



CAMBRIDGE HISTORICAL COMMISSION

831 Massachusetts Avenue, 2nd Fl., Cambridge, Massachusetts 02139
Telephone: 617 349 4683 TTY: 617 349 6112 Fax: 617-349-6165
E-mail: histcomm@cambridgema.gov URL: <http://www.cambridgema.gov/Historic>



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Date: December 31, 2019

To: Members and Alternates of the Historical Commission

From: Sarah L. Burks, Preservation Planner

Re: Case D-1546: Vickory-Olson-Scannell House, 41 Tremont St. (1846)

An application to relocate the house at 41 Tremont Street on its lot was received on December 13, 2019. The owner, 41 Tremont St. Ventures LLC, was notified of an initial determination of significance and a public hearing was scheduled for January 2, 2020. The outbuilding at the rear of the lot was determined not to be significant.



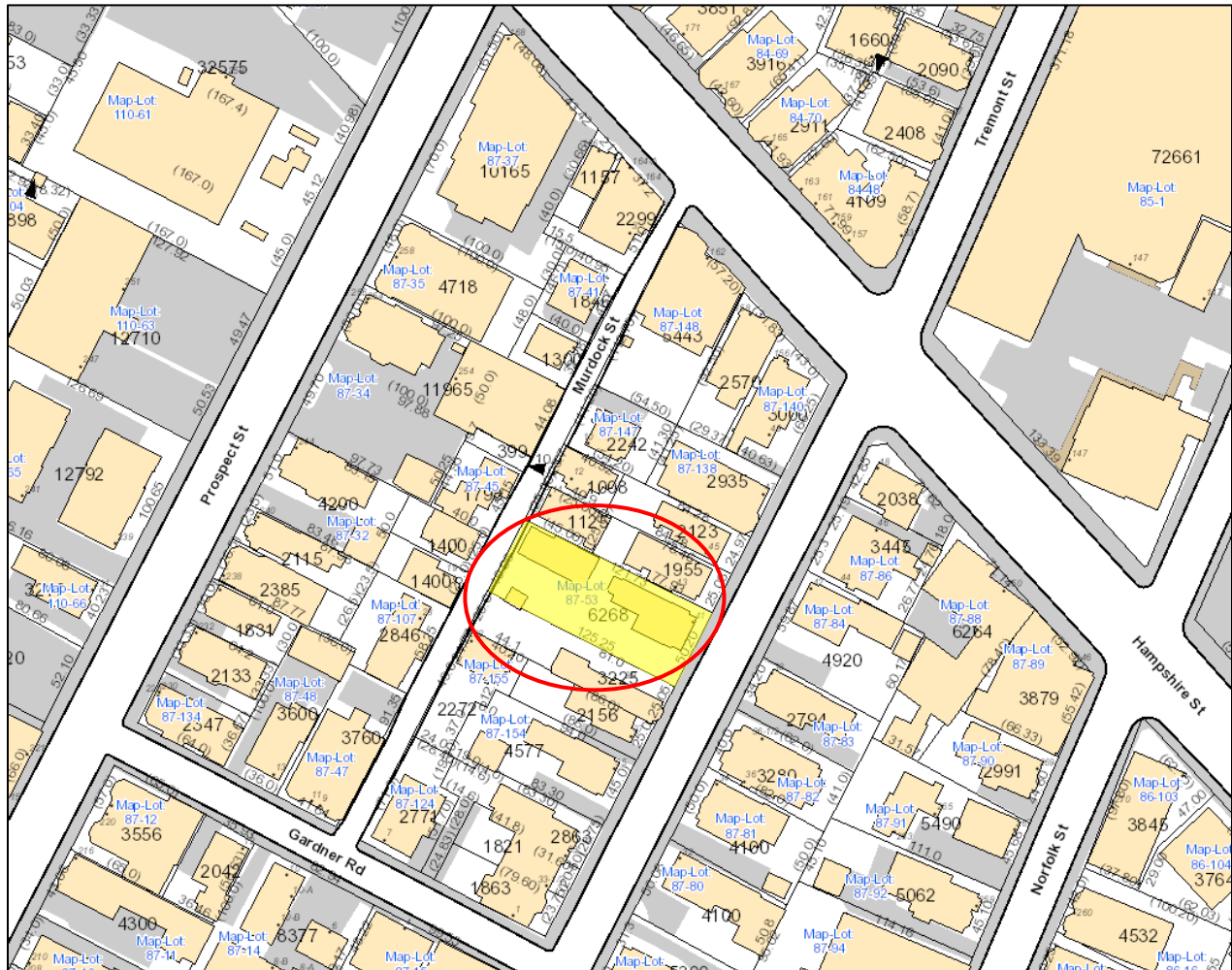
41 Tremont Street

Cambridge Assessing Dept. photo

Current Conditions

The house occupies a 6,267 square-foot lot (87/53) on the west side of Tremont Street, between Gardner Road and Hampshire Street. This lot measures approximately 50 feet wide by 125 feet deep. The house is a 2½-story frame building with a front facing gable roof on a brick foundation. The zoning is Residence C-1, a multi-family housing district that requires 1,500 square feet per dwelling unit. The FAR and height limits in this district are 0.75 and 35 feet. The assessed value of the land and building, according to the Assessors database, is \$1,435,700. The house is in good condition and appears to have been well maintained. In its existing location on the lot, the house

has non-conforming front and north side setbacks. The existing height is approximately 30 feet.



41 Tremont Street

Cambridge GIS

The applicant proposes to lift the structure, demolish the ell and the foundation, and relocate the main block of the house to a new foundation on the same lot, approximately three feet to the south and two feet to the west (rear). The applicant proposes to construct two new residential units to the rear of the old house. Three parking spaces would be provided at the rear of the lot, which would be accessed from Murdock Street. Plans for the proposed project are on file and have been distributed to the commission.

Description

The house was constructed in 1846 in the Greek Revival style. A one-story front porch extends across the full front of the house and is supported by Doric columns. The first-floor windows at the porch are elongated, but do not come all the way down to the floor level. Additional stylistic features such as the closed pediment, heavy entablature, wide pilasters, and divided-light sash are present. The main block of the house measures 22 feet across and 25 feet deep with an ell measuring 14 x 19. The existing windows have six lights in the top sashes and a single light in the bottom sashes. The front door is located on the right of this side-hall plan home.



41 Tremont Street (yellow house at left) Cambridge

Bing Maps, street view



41 Tremont Street, Cambridge

Connect Explorer, aerial view

History

Tremont Street was laid out in 1837 and extended from Broadway to Hampshire Street in 1845. This block developed in the 1840s and 1850s with some later infill, mostly three-deckers of the 1890s.

This property was purchased by Jonathan A. Vickery (or Vickory), a mason and carpenter, from J. A. Brown and D. H. Day in 1846. Vickory was taxed for the unfinished house the same year. The

house was owned for twenty years by Jonas Olson, a grain merchant in East Cambridge who had emigrated from Sweden in 1853. He died in Somerville in 1896. The next owner, John W. Smith, sold butter and eggs. He constructed a one-story 20 x 30 wooden storehouse at the back of the lot in 1896. The outbuildings (one, sometimes two) were enlarged, relocated, and altered as needed by owners over the years.

John Smith and his wife Catherine defaulted on their mortgage and the property was sold at auction in 1900. It was purchased by a neighbor, Mary Mains of 38 Tremont Street, who then rented it out to tenants including an upholsterer, janitor, and fireman. The subsequent owner, Michael A. Scannell, was a mason and employee of the Public Works Department. He owned the house from about 1925 until his death in 1971. His daughter, Margaret Scannell, inherited the property. She was a teletype operator for Blue Cross Blue Shield in Boston and later worked for the MBTA. She resided in the home until her death in 1980.

Significance and Recommendation

The Vickory-Olson-Scannell House is a characteristic side-hall Greek Revival house. It is significant for its associations with the first phase of development of the northern extension of Tremont Street in the mid-1840s. The house retains many characteristic architectural features including its porticoed front porch, cornice trim, and corner pilasters.

I recommend that the Commission review the proposed plans for relocation and partial demolition and hear public testimony from the neighbors before making a further determination.

cc: Sean Hope, owner representative
Ranjit Singanayagam, ISD