

FINAL LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT

Maria Baldwin-Alvaro Blodgett Houses

194, 194R and 196 Prospect Street, Cambridge, Mass. 02139



The Maria Baldwin-Alvaro Blodgett houses at 194, 194R, and 196 Prospect Street are a well-preserved example of Greek Revival, semi-detached residences in The Port neighborhood of Cambridge. The building comprises two side-hall Greek Revival houses with a shared party wall. At the entrances, a portico is supported by three Ionic columns. While architecturally significant with strong integrity in its current state, the primary significance of 196 Prospect derives from its connection to Black educator Maria L. Baldwin, who resided there between 1889 and 1905, educating and conducting meetings from the residence until she relocated to Boston.

Designation of the properties by the City Council as a Cambridge Landmark will protect the extant original and significant later exterior features of the 1839 double-house, guiding the future owners on appropriate alterations while respecting the distinct architectural and historic character of the landmark.

Eric Hill and Charles Sullivan
Cambridge Historical Commission

January 12, 2023

Introduction

The Baldwin-Blodgett houses have long been recognized as historically significant for their association with Maria Baldwin, the African American educator and Master of the Agassiz School. The building was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1976 and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. In 1978 the Cambridge Historical Commission offered to install a Bicentennial blue oval marker on the house, but this was declined, as was an African American Trail marker in 1993. In 2018 Linda Papaforti, who had inherited 196 Prospect Street in 2015, contacted Just A Start and the Historical Commission about the possibility of rehabilitation assistance but never completed an application.

The Historical Commission initiated a landmark designation study of the Baldwin-Blodgett houses in February 2021, shortly after learning that Ms. Papaforti had placed the property on the market. The Commission decided that the house might be at risk of inappropriate redevelopment in its current state of deferred maintenance and initiated the study as a defensive measure. Ms. Papaforti informed CHC staff that she did not object to the study, and that she was uncertain about actually selling the property.

During the course of the study CHC staff reached out to the three condominium owners at 194 and 194R Prospect Street. Ms. Papaforti died in May of 2021 and communication ceased for a time as the property passed to her heirs. At a public hearing on January 5, 2023, her heirs were represented by attorney Joseph Franzese. No objections to the designation were stated at the hearing.

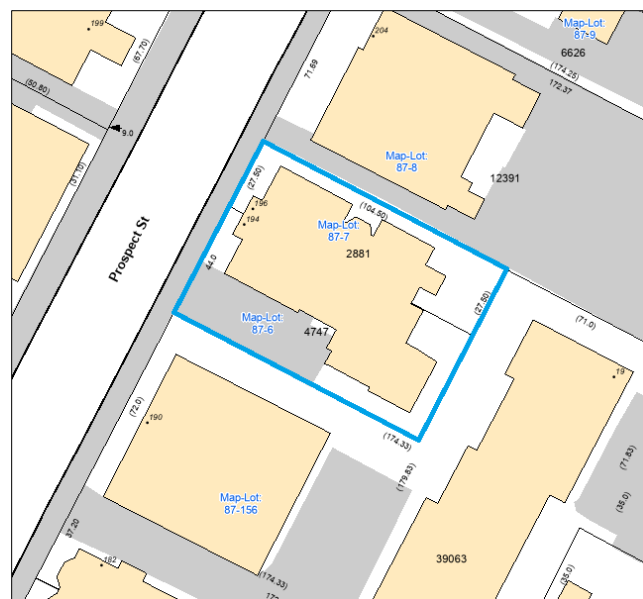
The proposed designation of the Baldwin-Blodgett houses is in the form of a Council Order that may be adopted by a simple majority of five votes. The effect of the designation will be that no building permit may be issued, and no publicly visible exterior alterations may be made, without a Certificate of Appropriateness, Hardship, or Non-Applicability from the Cambridge Historical Commission.

A. Location and Zoning Considerations

The Maria Baldwin-Alvaro Blodgett houses are located on the east side of Prospect Street, mid-block between Broadway to the south and Gardner Street to the north. This span of Prospect Street retains some mid-19th century residences, with some mid-20th century commercial and multi-family buildings. The property is outside the Mid-Cambridge Neighborhood Conservation District, which has Prospect Street as its eastern boundary.

The Baldwin house is sited on a 2,881 square-foot lot in a Residence C-1 zoning district. The district allows multi-family construction with an FAR of 0.75 and a height limit of 35 feet.

The attached Blodgett house at 194 Prospect Street was renovated in 2009 and contains two condominium units. As part of that project a concrete block service garage behind 194 Prospect Street was replaced with an addition numbered 194R Prospect Street that contains one condominium unit, totaling three for the adjoining parcel.



Assessing map showing parcels at 194-196 Prospect Street.



Looking north on Prospect Street, 194-196 Prospect St at center-left. CHC staff photo, 2022.

Under current zoning, the potential for further development at 196 Prospect Street is limited, as the current FAR of the property at 0.81 exceeds the allowable FAR of 0.75. A future owner could only propose partial demolition to allow for a new addition

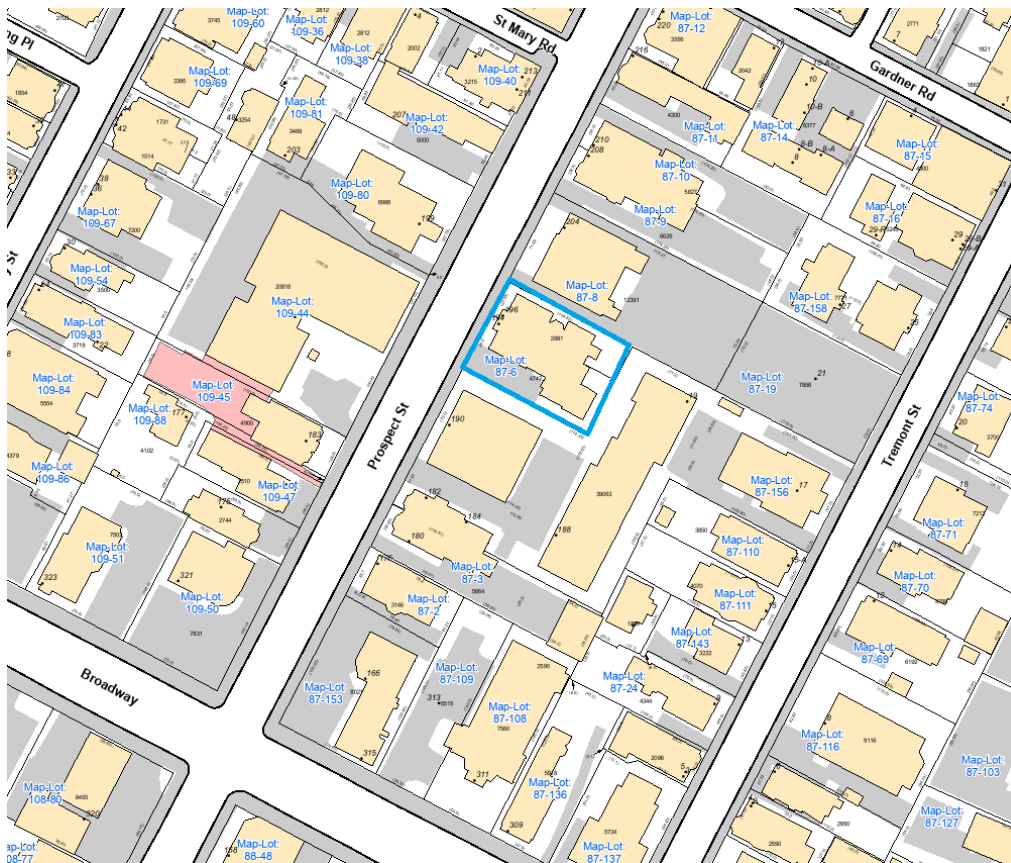
at the rear. The property has no off-street parking, so additional units would require parking under current zoning regulations. A special permit or variance would be required for a higher FAR, easing of parking requirements, a waiver on yard requirements, and the like. The adjoining property at 194 Prospect appears to have achieved its full development potential under existing zoning.

B. Ownership and Occupancy

The attached structures at 194-196 Prospect Street are presently divided into four units: three condominiums at 194/194R Prospect Street and one single-family dwelling at 196 Prospect Street. At 194 Prospect Street the historic house is split between two units with Unit 1 owned by E. Cecily Miller and Kenneth Field, recorded in the Middlesex South Registry of Deeds in book 70200, page 220 in 2017; and Unit 2 owned by Alaa Murabit in book 74167, page 551 in 2020. A rear unit at 194R Prospect Street is owned by Peter and Suzanne Martin as recorded in the Middlesex South Registry of Deeds in book 46166, page 546 in 2005.

The property at 196 Prospect Street was most recently owned by Linda Papaforti as recorded in the Middlesex South Registry of Deeds in 2015 found in Registered Lands Book 1481, page 116.¹ Ms. Papaforti passed away on May 11, 2022, and the property has since been listed for sale for \$1,080,000. The listing explains that the ‘property is in need of “full rehab”’.

¹ Title determined by the Land Court on April 17, 1913. Book 28, page 221, Certificate #4427.



194-196 Prospect Street and surrounding neighborhood.

C. Area Description

Prospect Street was laid out in 1804 to connect Cambridgeport to the western part of Charlestown and Prospect Hill, its namesake. This section of Charlestown was incorporated as Somerville in 1842. Cambridgeport was declared a United States port of delivery in 1805. From this, two major thoroughfares, Broadway and Hampshire Street, connected the active port area to the inland towns, making Prospect Street a major artery northward. During this period Prospect Street and Broadway opposite Sennott Park developed as a prestigious residential



The Prospect and Broadway neighborhood in 1854.
H.F. Walling, Map of Cambridge, Mass.

neighborhood with many substantial Greek Revival houses. However, Cambridgeport failed to live up to its potential as a great commercial city, and subsequently evolved into a Boston-oriented commercial suburb, thanks in part to a boom in manufacturing activity there.

Like many towns in the Boston area, mid-to-late-nineteenth century industrialization changed the face of Cambridgeport. In the 1850s the introduction of street railway service, the elimination of bridge tolls, and the advent of the steam railroad all had an impact on both suburban and industrial growth. With an abundance of cheap land and immigrant labor, along with better transportation, Cambridgeport became an attractive location for large industrial firms, many of which located east of Windsor Street, along the Broad Canal and Main Street toward Kendall Square. A population boom soon followed, adding well over 10,000 new residents every decade after 1855.



Greek Revival houses opposite Sennott Park, ca. 1900. From left to right, 309 Broadway (1837), 305-307 Broadway (1836), and 301-303 Broadway (1836). CHC collections.



East side of Prospect Street north of Broadway, 1919, with 196 at right.

CHC Engineering Dept. collection

By the mid-20th century, Prospect Street became more commercial because of its use as a major thoroughfare between Central Square and Union Square in Somerville. Due to the larger lot sizes and increased values, many residential property owners redeveloped their lots. Alterations to existing structures included new storefronts in front yards and new garages in back. Some properties were razed

entirely for new buildings. Automobile garages began to proliferate by the inter-war period, and after WWII some buildings were razed for parking lots, new multi-family housing, and service stations.

The immediate surroundings of the Baldwin-Blodgett Houses changed radically in the early 20th century. A concrete service garage was constructed behind the Blodgett house in 1919. At 190 Prospect Street an 1836 single-family house was remodeled as a three-decker in 1947; this and the garage were redeveloped with a multi-unit building and townhouses in 2006-2009. The 1842 Italianate house that formerly stood at 204 Prospect Street next door to the Baldwin house burned down in 1928, and the site remained a vacant lot for the next 30 years. The Knights of Columbus Hall constructed there in 1958 is now a mosque owned by the Islamic Society of Boston.

Today, many of the low-density sites along Prospect Street have been redeveloped, with infill residential construction and gut-renovations to existing housing.

D. Architectural Description

The Maria Baldwin-Alvaro Blodgett houses at 194-196 Prospect Street are a well-preserved example of a Greek Revival double house in The Port neighborhood of Cambridge. The building stands two-and-one-half stories tall and has a side-hall plan, with an original two-story kitchen ell at the rear. The house sits atop a raised brick foundation that has been painted. The ridge of the slate roof is set parallel to the street and is joined at right angles by the ell roof. Three low-profile skylights have been added to the roof of 194 Prospect. A chimney remains in the kitchen ell of the Baldwin house half; other original chimneys are no longer extant.



The facade of the Baldwin-Blodgett houses has six evenly spaced windows across the second story, while at the first floor there are two windows flanking each entrance, with two center doorways. All visible windows at 196 Prospect Street are wood, with probably original two-over-two sash. Window casings have traditional Greek Revival band mouldings and sills are the traditional 2" thick (nominal). The windows at 194 Prospect Street were replaced with new two-over-two windows in 2009. Under the eaves and extending around the sides of the house is an entablature surmounted by a boxed cornice and a severely deteriorated wooden gutter. At the gable end, the entablature is combined with boxed eaves to give the effect of a pediment. Evidence of wide corner boards and pilaster capitals is presumed to be present under the wood shingle siding. The kitchen ell has an undecorated fascia surmounted by a boxed cornice at its eaves on the north and south walls only.



The most prominent feature of the facade is its portico, which is set in front of the double entry and spans both entrances. The portico is supported by three fluted Ionic columns with plain pilasters and capitals, above which is an entablature with a boxed cornice. Both houses have multipaned wood doors in the Arts and Crafts style, likely added in the 1910s or 1920s.

A newly-discovered photo from 1919 shows some original features of the house. A low balustrade tops the portico. The original clapboard siding and skirt board are apparent. The wide corner board features a pilaster capital. The original configuration of the front steps can be seen, along with what was probably the original Greek Revival style fence. Operable shutters added interest to the façade.



196 Prospect Street (right) in 1919, showing original details of the facade. Cambridge Engineering Department photo, CHC

In 1899, Louis Baldwin, Maria's brother, was issued a building permit to extend the ell with an 18' long one-story addition that may have been intended as a meeting room. The Baldwins also added the three-sided bay window with a stained-glass "piano window" in 1900. These are the only alterations associated with the Baldwins and may have been designed to facilitate the meetings and study sessions Miss Baldwin held with activists and students.



1899 one-story Baldwin addition and bathroom with enclosed porch added by a later owner in 1930.

Other additions include a side porch from 1930 now enclosed with fanlight transoms above casement windows and a small extension for a bathroom. These are not considered significant, but the bay window and the one-story extension of the ell are important for their associations with Maria Baldwin and her public role.

While the front portion of 194 Prospect was restored in 2009, 196 still bears the wood shingles that were applied over its original clapboards in the 1930s. The Baldwin half exhibits much deferred maintenance but is largely in recoverable condition. Both houses should be brought to the same level of repair and maintained to present a consistent appearance.



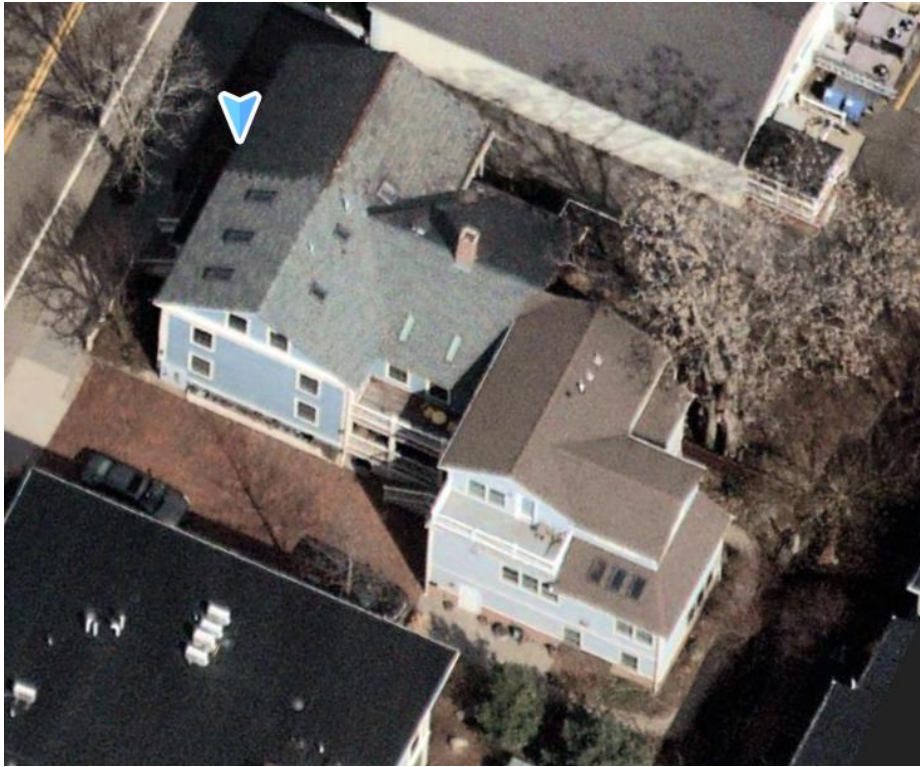
Bay with piano window constructed by the Baldwins in 1900. CHC photo, 2023



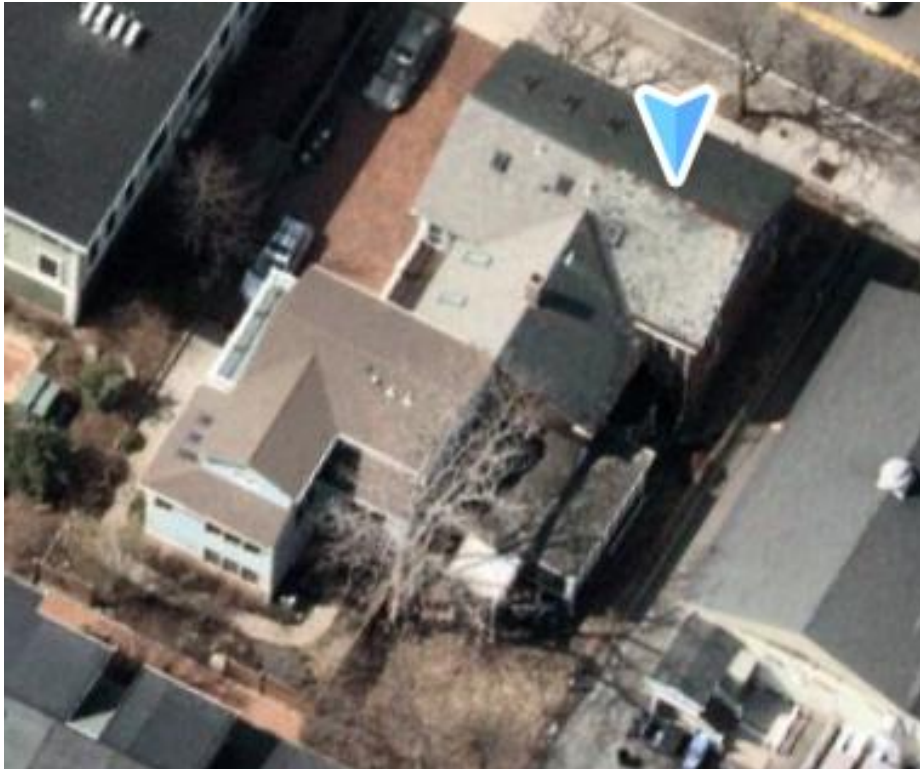
194-196 Prospect Street, c.1970. Historic American Buildings Survey photograph.



194-196 Prospect Street as photographed in 2021.. 194R Prospect Street is seen at right.



194-196 Prospect Street seen from the southeast. The addition at 194R Prospect Street, constructed in 2009 on the site of a demolished concrete garage, is at lower right.



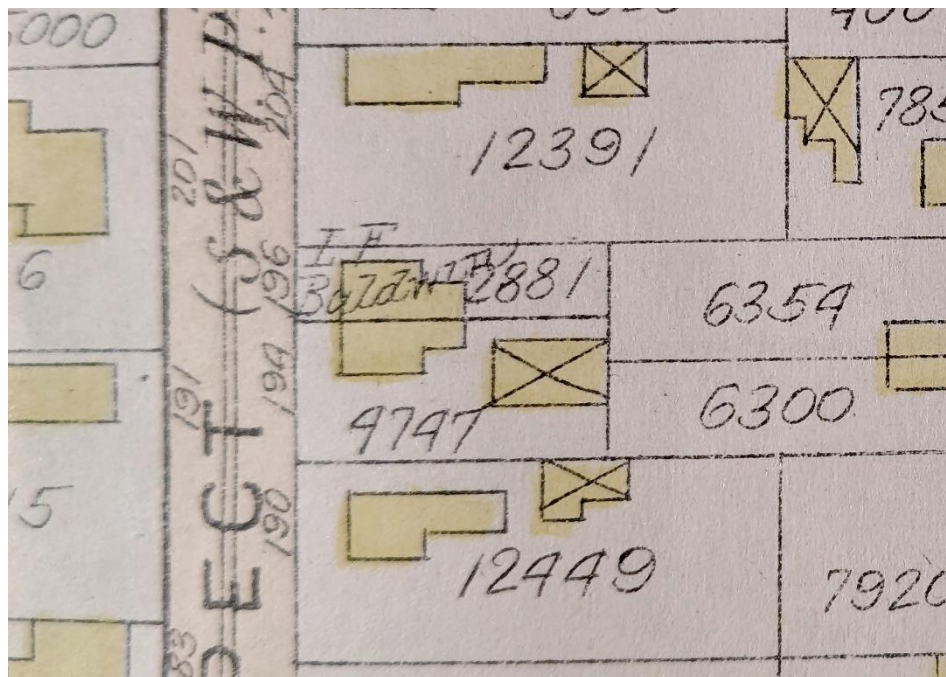
194-196 Prospect Street seen from the northeast. Photos by NearMap.com.

E. History and Significance

The lot at 194-196 Prospect Street was deeded in 1838 from Cyrus Page to Alvaro Blodgett, a carpenter who later served nine years as a City Councillor. Blodgett built the current double house, which was taxed as unfinished property in 1839 and completed later that year or in 1840. In 1842, he sold the house to Amory Houghton, a housewright and lumber wharf owner who developed many properties along Prospect Street in Cambridge and Somerville.² Houghton in 1847 deeded the property to George O. Brastow (1811-1878), who rented it out. Brastow served in the Massachusetts legislature and was Somerville's first mayor.

By the 1870s, Hollis Danforth, a 'piano mover,' had purchased the property. He also rented out 196 Prospect. Danforth sold the residence in 1887 to Sarah L.W. Hemphill, who mortgaged it repeatedly and was frequently late paying property taxes. It appears Ms. Hemphill had Maria and Louis Baldwin mortgage the house under their names, possibly as a way to avoid or delay paying taxes on the property.

Maria Louise Baldwin and her brother, Louis F. Baldwin, leased the house beginning in 1888. They rented the property together until 1904, when Louis moved to 278 Harvard Street. Miss Baldwin remained alone at the house one more year until moving to Boston in 1905.



194-196 Prospect Street in 1900. Stadley Atlas of Middlesex County (detail)

² Houghton established the Union Glass Company in Somerville in 1851 and in 1852 gave up his wharf and land development enterprises. He bought a glass factory in Brooklyn and moved there from Somerville in 1864. Four years later he moved the factory to upstate New York, where he founded the Corning Glass Works. The Baldwin-Blodgett house was probably an investment property, not his residence.

Maria L. Baldwin (1856-1922)

Maria Louise Baldwin was born in Cambridge on September 13, 1856, the eldest child of Peter L. and Mary E. Baldwin. Peter was of West Indian descent and was a mariner before becoming a mail carrier. Maria grew up at 25 Washington Street with her family until Peter's death in 1881, when her mother sold the house and moved the family to 41 Clark Street. Mary Baldwin died in 1885, when Maria, Louis and Alice Baldwin all were listed as residents of the Clark Street property. Both 25 Washington Street and 41 Clark Street have been demolished.³

Maria attended the city's Allston Grammar school on Boardman Street and graduated from Cambridge High School in 1874. She immediately entered the Cambridge Teacher Training School (located at the Agassiz School) and graduated a year later. Miss Baldwin was hired as a substitute teacher at the Training School in 1878. She encountered difficulty in finding permanent work as a teacher in Cambridge and began to look outside of the city for teaching positions.



MISS MARIA F. BALDWIN.

Miss Maria Baldwin as featured in The CRISIS Magazine, April 1917. Photograph undated.

Miss Baldwin's first full-time teaching position was in Chestertown, Maryland, where she was employed for two years before returning to Cambridge in 1881. That year, she began teaching at the Agassiz School, a well-regarded public school attended by the mostly white children of academic and upper-middle-class families. Miss Baldwin eventually taught all grades from first to seventh.

In 1889 she was appointed principal of the Agassiz School. It was that year that she and her brother Louis moved from 41 Clark Street (razed in 1937 for Newtowne Court) to 196 Prospect Street, one-and-a-half miles away from her place of work. When offered the principal position at the Agassiz School, she hesitated to accept because she did not feel worthy of the role. On further urging by the School Committee, she accepted the position with the understanding that if the committee was ever displeased with her work as principal she would return to her earlier position as a teacher.

In 1915 the original Agassiz School building was replaced with a more substantial building that Miss Baldwin help plan. By the time the new building opened the School Committee had named her Master of the school. With this promotion, she became one of only two women in Cambridge and the only African American in New England to hold such a position. To keep up with her field she took courses at Harvard and other institutions and taught courses in the summer for teachers at Hampton Institute in Virginia and the Institute for Colored Youth in Cheyney, Pennsylvania.

Miss Baldwin was held in high esteem and associated with many well-known educators and

³ Alice Baldwin (1859-1943) attended the same local schools and teacher training program but relocated to Delaware to start her teaching career in 1887 and did not reside with Maria and Louis at 196 Prospect Street. Her career as an educator in the segregated Wilmington, Delaware school system was in some ways as distinguished as Maria's in Cambridge.

intellectuals, including Edward Everett Hale, Thomas Wentworth Higginson, Julia Ward Howe, William Monroe Trotter, and Archibald Grimke. Charles W. Eliot, the president of Harvard University, was also among her friends and referred to her as not only one of the most charming of his acquaintances but also the best teacher in New England.

Miss Baldwin devoted much of her time advancing educational opportunities for Black students beyond primary school. In her home at 196 Prospect Street, she held weekly study classes for Black students attending Harvard, including W.E.B. Du Bois. The 1899 addition to the house may have been constructed for this purpose.

Maria Baldwin lived at 196 Prospect Street from 1889 until 1905, when her brother's bankruptcy caused her to lose her equity in the house. She moved to a residential hotel for working women, the Franklin Square House on East Newton Street in Boston's South End. She and other prominent Black women from the Greater Boston area organized the League of Women for Community Service Inc. at 558 Massachusetts Avenue in Boston in 1918. She also was a member of the Council of the Robert Gould Shaw House Association, the Boston Ethical Society, and the Twentieth Century Club of Boston, and served as secretary of the Boston Banneker Club, a scholarly literary society organized in 1875.

In the 1890s Baldwin co-founded the nationally influential and innovative Woman's Era Club. She worked alongside the club's other founders, Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin, Florida Ruffin Ridley, Eliza Gardner, and Arianna Sparrow. Inspired by Ida B. Wells' 1892 speaking tour during which she shared eyewitness testimonials of lynchings in Memphis, Tennessee, the Club members focused on what they considered their generation's obligation to work for all African American causes: the anti-lynching movement, voting rights for women, and education and employment opportunities.

Although Miss Baldwin remained active in her final years her health eventually failed. In 1922, aged 66, she died from a heart attack while speaking on behalf of the Robert Gould Shaw House at the Copley Plaza Hotel in Boston.

Miss Baldwin's funeral was held at the historic Arlington Street Church in Boston and was filled with mourners. According to one obituary, among them were "the entire Agassiz Grammar School, the Cambridge School Committee, and many City of Cambridge officials." On January 30, 1922, a meeting of the Cambridge School Committee entered a statement about her career into its minutes. It referred to her life of service, her "influence for good", her "high courage in overcoming obstacles," and her "devotion to her chosen work." Additionally, in its resolution upon Miss Baldwin's death, the Cambridge City Council stated, "Her life was gentle, and the element of goodness was strongly



Maria L. Baldwin

Undated image courtesy of Schlesinger Library

entrenched in a nature that felt deeply the religion that spells service.”

Beyond Cambridge, Miss Baldwin was memorialized by other nationally respected African Americans, who fought alongside her for equality. In a column in *The Crisis*, W. E. B. Du Bois, who had known Maria almost all of his adult life, offered a tribute acknowledging what Baldwin had overcome and what she had symbolized to both black and white worlds: “She fought domestic troubles and bitter never-ending insults of race difference. But she emerged always the quiet, well-bred lady, the fine and lovely woman.” His tribute concluded with, “She died a teacher, teaching men, women and children; and how strange a mockery of our democracy it is that most Americans are chiefly interested to know that her thousands of public-school pupils, were white Massachusetts school children.”

Three months after her death, the League of Women for Community Service organized a meeting to discuss the establishment of a memorial room in Miss Baldwin’s honor. William H. Lewis, the former US assistant attorney general, Charles Eliot, former president of Harvard, and Maria’s long-time friend Florida Ridley spoke in support. The Baldwin Memorial Library at The League of Women for Community Service at 558 Massachusetts Avenue in Boston was dedicated in December, 1923.

The Maria Baldwin house was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1976 and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. A commemorative marker honoring Baldwin’s life and accomplishments was installed at the Agassiz School in 1993 as part of the Cambridge African American Heritage Trail. On May 21, 2002, the Cambridge School Committee unanimously voted to rename the third Agassiz School, built in 1994, the Maria L. Baldwin School. More recently, the City Council unanimously passed a policy order on August 2, 2021, renaming the Agassiz neighborhood after her. In 2023 the National Collaborative for Women’s History Sites and The William G. Pomeroy Foundation, will install a marker for the National Votes for Women Trail.

Louis F. Baldwin (1865-1935)

Louis Fremont Baldwin was born in Cambridge in 1865, nine years younger than Maria and the youngest of three siblings. Their father, Peter, died in 1880 and their mother Mary, died four years later. Maria, Alice (also a teacher), and Louis stayed in the family home on Clark Street for many years, likely supported by Maria and Alice’s teaching salaries. Louis graduated from Cambridge High School in 1882 and became involved in local politics and real estate.

Two years after graduating Louis was mentioned in local papers as an officer and secretary of the “Blaine and Logan Club,” a new group formed to support the Republican slate of James Blaine and John Logan in the 1884 presidential election. Blaine was defeated by Grover Cleveland, and Louis continued his efforts in local politics as a member of the Republican Club.

In 1889 Baldwin ran for the Common Council in Ward 2 (The Port and Mid-Cambridge). He was mentioned in



Louis Baldwin (1900), from *Proceedings of the National Negro Business League*, Boston.

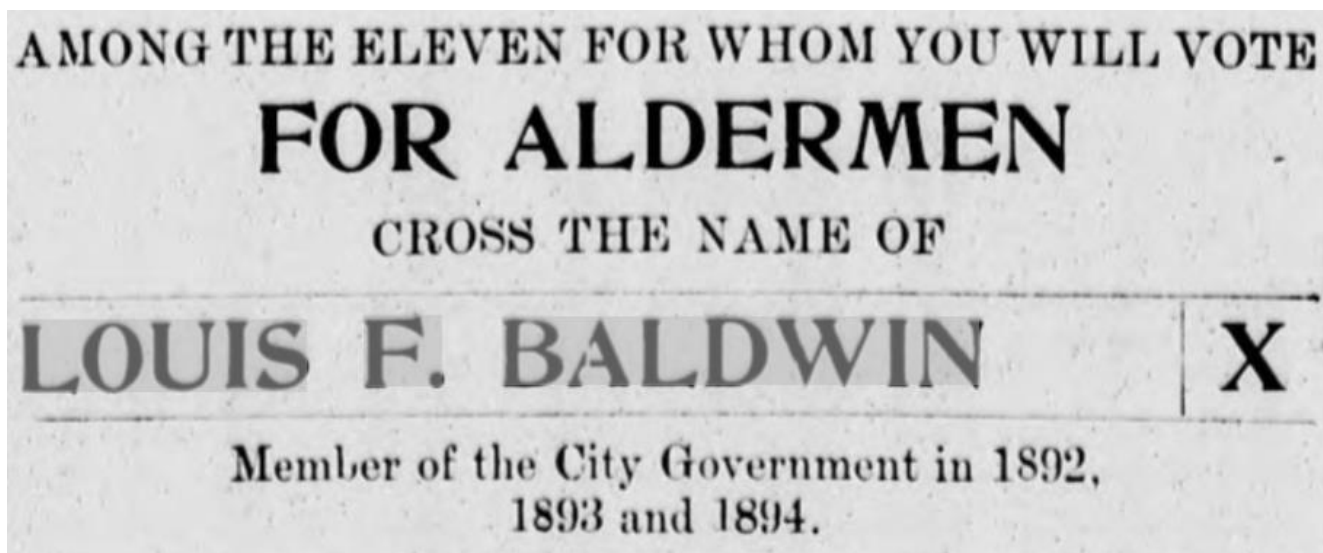
a *Cambridge Press* article as, “a young man who received his education in the schools of our city, and who has been an active and earnest worker in all measures pertaining to the welfare and general good of the public, and his election to the Council would secure to the citizens, an honest, straightforward, faithful servant of the people.” Despite this endorsement, he was not elected.

After his loss, Louis became more involved with local Black groups to advance civil rights. In 1890 he teamed up with W.C. Lane, a former Cambridge councilman, to form an equal rights association and social group, Massachusetts Colored Men. During this time, Baldwin became involved with two Boston-based Black newspapers, *The Courant* and *The Republican*, which were associated with some of the region’s most influential Black leaders.



Louis Baldwin (seated center first row) in Cambridge Common Council (photograph 1893). CHC collections

Baldwin ran for Common Council from Ward 2 again in 1891 and this time was elected as one of twenty members. He served one term in 1891-93. After his term ended he repeatedly but unsuccessfully ran for local office, including a race for alderman in 1899.



Cambridge Tribune, Dec. 9, 1899

Baldwin remained active in Republican Party affairs while he began to explore another avenue of personal interest, real estate development. In 1894, he entered a professional partnership with Joseph Dorsey (1869-1946), a slightly younger colleague from the neighborhood who graduated from the Cambridge Latin School in 1888 and traveled in the same political circles. The real estate firm of Baldwin & Dorsey developed over a dozen properties in Cambridge, including new houses and additions to existing ones.

In 1900 Baldwin was instrumental in bringing the first National Negro Businessmen's Convention, which was organized by Booker T. Washington, to Boston. Baldwin was a member of the planning committee and also of the new National Negro Business League's executive committee.



Greenacres Apartments, 124 Oxford Street (1901, Edwin Earp Jr., architect).

CHC Photo, 2013.

Following the convention, in 1901, Baldwin and Dorsey developed the Greenacre Apartments at the corner of Oxford and Harris (later Prentiss) streets, just blocks from the Agassiz School. The Greenacre opened in 1902 to great fanfare, with Baldwin and Dorsey paying for an open house for the contractors who had worked on the building and a Boston orchestra. The nine-apartment building and detached, renovated house next door cost over \$40,000, roughly equivalent to \$1.3M today.

In 1903 Baldwin married Estelle Rector, a widow from Washington, D.C. The couple moved to a house at the corner of Harvard and Inman streets. Almost exactly one year later Baldwin & Dorsey declared bankruptcy, claiming over \$23,000 in debts and assets of only \$6,600. As a result, Louis and Maria lost their equity in 196 Prospect Street and Maria moved to Boston a few months later. The partnership ended and both Baldwin and Dorsey were forced to seek other work.

Baldwin traded on his loyalty to the Republican Party and gained an appointment as a porter at the Boston Post Office. By 1907, he was living in Brookline with his wife and several boarders; the 1910 census listed him living on Aspinwall Avenue and working as a real estate conveyancer. He last appeared in the Cambridge newspapers in 1912 as a candidate for nomination as a city councillor, although there is no evidence that he had moved back to the city.

In 1915 Louis was living in New York without his wife. Estelle, living in Virginia, sued for divorce, charging him with desertion for over three years. The divorce was granted. By 1921 he had relocated to San Francisco, where he became a public figure as a “Doctor of Hindu Philosophy” and a frequent speaker at the Rosicrucian Fellowship Society.⁴

Baldwin took an active stance against discrimination on at least two occasions. In 1912 he successfully sued a New York theater for refusing to seat him, and in 1927 he sued a restaurant in San Francisco for discrimination when he and a colleague were served inedible food. The cook admitted that it was done to “keep them out of the place.”

In 1929 Baldwin authored *From Negro to Caucasian, or How the Ethiopian is Changing His Skin*, which described some fair-skinned Blacks as having “abandoned their one-time affiliations with Negroes, including their own relatives, and by mingling at first commercially or industrially, then socially with Caucasians, have ultimately been absorbed by the latter.” The text is an early look into the practice of “passing,” meaning fair-skinned minorities identifying as white. The book has been cited in numerous texts on the subject.

Louis Fremont Baldwin died in San Francisco on July 6, 1935, at 72 years old. James A. Dorsey remained in Cambridge, married in 1905, found employment as a bank clerk, and settled in West Cambridge, where he died in his home at 204 Garden Street in 1946.

⁴ W.E.B. Du Bois, asked for a reference in 1925, described Louis in negative terms and alleged that his behavior was “partially responsible for [Maria’s] death.” Du Bois had attended many of Maria’s weekly seminars and written laudatory articles about her, so he was perhaps unduly harsh in his assessment. University of Massachusetts-Amherst Libraries, Special Collections and University Archives, MS 312. Letter from W. E. B. Du Bois to G. Virginia Banks, August 5, 1925 concerning the reputability of Louis Fremont Baldwin and an upcoming visit.

F. Relationship to Criteria

1. Criteria for Landmark Designation

The enabling ordinance for landmark designation states:

The Historical Commission by majority vote may recommend for designation as a land-mark any property within the City being or containing a place, structure, feature or object which it determines to be either (1) importantly associated with one or more historic persons or events, or with the broad architectural, aesthetic, cultural, political, economic or social history of the City or the Commonwealth or (2) historically or architecturally significant (in terms of its period, style, method of construction or association with a famous architect or builder) either by itself or in the context of a group of structures . . . (City Code, Article III, Chapter 2.78.180.A)

2. Relationship of Property to Criteria

The Maria Baldwin-Alvaro Blodgett houses at 194-196 Prospect Street meets criterion (1) for its important associations “with the broad architectural, aesthetic, cultural, political, economic, or social history of the City or the Commonwealth” as the long-time residence of Maria Baldwin, a nationally prominent educator and activist. The property can also be considered to meet criterion (2) as the work of housewright Alvaro Blodgett and as architecturally significant in terms of its period and style within the context of the streetscape of extant mid-19th century homes along Prospect Street.

G. Recommendations

The purpose of landmark designation is contained in the enabling ordinance, which is to:

Preserve, conserve and protect the beauty and heritage of the City and to improve the quality of its environment through identification, conservation and maintenance of . . . sites and structures which constitute or reflect distinctive features of the architectural, cultural, political, economic or social history of the City; to resist and restrain environmental influences adverse to this purpose; [and] to foster appropriate use and wider public knowledge and appreciation of such structures.

Landmark designation or donation of a preservation easement are the only two options for the permanent long-term protection and preservation of the Maria Baldwin-Alvaro Blodgett houses. While the is individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places, such a listing alone cannot protect the building from unsympathetic alterations. The possibility of all the current owners donating preservation restrictions on both properties is remote.

CHC staff recommends that the Commission find that the Maria Baldwin-Alvaro Blodgett houses at 194-196 Prospect Street is eligible for designation under Article III, Chapter 2.78, for the reasons stated above.

The symmetrical double-house maintains its architectural integrity and is a lasting example of the early residential development seen on Prospect Street. The Maria Baldwin house also serves as the last extant location in Cambridge with strong ties to Maria Baldwin, a nationally respected Black educator and advocate. If implemented by the City Council, landmark designation would allow the Commission to review and approve publicly visible exterior alterations with the goal of protecting the historic integrity of the building and its setting. Designation of the adjoining house at 194 Prospect is necessary to protect the Baldwin house; one cannot be protected without the other.

The designation would not regulate use or alterations to interior features or those not visible from a public way. Publicly-visible exterior alterations to the structure at 194R Prospect would be subject to non-binding review.

H. Standards and Criteria

Under the neighborhood conservation district and landmark designation ordinance, Ch. 2.78, Art. III, the Historical Commission is charged with reviewing all construction, demolition or alterations that affect exterior architectural features (other than color) of a designated landmark. This section of the report describes exterior architectural features that are among the characteristics that led to consideration of the property as a landmark. Except as the Order designating or amending the landmark may otherwise provide, the exterior architectural features described in this report should be preserved and/or enhanced in any proposed alteration or construction that affects those features of the landmark.

The Standards described below represent current best practices in historic preservation and are generally applicable to any designated property. The following Guidelines are to be consulted during consideration of applications for Certificates of Appropriateness for alterations to the landmark described in this report. The standards and guidelines are not intended to be prescriptive or comprehensive; the Commission must use its collective judgement in determining the appropriateness of any proposed project.

In this context the verb **should** indicates a recommended course of action; the verbs **shall or must** indicates those actions which are specifically required to preserve and protect significant architectural elements.

A. General Standards

Subject to review and approval of alterations to exterior architectural features under the terms of this report, the following standards shall apply:

1. The historic character of a property must be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property must be avoided.
2. Changes and additions to the landmark which have taken place over time are evidence of the history of the property and its context. These changes may have acquired significance in their own right and, if so, that significance should be recognized and respected.
3. Significant historic and architectural features of the landmark, including but not limited to those identified in this report, should be preserved if practicable in a manner consistent with these standards.
4. Deteriorated architectural features should be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement, the new feature must match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials.

5. The use of synthetic replacement materials is discouraged, except when substituted for perishable features exposed to the weather or when necessary to accommodate the effects of climate change.⁵
6. Chemical and/or physical treatments (such as sandblasting) must not be used in a manner that damages historic materials. The surface cleaning of structures must be undertaken using the gentlest means possible and the results should preserve the patina that characterizes the age of the structure. Applications of paint or masonry preservative solutions will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis; painting masonry surfaces will be considered only when there is documentary evidence that this treatment was used at some point in the history of the property.
7. Architectural (building façade) lighting, streetscape lighting, and signage lighting, when allowed by a Certificate of Appropriateness, should reinforce definitive characteristics of historic and contemporary architecture as well as create high quality 24-hour streetscapes. To achieve these goals, projects should minimize brightness, and light trespass, monitor light color (temperature Kelvin), and focus lighting on significant features.
8. Significant archeological resources affected by a project should be protected and preserved. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures must be undertaken.
9. Alterations or additions that may be needed to assure the continued use of the historic structure or site or that expand the volume or footprint of the structure should not radically change, obscure or destroy character defining spaces, materials, features or finishes. New additions should be considered only after it has been determined that project requirements cannot be successfully met by altering non-character-defining interior spaces.
10. Additions should reflect an explicit understanding of the architectural character of the historic building and its context. Additions should be designed in a manner that makes clear what is historic and what is new, but should not arbitrarily impose contrasting materials, scales, or design vocabularies. Design of the new work may be contemporary or may reference design motifs from the historic building. Regardless of the design approach, the result should appear as a harmonious whole.
 - a. Additions should respect the essential form of the historic building and be clearly recessive or subsidiary to the original structure in location, massing, materials, finishes, and textures. Additions are best located at the rear and/or on an inconspicuous side of a historic building and limited in size and scale in relationship to the historic building.
 - b. Additions should be considered in terms of their effect on the context of the site. Additions can contribute variety and interest in complex urban environments but should not dominate or distract from significant nearby structures.
 - c. Additions should not compromise the historic aspects, architectural significance, or the distinct character of the landmark, neighborhood, and environment.

⁵ See *Cambridge Historical Commission Practices in Reviewing Synthetic Trim and Gutters*, June 26, 2018

- d. Additions should be clearly differentiated from the historic building but still compatible in terms of mass, materials, relationship of solids to voids, and color.
- e. Additions should cause the least possible loss of historic materials so that character-defining features are not obscured, damaged, or destroyed.
- f. Rooftop additions should be set well back from historic facades so that the historic structure retains its integrity of form and mass. Additional stories, when required for the new use, should be set back from the wall plane and be as inconspicuous as possible when viewed from the street. Designers should be cognizant of distant views and neighborhood context and take advantage of existing parapets to conceal rooftop structures.
- g. Additions such as balconies and greenhouses should be placed on non-character-defining elevations and limited in size and scale in relationship to the historic building.
- h. Additions should be designed in such a way that if they were to be removed in the future the essential form and integrity of the landmark would be unimpaired.

11. New construction on a designated property shall conform to the guidelines for alterations, where applicable.

12. Demolition of a designated structure can be allowed only as a last resort after all practicable measures have been taken to ensure preservation, or unless required to comply with requirements certified by a duly authorized public officer to be necessary for public safety because of an unsafe or dangerous condition.

B. Guidelines for Review of Alterations at 194-196 Prospect Street

1. Architectural Character

The Maria Baldwin-Alvaro Blodgett houses comprise a vernacular Greek Revival structure characterized by triangular pediments, corner pilasters, a front porch supported by three fluted columns with Ionic capitals, a symmetrically-organized façade, and characteristic Greek Revival carpentry details. The massing, character, and details of the structure must be respected.

2. Site Development.

The houses share a party wall on their common property line and are set back approximately 10' 6" from the west property line on Prospect Street. In their main block the houses are 28'6" deep, and their ells extend approximately 18' further for an overall depth of 46'6". The back (east) wall of the ells is approximately 57' from the front property line.

No new construction may occur in the front setback or within 57' of Prospect Street at either house; east of that point new construction may intrude in the setback to the extent allowed by zoning, subject to issuance of a Certificate of Appropriateness.

3. Alterations at 196 Prospect Street

All publicly-visible exterior alterations will be subject to binding review through the Certificate of Appropriateness process.

a. Exterior surfaces

Original exterior materials on the west and north facades must be preserved insofar as practicable. Wood shingle siding may be removed to exposed original siding and trim details for restoration or replacement in kind. Replacement of existing wood shingles will not be allowed.

b. Foundations

Special care must be taken to protect and maintain the brick masonry of the foundation. Repointing the mortar joints must maintain the strength, color and texture of the mortar and the size and profile of the joints. Paint removal, if undertaken, must be carried out with minimum pressure and minimum concentrations, subject to on-site staff review and approval. Application of new paint is discouraged, but if implemented must follow Commission recommendations.

c. Windows

Most if not all historic window openings appear to retain their original 2+2 sash. Original sash should be evaluated for restoration while maintaining operability. Replacement windows, if allowed, should replicate historic patterns and details as closely as practicable while achieving energy efficiency goals. Only half-screens will be allowed. Storm windows may be installed without review in conformance with current Commission policy.

d. Portico

The Classical entablature of the portico is supported by three original fluted columns with Ionic capitals and flat, square plinths. Preservation of these elements is mandatory, except that the gutter, if replaced, should display a traditional profile. The low balustrade that appears in the 1919 photo may be reinstalled with Commission approval of construction details.

Consult the 1919 photo for the original configuration of the porch platform, steps, and railings. While restoration of original features would be desirable, at a minimum porch railings at 196 must match those at 194 in appearance;. Treads, risers and decking should match in dimensions and location, but may be fabricated of synthetic materials such as Azek, Trex, or approved equal.

e. Facade Restoration

Wood shingle siding may be carefully removed to allow evaluation of the clapboards for restoration. Evidence of prior trim details such as corner boards and pilaster capitals shall be carefully preserved and used to prepare replacement details. The Owner and the Executive Director of the Historical Commission may identify deteriorated clapboards for replacement in kind. Lead paint may be abated by chemical or mechanical means, subject to applicable codes and approval of the Executive Director.

f. Exterior Colors

Although exterior colors of landmarks are not subject to the jurisdiction of the Historical Commission, the Owner is strongly encouraged to paint the exterior in a period-appropriate color scheme as advised by the Executive Director.

g. Roof

The roof of the Baldwin house is covered with slate; the Blodgett house has asphalt shingles. The slate roof may be restored without review; replacement with asphalt shingles will be subject to issuance of a Certificate of Appropriateness. A new roof at 196 should match that at 194 unless that roof is determined to warrant replacement. In that case, the new shingles should be uniform across the entire roof. Color and pattern will be subject to Commission approval. Rooftop HVAC equipment shall not be allowed except at 194R.

h. Gutters.

Replacement gutters may be incorporated into the eaves such that the exterior profile mimics exactly with the rake moulding, or, with the approval of the Commission, may be replaced with fiberglass or copper in a traditional Boston Pattern cyma recta (ogee) profile. K-Style metal gutters are not considered appropriate.

i. Interior features

Although interior features are not subject to the jurisdiction of the Cambridge Historical Commission, owners of the Baldwin-Blodgett house are encouraged to preserve all original window and door trim, fireplace surrounds, and bannisters, including the configuration and appearance of the bay window on the north elevation and its associated meeting room.

4. Alterations at 194 Prospect Street.

The Blodgett house at 194 Prospect was completely renovated in 2009. Windows were replaced in their entirety. All original siding and trim was removed and may have been replaced without reference to original dimensions and profiles.

The Blodgett house is protected in its exterior appearance at the time of designation and the owners will be under no obligation to alter it in any way. However, in the event of future exterior alterations to windows, siding and trim these elements should be made to match those at the restored Baldwin house. Exterior alterations at 194R will be subject to non-binding review.

5. Additions

Evaluation of proposed additions should consider the architectural character of the Baldwin-Blodgett house and its immediate surroundings. Additions should represent the period in which they are designed but be secondary to and appropriate to the historic character of the main structure. Additions at 194 Prospect Street, if allowed, should not intrude on the main block or ell of the house. The structure at 194R is presumed to be built out to the extent allowed by zoning. Additions at 196 Prospect Street, if allowed, should respect the form, massing, scale and materials of the original structure without mimicking its design. Additions should leave the original ell intact and retain or enclose the one-story Baldwin addition. The bay window must remain unencumbered by alterations. The enclosed porch and bathroom addition are not considered significant.

6. Site features

Alterations to publicly visible landscape structures, including walls, fences, paths, driveways, and the like, should be compatible with the original design and materials. Fences or walls at the

front sidewalk should be kept low and match one another so that views of the house and significant exterior features are not obstructed. The fence shown in the 1919 photo may be replicated with the approval of the Commission with regard to construction details, or the present fence at 194 may be reproduced at 196. HVAC equipment may not be placed in the front setback, and may be attached to publicly-visible exterior walls only at grade-level and only in the event that a non-publicly-visible location is unavailable.

**Proposed Order Designating the Maria Baldwin-Alvaro Blodgett houses
at 194-196 Prospect Street as a Cambridge Landmark**

ORDERED,

That the Maria Baldwin-Alvaro Blodgett houses at 194-196 Prospect Street be designated as a protected landmark pursuant to Chapter 2.78, Article III, Section 2.78.180 of the Code of the City of Cambridge, as recommended by vote of the Cambridge Historical Commission on January 5, 2023. The premises so designated is the land defined as parcels 6 and 7 on assessor's map 87 and the structures thereon.

This designation is justified by the high level of historical and architectural significance exhibited by the structure and as the home of Black educator and civil rights advocate Maria L. Baldwin.

The effect of this designation shall be that review by the Cambridge Historical Commission and the issuance of a Certificate of Appropriateness, Hardship or Non-Applicability shall be required before any construction activity can take place within the designated premises or any action can be taken affecting the appearance of the premises, that would in either case be visible from a public way. In making determinations, the Commission shall be guided by the terms of the Final Landmark Designation Report, dated January 10, 2023 with respect to the designated premises, by Section VII, Standards and Criteria of said report, and by the applicable sections of Chapter 2.78, Article III, of the Cambridge Municipal Code.

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