



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

STEP 1: DETERMINATION OF SIGNIFICANCE
STAFF REPORT

Site: 4 Princeton Street

Case: HPC.DMO 2020-16

Applicant: KAP Development, LLC

Owner: same as applicant

Proposal: *Demolish all structures on lot*

HPC Meeting Date: August 26, 2020



Top: 4 Princeton Street viewed from Alpine St.

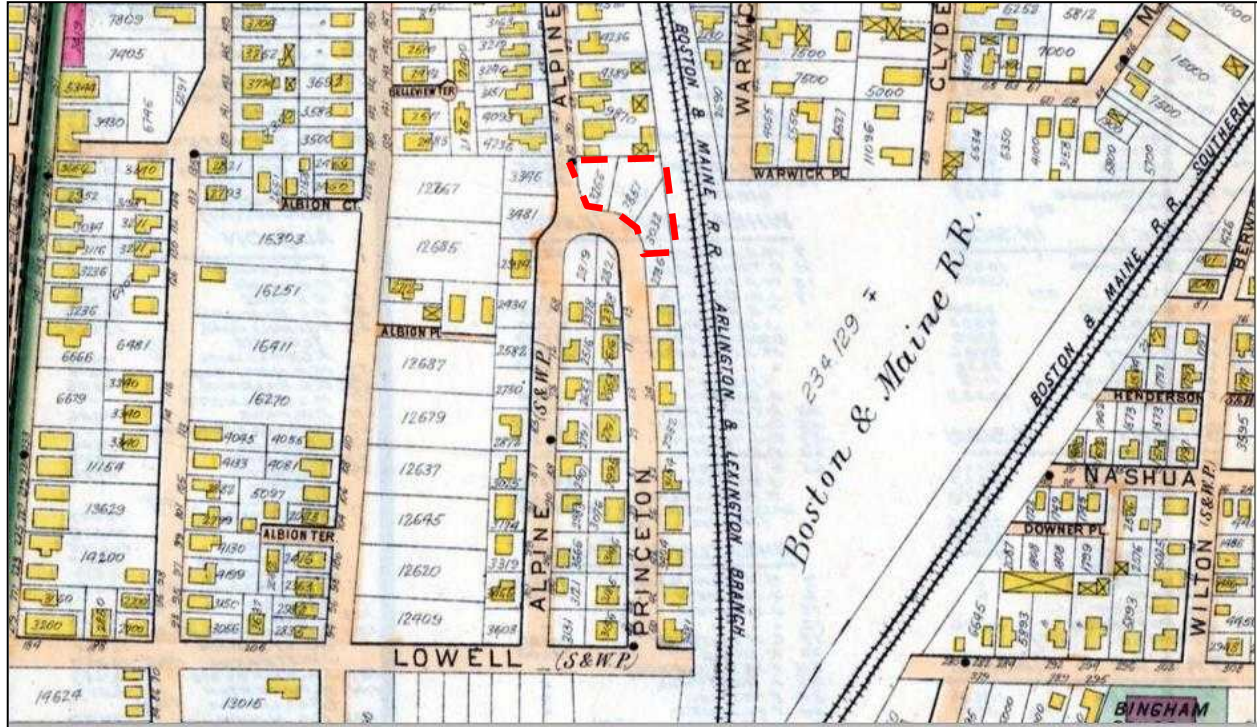
Middle: View from Princeton Street of house and garage

Left: Aerial View of property showing house and garage.

I. HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

Historic map research shows that as of 1900, this property on Princeton Street remained undeveloped and consisted of three separate parcels. To-date, no maps have been uncovered indicating who owned the undeveloped land at or prior to this time. Historic maps post-1900 are not accessible.

The 1900 Stadly map below shows the area at that time. Today's 4 Princeton Street has been outlined in hatched red lines and shows the three undeveloped parcels.



The Somerville Assessor's database lists a construction date of 1930 for this house. Assessor's databases are notoriously inaccurate in terms of their build dates and are often just estimates. City Directory and Census data shows the earliest mention of an occupant at 4 Princeton Street is 1914. Nothing appears for this property in the 1910 Census or in Directories prior to 1914. Therefore, it is possible to narrow the potential build date of the main portion of this structure to 1910-1914. Given the results of the map research and architectural observations of the existing house, it is unlikely that the current structure replaced an earlier one of the lot.

The attached research spreadsheet shows Harry C. Witt, a commercial artist, as the sole occupant of this building in 1914 (the building was likely originally built as a single-family structure). Harold Veinotte, a carpenter, was the subsequent occupant in 1915. The McDonald family rented the property as of 1920 and included extended family, a nephew. The property remained home to numerous different occupants over the decades, particularly between 1914 – 1933. The occupations of but a few are known but they range from the arts to the trades and “skilled labor”.

The garage is concrete block and is of a later date.

II. ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

Relevant period

The period of relevance for the house starts between c.1910-1914

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 house and garage are assumed to be in their original locations.
- b. Design:

House: The house has been altered multiple times over the course of its existence. The original, main form of the house has a single-story, shallow-pitched main gable. Over the decades, a shallow-pitched cross-gable was added. Two shed-roofed additions were added to the Alpine Street elevation. Each has steps leading to a covered entry. An open, though covered, third entry is seen on the Community Path elevation of the building. A brick chimney stack is also extant. Basement windows present. Paired, double-hung windows extant on most elevations. Multiple windows of varying styles, size, and function also extant across the facades. There are three principal entry doors.

Given the similarities in their base form, it is possible that 55 Alpine Street, sited directly opposite the front elevation of the subject property, are contemporaneous structures.



Above: Image of 55 Alpine Street

Garage: Two-bay, gable-roofed, one-story concrete block garage.

- c. Materials:

House: Stucco-ed foundation, original foundation material not viewable. Exterior materials appear to be a combination of wood trim, vinyl trim, and asbestos

shingling. Asphalt shingles on roof. Vinyl/plastic stationary shutters. Wood steps, balusters, and rails. Most windows appear to be vinyl.

Garage: Concrete block body with wood trim and asbestos shingling. Asphalt shingles on roof. Garage doors appear to be painted wood.

- d. **Alterations:** Addition of cross-gable; shed-dormered enclosed entries; window replacement, asbestos siding, vinyl trim cover, creating of multiple entry points to building.

Evaluation of Integrity: While what appears to be the original form (see above) is somewhat distinguishable, and the chimney stack is still extant, due to the number of changes made in an *ad hoc* manner and being of no discernable style, there is little architectural integrity left to the building.

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.

HOUSE

1. The HPC must make a finding as to whether or not the HOUSE at 4 Princeton Street meets any of the criteria stated above.
2. The HPC must specifically state why the HOUSE at 4 Princeton Street does or does not meet the threshold for historic significance under finding “i”.

GARAGE

1. The HPC must make a finding as to whether or not the GARAGE at 4 Princeton Street meets any of the criteria stated above.
2. The HPC must specifically state why the GARAGE at 4 Princeton Street 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.

HOUSE

1. The HPC must make a finding as to whether or not the HOUSE at 4 Princeton Street meets any of the criteria stated above.
2. The HPC must specifically state why the HOUSE at 4 Princeton Street does or does not meet the threshold for historic significance under finding “i”.

GARAGE

3. The HPC must make a finding as to whether or not the GARAGE at 4 Princeton Street meets any of the criteria stated above.
4. The HPC must specifically state why the GARAGE at 4 Princeton Street does or does not meet the threshold for historic significance under finding “ii”.

IV. VOTE

1. When bringing the matter to a vote, the HPC must include the reasons why the HOUSE at 4 Princeton Street is or is not “historically significant” based on their assessment of the building and the data presented.
2. When bringing the matter to a vote, the HPC must include the reasons why the GARAGE at 4 Princeton 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
65	4 Princeton St	R	Arthur J Mcdonald (head)		37 Painter	Massachusetts		US Federal Census 1920	
66	4 Princeton St		Anna E Mcdonald (wife)		35	Canada	1900	US Federal Census 1920	
67	4 Princeton St		William J Mcdonald (son)		7 Student	Massachusetts		US Federal Census 1920	
68	4 Princeton St		Arthur J Mcdonald (son)		5 Student	Massachusetts		US Federal Census 1920	
69	4 Princeton St		William Gallaher (nephew)		1	Massachusetts		US Federal Census 1920	
	4 Princeton St		Harold S Veinotte		carpenter			City Directory 1915	
	4 Princeton St		Harry C Witt		commercial artist			City Directory 1914	
	4 Princeton St		Payten Colyer (Julia)		manager			City Directory 1925	
	4 Princeton St		Thomas F Scully		frt hd			City Directory 1927	
	4 Princeton St		Helen White (Fred)					City Directory 1927	
	4 Princeton St		Muriel Hughes					City Directory 1925	
	4 Princeton St		Bridie Scully					City Directory 1927	
	4 Princeton St		Willis M Hughes		Engineer			City Directory 1924	
	4 Princeton St		John Saltamartini					City Directory 1933	
	4 Princeton St		Joseph Gorgentini					City Directory 1933	
	4 Princeton St		Mary Gorgenti					City Directory 1933	
	4 Princeton St		Manjit S Arora					U.S. Public Records Index 1950-1993	
	4 Princeton St		Marie M Pierre					U.S. Public Records Index 1950-1993	
	4 Princeton St #1		Mohammed Saeed					U.S. Public Records Index 1950-1993	
	4 Princeton St		Taja Swarn					U.S. Public Records Index 1950-1993	
	4 Princeton St		Mahmud Omar					U.S. Public Records Index 1950-1993	