



CAMBRIDGE HISTORICAL COMMISSION

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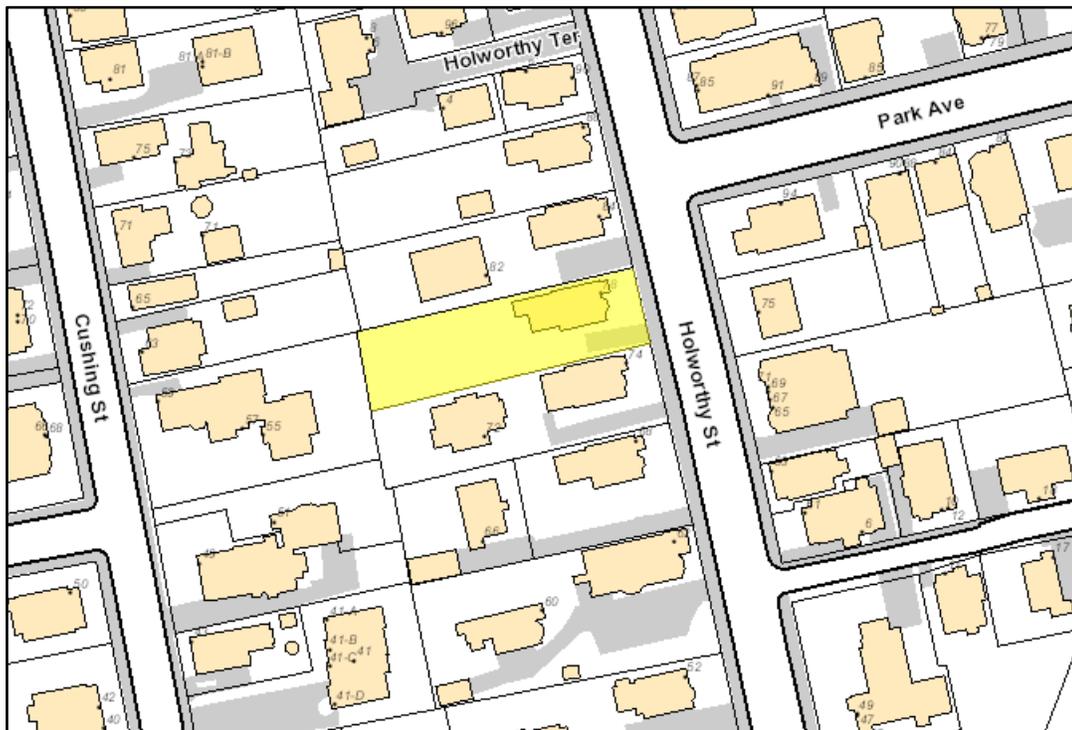
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Date: August 3, 2018
To: Members of the Historical Commission
From: Sarah L. Burks, Preservation Planner
Re: D-1492: 78 Holworthy Street (Safford House, built by 1875)

An application to demolish the house at 78 Holworthy Street was received on July 17, 2018. The applicant was notified of an initial determination of significance, and a public hearing was scheduled for August 9, 2018.

Site

The single-family house is located on the west side of Holworthy Street near 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 31) is \$539,800. The house is sited at the northeast corner of the 8,778 square-foot lot. The Residence B zoning district 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 175 feet deep. The main block of the house is approximately 22 feet wide by 29 feet long, a two-story ell extends another 18 feet with a smaller one-story addition and porch beyond. The placement of the house on the lot is such that there is a large amount of open space in the rear and side yards. A concrete patio and shed are located in the back yard. The house has a non-conforming side setback on the north. The driveway is on the south side of the house.



The applicant has submitted an engineer's letter stating that the framing of the floors and roof would need to be rebuilt and that reinforcing the existing framing would not be sufficient to meet the load requirements. The proposal is to demolish the house and build two detached dwellings on the lot. Covered parking spots are proposed as part of the design.

Current Condition

The current condition of the exterior of the house is fair. The asbestos siding (installed in 1947) has been removed, exposing the original clapboards and added furring. No sagging is evident at the roof and the shingles have no apparent holes. The basement and interior framing has not been examined by staff, though a letter from the applicant's engineer has been submitted with the application materials.

Architectural Description

The house at 78 Holworthy Street is a 2½ -story, front-gabled, side hall house on a low brick foundation. The house is two 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 were replaced with wrought iron columns. The house was covered with asbestos shingle siding that has recently been removed revealing the original clapboards and the wood furring used for application of the siding. The windows are symmetrically placed on the primary elevations. The two-story ell is also gable roofed, but with a lower ridge height. A small three-sided bay exists on the south side of the front elevation. The roof shingles are patched where a chimney was removed.





The house was designed in the Bracketed Italianate style. The gable roof has cornice returns and wide eaves, both typical characteristics of the style. The original 2-over-2 double hung wood windows are not present and were replaced by 1-over-1 double hung sash. The corner boards are unusually narrow at only three or four inches, though this might be a detail more common to Belmont builders. The related house at 68 is slightly wider and three bays wide but illustrates some of the missing architectural features that are now missing at 78.

History

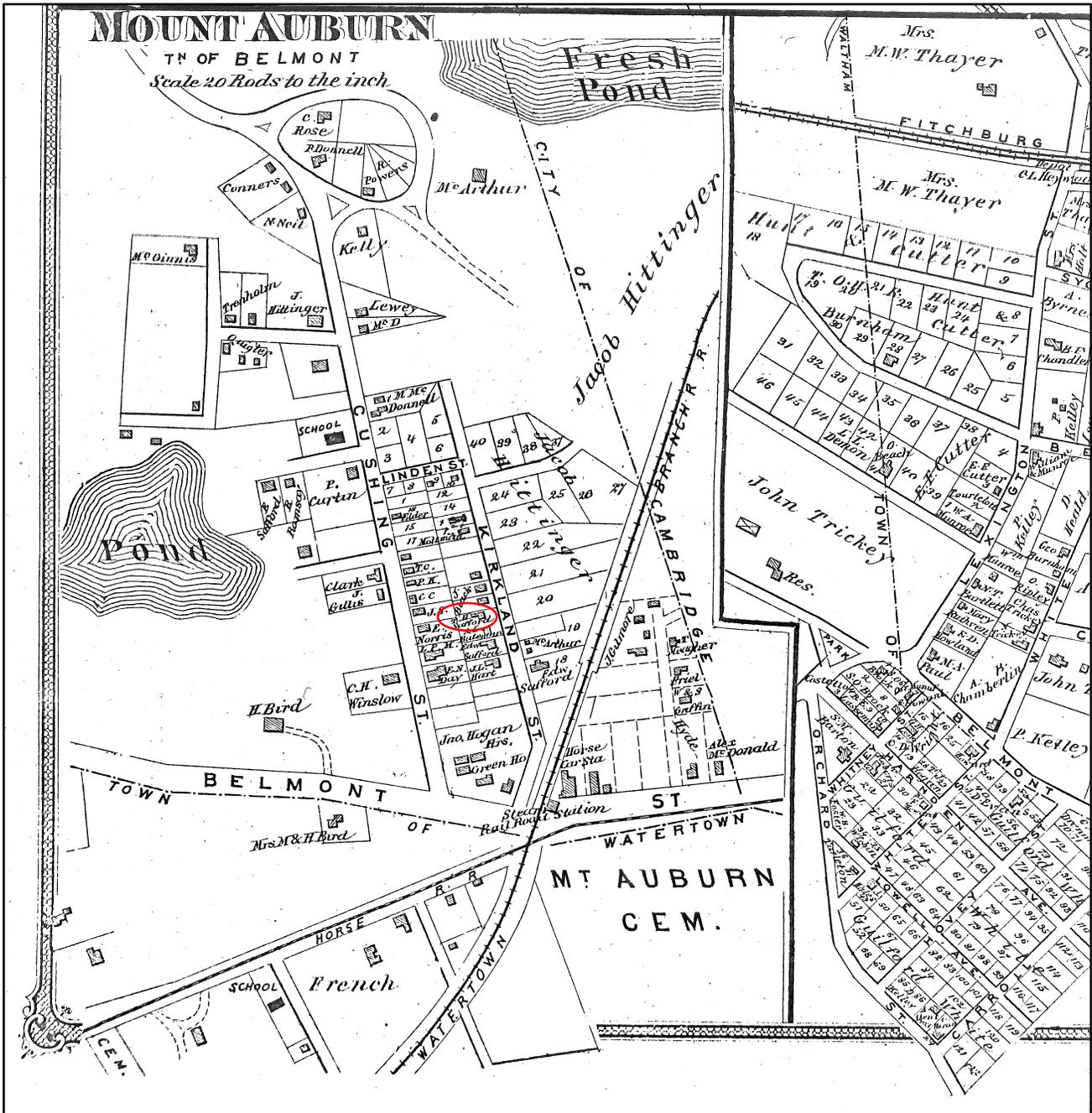
The street was laid out in 1847 and named Kirkland Street. This neighborhood was originally part of Watertown. The first scheme for development was a real estate venture in the 1840s called Strawberry Hill. The opening of omnibus service to Harvard Square in 1845 and the Watertown Branch railroad station 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.



68 Holworthy Street (Edward Safford House)

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 Cushing Street neighborhood increased after 1880, and by 1910 the area was almost completely developed. The filling of Bird's Pond to the west of Cushing Street promised additional development, although this did not materialize until after World War

II with the construction of the Corcoran Park veterans' apartments. The neighborhood has seen some significant construction projects, the largest of which was the reconstruction of the Haggerty School in 1994. Several demolition and new construction jobs have been completed on Cushing Street since 2000 but activity on Holworthy Street has been limited to renovations and infill construction. New rear yard dwellings have been constructed on either side of the subject property, at 72 and 82 Holworthy.

Edward Safford, a bookkeeper and property owner who strongly advocated for annexation to Cambridge, purchased several undeveloped lots in the Strawberry Hill subdivision in 1867 including the northern half of lot 61 where 78 Holworthy was subsequently built. Edward lived in a similar house at 66 Holworthy Street while Truman H. Safford (relationship not known) lived at 78 per the 1875 Beers & Co. map of Belmont shown on the previous page. Truman Hopson Safford (1810 Vt.-1880 Mass.) was the gate keeper and later the undertaker at Mount Auburn Cemetery. He and his wife had eleven children. One son, Frederick M. Safford, was employed as a gardener at the cemetery and another, Truman H. Safford, Jr. was an astronomer at the Harvard Observatory. The Safford family sold the house to William S. Bond in 1876. No information about Bond has been found. Bond sold the property to Edward and Mary Cunningham in 1885. Edward was a horse dealer. A barn was located on the property until 1934.

Significance and Recommendation

The house at 78 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 Truman and Louisa Safford family 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: Duncan MacArthur
Robert Linn
Ranjit Singanayagam, ISD