



CAMBRIDGE HISTORICAL COMMISSION

831 Massachusetts Avenue, 2nd Fl., Cambridge, Massachusetts 02139

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Joseph V. Ferrara, Chandra Harrington, Elizabeth Lyster; Jo M. Solet, Yuting Zhang, *Members*
Gavin W. Kleespies, Paula A. Paris, Kyle Sheffield, *Alternates*

Date: May 26, 2023
To: Members of the Historical Commission
From: Sarah Burks, Preservation Planner
Re: Case D-1657: 88 Holworthy St., (Nolan-Sayied House, built by 1874)

In December 2020 and January 2021, the Historical Commission held hearings on an application to relocate 88 Holworthy Street and position it on a new foundation that would conform to the zoning setbacks. The Commission voted to find the existing house in its present location not preferably preserved in the context of the revised proposal, with the condition that construction details be reviewed and approved by staff.

Since that time, the project was approved by the Board of Zoning Approval, to the same plans as approved by the Historical Commission. The applicant has returned with a new demolition permit application to reconstruct the house in the approved new location and build to same design as previously shown, but in new construction.

The original demolition memorandum from December 3, 2020 is attached for reference. The proposed plans are included in your packets.



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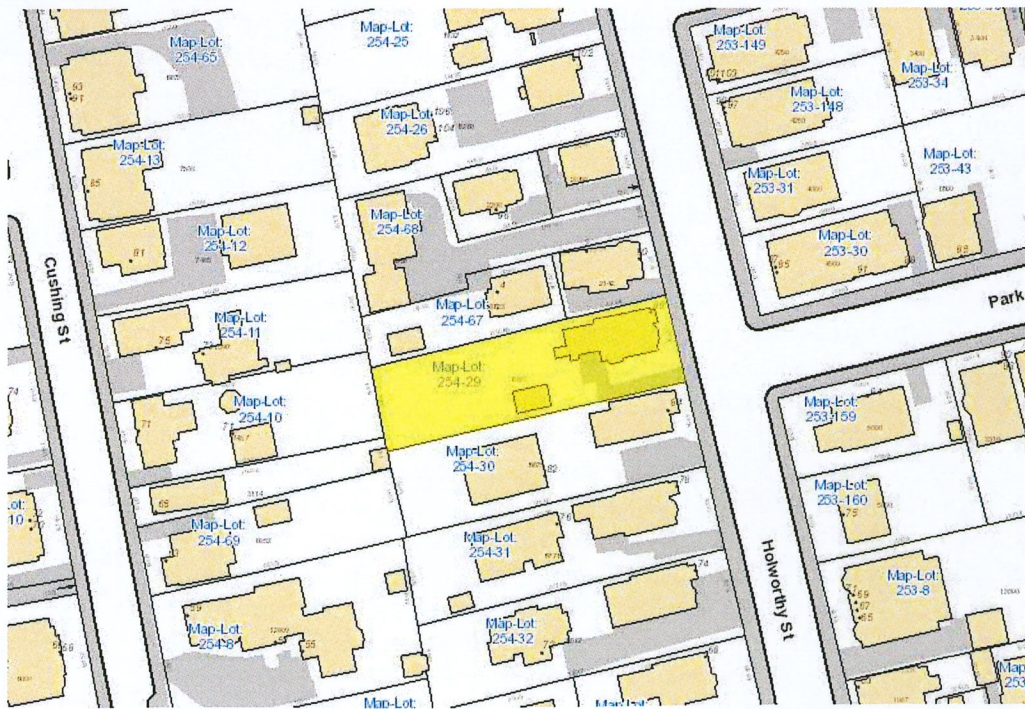
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William G. Barry, Jr., Robert G. Crocker, Joseph V. Ferrara, Chandra Harrington, Jo M. Solet, *Members*
Gavin W. Kleespies, Paula A. Paris, Kyle Sheffield, *Alternates*

Date: December 3, 2020
To: Members of the Historical Commission
From: Eric Hill, Survey Director
Re: D-1564: 88 Holworthy Street (Nolan-Sayied House, built by 1874)

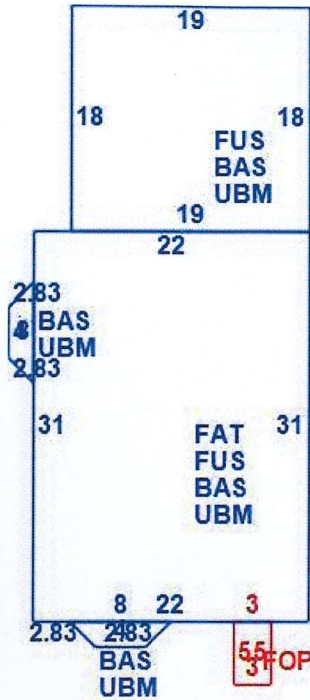
An application to demolish the house at 88 Holworthy Street was received on October 29, 2020. The applicant was notified of an initial determination of significance, and a public hearing was scheduled for December 3, 2020.

Site

The single-family house is located on the west side of Holworthy Street opposite Park Avenue in the Strawberry Hill neighborhood of Cambridge. It is a frame building on a brick foundation. The assessed value for the land and building (Map 254/Parcel 29) is \$979,100. The house is sited at the northeast corner of the 8,636 square-foot lot. The Residence B zoning district is allows single or two-family and townhouse construction. Zoning permits an FAR of 0.35 and requires a minimum of 2,500 square feet lot area per dwelling unit. The height limit is 35 feet.



The existing conditions of the site include a lot that measures approximately 50 feet wide by 170 feet deep. The home is located on the northern edge of the lot with a non-conforming setback. A driveway is located on the southern lot line terminating at a detached garage.



The applicant is proposing to demolish the 18'x19' rear ell, selective demolition of the front bay window and portico, and to move the home away from the north property line to meet setback requirements. A new detached home is proposed at the rear of the lot, accessed by the driveway with four surface parking spaces between the two properties.

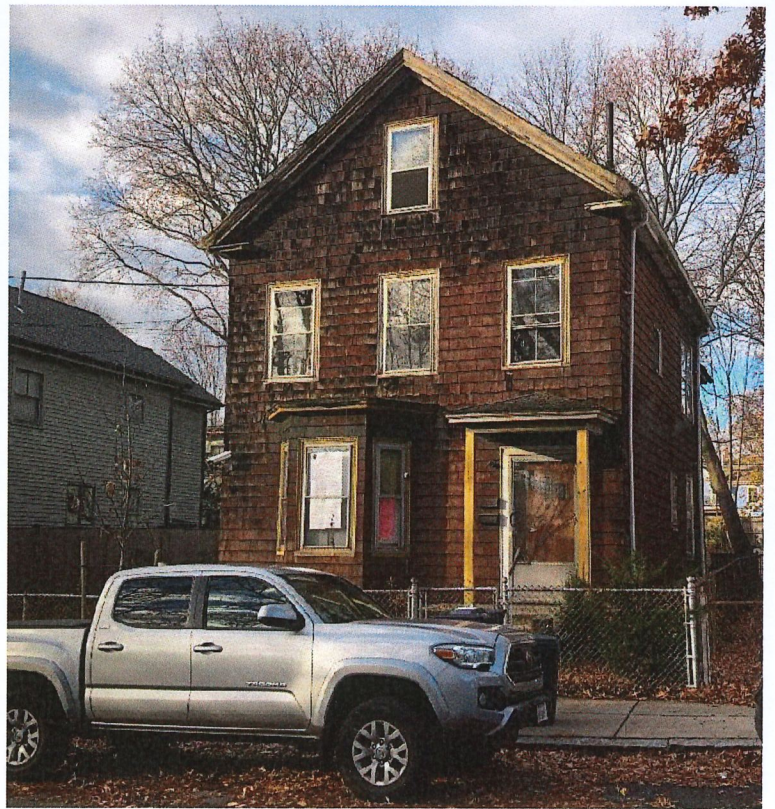
Since the 1990s, a half-dozen properties on the west side of Holworthy Street have been renovated with new detached dwellings constructed in the rear yard. Due to the abnormally deep lots, developers have been able to increase density without demolishing the historic structures at the street.

Current Condition

The current condition of the exterior of the house is fair. The wood shingle siding (installed in 1938) are in poor condition and are likely installed over original clapboards. No sagging is evident at the roof and the shingles have no apparent holes. The structure appears sound and there are no apparent foundation concerns.

Architectural Description

The house at 88 Holworthy Street is a 2½ -story, front-gabled, side hall house on a low brick foundation. The house is three bays wide with the entry hall located at the right. The entry porch retains the original cornice trim but is missing the columns and pilasters which have been replaced with plain boards to support it. The house was covered with wood shingle siding that is in poor condition. It is unclear as to whether or not the original clapboards are underneath. The windows are symmetrically placed on the primary elevations. The front door was replaced with a three-light wood door, likely in the 1970s. A two-story ell with a flat roof extends off the rear. A small three-sided bay exists on the south side of the front elevation and the rear of the south side elevation.



The house was designed in the Bracketed Italianate style, but is modest in terms of detailing and ornamentation. The gable roof has cornice returns and wide eaves, both typical characteristics of the style. The 2-over-1 windows are retained in most openings and are

by



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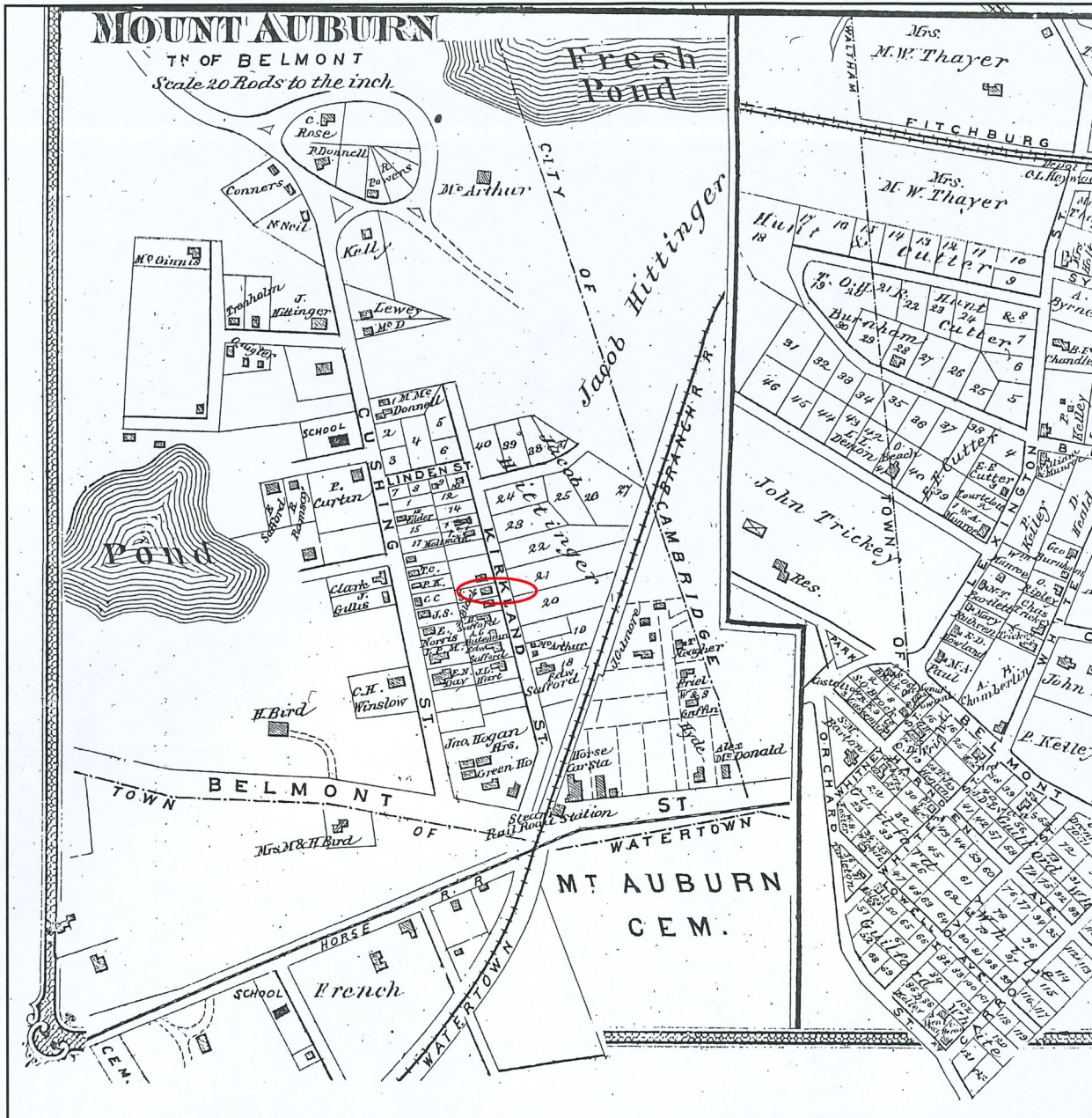
aluminum storm windows.

A detached, one car garage was constructed in 1954 mid-lot, to the south west of the main home. The garage features a gable roof, shingle siding and appears to retain the original garage door.

History

Holworthy Street was laid out in 1847 and named Kirkland Street. This neighborhood was originally part of Watertown. The first scheme for development was a real estate venture in the 1840s called Strawberry Hill. The opening of omnibus service to Harvard Square in 1845 and the Watertown Branch railroad station in 1846 brought the neighborhood a modest popularity. The area was set off from Watertown to the new town of Belmont in 1859. In 1880, a total of 0.89 square miles of Belmont was annexed to Cambridge as part of an effort by the City of Cambridge to protect the surroundings and water supply of Fresh Pond. The street's name was soon after changed to Holworthy to avoid confusion with the Kirkland Street in Mid Cambridge. The street was named after wealthy English merchant, Sir Matthew Holworthy (1608-1678), who is also the namesake of Holworthy Hall at Harvard after a £1,000 donation to Harvard — then the largest donation in the college's history.

Initially the neighborhood was envisioned as suburban retreat for commuting Bostonians; "Strawberry Hill" was the name of a Watertown subdivision platted by Alexander Wadsworth, designer of Mount Auburn Cemetery, in 1847. Vineyard and upper Cushing Street were part of an adjoining subdivision, "Auburn," which was also laid out in 1847 by Boston surveyor John Low. The area was incorporated as part of the Town of Belmont in 1859 but was too remote to prosper and after 1860 deed restrictions were relaxed and the lots became attractive to Irish laborers. During the 1860s, approximately a dozen houses were built along Cushing and Holworthy Streets, a process that continued into the early 1870s. The Town of Belmont erected a schoolhouse on Cushing Street in 1872. Further growth was halted by the Panic of 1873, but the pattern of modest single and double houses was continued when building resumed in the mid-1880s after the area was annexed by Cambridge.



F. W. Beers & Co. Map of "Mount Auburn, Town of Belmont," atlas plate from County Atlas of Middlesex, 1875.

Residential construction in the neighborhood increased after 1880, and by 1910 the area was almost completely developed. The neighborhood has seen some significant construction projects, the largest of which was the reconstruction of the Haggerty School in 1994. On the street, numerous rear dwellings have been constructed, and many historic homes have been renovated in the past decade.

In 1870, James Black, who was listed as a laborer in city directories, purchased land at 86 Holworthy Street complete with a dwelling. That next year, he purchased the adjacent parcel, which is now 88 Holworthy, and constructed that house by 1874. In 1874, the house at 88 Holworthy Street was sold to a Nicholas Nolan, a gardener. After Nicholas Nolan's death in 1887, the home was willed to his heirs, who rented out the home to laborers. The home was sold out of the family by the 1920s to Joseph and Josephine Manzelli, laborers who lived in the home through the 1930s. The house was occupied by renters, many of whom did not stay long, through the 1960s. By 1967, the home was occupied by Abul Sayied, a teacher, who was joined

by his new wife Ingrid Nitsche that next year. The home had been occupied by the Sayied family until it sold in 2020.



88 Holworthy St., 1970. CHC Survey Photo

Significance and Recommendation

The house at 88 Holworthy Street is significant as a characteristic example of a Bracketed Italianate side hall residence. The house's construction exhibits associations with the broad architectural, economic, and social history of the Town of Belmont and the City of Cambridge. Its relationship to the Nolan and Sayied families demonstrates the neighborhood's early development and relationship to the Mount Auburn area of West Cambridge. It is the staff recommendation that the structure be found significant for these reasons.

cc: Stephen Sillari, Owner
Ranjit Singanayagam, ISD