



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
MAYOR'S OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
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STEP 1: DETERMINATION OF SIGNIFICANCE
STAFF REPORT

Site: 55 Heath Street – Carriage Barn only
Case: HPC.DMO 2020-11

Applicant Name: Lynne Thompson
Owner Name: same as applicant

Recommendation: See report
Hearing Date: June 23, 2020



I. HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

Historical Context: The carriage barn at 55 Heath Street is sited at the rear of a parcel containing a detailed Italianate dwelling house. The barn is located in the Ten Hills section of the City. This structure is located in an area of Ten Hills that was carved out in 1845 to create a small residential subdivision by James Dana for the purpose of housing brickyard workers.¹ Census research needs to be conducted to determine if the dwelling house associated with this barn was created to house brick yard workers, though the house is of a higher style than what is normally seen used for 19th century laborer housing.

The carriage barn is clearly associated with pre-automotive Somerville. Livestock and equipment, including wagons/carriage would be housed on the first level while storage (hay, grain, additional equipment, etc.) would be stored on the second level. At times, if a homeowner could afford such, hired hands might bunk on the second level as well.

Architectural Description: The structure (carriage barn) that is the subject of the demolition application is a wood-framed, wood-clapboarded 1½-story gable-roofed accessory structure. The gable ends are

¹ *Beyond the Neck: The Architecture and Development of Somerville, MA.* ed. 1990.

found at the right and left elevation of the building and present deep gable returns. A substantial cornice and sturdy corner posts frame the building. The front façade sports a center gabled peak. It is the center gabled peak along with the deep gable returns and roof pitch that identify the structure's style as Italianate.

The left elevation presents a double-hung 6x6, wood-muntined window centered between the gable returns. The right elevation presents two double-hung, 6x6, wood-muntined windows: one at the first story and one centered between where the gable returns were once present. The front façade presents a hay door under the center gabled peak. The first floor of the front façade has been divided into four garage bays. Three of these bays are located on the original body of the house. The left-most bay is located in a single-story, shed-roofed later addition to the structure.

The dwelling house still extant on this property is also clearly Italianate in architectural style. Based on architectural style alone, the carriage barn is a contemporary of the dwelling house.

It is rare to find these Italianate-styled carriage barns in Somerville today.

II. FINDINGS

For a Determination of Significance, the subject building must be found either (i) importantly associated with people, events or history or (ii) historically or architecturally significant (Ordinance 2003-05, Section 2.17.B, i-ii).

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.

Deed, census, and historic map research will need to be conducted on this property.

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.

Relevant period

The period of relevance for the property begins c.1855-1860

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: It is believed that the building is in its original location but historic map research will help determine the length of time that the barn has been associated with the dwelling house on this site.
- b. Design: Italianate. Heavy cornice, high-pitch side gable roof with gabled center peak on front façade. Wood frame construction with heavy corner posts. Deep gable returns. See earlier architectural description.
- c. Materials: Wood frame construction, wood clapboarding, glass-paned wood windows. New metal/vinyl garage doors; asphalt shingled roof.
- d. Alterations: Left elevation shed-roofed, single-story addition with garage bay. Three garage bays on main front elevation.

Evaluation of Integrity: Despite the inclusion of modern garage bays and a left elevation addition, the main massing of the original carriage barn building is clear and retains a high degree of architectural integrity (see architectural description earlier in this report and associated photos).

V. RECOMMENDATION

Based on the assessment provided of criteria A and B of the ordinance, Staff recommend that the CARRIAGE BARN at 55 Heath Street be determined **HISTORICALLY SIGNIFICANT** based on Criterion (ii) (historical and architectural significance), including the rarity of these Italianate barns in the City and the clear Italianate architectural style of the structure.







