



CAMBRIDGE HISTORICAL COMMISSION

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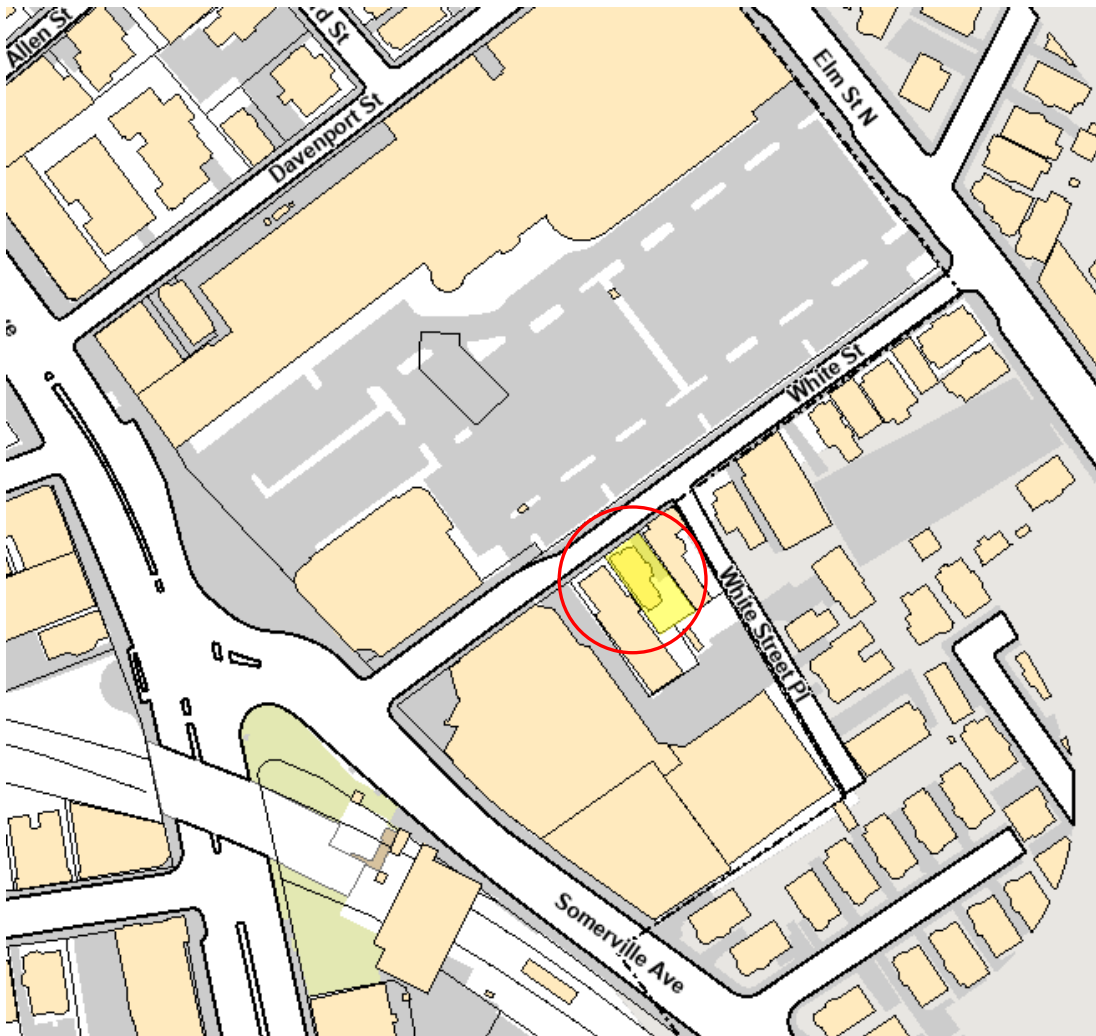
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Date: February 24, 2023
To: Members of the Historical Commission
From: Sarah L. Burks, Preservation Planner
Re: Case D-1644: Elston House, 22 White Street (1872)

An application to demolish the house at 22 White Street was received on February 3, 2023. The owner, 22 White Street, LLC c/o Mike Tokatlyan, was notified of an initial determination of significance and a public hearing was scheduled for March 2, 2023.



Current Conditions

The house occupies a lot containing 3,094 square feet on the south side of White Street, opposite the Porter Square shopping center. The zoning is Business C, a business, general retail, and office district that also allows multi-family residential construction with a residential FAR allowance of 2.0, a height limit of 55 feet, and 500 square feet of minimum lot area per dwelling unit.

The applicant proposes to demolish the existing building and construct a new 5-story multi-family residence with four bicycle parking spaces on the ground floor and four at-grade parking spaces in the rear yard. The floorplan accommodates one unit per floor on floors 2-5. The plan and elevation drawings for the proposed project are enclosed with this report.

The current condition of the building is very good. There are no obvious structural problems or deferred maintenance. The building is occupied on the first floor by Mind's Eye yarn shop and a residential apartment above. Originally a single-family house and later a two-family, the building has been mixed-use for many years.

The neighborhood context for this house includes another Italianate house at #26 and a five-story condominium building at #18, which replaced an Italianate house in 2013. On the other end of the street, which is Somerville real estate, there are several surviving houses, but generous zoning and property values would indicate that further development is likely.



22 White Street, Cambridge Assessor's Database, accessed Feb. 24, 2023

Architectural Description

The 2½-story building is wood frame on a brick foundation with a gable roof, oriented gable end toward the street. The house features wood clapboard siding. The gable end retains its raking cornice, paired brackets, and eave returns. The

pairs of brackets continue along the sides of the building and are widely spaced. The hipped porch roof is supported by chamfered square columns. An apron below the porch brackets is decorated with incised cutting in a floral motif. The porch occupies the right side of the front elevation and a one-story three-sided protruding bay occupies the left. A second bay window is located on the left (east) elevation. The original wood windows have been replaced with modern vinyl windows. In plan, the Bracketed-Italianate house is an example of the popular side hall residence.

History

White Street originally developed in the 1840s, with later infill construction in the 1870s and 1904. Large scale demolition and commercial redevelopment on the north side of the street occurred in the early 1950s.

William Hunnewell, a chaisemaker on North Avenue, sold the property behind his shop and extending to Elm Street to Artemis White, a Somerville blacksmith, in 1844. White laid out Maple Place and 9 house lots. Together with housewright Joshua Fernald, White constructed several 1½-story Gothic Revival cottages between 1844-1846. One of these cottages survives in much its original form at 32 White Street (Somerville) but it is proposed for demolition and replacement by a lab building at 32-44 White Street by SGL Development. These small cottages were the first house type built on the street and likely spawned the name change from Maple Place to Cottage Street in 1862. The name changed again by 1874 to White Street. The development was successful, in large part due to the proximity of the houses to the Porter Square railroad station, for easy commuter access to Boston.



32 White Street, Somerville, July 2012. Photo by S. Burks.

Four houses were built on White Street in the 1870s: #18, #22, #26, and #23-25. The three Italianate side hall houses on the south side of the street were built by a family of carpenters, Thomas, John, and Michael Elston. Thomas Elston purchased the property from William H. Bailey, a wool dealer, in 1873 after the three houses

were already under construction. The Elstons were responsible for at least 25 buildings built in Cambridge between 1872 and 1911.

Thomas Elston sold the finished house in December 1873 to Harriet s. Kingsbury, a single woman in Needham. She does not appear to have lived there herself and sold the house in 1874 to Horace S. Bartlett of Cambridge. Bartlett owned the home for nearly twenty years. He operated a pharmacy on the corner of Massachusetts Avenue (then Harvard Street) and Holyoke Street. He rented the house to Nathaniel Ham, a carpenter, for several years. By 1903 George and Matilda Ayer lived in the home. George was a traveling salesman who may have selected this location for its convenience to Porter Station.



18 (right), 22 (middle) and 26 (left) White Street, **July 2012**. Photo by E. Tuffy.



18 (right), 22 (middle) and 26 (left) White Street, **February 2023**. Photo by S. Burks.



White Street, looking east. Nov.1951. Cambridge Engineering Department photo.

Significance

The Elston House is a characteristic side-hall Italianate with intact architectural detailing, such as the paired brackets, cornice end returns, decorative bay windows, and covered porch. As one of the original group of three such houses built by the Elton family 22 White Street contributes positively to the streetscape, anchoring the east end of the street. The house also is also significant in the context of the broad social and economic history of the city for its association with the Elston, Ayer and Tyler families.

cc: Peter McLaughlin, Inspectional Services
22 White St. LLC, Attn: Mike Tokatlyan