



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
MAYOR'S OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
KATJANA BALLANTYNE
MAYOR

GEORGE J. PROAKIS
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

PLANNING DIVISION
HISTORIC PRESERVATION

STEP 1: DETERMINATION OF SIGNIFICANCE
STAFF REPORT

Site: 15 Taylor Street

Case: HPC.DMO 2022.05

Applicant: Taylor Mystic, LLC

Owner: Same as Applicant

Legal Ad: *The Applicant seeks to demolish a principal structure constructed a minimum of 75 years ago.*

HPC Meeting Date: March 15, 2022

Top: Front elevation

Bottom, left: Left elevation

Bottom, middle: Rear elevation

Bottom, Right: Right elevation



I. HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

Historical Context: 15 Taylor Street is a two and half-story structure. Taylor Street is dominated by two-and-half residential buildings and one five story residential building.

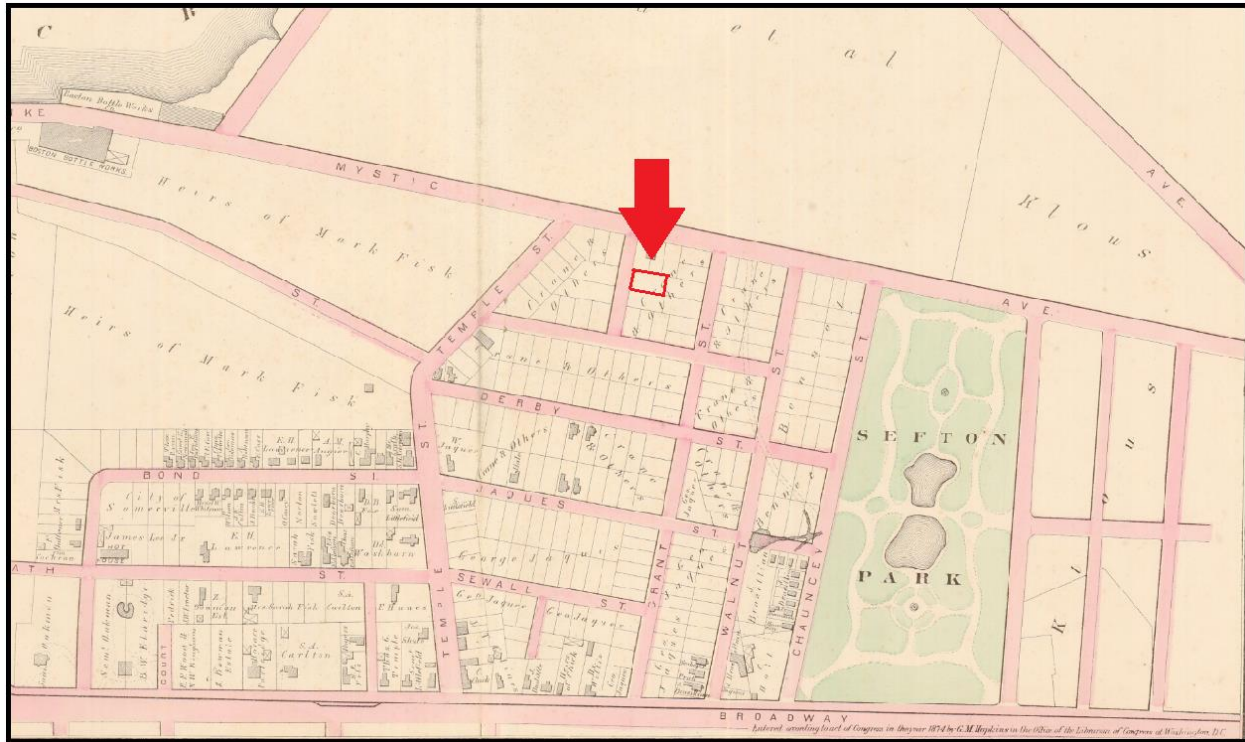
Ten Hills is named for the ten hills of the original tracts of land deeded to Governor John Winthrop by the Massachusetts Bay Colony Council in 1630. The original Ten Hills site was bisected by the Mystic River, with 450 acres in present-day Medford. Winthrop chose the area for the site of his farmhouse and used Ten Hills as a summer residence. Governor Winthrop was among the one of the few original European settlers in the Ten hills area.

In the 19th century, Ten Hills' clay deposits were excavated for the manufacture of bricks and pottery. Between the Civil War and the turn-of-the-century, brickmaking was the main industrial activity of the Ten Hills area.

A small residential subdivision was platted near present-day Temple Street in 1845 to house brickyard workers. This included the present-day streets of Jaques, Heath, and Bond. The street names of the area reflect the names of eighteenth and nineteenth century Ten Hills residents.

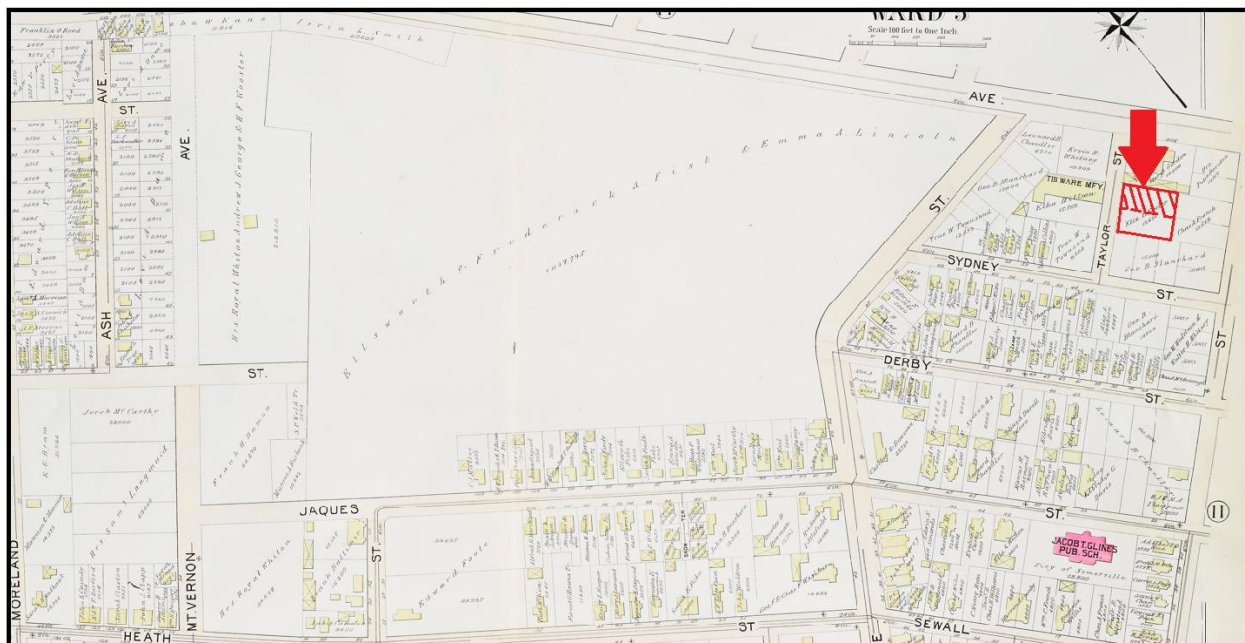


Above: 1852 Draper Map with general location of 15 Taylor Street indicated.

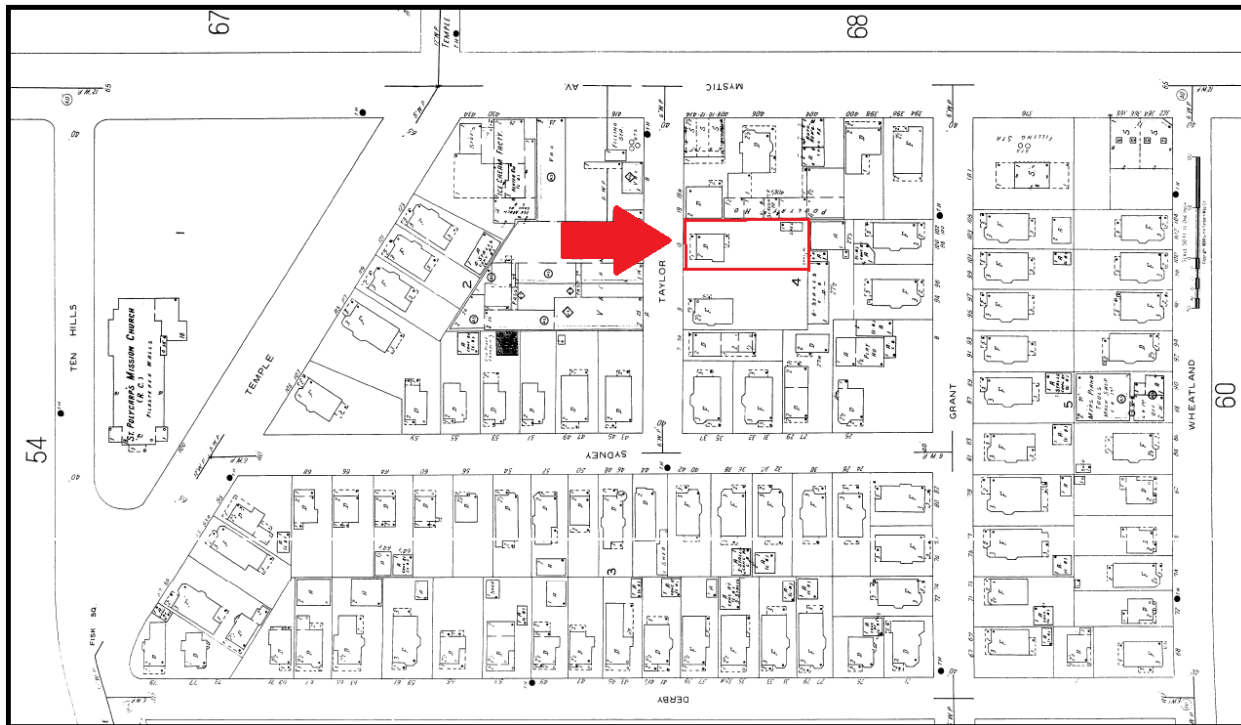


Above: 1874, Plate 14&15 Hopkins Map, specifying location of 15 Taylor Street.

Brickyards, the largest local industry at mid-19th century rapidly declined in the 1880s and 1890s until only one yard remained by 1900, located on the Mystic River flats of Governor Winthrop's former Ten Hills farm. With the decline of the brick industry, this land was filled and used for building lots. Similarly, marshes in the Ten Hills areas were filled, often for the construction of tenements.



Above: 1895 Bromley Map, Plate 10 specifying location of 15 Taylor Street.



Above: 1933-1934 Sanborn Map, Sheet 65 specifying location of 15 Taylor Street.

By 1907, the western section of the city was largely platted or built, and realtors began to cast their attention to some of the last remaining land in the city: the former brickyards of Ten Hills along the Mystic River, and the partially excavated grounds of Mount Benedict. The developments of moderately priced two-family houses at Ten Hills created one of the most crowded neighborhoods.

Architecturally, residential construction after the turn of the century continued the Queen Anne and Classical Revival tradition. Entire sections were often developed with the same two-family house type, particularly in the Ten Hills and Mount Benedict areas. Few single-family houses were built after 1910, with two-family houses and apartment buildings constituting the primary residential building type.

The first listed owner in the records for the lot that became 15 Taylor Street is ‘*Crane & Others*’ as shown in the 1874 Hopkins Map. In 1874, 15 Taylor St was a vacant lot as were the lots in the surrounding blocks owned by Crane & Others. This entity owned multiple city blocks in the surrounding area; however, Staff was unable to uncover further details on the owners.

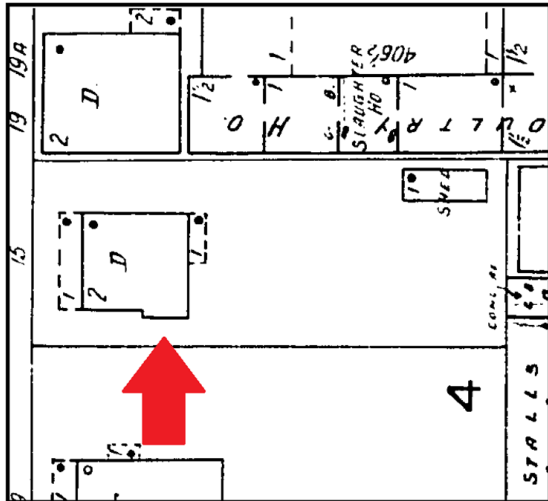
By 1895, 15 Taylor St is owned by ‘*Elizabeth Fowler*’. City Directories and Census records do not list her as living at the property. Records show that there was one Elizabeth Fowler living in Somerville at this time, but at 1 Cross Street. This is likely the same individual and would make Elizabeth Fowler an absentee landlord of 15 Taylor.

City Directories list residents for the site starting in 1913 which likely means that 15 Taylor was first developed in 1913. The residence at 15 Taylor Street first appears on the 1933-1934 Sanborn Map.

Further research resulted in the following information on the tenants or owners over the decades at 15 Taylor Street. The names that have been found show the property was inhabited by working-class individuals. A list of all residents' records is available for is provided below.

Name	Year(s) of Residency	Occupation
Deering, Elizabeth	1929	
Deering, Elizabeth H	1929	Sales
Deering, James B	1929	Machinist
Deering, Joseph	1929	Stevedore
Dondaro, Joseph	1913-1916	Printer
Giautte, Eduardo	1916-1917	Laborer
Giautte, Katherine	1917	
Murphy, Alice M	1927	Stenographer
Murphy, Caroline A	1927	Student
Murphy, Gertrude	1927	Secretery
Murphy, John G	1925-1927	Student
Murphy, John T	1918-1920	Coffee Roaster
Murphy, Lucy E	1918-1920	Bookkeeper
Murphy, Mary C	1918-1920	
Murphy, Walter F	1924-1927	Student, Live stock
O'Brien, Lillian	1929	
Wardell, William	1940	Trucking & Teaming

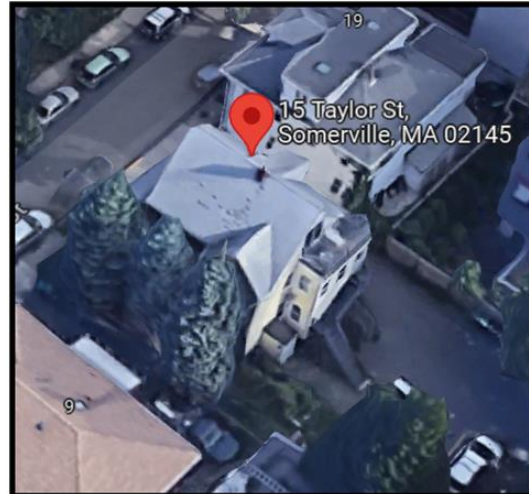
Comparing the historic maps with the current property we can track the architectural changes over time and the degree to which the structure has been altered.



Above: Fig 1



Above: Fig 2



Above: Fig 3

Fig 1: 1933-1934 Sanborn Map, close up of 15 Taylor Street

- The 1933-1934 Sanborn Map depicts that the original structure had a porch along the front elevation, as well as a rear porch. There was a gable-ell to the rear of the right elevation.
- A small, detached shed is depicted at the rear of the property

Fig 2: Satellite image of the front and left elevations of 15 Taylor St

- By 2022, a second-story addition above the front porch has been added. The addition acts as a roof to the porch below. Visible on the roof of the left elevation is a shed dormer which was likely a later addition.

Fig 3: Satellite image of the rear elevation of 15 Taylor St

- By 2022, the rear porch has been enclosed and a second floor addition placed above with a roof deck on top. An exterior staircase leads to the upper floors. A small shed has been attached to the rear.

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.

1. 15 Taylor Street

The period of relevance for the house starts c.1914-1947

- a. Location: It is likely that this structure is in its original location and was built on-site.
- Design: The house is a front gable, wood-framed residential building with a covered porch on the first floor.
- Front Elevation
 - Covered porch with an aluminum or plexiglass front doors with glass sunburst window insert.
 - Porch has three wood beams to support a second story enclosed space above; knee walls along the sides of the porch.
 - Fenestration consists of two one-over-one, double-hung, sash windows with detailed surround on the right of the front door. The second-floor fenestration consists of two sets of four awning windows. The top floor has one one-over-one double-hung, replacement sash window with detailed surround.
 - Concrete steps lead to a wood porch.
 - Wood or aluminum railings on front steps.
 - Mid-late 20th century iron railings
- Right Elevation

- Fenestration on the first floor consists of three one-over-one, double-hung, sash windows with detailed surround. The second-floor fenestration consists of three one-over-one, double-hung, sash windows with detailed surround. The top floor of the gable-ell has one awning window.
- Basement fenestration consists of a sliding sash window with simple surround.

- Left Elevation

- Single shed dormer with window.
- Fenestration on the first floor consists of a single one-over-one, double-hung window. Located between the first and second floor is a single one-over-one, double-hung window; this placement suggests the window is located in a stairwell.
- Basement fenestration consists of two horizontal sliding sash windows with simple surround.

- Rear Elevation

- Two-story rear ell with roof deck.
- Wood staircase leading to second floor entrance on the ell.
- Wood steps leading to a landing and entrance to first floor.
- Aluminum or plexiglass and glass door on second floor.
- Sliding glass doors to roof deck.
- Fenestration consists of two one-over-one, double-hung, sash window with detailed surround. Second floor fenestration consists of four one-over-one, single or double-hung, sash windows with detailed surround.
- Shed attached to the rear of gable-ell.

b. Materials:

- Foundation: brick with wood screening in some places
- Windows: aluminum or vinyl, some may be wood
- Entry doors: modern. aluminum (maybe fiberglass) with glass insert
- Siding: wood clapboard
- Trim: wood & aluminum
- Steps: brick & concrete
- Chimney: brick

- c. Roof: gable with asphalt shingle and one brick chimney. Single shed dormer on the left elevation.

- d. Alterations: Replacement windows and doors. The installation of the shed dormer on the left, the addition above the front covered porch, the enclosure of the rear porch and the second story addition above the rear porch with a roof deck, and the attached shed are all later additions.
- e. Evaluation of Integrity of 15 Taylor Street Based on the observations of the building and a study of the historic maps, it is Staff's position that the building does retain most of the integrity of its original form. Alterations have occurred to this structure which obscure original details and architectural design; however, the original massing remains largely intact.

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 15 Taylor Street Avenue meets any of the criteria stated above.
2. The HPC must specifically state why the RESIDENTIAL STRUCTURE at 15 Taylor 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 15 Taylor Street meets any of the criteria stated above.

2. The HPC must specifically state why the RESIDENTIAL STRUCTURE at 15 Taylor Street or does not meet the threshold for historic significance under finding “*b*”.

If the HPC makes the above finding, the HPC must state their reasons why they take this position.

IV. VOTE

1. When bringing the matter to a vote, the HPC must include the reasons why the RESIDENTIAL STRUCTURE at 15 Taylor Street is or is not “historically significant”.