



STAFF REPORT

Town of Wellesley - Planning Department

Application: DR-2019-22 35 Clifford Street- Preservation Determination
Subject Property: 35 Clifford Street (Assessor's Parcel ID # 88-3)
Applicant: James Tau
Property Owner: James Tau and Laura Thomson
Date: Report prepared 4/30/2019 for 5/15/2019 Historical Commission Meeting
Staff Contact: Claudia Zarazua, Planner
Staff Recommendation: **Preferably Preserved**

APPLICATION OVERVIEW

Applications for Eligibility Notice and Preservation Determination were submitted on April 4, 2019 indicating the intent to demolish, in its entirety, a building located on the property and used as a dwelling. An Eligibility Notice was issued on April 8, 2019 determining the subject building to be an Eligible Building. A public hearing before the Historical Commission is scheduled for May 15, 2019.

DESCRIPTION

In consideration of the application for Eligibility Notice, it was determined that the dwelling was originally constructed no later than 1916 when a house was first reported as built on this address under ownership of Gaetano Messieri. According to a report from 1983 written by Jean Berry, the original location of the house was in the former Sunshine Dairy and moved to this location in 1915. The report further explains that the approximate date of construction is 1867.

Gaetano Messieri acquired the parcel of land from James and Mary Meehan in 1916. The original lot was created in 1841 when Dan Ayer, a local developer, bought a large plot of land and subdivided it. (See Figure 1). The property was acquired by Bruna Alberghini in 1964. After the death of Mrs. Alberghini, her estate sold the property to Maria and Cyril Rakhmanoff in 1989. The house was later sold to John Kendall and Melissa Arronte in 2002. The current owners acquired the property in late 2018.

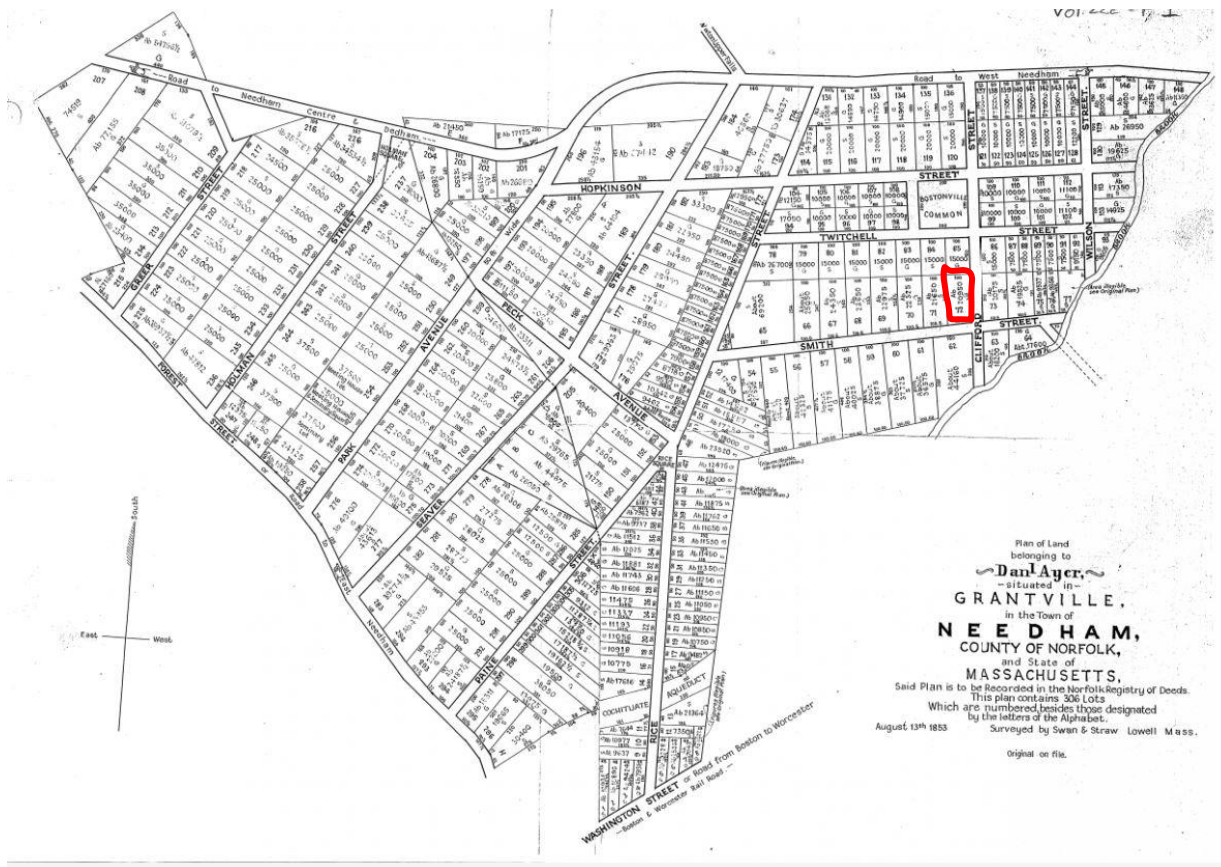


Figure 1. Plan of Land belonging to Dan Iyer, 1853, Norfolk County Registry of Deeds

According to building permit records, the following modifications have been made: a second floor addition in 1975, new windows and insulation in 1990, roof repairs in 1991, new dormers in room over garage in 1997, and a significant 2-story addition in 2005.

The dwelling is a two-story house with two dormers. Remnants of the typical wrap around porch are still visible although it is now completely enclosed. Staff believes the original architecture of the house is best characterized as part of the National family with significant additions but minimal modifications to the front facade.

The house is a nonconforming structure and sits on a conforming lot of 10,535 square feet. The building is sited on the southern side of the property and the driveway is located along the southern property line. (See Figure 2).

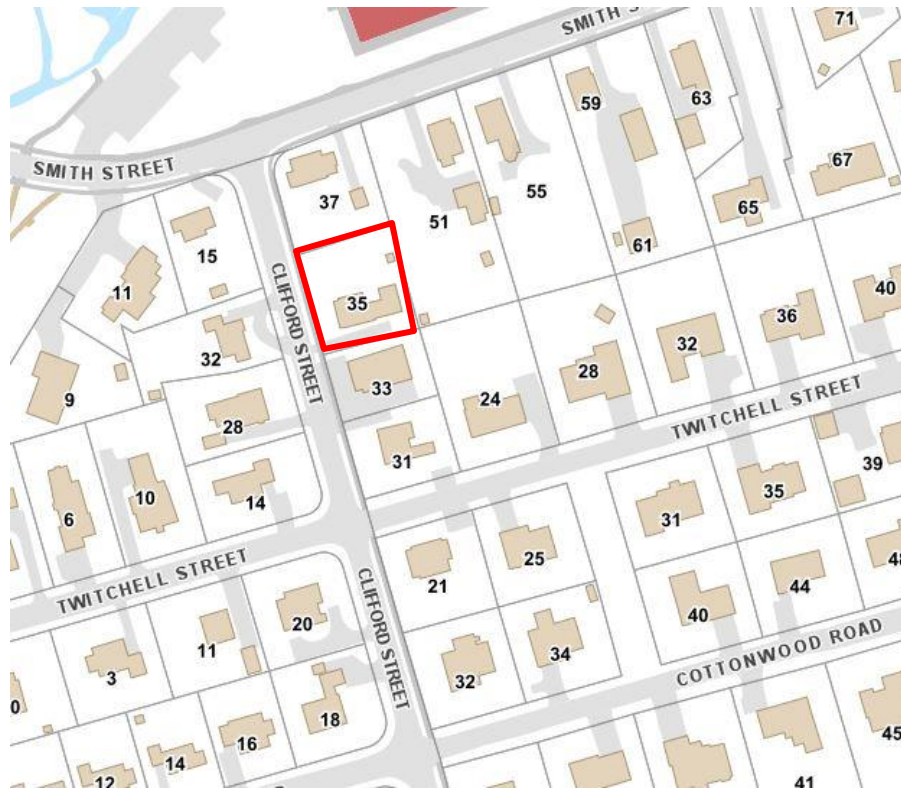


Figure 2. Neighborhood Context

PRESERVATION DETERMINATION STANDARDS

In consideration of a Preservation Determination for the building, the Historical Commission is to determine whether or not the building should be Preferably Preserved, a term defined as a building “the demolition of which that is proposed...would be detrimental to the historical or architectural heritage of the Town because such Building is (i) importantly associated with one or more historic persons or events, or with the architectural, cultural, political, economic or social history of the Town, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts or the United States of America, (ii) historically or architecturally important by reason of period, style, method of building construction or association with a particular architect or builder, either by itself or in the context of a group of Buildings, or (iii) located within one hundred fifty (150) feet of the boundary line of any federal or local historic district and contextually similar to the Buildings located in the adjacent federal or local historic district.”

If the Commission determines that the Building should be Preferably Preserved, then no Demolition Permit with respect to such Building shall be issued until twelve (12) months after the date of the Preservation Determination.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff is of the opinion that the subject building is (i) associated with one or more historic persons or events, or with the architectural, cultural, political, economic or social history of the Town, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts or the United States of America, (ii) historically or architecturally important by reason of period, style, method of building

construction or association with a particular architect or builder, either by itself or in the context of a group of Buildings, but that the building **is not** (iii) located within one hundred fifty (150) feet of the boundary line of any federal or local historic district and contextually similar to the Buildings located in the adjacent federal or local historic district.

With respect to standard (i), Staff is of the opinion that the existing dwelling is significant because it is importantly associated with one or more historic persons or events, or with the architectural, cultural, political, economic or social history of the Town. This building is one of the remaining structures representative of the original Italian immigrant neighborhood. Directly abutting this property is The Reliance Club, on 33 Clifford, that housed the first “Italian Men’s Club” in Wellesley. According to an article from the Townsman, the club was created in 1918 with the purpose of providing educational and social activities for Italian families. According to former owners of the property, the subject property often served as an overflow venue for the many social engagements of the Reliance Club. The neighborhood was a typical working-class enclave composed of builders, carpenters, masons, cobblers, bakers, and gardeners. According to a 1980 letter from the Wellesley Historical Commission, gardeners from the neighborhood were hired by Walter Hunnewell for the design and maintenance of his Italian Gardens.

With respect to standard (ii), Staff is of the opinion that the existing dwelling is architecturally important by reason of period and style, by itself and in the context of the neighborhood. Staff believes that the most publically visible facade of the dwelling is original in its form and consistent with the period and style of the original neighborhood.

Therefore, based upon the above, Therefore, based upon the above, **Staff is of the opinion that demolition of the subject building would be detrimental to the historical or architectural landscape of the Town and recommends that the Historical Commission determine that the building be deemed Preferably Preserved.**

