



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

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

PLANNING DIVISION  
HISTORIC PRESERVATION

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**STEP 1: DETERMINATION OF SIGNIFICANCE**  
**STAFF REPORT**

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**Site:** 12 Woodbine St

**Case:** HPC.DMO 2022.23

**Applicant:** North America  
Development, LLC, Bruna Rossetti

**Owner:** 12 Woodbine, LLC

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

**HPC Meeting Date:** June 21, 2022



*Top: Front elevation*

*Bottom, left: Left elevation*

*Bottom, middle: Rear elevation*

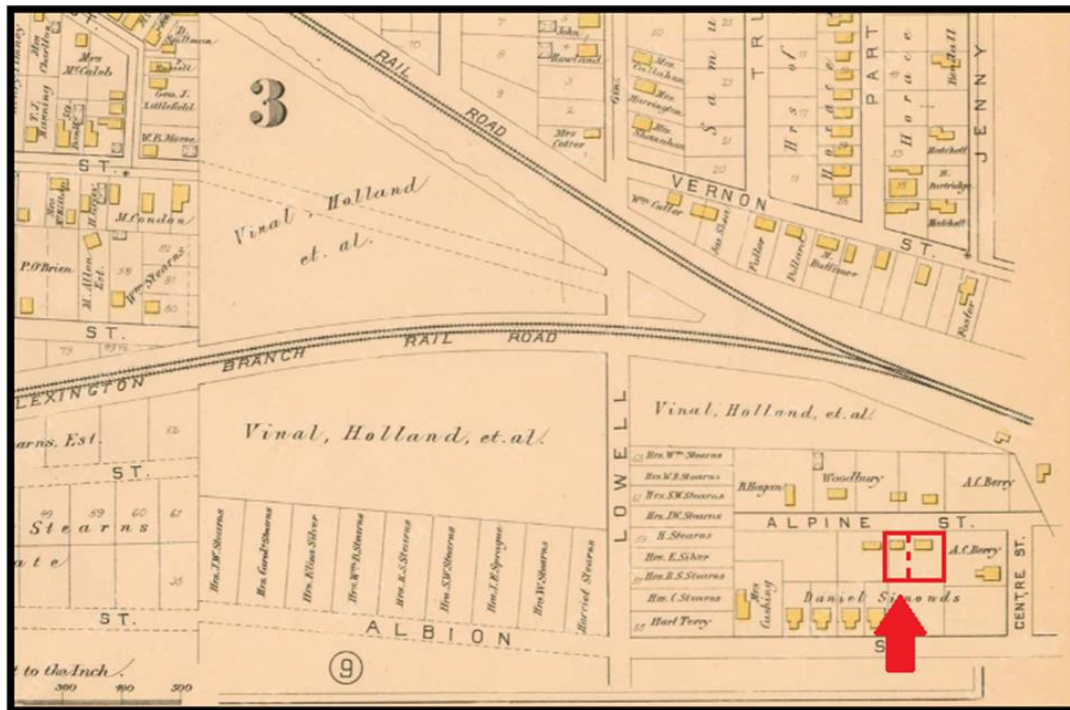
*Bottom, right: Right elevation*



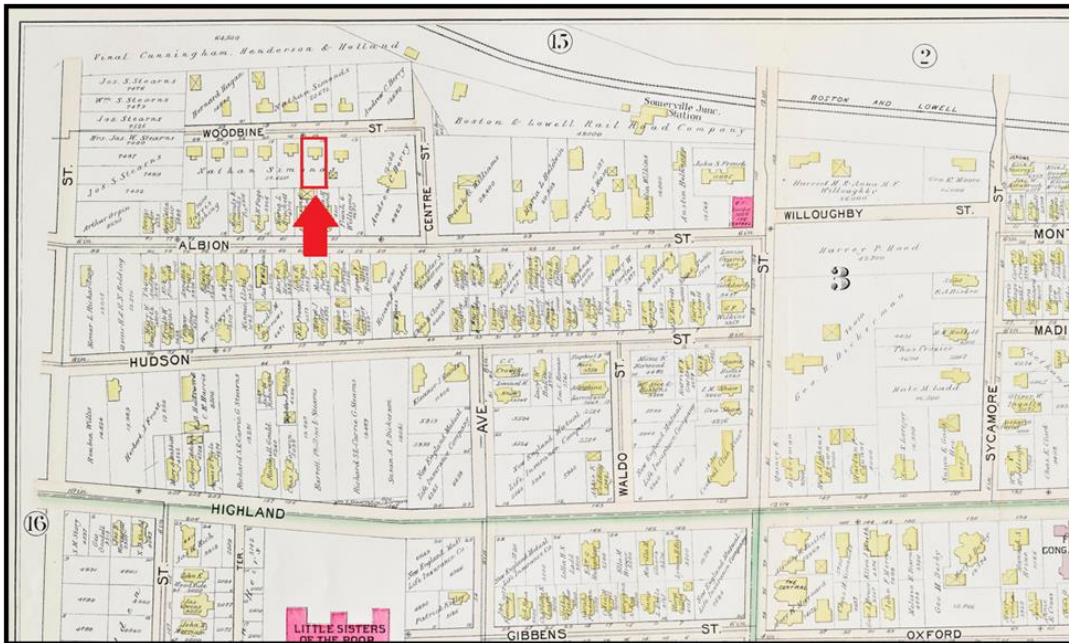
The purpose of a staff report is to provide the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) with additional information and professional assessments regarding properties that are proposed for demolition. These assessments are based on the criteria allowed for consideration by the HPC in accordance with the Demolition Review Ordinance (DRO). A Staff Report is not a determination/decision, nor does it constitute authorization in any form.

## I. HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

**Historical Context:** 12 Woodbine Street was constructed at some time between 1874 and 1884. Woodbine Street was originally called Alpine Street and dead-ended against land belonging to the Stearns family. The 1884 Hopkins Atlas shows only six houses on the street with three of them noted as the property of Daniel Simonds. By 1895, most of the south side of Woodbine Street was fully built up with workers' cottages.



Above: 1884 Hopkins Map, Plate 12- indicating approximate location 12 Woodbine

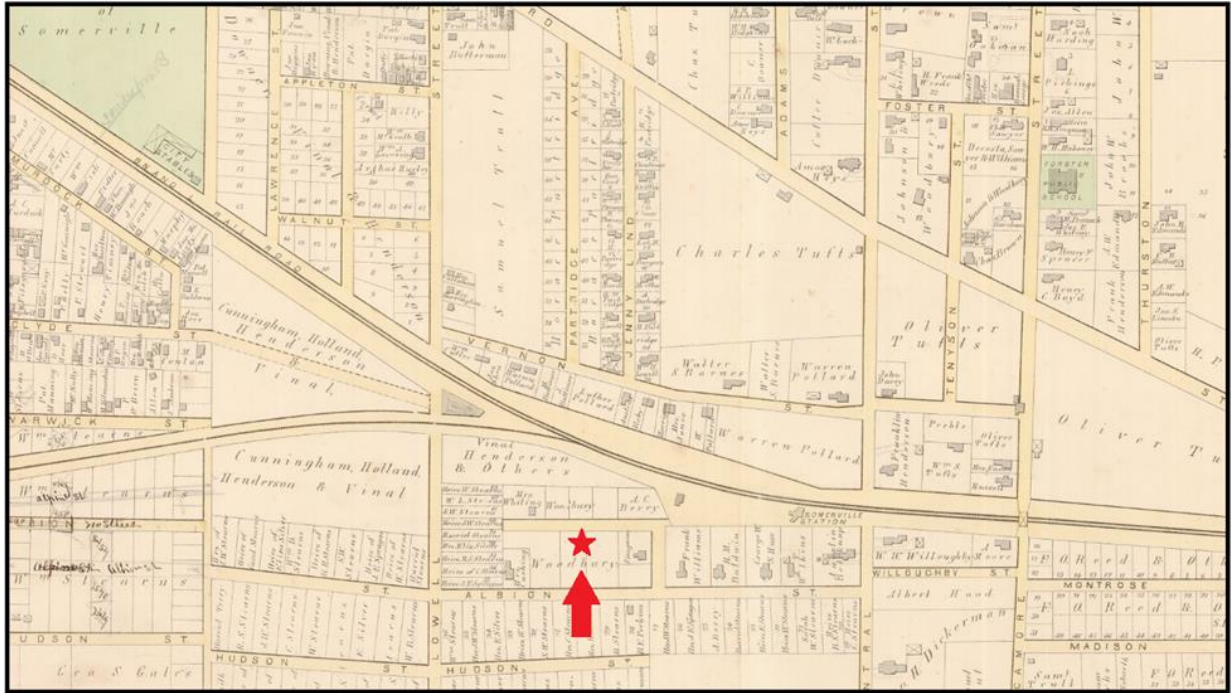


*Above: 1895 Bromley Map, Plate 3- indicating location 12 Woodbine parcel*

Ownership of multiple parcels on both sides of Woodbine Street, including 12 Woodbine, was later transferred to another family member, Nathan Simonds. In the 1900 census, 76-year-old Simonds is listed as a landowner boarding at 73 Albion Street. This means that Nathan Simonds was a boarder in a house abutting the properties he owned and rented out on the south side of Woodbine Street. Due to the continued ownership of the land from 1884 through 1900 by the Simonds family, it is likely that all the workers cottages were constructed by them on speculation for rental. Nathan Simonds also owned rental property on Campbell Park in Davis Square.

The workers' cottage located at 12 Woodbine Street was possibly constructed between 1874 and 1884 on land belonging to Daniel Simonds and later Nathan Simonds. This side of Woodbine has predominantly been 1 ½-story cottages with side gable ends and the broad side of the house facing the street. Apart from varying changes (such as front porches) and perhaps minor additions, the main bodies of these houses (10, 12, 16, 20) were likely largely identical. 15, and 19 Woodbine Street, properties on the north side of the street, came in for demo review in 2019 and 2020. 16 Woodbine came in for demolition review in 2021.





Above: 1874 Hopkins Map, Plate 12- indicating location 12 Woodbine parcel

As can be seen in the 1874 Hopkins Map, no structures existed on the site prior to the current building.

From comparing the 1884 Hopkins Map and the 1895 Bromley Map, it is evident that the extant rear lean-to was added between 1884 and 1895. Additionally, we can see from the 1895 Bromley Map that the extant front entrance was added sometime after 1895 and was likely a porch. It is unclear when it was enclosed and was likely open at the time it was added to the structure.

Overall, the vast creation of workers' dwellings to house "unskilled" laborers and their families who toiled in the various industries in Somerville (railroads, slaughterhouses/meatpacking, laundries, brickmaking, glassmaking, among countless others) speaks to the important role that these workers played in the growth and development of this City.

This property was rented by a variety of working-class families throughout the 20th century, such as the Kuhn family who immigrated from Germany and worked as cigar manufacturers, shippers, and tailors. The Willis family, who resided at 12 Woodbine between 1905-1929, included members who worked as tin platers, laborers, and machinists.

(Continued on next page.)

A list of all residents for 12 Woodbine Street and their professions is provided below.

Name	Year(s) of Residency	Occupation	Relationship	Residency Type
Blake, Margaret	1889		Wife/Widow of Charles H Corner	H
Campbell, William H	1893	Car Conductor		H
Corner, Charles H	1893 - 1889	Harness Maker	Husband to Margaret Blake	H
Kuhn, Amelia	1896 - 1905		Wife to Fritz	H
Kuhn, Carl H L	1896 - 1905		Son of Amelia & Fritz	B
Kuhn, Fritz	1896 - 1905	Cigar Manufacturer	Husband to Amelia	H
Kuhn, Gustaf/v	1896 - 1905	Tailor	Son of Amelia & Fritz	B
Kuhn, William	1897 - 1898	Piano Maker		B
Lefrancis, Amelia	1896 - 1905		Granddaughter of Amelia & Fritz	
Lefrancis, Nettie	1896 - 1905		Daughter of Amelia & Fritz	
Spillane, James P	1895	Bookkeeper @ 71 Kilby		H
Watkins, William	1890 - 1892	Engineer		H
Williamson, Henry J	1911	Machinist Apprentice		B
Willis, Clarence L	1924 - 1929	Mover	Son of John & Martha	R
Willis, Emmaline K	1906 - 1919		Mother of John	B
Willis, Franklin J	1924 - 1929		Son of John & Martha	R
Willis, Henry J	1909 - 1924	Machinist Apprentice, Box Ctr	Son of John & Martha	B
Willis, John H	1906 - 1929	Tin Plater	Married to Martha/ Head of Household	H
Willis, Martha E	1917 - 1929		Married to John	H
Willis, Walter S	1911 - 1917	Laborer, Helper, Private @ Camp Devens		B

## 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.*

Prior to applying to the HPC for demolition review, the Applicant removed the front enclosed porch and rear portion of the building without permission. This unauthorized activity can be seen in the photos on the first page of this staff report. After the Applicant was notified by ISD that demolition review by the HPC was required, the Applicant began to submit their application documents. The Applicant was allowed to secure the house from the elements and secure the property.

Yet, while the Applicant was in the process of submitting their application materials for demolition review, the Applicant team, within a few short hours, proceeded to remove the roof structure and the entire second floor. The City was alerted to this unauthorized activity by the neighborhood. This was again done without authorization from the City. ISD visited the property again and issued a Stop Work Order.

Below are photos of 12 Woodbine prior to the commencement of demolition, followed by the current state of 12 Woodbine following the second bout of unauthorized demolition.

**12 Woodbine prior to demolition:**



*Above: Front elevation prior to commencement of demolition*



*Above: Left elevation prior to commencement of demolition*





*Above: Right elevation prior to commencement of demolition*



*Above: Rear elevation prior to commencement of demolition*

**12 Woodbine after demolition:**



*Above: Photo after commencement of demolition*



*Above: Photo after commencement of demolition*





*Above: Photo after commencement of demolition*

## **1. 12 Woodbine Street**

The period of relevance for the house starts late 1884 - late 1929.

- a. Location: It is likely that this structure is in its original location and was built on-site.
- b. Design: The dwelling house was a 1 ½-story, side-gabled structure with a small covered and enclosed front porch. The house retained its original form and massing (story height, gable ends, and main massing) prior to demolition. It is possible that the front entrance to 12 Woodbine was added within a few decades of the original construction. Though not original to the construction date of the building, it was still an important later feature. It is unclear if the porch would have been enclosed or open at the time of its construction. A chimney stack was removed during the demolition.

### - Front Elevation

- Symmetric front elevation, formerly with an enclosed porch
- Formerly wood steps from porch to pavement
- Prior to demolition the fenestration consisted of either double casement or horizontal sliding windows
- There was a skirt with vertical wood slats along the enclosed front porch.

- Right Elevation
    - Fenestration consists of one-over-one double-hung sash windows with simple surround
    - Gable-ended roof
  - Left Elevation
    - Fenestration consists of one-over-one double-hung sash windows with simple surround
    - Gable-ended roof
  - Rear Elevation
    - Fenestration consists of two-over-two fixed window with simple surround and one one-over-one double-hung sash window.
    - Prior to demolition a door led to wood porch with wood steps
- c. Materials:
- Foundation: Concrete parged brick or stone/rubble.
  - Windows: Aluminum
  - Siding: Wood Clapboard covered by vinyl
  - Roof: Asphalt shingles prior to demolition
- d. Alterations: Main body: windows, shingling, doors.
- Porches: The addition of the porch on the front was later than the date of original construction but may have been added within a few decades in either an enclosed or open fashion. The rear porch likely replaced an original ell that was demolished after 1900. Both porches were removed during the demolition.
- e. Evaluation of Integrity of 12 Woodbine Street Based on the observations of the building and a study of the historic maps, it is Staff's position that the building did retain integrity of its original form prior to demolition. Minimal alterations had occurred to this structure, and details and architectural design were still apparent.

### 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 STRUCTURE at 12 Woodbine Street meets any of the criteria stated above.
2. The HPC must specifically state why the STRUCTURE at 12 Woodbine 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 STRUCTURE at 12 Woodbine Street meets any of the criteria stated above.
2. The HPC must specifically state why the STRUCTURE at 12 Woodbine Street does 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 STRUCTURE at 12 Woodbine Street is or is not “historically significant”.