



CAMBRIDGE HISTORICAL COMMISSION

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May 1, 2026

To: Members of the Historical Commission

From: Charles Sullivan

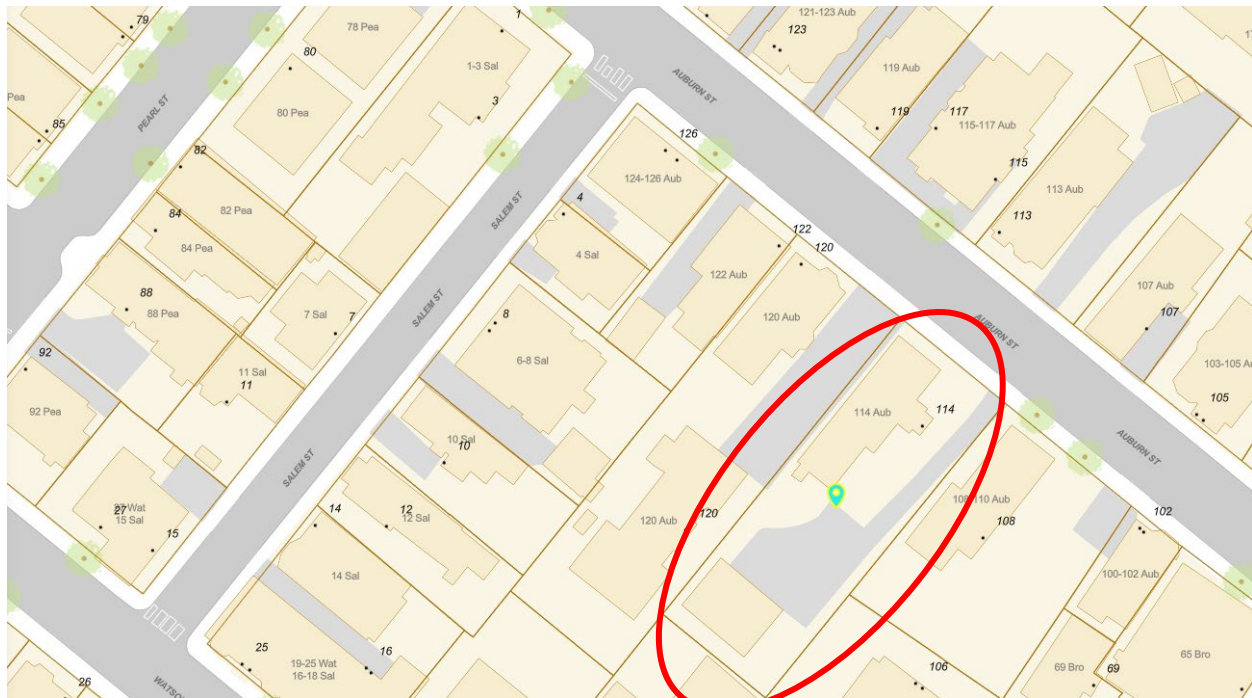
Re: Case D-1819: Zaccheus Whitney house, 114 Auburn St., by George Nearhous.

A demolition permit application to raise the roof and remodel the building at 114 Auburn Street was received on April 15, 2026. The owner was notified of an initial determination of significance required by the building's location in the Salem-Auburn Streets National Register District and a public hearing was scheduled for May 7, 2026.



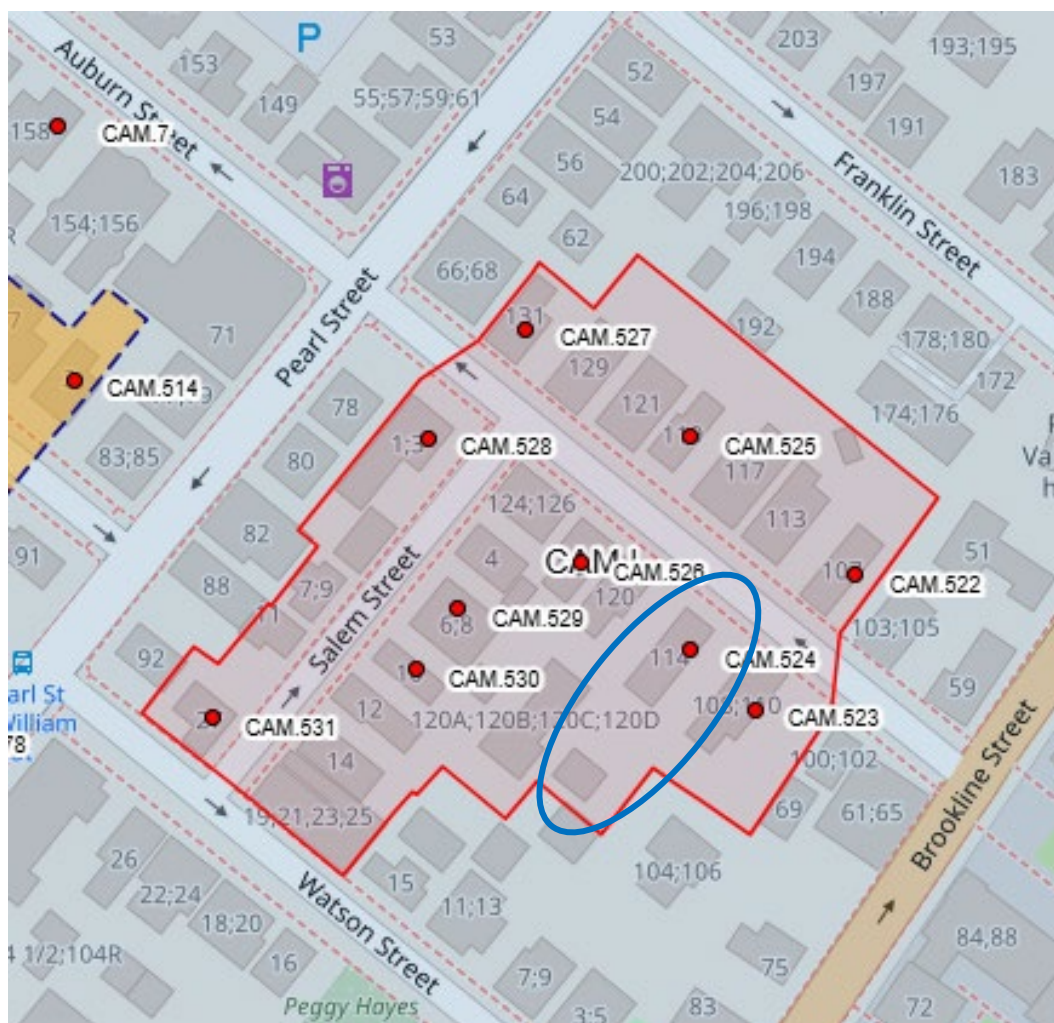
Zaccheus Whitney house, 114 Auburn Street

CHC



114 Auburn Street

City of Cambridge GIS



Salem-Auburn Streets National Register District

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Salem-Auburn Streets National Register District, view east on Auburn Street
L-R: 108-110 Auburn Street (1819); 114 Auburn Street (1844); 107 Auburn Street (ca. 1806)



Salem-Auburn Streets National Register District, view west on Auburn Street
L-R: 108-110 Auburn (1819); 114 Auburn (1844); 120 Auburn (1852); 122 Auburn (1844)

Site

The Whitney house occupies a 7,056 sf lot measuring 40' by 140' feet on the south side of Auburn Street between Brookline and Pearl streets. The property is located in a C-1 residential zoning district, which allows single to multi-family dwellings up to four stories (or 45' in height) as of right. Since the lot size exceeds 5,000 sf, a project with an affordable housing component could be six stories (74'). The minimum front yard setback for C-1 zone is 10-feet, and the minimum side and rear yard setbacks are 5-feet. The house is a contributing building in the Salem-Auburn Streets National Register District.

Description

The Whitney house was constructed about 1844, replacing one of the oldest houses in the district. It probably originated as a center-entrance, five-bay wide, 2½- story Greek Revival Style house with a gable end facing the street, and achieved its present appearance with a rebuilding in 1933.

The Whitney house in its present form is a 2½-story house, the main block of which has a T-shaped footprint, with paired double-hung windows and a gabled portico over the entrance. The original clapboards were covered with wood shingles in 1932. Doors and windows have been replaced. Original exterior details are obscured but expected to be present under the siding. The porch with turned columns was added in 1933. Two extensions project from the rear of the house. A freestanding concrete block garage dates from 1947.



114 Auburn Street

Cambridge Assessing Department



114 Auburn Street, rear view

CHC

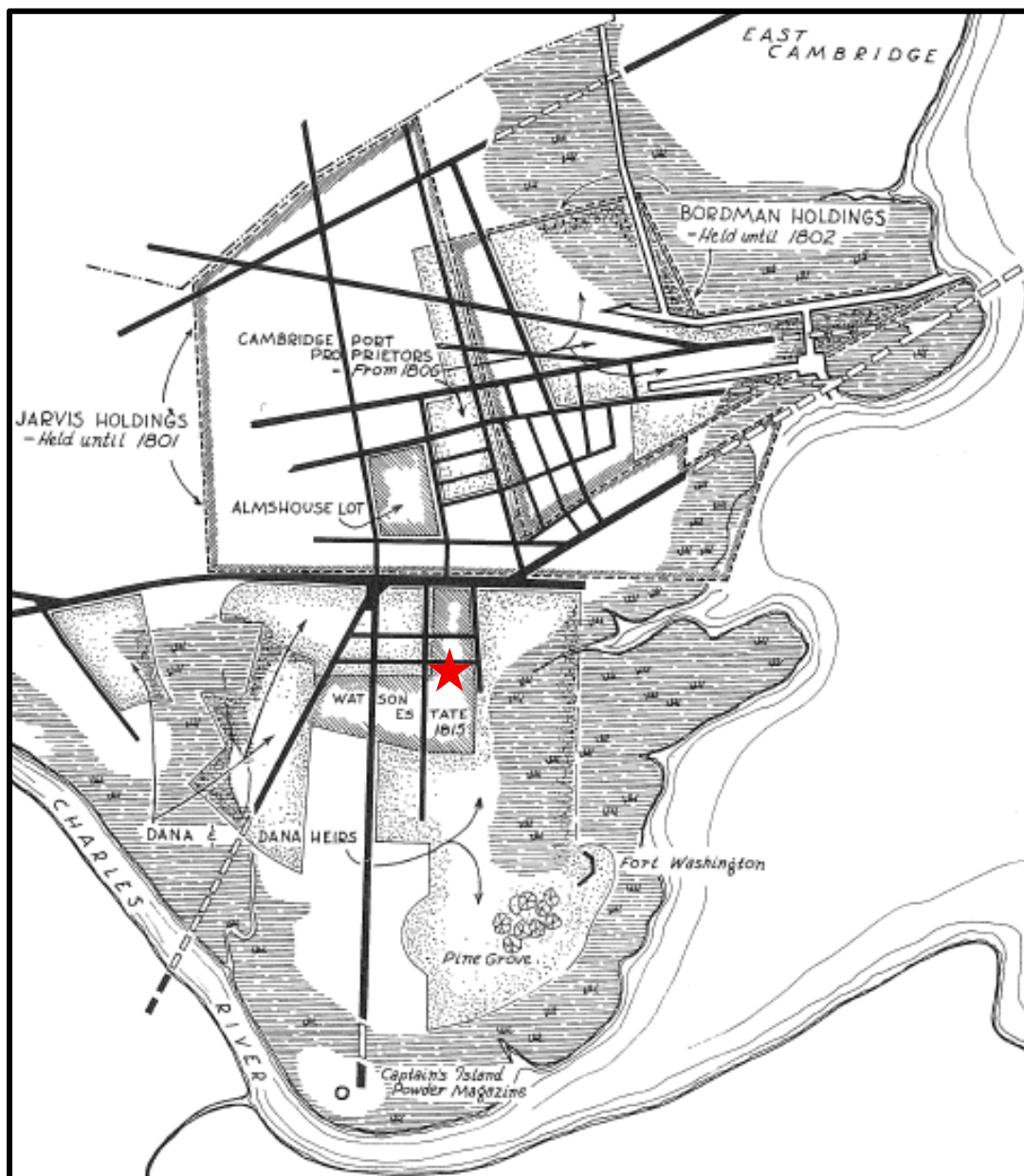


114 Auburn Street garage (1947)

CHC

History

The settlement of Cambridgeport was made possible by the completion of the West Boston Bridge in 1793. Main Street extended from the bridgehead at Kendall Square across the marshes to dry ground at Lafayette Square, which became the focus of settlement on the mainland. By this time there were three principal landowners: Francis Dana, an investor in the bridge; Leonard Jarvis, Collector of the Port of Boston; and William Watson, a glazier by trade who resided in Old Cambridge near Harvard Square.



Early 19th century landholdings in Cambridgeport.
 Cambridge Historical Commission, *Report Three: Cambridgeport* (1971), Fig 13

The only substantial estate south of Massachusetts that was not owned by Francis Dana or his heirs was an L-shaped parcel of land between Western Avenue and Brookline Street that belonged to William Watson, a glazier who lived at the corner of JFK and Mt. Auburn streets. Watson died in 1810; his son Abraham Watson and other heirs were responsible for laying out streets and selling building lots.

William Watson's 1810 probate inventory records a one-story house occupied by "the widow Fuller" on a lot on Auburn Street measuring 50' by 250'. Watson's widow, Catherine, bought this property at auction and in 1818 sold it to Zaccheus Whitney (1774-1845), a housewright from Lancaster, Mass. A year before he died Zaccheus moved the old house to the back of the lot facing Watson Street and built the present house at 114 Auburn Street. Whitney's widow Fanny died in 1872, and his son, Capt. Edward T. Whitney, a surveyor and fireman, retained the property until his death in 1879.

The subsequent owners were members of the Woodburn family. Fredrick C. Woodburn, a produce dealer in Boston, died in 1898. His widow, Josephine, died in 1929, and the property passed to their daughter, Mrs. William F. Norris. William Norris was a carpenter who in 1923 built a one-story workshop behind the house. Ms. Norris died a few months after her mother, and the house was unoccupied when it was damaged in a fire in 1931. The Back Bay Cooperative Bank foreclosed on a mortgage and retained Malcolm Gregory, a builder, to restore the house. Gregory received permits in 1932 and 1933 to rebuild the foundation, construct a new entrance, replace the windows, and shingle the exterior, giving the house its present appearance. Later owners, James and Patra Karon, built the present garage in 1947 and in 1955 built an addition to convert the house to a two-family.

Significance and Recommendation

The Zaccheus Whitney house at 114 Auburn Street is automatically significant for the purposes of the demolition permit review ordinance as a contributing building in the East Cambridge National Register District.

The demolition delay ordinance, Cambridge Municipal Code, Ch. 2.78, Article II, requires CHC review of applications to demolish buildings fifty or more years old (2.78.090.A). Demolition permits are required by the Inspectional Services Department under the following conditions:

- Relocating a building, or
- removing 50% or more of the area of the exterior walls or roof (framing), or
- removing a roof (including but not limited to raising the overall height of a roof, rebuilding roof to a different pitch, or adding additional stories to a building), or
- removing 50% or more of floor framing, or
- removing 50% or more of the foundation, or
- removing 25% or more of the volume above grade of a building

The current owner intends to remodel the building by adding a story, demolish the non-contributing garage, and construct a new building in the backyard. ISD has ruled that this action requires a demolition permit. CHC staff has met with the owner and his team to discuss ways in which the remodeling could preserve the character of the buildings and minimize adverse effects on the National Register district.

Staff recommends that the Commission find the Zaccheus Whitney house “not preferably preserved” in the context of the proposed remodeling plans.

cc: Peter McLaughlin, Inspectional Services Department Commissioner
George Nearhous
Evan Stellman, KDI Architecture