



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>



Bruce A. Irving, *Chair*; Susannah Barton Tobin, *Vice Chair*; Charles Sullivan, *Executive Director*
 Joseph V. Ferrara, Chandra Harrington, Elizabeth Lyster, Jo M. Solet, Yuting Zhang, *Members*
 Gavin W. Kleespies, Paula A. Paris, Kyle Sheffield, *Alternates*

February 22, 2023

To: Members of the Historical Commission

From: Eric Hill, Survey Director

Re: Cases D-1642: 231 Third Street (Deehan-McGinley House, 1904); and D-1643: 235 Third Street (McElroy-Hamouda House, 1872)

An application to demolish buildings at 231 Third Street and 235 Third Street in East Cambridge was received on February 1, 2023. The applicant, Dan Anderson of Anderson Porter Design, and the owner, DND Homes LLC, were notified of an initial determination of significance and a public hearing was scheduled for March 2, 2023.

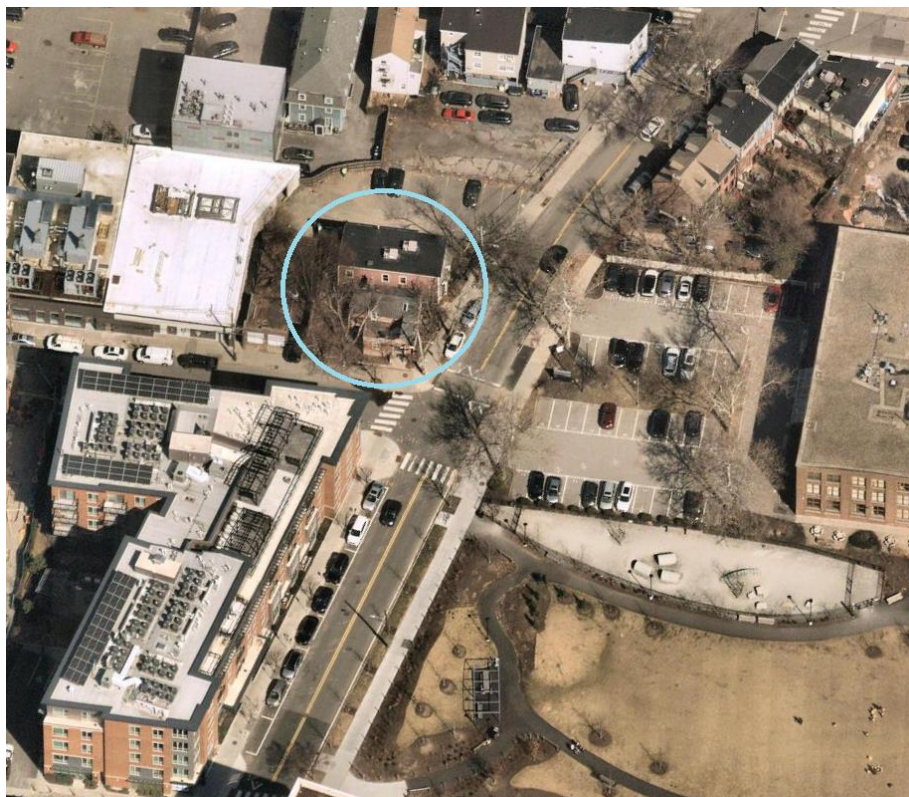
General Description and Current Conditions

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”.



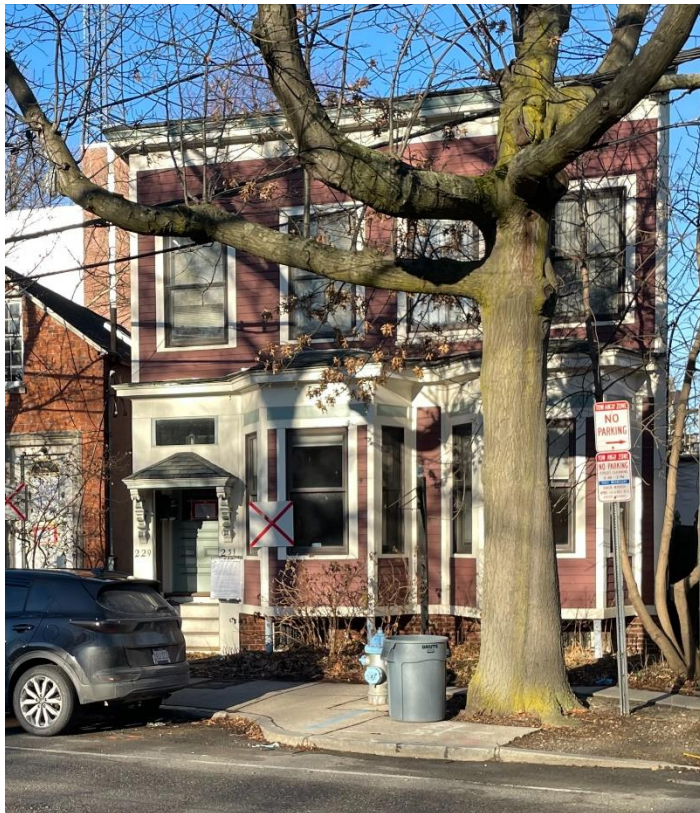
2022 aerial of 231 & 235 Third Street and surrounding neighborhood.

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 proposed 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.

As of the date of this report, the only jurisdiction the Cambridge Historical Commission has over the properties at 231-235 Third Street is the demolition delay review process. The applicant is proposing to raze the two residential buildings and the detached garage structure and erect a five-story residential building.



231 Third Street façade.

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



231 Third Street before renovation, 1966.

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.



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 façade.



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 keystone 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



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

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.

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



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



235 Third Street, garage fronting on Bent Street.

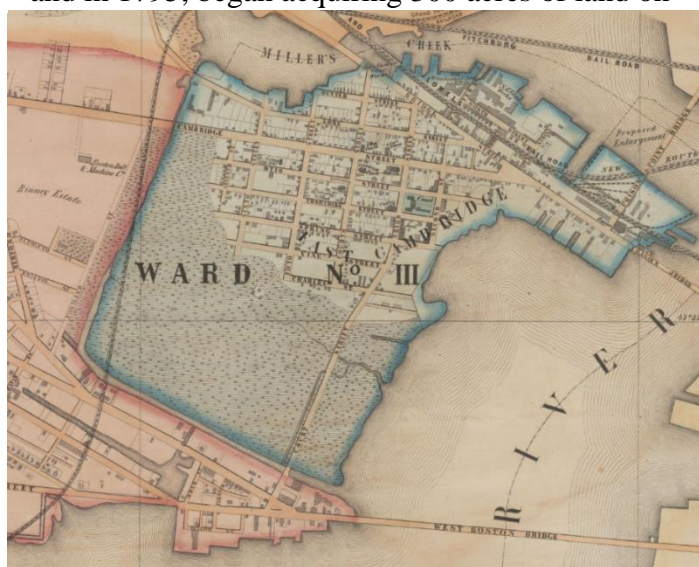
History and Context:

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

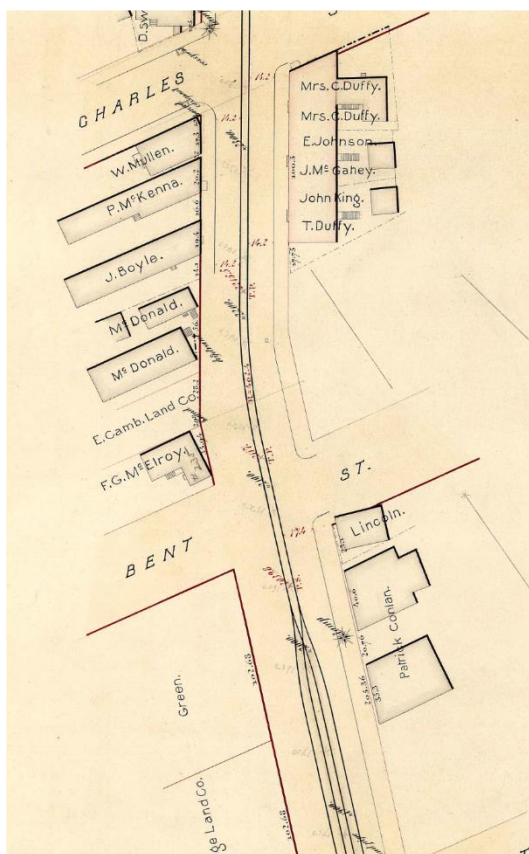
Lechmere's Point, which was largely comprised of salt flats at the time. He continued in this vein until 1805, when he petitioned the General Court for permission to build a bridge from Lechmere's Point to Boston. With the bridge under construction, Craigie formed the Lechmere Point Corporation and sold 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



Walling Map of East Cambridge, 1854.

running parallel to Cambridge Street and the north-south streets serving as secondary streets. Later extensions of Tuft's 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.



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. 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.

Significance and Staff Recommendation

The Deehan-McGinley House at 231 Third Street and the McElroy-Hamouda House at 235 Third Street reflect distinctive features of the architectural, cultural, political, economic or social history of the city. They are significant for their associations "with the broad architectural, cultural, political, economic or social history of the City" and are "architecturally significant

... in the context of a group of buildings,” namely the residential development of the periphery of East Cambridge in the last quarter of the 19th century.

CHC staff recommends that the Commission should hear testimony from the applicants and the public before making a determination whether either or both buildings should be found preferably preserved in the context of the proposed replacement structure.

cc: Ender Saricay, DND Homes, LLC
Ozan Dokmecioglu, Owner
Dan Anderson, Anderson Porter Design
Peter McLaughlin, Acting-Commissioner of Inspectional Services Department

Sources:

Ancestry.com Census records, directory records, birth and death records.

Atlas Maps (1873, 1903, 1916, & 1930)

CHC Survey Files for 231 Third Street and 235 Third Street

Final Report of the East Cambridge Neighborhood Conservation District Study Committee, December 20, 2022.

<https://www.glendon.yorku.ca/faculty-profile-details/?currentuserid=30476>

Middlesex South Registry of Deeds