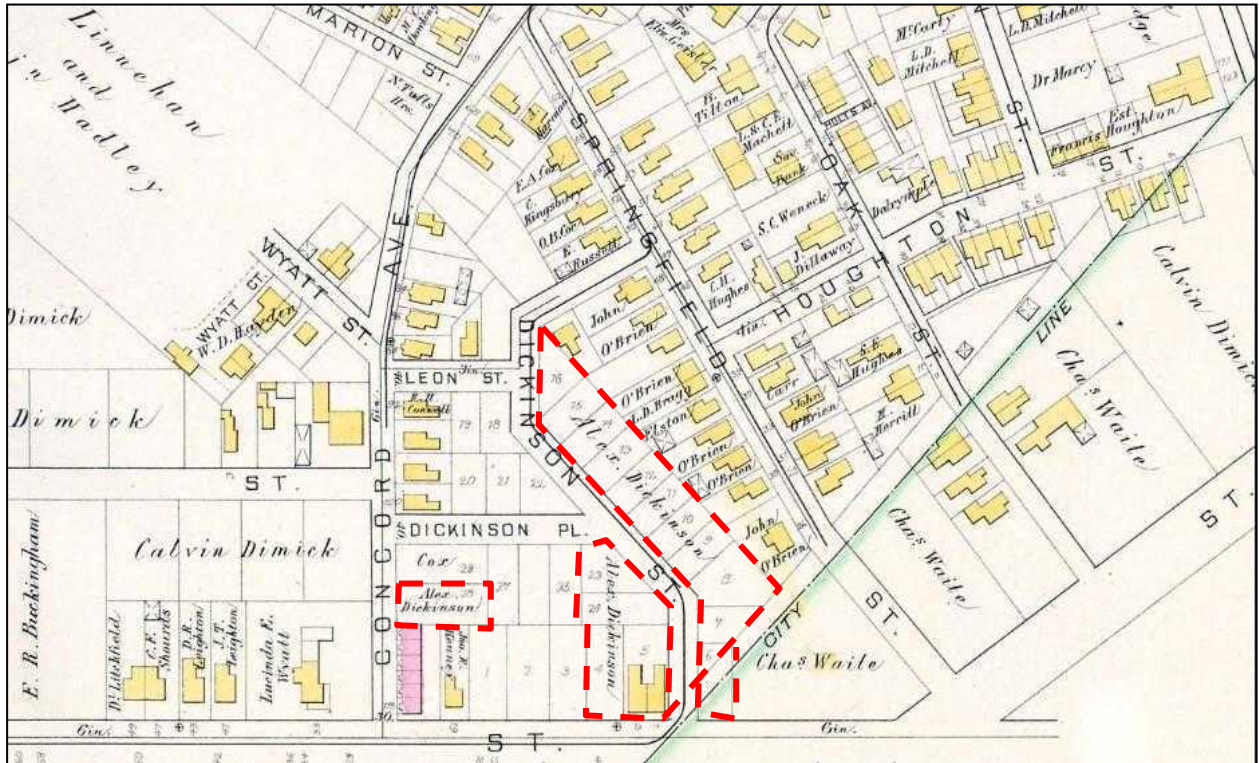
As of December, 1875, Dickinson Street was established. Alexander Dickinson sold off land on the opposite side of the street from today's #40, to a Mary Connor. We know this due to the discovery of a land survey plan related to the Dickinson-Connor land sale. The land on the even side of the street remained under the ownership of Alexander Dickinson.

It is extremely rare and fortuitous to find this historic, individual survey plan. Because Preservation Planning was able to find this in their research, this helps to pinpoint the very narrow window of time (1874 – December, 1875) during which Dickinson Street was laid out. An image of the original survey document for the Dickinson-Connor property transfer appears below. Note that the "Benefit Street" noted in the survey later became "Dickinson Place" (1884 Hopkins map), which then became today's "Hammond Street".



Left: Survey plan for the sale of property from Alexander Dickinson's holdings to Mary Connor. Dickinson Street has been laid out.

By 1884, as seen in Hopkins Plate 008 below, Dickinson Street has been further laid out and Alexander Dickinson's remaining holdings have been laid out into multiple parcels, with parcels 9-15 being largely uniform shape and size. Dickinson retains ownership of parcels on the opposite side of Dickinson, along with some fronting on Beacon Street, and a parcel on Concord Avenue.



Above: Dickinson Street, 1884 Hopkins Plate 008. The parcel on which 40 Dickinson is sited is one of 7 uniform parcels laid out, unbuilt, and still owned by Alexander Dickinson. The parcels sold off by the Dickinson estate to Mary Connor in 1874 remain unbuilt.

The next available map is the 1895 Bromley Map of Somerville. Plate 006 (image below) shows the subject area. Between 1884 and 1895, all of the parcels previously owned by Alexander Dickinson were sold to individual owners and present residential structures of uniform massing and form. 40 Dickinson is one of two that also has a barn (noted by the yellow building with the “x” across it). 28 – 48 Dickinson Street all contain wood-framed residential structures (noted by the yellow color used to identify the buildings). All show a front bay.

In 1895, 40 Dickinson is owned by Sarah P. Byrne. The Byrne family appears in the 1893 and 1895 City Directories and the 1900 Census for this property (data spreadsheet attached). At one point, members of the Byrne family are renters at the property while others are listed as Owners. It is likely that all of the buildings at 28-48 Dickinson Street were built as two-family structures and, certainly, given the family clusters of residents who occupied the building over the years, 40 Dickinson was certainly a two-family structure for much of its life. As the HPC is aware, it was also common for owner-residents of these properties to take in individual boarders to live in extra rooms as well; this likely accounts for the seemingly unrelated residents living with the Byrne and later Warner families over the years.

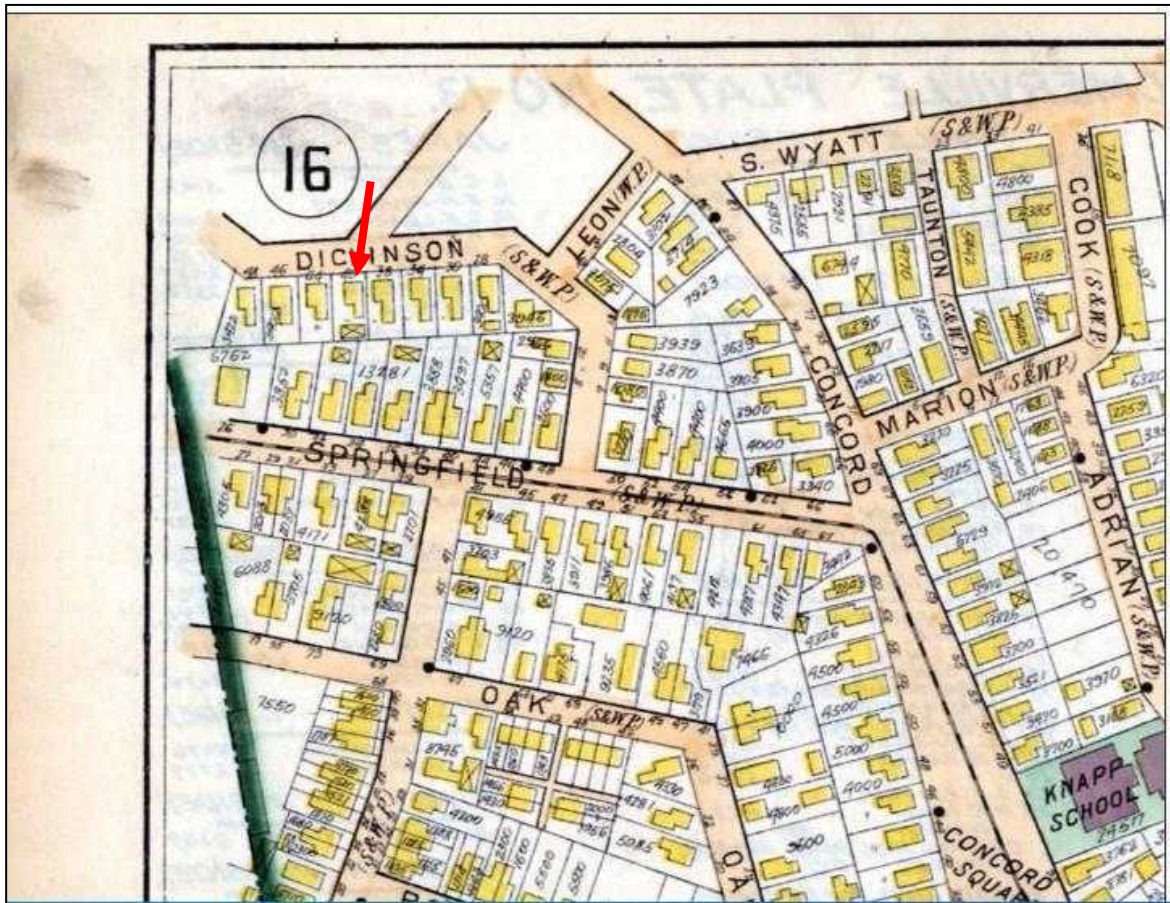


Above: 40 Dickinson St. 1895 Bromley Map, Plate 006. Owner: Sarah P. Byrne. Note the barn at the rear of the property.

The last historic map available is the 1900 Stadly map of Somerville, with Plate 013 showing the subject property. The form and massing of the house remain the same and the barn is still extant at the rear of the property.

Over the last 125+ years, 40 Dickinson Street has been home to residents who worked in numerous “professional” and “trades” jobs - from policeman to stenographer, librarian to plasterer, milkman to cabinetmaker among many others. As noted earlier, the Byrne family figures on the historic maps, census, and city directories as renting residents and owner-residents of the property. “Miss Sarah P. Byrne” is listed as a resident of the property in the 1893 City Directory, so we know that the structure had been built by that date, if not earlier. Miss. Sarah P. Byrne is noted as the sole owner of the property on the 1895 Bromley map.

The Warner family comes into focus starting in 1910 as renters of the property. By 1940, Mary C. Warner, a widow, is the owner of the property.



Above: 40 Dickinson Street, 1900 Stadly Plate 013. Barn remains extant at rear of property. Note the uniformity of shape and massing of all of the houses on this portion of Dickinson Street. With overall minor changes to the facades, the massing and form of these houses remains intact today.

II. ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

Relevant period

The period of relevance for the property starts between 1884 and 1895.

Integrity

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.

- a. Location: The building is in its original location.
- b. Design: 40 Dickinson Street is a three-bay-wide, gable-fronted, wood-frame structure. Side-entry hall residential structure. The original form and massing remain from the public street view. Carved wood cornice with round drop medallions on front gable. Two-story bay; covered front entry porch. Half-hip roof on bay. Half mini-roof string

course on second story. Roof-eave between first and second floor bay segues into roof of front entry porch. Wood pillar, railings, balusters, steps and decking to front entry porch.

- c. Materials: Wood frame, brick foundation, wood trim and window surrounds, asbestos exterior shingles (according to Assessor's database, but this appears quite likely). Asphalt shingles on roofs. Wood steps, porch railings, balusters, pillars, decking. Metal downspouts.
- d. Alterations: Exterior shingles (likely installed over original wood clapboarding); multiple windows appear to have been replaced; some window casings appear original while others have been modified to appear similar; front porch pillars, railings, steps, and decking have possibly been replaced/patched/repared over the last 100 years as is expected.

Evaluation of Integrity: 40 Dickinson retains its original form and massing to the street and the main roof of the house retains its original pitch. The two-story front façade bay remains extant. The bay retains its original half-hip shaped roof atop the second floor of the bay structure. The building also retains the original semi-roof-eave break that runs between the first and second story of the bay and across the front of the building to form the roof of the front entry porch. The two-over-two windows on the front façade are all in their original locations and appear to be largely of their original size.

The building retains a high degree of integrity. As noted above, the carved wood cornice remains extant (the only other such one visible remaining is located on the right-abutting property). This is a rare survivor in general and on the street unless others are covered by aluminum/vinyl trim.

The brick foundation remains extant and the front entry door is consistent with the construction period and style of the house. 40 Dickinson is one of five buildings on this side of the street that retains its second story string course that takes the form of a mini half-hooded roof (see photos). 40 Dickinson's is the most prominent and the best preserved of those that remain.

The integrity of design, form, massing, and period architectural elements contributes not only to this individual property but also to an overall cohesive streetscape on this side of Dickinson Street. The structures along Dickinson Street (particularly on the even side as noted earlier) are a window into a short period of housing development, social, cultural, and economic history in this immediate area. These structures, 40 Dickinson in particular, include architectural detail and decoration not always seen in gable-fronted, two-family houses built during this period.



Carved wood decorative cornice

Half-hip roof

Windows in original locations

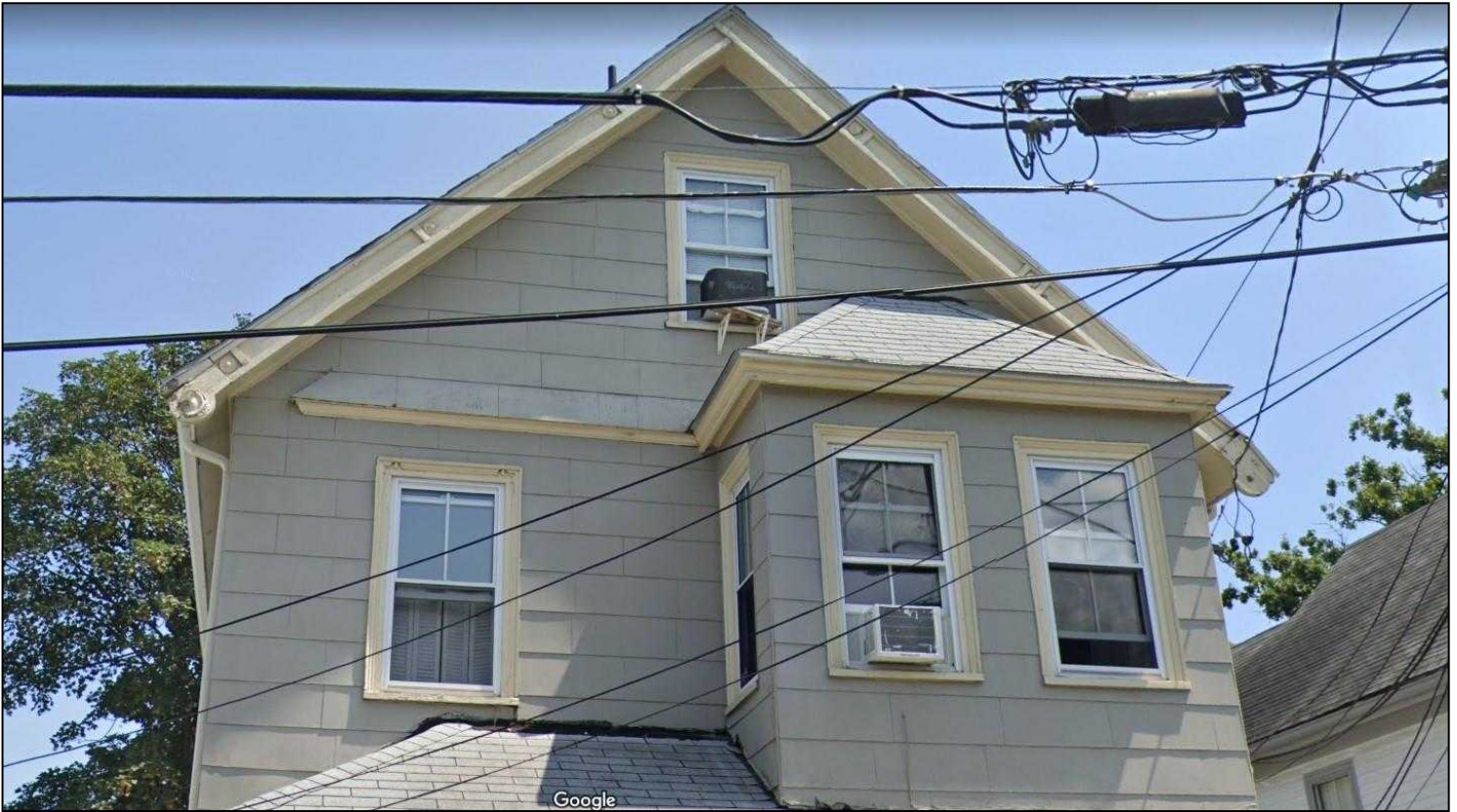
String course-turn mini-roof

Eave line to front porch roof

Period door

Original and later window casings

Brick foundation



Above: 40 Dickinson Street, close-up of cornice detail

Below: Right-abutting property at 44 Dickinson Street, the only other building on the street that presents its period molded and carved cornice



The images below show the integrity of the streetscape on this even-numbered side of Dickinson as it moves up from Beacon and past Hammond. All of the structures indicated below retain a high degree of original form, massing, and design. The alterations that have occurred do not obscure the original form, massing, and design, of these buildings and reflect the overall original uniformity that was intended for the streetscape.





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** (Ordinance 2003-05, Section 2.17.B, i-ii). 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

2003-05, Section 2.17.B, i

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 building at 40 Dickinson Street meets any of the criterion stated above.
2. The HPC must specifically state why the building does or does not meet the threshold for historic significance under finding “i”.

B. HISTORICAL & ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

2003-05, Section 2.17.B, ii

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.

1. The HPC must make a finding as to whether or not the building at 40 Dickinson Street meets any of the criterion stated above.
2. The HPC must specifically state why the building does or does not meet the threshold for historic significance under finding “ii”.

IV. VOTE

When bringing the matter to a vote, the HPC must include the reasons why the building at 40 Dickinson Street is or is not “historically significant” based on their assessment of the building and the data presented.

Census Location (#)	Plotted Land	O/R	Name	Age/Birth Date	Occupation	Place of Birth	Immigration Year	Source	Notes
	40 Dickinson	O	James W Lundergan (head)		46 Milk Dealer	Massachusetts		1900 US Federal Census	Mother and Father from Ireland
	40 Dickinson		Alice J Lundergan (wife)		44	Massachusetts		1900 US Federal Census	Mother and Father from Ireland
	40 Dickinson		John Byrnes [John Ryans] (Brother in law)		35 Milkman	Massachusetts		1900 US Federal Census & 1895 City Directory	
	40 Dickinson	R	William J Davidson (Head)		33 Policeman	Scotland	1869	1900 US Federal Census	
	40 Dickinson		Sarah Davidson (wife)		33	Massachusetts		1900 US Federal Census	Mother and father from Ireland
	40 Dickinson		James Byrne (brother in law)		37 Carpenter Ward Navy	Massachusetts		1900 US Federal Census	Mother and father from Ireland
	22 40 Dickinson	R	William J Warner (Head)		30 Fire Engine Driver	Massachusetts		1910 US Federal Census	
	23 40 Dickinson		Mary C Warner (wife)		29	Ireland	1886	1910 US Federal Census	
	24 40 Dickinson		Mary C Warner (daughter)		6 Student	Massachusetts		1910 US Federal Census	
	25 40 Dickinson		Alice Warner		5	Massachusetts		1910 US Federal Census	
	26 40 Dickinson		Gertrude Warner		3	Massachusetts		1910 US Federal Census	
	27 40 Dickinson		Claire Warner		0	Massachusetts		1910 US Federal Census	
									Attended School or College:No Highest Grade Completed:High School, 4th year Duration of Unemployment:60 Class of Worker:Wage or salary worker in private work Weeks Worked in 1939:0 Income:0
	25 40 Dickinson	O	Mary C Warner (head, widowed)		62	Massachusetts		1940 US Federal Census	
	26 40 Dickinson		Gertrude Warner (daughter)		33 Newspaper Secretary	Massachusetts		1940 US Federal Census	
	27 40 Dickinson		Claire Warner (daughter)		30 Stenographer	Massachusetts		1940 US Federal Census	
	28 40 Dickinson		Philip J Warner (son)		25 Store Salesman (Wholesale)	Massachusetts		1940 US Federal Census	
	29 40 Dickinson		Ruth Warner (daughter)		24 Librarian at Public Library	Massachusetts		1940 US Federal Census	
	30 40 Dickinson		Helen Warner (daughter)		21 Typist (Medical Supply Industry)	Massachusetts		1940 US Federal Census	
	40 Dickinson		Jesse Storr		Cabinet Maker			1898 City Directory	
	40 Dickinson		Miss Sarah P. Byrne					1893 City Directory	
	40 Dickinson		Charles Mc Clarty		teamster			1905 City Directory	
	40 Dickinson		Henry B Warner					1906 City Directory	
	40 Dickinson		George O. Goodwin		motorman			1901 City Directory	
	40 Dickinson		Dennis Lundergan		plasterer			1915 City Directory	
	40 Dickinson		Harold J McAlduff		cond			1927 City Directory	
	40 Dickinson		Eileen J McAlduff					1927 City Directory	
	40 Dickinson		Lun D E	Death date: 7 Mar 1928				1928 Obituary Index	
	40 Dickinson		William A O'Brien		printer			1933 City Directory	
	40 Dickinson		Patrick Donahue		Retired			1940 City Directory	
	40 Dickinson		Mary Donahue					1940 City Directory	