



CAMBRIDGE HISTORICAL COMMISSION

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Date: September 1, 2023

To: Members of the Historical Commission

From: Eric Hill, Survey Director

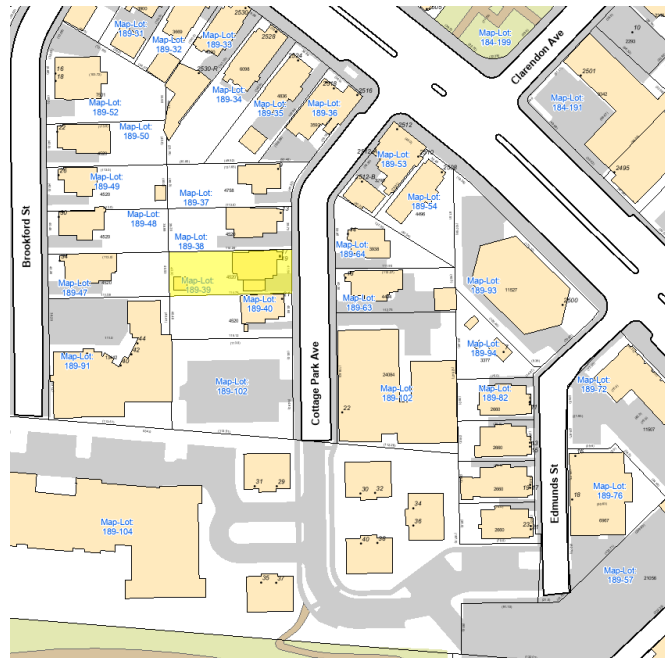
Re: Case D-1666: 19 Cottage Park Avenue, (Francoeur House, 1890)

An application to demolish the two-family residence at 19 Cottage Park Avenue and construct a new, single-family residence was received on July 26, 2023. The applicant was notified of an initial determination of significance and a public hearing was scheduled for September 7, 2023.

Site

The house at 19 Cottage Park Avenue is located on the west side of Cottage Park Avenue, mid-block. It occupies a 4,520 square foot lot (Map 189/Lot 39) that measures approximately 40' wide by 115' deep. The assessors value the land at \$555,600 and the building at \$360,800. The house is sited in the northern, more residential section of the street, with the 3-story brick industrial/office building of the former J. H. Emerson Company at 22 Cottage Park Avenue to its southeast. The short street is located between Massachusetts Avenue to the north, and the Alewife Linear Park.

The dwelling house is located in a Residence B zoning district. The current proposal is to demolish the existing two-family house and detached rear shed and replace it with a new single-family residence with Passive House with detached two-story garage in the rear yard. According to Passive House Accelerator, "A passive house is a voluntary set of building standards that aims to create houses and other structures that are comfortable and healthy yet consume very little energy. This is achieved via five principles: 1) super insulated envelopes, 2) airtight construction, 3) high-performance glazing, 4) thermal-bridge-free detailing, and 5) heat recovery ventilation."



Zoning map of 19 Cottage Park Ave.

There are at least three other existing Passive Houses in Cambridge, they include: 159 Allston Street, 29 Bellis Circle, and 60 Stearns Street.

Architectural Description and Condition

The house at 19 Cottage Park Avenue is a modest Queen Anne style dwelling with its gable end facing the street. The two-and-a-half story detached structure is of wood frame construction and sits on a raised concrete foundation. The plan is side hall with its entry at the façade. The entire structure is covered with white aluminum siding. According to a 1982 survey photograph, the building was most recently clad in wood shingle siding, which is likely extant under the overlaid aluminum dating to 1985.

The entrance is located within a projecting entry vestibule which was added sometime in the 20th century. The entry originally was capped by a steep gable roof, which was replaced by the present sloped roof, likely at the time of the re-siding work. Above the entry, a shallow projecting squared bay (1900) extends outward from the façade. All windows in the residence appear to be vinyl, double-hung replacements. The original first floor window was enlarged to create the current ganged three window composition sometime in the late 20th century. On the south-facing side elevation, a two-and-a-half-story bay projects through the eaves and is capped by a gable roof, running perpendicular to the main roof slope. An oversized gabled dormer extends off the north slope of the roof with a centered window within. The roof and dormers are covered in asphalt shingles. A brick chimney is sited at the center of the roof near its crest. An exterior wood stove and flue are located at the south side façade and were installed in 1983.

The house sits behind a small front yard garden that is contained by a shallow concrete and brick wall surmounted by a metal wrought fence. At the south front and side yards, an asphalt driveway runs the side yard toward the rear of the property. The rear yard is comprised of grass lawn. At the southwest corner of the property, a small, detached shed is sited just within the lot lines.



19 Cottage Park Avenue, CHC Photo, 09-01-2023



19 Cottage Park Avenue, CHC Photo, 1982.

As of the date of this report, some permitted demolition work has begun on the interior and windows of the house.



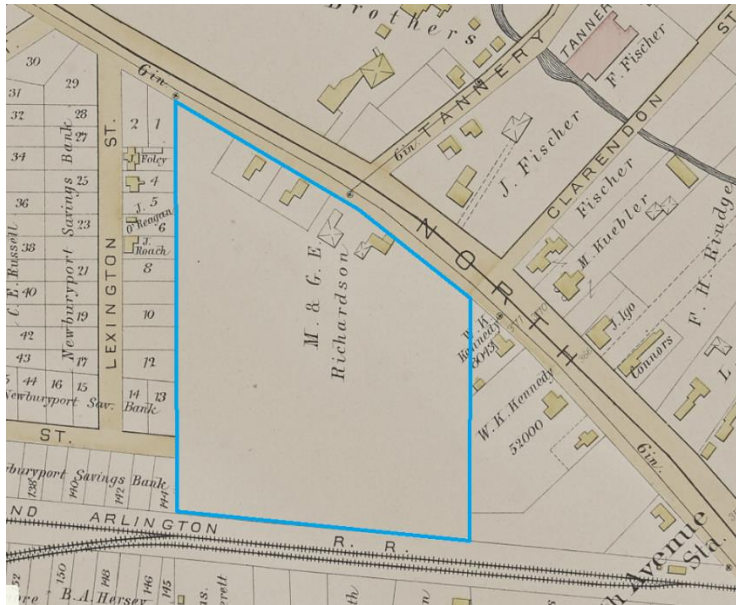
19 Cottage Park Avenue, 09-01-2023

History

From the 1840s through the early 1900s, the colonial farms of Northwest Cambridge were portioned into residential subdivisions, with the northernmost section of the city seeing the latest development. Unlike the large-scale gridded street plans by Dana for sections of Cambridgeport or the Craigie grid scheme for East Cambridge, there was no single unifying plan that determined the growth of Northwest Cambridge. Instead, a series of separate and independent subdivisions off Massachusetts Avenue and in the former brickyards were the cause of much of the residential growth in this section of Cambridge.

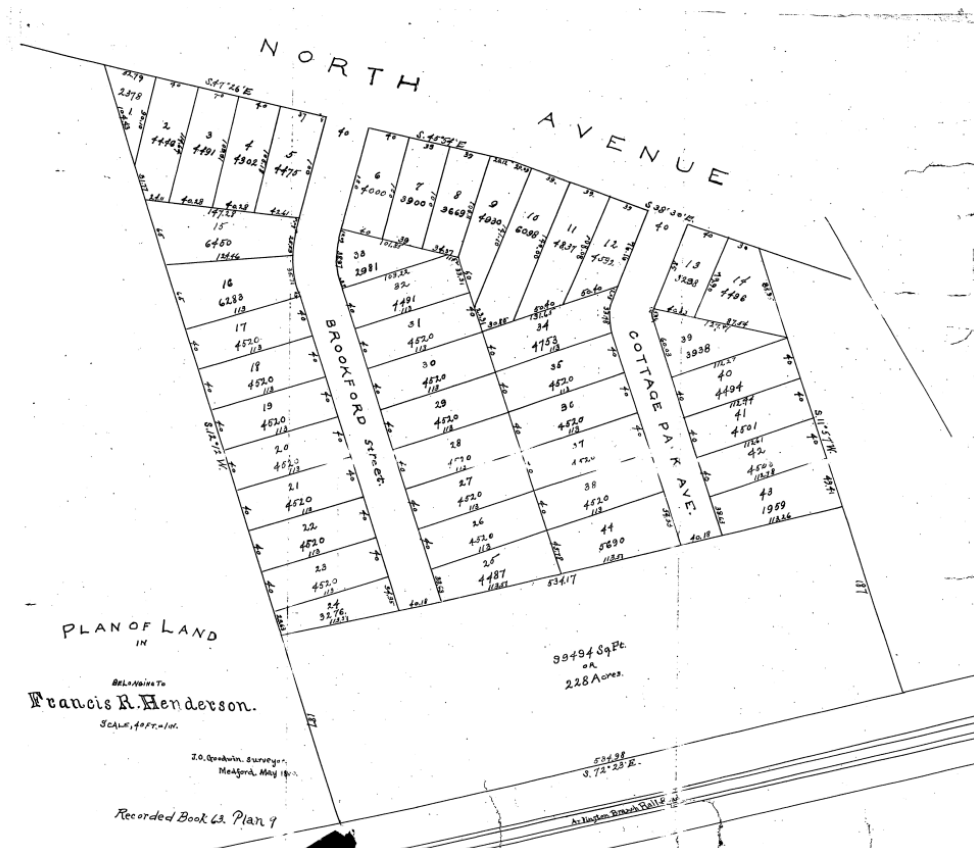
By the last decades of the 19th century, the electric trolley made North Cambridge even more connected to other parts of Cambridge and Boston which incentivized further development by speculators. In 1887, the Boston-based West End Street Railway gained control over the local Cambridge horse car line, and in 1889, the North Avenue (later Massachusetts Avenue) horse cars were replaced with electric trolleys. This electrification of the street railway system directly affected the trajectory of residential development in North Cambridge.

The land along North Avenue close to the Arlington border was almost entirely populated by farms along the colonial highway until the 1890s. The initial developer of this area was Francis “Frank” Robert Henderson (1863-1945) of the Henderson Brothers carriage manufacturing company. With his family’s wealth and influence, the 24-year-old purchased the seven-acre Teele estate with a frontage of 650 feet on North Avenue extending back to the property line of the Boston & Lowell Railroad, with the aim of improving it with houses.

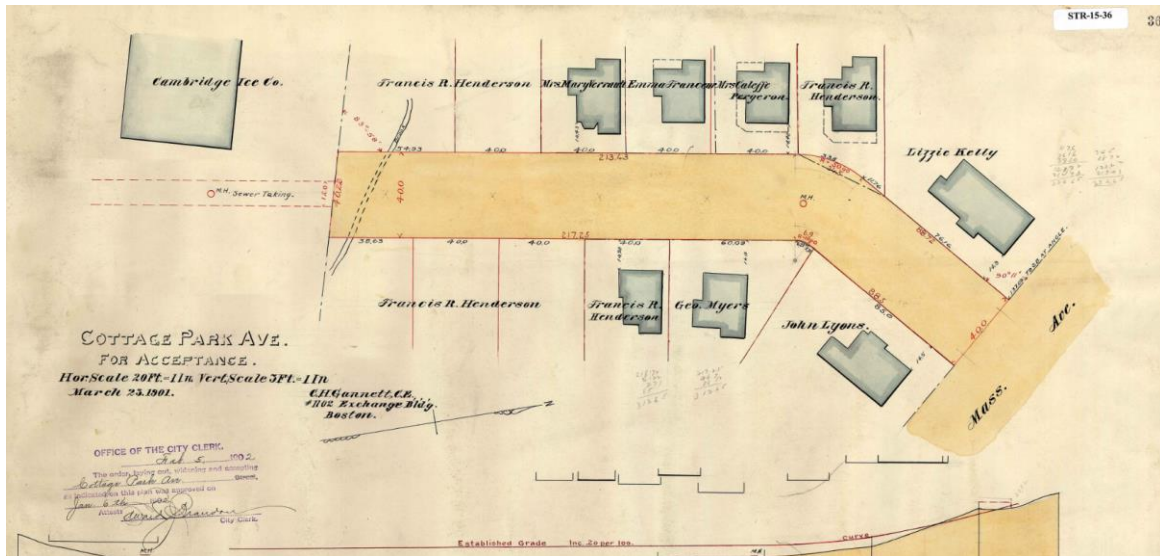


1886 Hopkins atlas map showing Cottage Park development area.

In 1887, Francis Henderson hired Mr. Goodwin of Medford to survey and lay out the streets and lots, with a proposed 62 house lots laid out for development. Local papers state that the new development would be called Cottage Park. Two streets, Cottage Park Avenue and Brookford Street, were laid out southward off North Avenue terminating at the lots fronting the railway. Cottage Park Avenue was accepted as a public way in 1901.

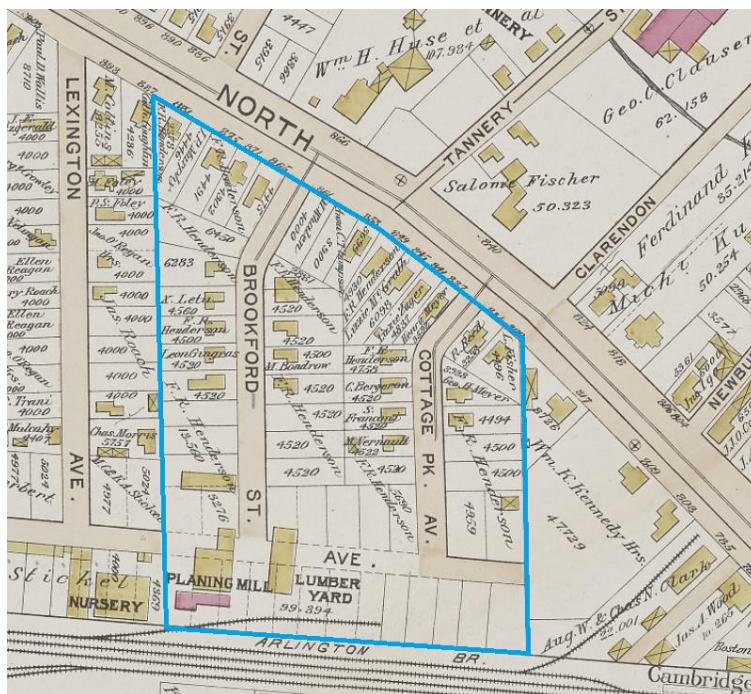


Plan of Land to be developed by Francis R. Henderson.



1901 survey plan of Cottage Park Avenue, for acceptance.

Six houses were built on Cottage Park Avenue on the lots closest to North Avenue. Warehouses and storage buildings would later be built on the lots closest to the Lowell Railroad. The house at 19 Cottage Park Avenue was permitted in 1889 by Francis Henderson with him also listed on the permit as builder. The property was taxed as unfinished in 1890 but was completed later that year.



1894 Bromley of Cottage Park development. 19 Cottage Park Ave shown owned by "S. Franconi" a misspelling of S. Francoeur.



From right to left: #13, #19, and #21 Cottage Park Avenue. All similar in overall design with varied later alterations.

Francis Henderson sold the property at 17 (19) Cottage Park Avenue in 1890 to Stanislas Francoeur [FRAHN-cur] (1834-1894) and his wife Emma Gingras Francoeur (1852-1940), née Arigenton. Both Stanislas and Emma were born in Quebec and emigrated to Boston, marrying in 1883, and settled in Cambridge for work. Stanislas was listed in city directories as a painter and Emma as a “domestic”. They had one son together, Stanislas Joseph Francoeur, who was born in 1884. Stanislas Sr. would die in 1894, just four years after they purchased their family home.

Emma would remarry George LaRose (1845-1931) in 1896. LaRose worked as a plasterer and was also born in Quebec. He moved into the Cottage Park Avenue house with Emma. In 1900, Emma pulled a permit to add a bay window, which is likely the shallow bay above the front entrance. In 1901, Emma pulled a permit to construct a piazza on the house, with George listed on the permit as the builder. In 1910 the couple converted the house into a duplex, being 17-19 Cottage Park Avenue. In this renovation, they replaced the foundation with concrete.

George and Emma LaRose lived in one unit until their deaths in 1931 and 1940 respectively. Stanislas Francoeur Jr. and his wife Helen Francoeur living in the other unit. After her death in 1940, Emma willed the property to her son Stanislas, who rented out the other unit to laborers.

Stanislas sold the property in 1943 to Evelyn E. Battista of Somerville, who does not appear to have ever occupied either unit in the duplex. Evelyn rented unit #17 to Stanislas Francoeur for over a decade longer until he no longer appeared in City Directories. It is not clear when Stanislas Jr. died. Evelyn Battista later sold the property to Melvin and Beatrice Fraiman in May 1955, who quickly re-sold the duplex in October of that year to couple William A. Fox Jr. and Virginia Fox.

William Fox worked as a machine operator at F.S. Webster Company in Kendall Square. Since William’s death in 2017, the property has been under ownership by the Virginia Fox Family 2017 Revocable Trust with Charles Fox and Glen Fox listed as co-trustees.

Significance and Recommendation

The house at 19 Cottage Park Avenue is significant for its connections with early suburban housing development in North Cambridge by carriage-maker Francis Henderson and as an example of middle-class immigrant housing built in the late 19th century for a neighborhood largely occupied by French Canadian-born residents. The Commission should hear testimony from the applicants and neighbors and review the plans for demolition and new construction before making a further determination.

cc:

Peter McLaughlin, Inspectional Services

New Age Properties LLC., Owners