



CAMBRIDGE HISTORICAL COMMISSION

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Gavin W. Kleespies, Paula A. Paris, Kyle Sheffield, *Alternates*

September 30, 2023

To: Members and Alternates of the Cambridge Historical Commission

From: Eric Hill, Survey Director

Re: L-146: 231 Third Street (Deehan-McGinley House, 1904); and 235 Third Street (McElroy-Hamouda House, 1872).

An application to demolish the buildings at 231 Third Street and 235 Third Street in East Cambridge was received on February 1, 2023. The applicant proposed to raze both buildings and the detached garage and erect a five-story residential building. The owner, DND Homes LLC and their architect, Dan Anderson of Anderson Porter Design, were notified of an initial determination of significance and a public hearing was held on March 2, 2023. The applicants requested a continuance, and Cases D-1642 (231 Third Street) and D-1643 (235 Third Street) were heard at the May 4, 2023 meeting of the Historical Commission.

The Commission confirmed the Executive Director's initial determination of significance at the May 4 hearing but voted to continue the hearing since the applicant and owner wished to hold further discussions with the neighborhood and work further on the proposed replacement building design.

The proponents presented updated plans at the June 1, 2023, meeting of the Cambridge Historical Commission. Commissioners commended the owner and architect for addressing some concerns brought up at the May hearing but could not support the replacement building as submitted. With the owners' consent, the commission voted to continue the case. The owner and architect requested an Architect's Committee meeting to provide more detailed critiques and comments on the replacement project.

At the July 10, 2023 Architect's Committee meeting, two commissioners reviewed the design and provided suggestions based on neighborhood context and site conditions. No vote was held. The applicants stated that they would present updated designs at a subsequent meeting.

At the August 3, 2023 meeting of the Historical Commission, Mr. Anderson noted that neither of the members who had been present at the July 10 meeting of the Architects Committee were in attendance and requested a continuance.

On September 7, 2023 meeting, the commissioners reviewed the amended plans and heard testimony from members of the public before finding that the buildings at 231 Third Street and 235 Third Street were not preferably preserved in the context of the replacement project, effectively allowing the demolition to proceed pending other city department reviews.

Also on September 7, 2023, a citizen's petition was submitted to initiate a landmark study for the designation of both 231 and 235 Third Street as Cambridge Landmarks. Staff confirmed with the Election

Commission that the petition had been signed by the required ten registered voters and the measure was advertised for the next CHC meeting on October 5, 2023.

Site

The building at 231 Third Street occupies a 2,649 square-foot lot (27-34) on the west side of Third Street just north of the intersection with Bent Street. It is a two-story wood-frame building with a shallow sloping flat roof. The building at 235 Third Street occupies a slightly larger lot at 2,910 square feet, which is situated at the northeast corner of Third and Bent streets. There are two structures on the lot at 235 Third Street: comprised of a wood-frame cottage with brick veneer, and a detached two-car brick garage structure.



231 (right) and 235 (left) Third Street.

The base zoning is IA-1, a limited impact business and industry district that also allows most types of housing. The FAR and height limits in this district are 1.25/1.50 and 45 feet. The two lots are also located within the East Cambridge Housing Overlay (ECHO), which seeks to “provide an incentive for residential development within the designated ECHO district as an extension of the existing residential neighborhood and to permit housing to be developed” as stated in Section 20.40 of the Cambridge Zoning Ordinance. The ECHO allows a maximum permitted FAR for all residential uses be twice the non-residential FAR permitted in the underlying base zoning district. The height limit remains 45’-0”.

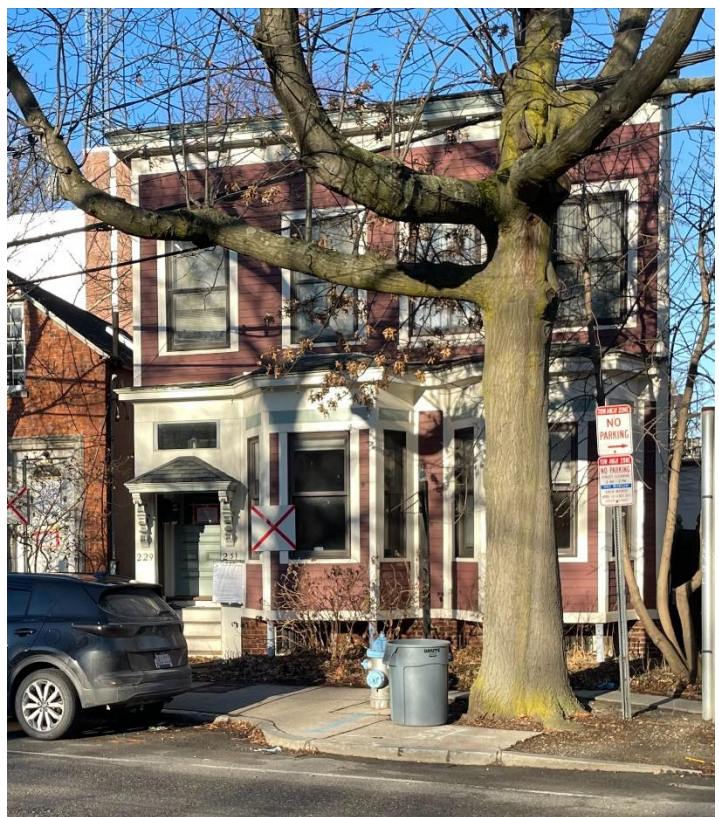




2022 aerial of 231 & 235 Third Street and surrounding neighborhood.

The assessed value of the land and buildings on both lots, according to the FY23 Assessing Database, was \$2,125,000.

The two parcels are also included in the East Cambridge Neighborhood Conservation District (ECNCD) study area. Establishment of the ECNCD would seek to “...conserve significant structures and features where they exist while encouraging architectural diversity and individualized alterations that respect the vibrant and eclectic character of the neighborhood. The Commission will seek to maintain the present diversity of development and open space patterns (including green canopies where possible) and building scales. It will acknowledge the growing demand for housing in the community at large by accommodating greater density where appropriate and by preserving the existing housing stock of the neighborhood where possible.” The ECNCD Report is awaiting review and a vote by the Cambridge City Council, where a simple majority is needed to establish the district.



231 Third Street façade.

As of the date of this memo, the Cambridge Historical Commission has no remaining jurisdiction over the properties at 231-235 Third Street.

Architectural Descriptions:

231 Third Street:

The dwelling at 231 Third Street is a well-maintained rectangular, two-story, wood-frame structure clad with wood clapboard siding and capped with a flat membrane roof. The duplex is a modest and very late example of an Italianate two-decker built in Cambridge and sits upon a slightly raised brick foundation.

The primary façade is characterized by two octagonal bays which are supported by metal supports; basement-level windows are located beneath the projecting bays. To the left of the bay windows, a small hip roof overhang projects over the doorway and is supported by intricate brackets. A transom has been added over the roofed entry. The front door consists of a paneled wood door with glazing in the upper portion. The door is recessed into the building and is located atop five steps. At the second floor, four evenly spaced one-over-one aluminum windows span the façade. A slight overhanging eave at the façade is lined by small corbels. The north façade is characterized by windows of varied locations and sizes. There are no eaves at the side and rear elevation and the fascia lies flush with the exterior walls.

235 Third Street:

The dwelling at 235 Third Street is a wood-frame cottage which was extensively remodeled in the 1990s. The dwelling is comprised of a one-and-one-half-story main block with side-hall configuration with its gable end facing Third Street and a one-story ell with cross gable roof facing Bent Street. A one-story enclosed porch on the west side of the ell was removed during the 1990s renovation. The building historically had a slightly raised brick foundation which now appears to have been clad with a stone veneer.



231 Third Street before renovation, 1966.



Undated photograph of door and hood at 231 Third Street, photo by B. Orr.



235 Third Street, 1980. Viewed from corner of Third and Bent streets.

The Third Street elevation includes the one-and-one-half-story gable end block of the house with a door set within a cast stone entry. The entry is accessed up a couple steps and a stone landing which is lined with stone knee walls that are lined on the exterior by decorative cast stone spindle detailing. To the left of the entry, an eight-over-eight double-hung wood window sits nearly centered in the façade with stone sill and lintel. A storm window protects the historic window.

Above, two six-over-six wood windows are located in the gable end with their stone lintels cut at the ends where they meet the roof. The one-story ell at the Third Street façade includes two, eight-over-eight wood windows with stone sills

and lintels. Two basement windows cut into the foundation are presently boarded up.



235 Third Street façade.



235 Third Street, west and south facades from Bent Street.



235 Third Street, Bent Street entrance.

The one-story Bent Street façade features a large entry up a short flight of steps off the sidewalk. The brick façade is punctuated by a double-door entry recessed within an elaborate stone and wood opening. The concrete lintel features a key-stone centered over the paired 15-light French doors. A slightly off-center single-pane window sits above the doorway. The deteriorating concrete steps are flanked by knee walls capped on each side by brick planters with inlaid stone medallions. A slightly off-center single-pane window sits above the doorway. To the west, a one-bay single-story addition is punctuated by a central double-hung window. The deteriorating lintel appears to be metal encased in concrete which has largely delaminated. A cast stone parapet sits at the roofline and is lined with engaged spindles cast in the panel.

its soldier course banding between the garage doors and parapet. The parapet is capped by cast stone with a raised central brick panel.

Across a small yard a detached two-car garage sits on the west side property line. The garage is brick and concrete block construction and exhib-



235 Third Street, Bent Street façade window and parapet detail.



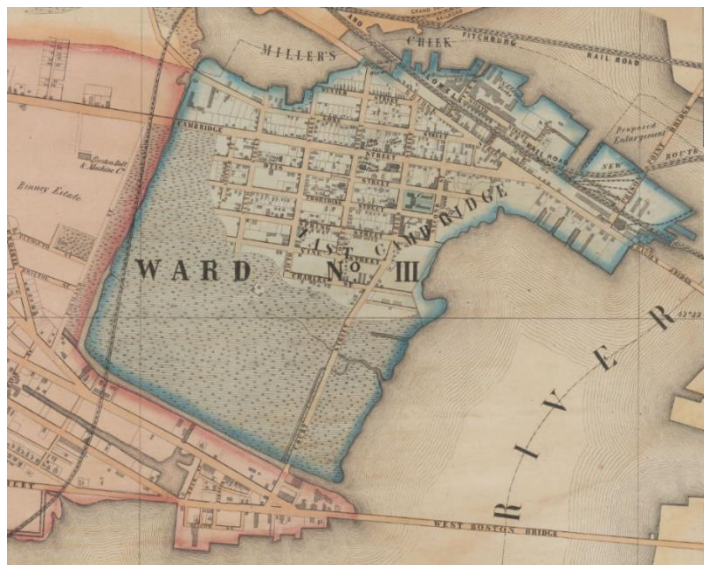
235 Third Street, garage fronting on Bent Street.

History and Context:

East Cambridge Development and History:

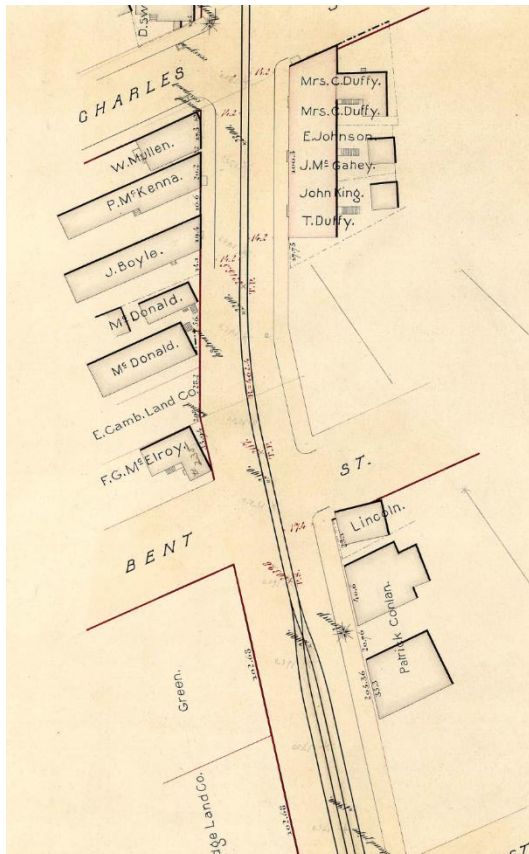
The East Cambridge neighborhood largely developed due to one man, Andrew Craigie (1754-1819). Born in Boston in 1754, Craigie was appointed "medical commissary and apothecary for the Massachusetts army" two weeks after the Battle of Bunker Hill. During his tenure Craigie amassed a sizable fortune by speculating in government securities. After the war Craigie purchased the John Vassall estate on Brattle Street, and in 1795, began acquiring 300 acres of land on Lechmere's Point, which was largely comprised of salt flats at the time. He continued in this vein until 1805, when he petitioned the General Court for permission to build a bridge from Lechmere's Point to Boston. With the bridge under construction, Craigie formed the Lechmere Point Corporation and sold shares to investors, including Harrison Gray Otis, merchant Israel Thorndike of Beverly, and his old colleague Gov. Christopher Gore.

The Lechmere Point Corporation hired Cambridge surveyor Peter Tufts to lay out lots for sale. Tufts' plan of East Cambridge is a regular grid with the main streets running parallel to Cambridge Street and the north-south streets serving as secondary streets. Later extensions of Tufts' plan of East Cambridge were laid out as the neighborhood continued to grow south and west. The neighborhood developed, primarily around the new Middlesex County Courthouse (1813), designed by Charles Bulfinch, and some speculative housing developed in the surrounding streets off Third Street. Many of the homes in East Cambridge date from 1820-1870 and were built centered around the courthouse and Cambridge Street, with later construction concentrated on the western and southern sections of the neighborhood. As seen in the 1854 Walling Map of Cambridge, Third Street was meant to be the major through-street connecting East Cambridge to Kendall Square and the West Boston Bridge.



Walling Map of East Cambridge, 1854.

In 1861 Gardiner Hubbard, Estes Howe and others chartered the East Cambridge Land Company, which sought to subdivide and sell an extensive tract between Charles Street and the Broad Canal on the north and south and Third and Portland streets on the east and west. While the objective of the Land Company was to sell large tracts for industrial use, some smaller parcels, apparently including the corner lot at Third and Bent Streets, were sold for residential development.

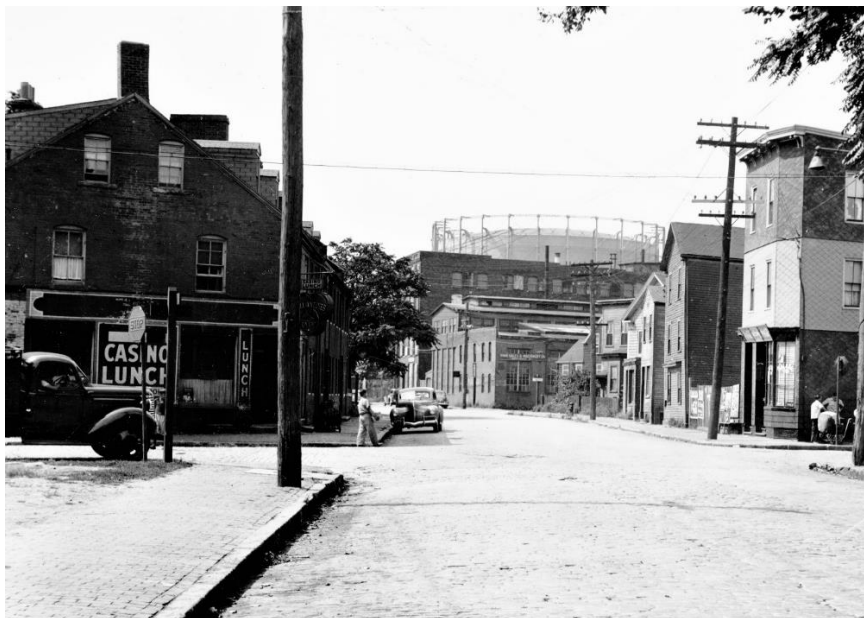


Survey of Third Street by E. F. Bowker, August 1873.

Modest worker's cottages were built in the southern edge of East Cambridge in the second half of the 19th century as Kendall Square emerged as a major industrial district, with most housing terminating at Bent Street. By the turn of the 20th century, many full-block parcels south of Bent Street, towards the Broad Canal were developed for industrial use. Businesses including the American Net & Twine Co., George Blake Manufacturing Co., and the Cambridge Gas Light Company provided employment to a diverse immigrant workforce in East Cambridge.

Most available land north of Bent Street had been developed for residential use by the turn of the 20th century. Scattered vacant lots were developed for multi-family housing by WWI, and little change occurred in the neighborhood until the 1960s when Urban Renewal and shifting economic conditions led some historic structures at the southern periphery to be demolished for surface parking lots, largely for businesses closer to Kendall Square. Nearly all of the early-to-mid-19th century housing remaining west of Third Street between Bent and Charles streets was razed by 1968, leaving just the altered 201-203 Third Street (1831) and 231-235 Third Street extant.

Across Third Street, the Bottle House Block (1826) and the former American Net and Twine Company Factory (1875-1916) are well-preserved examples of the industrial and residential development found in the southern periphery of East Cambridge; both are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.



Third Street at Charles Street, 1946. 231 & 235 Third Street seen in distance at center of photograph.

231 Third Street:

The lot at 231 Third Street remained undeveloped until 1904, when Ms. Mary Deehan purchased the property from the East Cambridge Land Company. Ms. Deehan hired architect Nathan Douglas, who along with builder Gustavus Wilson built the two-family house on the site. Directories from the first decade of the 20th century list Ms. Deehan as the widow of Thomas, a former teamster in the firm of Day and Collins. Mary operated a restaurant from the building and lived in the other unit with her daughter Grace, who worked as a waitress. By 1920, the census lists Mary living at the residence with her daughter Grace, Grace's husband Frank Murphy, his brother Robert, and three boarders.

By the late 1920s, the property was owned by Rose M. McGinley, who added a two-car brick garage at the rear of the lot in 1924. Ms. McGinley was listed in the 1920 census as a ticket seller for the street railway. Rose would later move to Watertown, and she rented the house to William and Jane Campbell and John J. Collins and his wife Gertrude, who lived in 229-231 Third Street into the mid-1940s. The property was purchased by Alice E. McElroy, who continued to rent the property out to boarders. The property was deeded in 1954 from Alice McElroy to Emily Campbell. After numerous other renters and owners, in 1995, owner Stephen Miller of Woburn, Massachusetts demolished the two-car garage at the property. In the early 2000s attorney Joyce Kauffman, a 1992 graduate of Northeastern University Law School, operated a family law practice at 231 Third and engaged in several important actions representing LGBTQ clients. The present owner acquired the building in 2022.

235 Third Street:

The McElroy House at 235 Third Street was built in 1872 on land purchased by Rosanna (1825–1909) and Francis McElroy (1822-?) from the East Cambridge Land Company. Both Francis and Rosanna were born in Ireland. The couple married in Cambridge in 1855 and settled at the corner of Fourth (later renamed Sciarappa) and Vine (later renamed Hurley) streets. Francis found work as a building mover. The couple lived in the house on Third Street with their three children: Charles, Mary, and Alice. It is unclear when Francis McElroy died, but Rosanna owned the house until her death in 1909. The couple's eldest son Charles took over the family business as a building mover and contractor and advertised in the Cambridge City Directories and local newspapers.



Ad for Charles H. McElroy (son of Francis G. McElroy) as a building mover and contractor. Cambridge Directory, 1896.

Rosanna left the property to her daughter Alice, who lived there until she moved to Watertown, with Rose McGinley, who formerly owned the house next door at 231 Third Street. Alice and Rose had the garages behind 231 & 235 Third Street constructed in 1924. Alice continued to rent the property until she sold it to William and Mary Kervick in 1954. William worked at the Public Works Department of Cambridge for a number of years. William died in 1982 and Mary moved to Alewife Brook Parkway, renting this property for years to tenants.

In 1990, the City of Cambridge filed notice of a taking at the Middlesex County Registry of Deeds due to unpaid taxes. A lien on the property was posted in late 1995 but redeemed by January 1996. In 1997, Omar Hamouda mortgaged the property. Mr. Hamouda applied for a permit in 1996 to remodel the house by bricking all exterior walls except the interior side elevation, replace the asphalt roof, add a secondary door facing Bent Street, and repair all windows, replacing the basement windows. Omar was listed as the owner and contractor for the work. The work completed in the 1990s has largely been maintained to this day. Dr. Hamouda is presently a professor of Economics at Glendon College, York University (Canada) and has research expertise in macroeconomics and monetary economics. He served as a visiting scholar at Harvard University 1989-90 and 1995-96 and as a research scholar and affiliate at MIT (1993-97). There is no record of Dr. Hamouda's expertise as a contractor or mason, he could not be reached for more information by the time of the completion of this report.

Little original fabric of the 1872 house remains from the renovations. The property was sold in 2022 to the present owner.

Landmark Criteria and Goals

Landmarks are enacted by the City Council upon recommendation of the Historical Commission. The Commission commences a landmark designation study process by its own initiative or by voting to accept a petition of ten registered voters.

The criteria provided in the ordinance outlines eligible properties as:

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 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... (2.78.180.A)

The purpose of landmark designation is described in the ordinance, which was enacted 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 neighborhoods, 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; to foster appropriate use and wider public knowledge and appreciation of such neighborhoods, areas, or structures; and by furthering these purposes to promote the public welfare by making the city a more desirable place in which to live and work. (2.78.140)

Relationship to Criteria

The Deehan-McGinley House at 231 Third Street and the McElroy-Hamouda House at 235 Third Street, together, could be considered to meet criterion (1) for their important associations "with the broad architectural, aesthetic, cultural, political, economic, or social history of the City or the Commonwealth" as examples of the modest working-class immigrant housing constructed in East Cambridge during the late 19th and early 20th century.

Staff Recommendations

While the Deehan-McGinley House at 231 Third Street and the McElroy-Hamouda House at 235 Third Street are significant examples of working-class housing long occupied by immigrants who settled in East Cambridge, staff does not believe that the buildings on their own warrant landmark designation. Due to commercial and industrial encroachment northward from Kendall Square during the 20th century, much of the original context of these houses has been lost.

CHC staff supports the September 7, 2023 decision by the Cambridge Historical Commission to not find the buildings at 231-235 Third Street preferably preserved in the context of the replacement project. In light of this action the landmark designation petition may be considered moot.

cc: Ender Saricay, DND Homes, LLC
Trina Murphy, DND Homes, LLC
Ozan Dokmecioglu, Owner
Dan Anderson, Anderson Porter Design
Marie Saccoccio, Lead Petitioner