

**PRELIMINARY
LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT**

**George E. Bridges House
74 Oxford Street / 43 Wendell Street
Cambridge, Mass.**



The 1893 George E. Bridges house is an architecturally significant and highly visible example of the Queen Anne style. It meets landmark criterion (1) for its associations with the social, economic, and architectural development of the Palfrey estate and criterion (2) as architecturally significant in terms of its period and style and for its associations with architect Alberto Haynes.

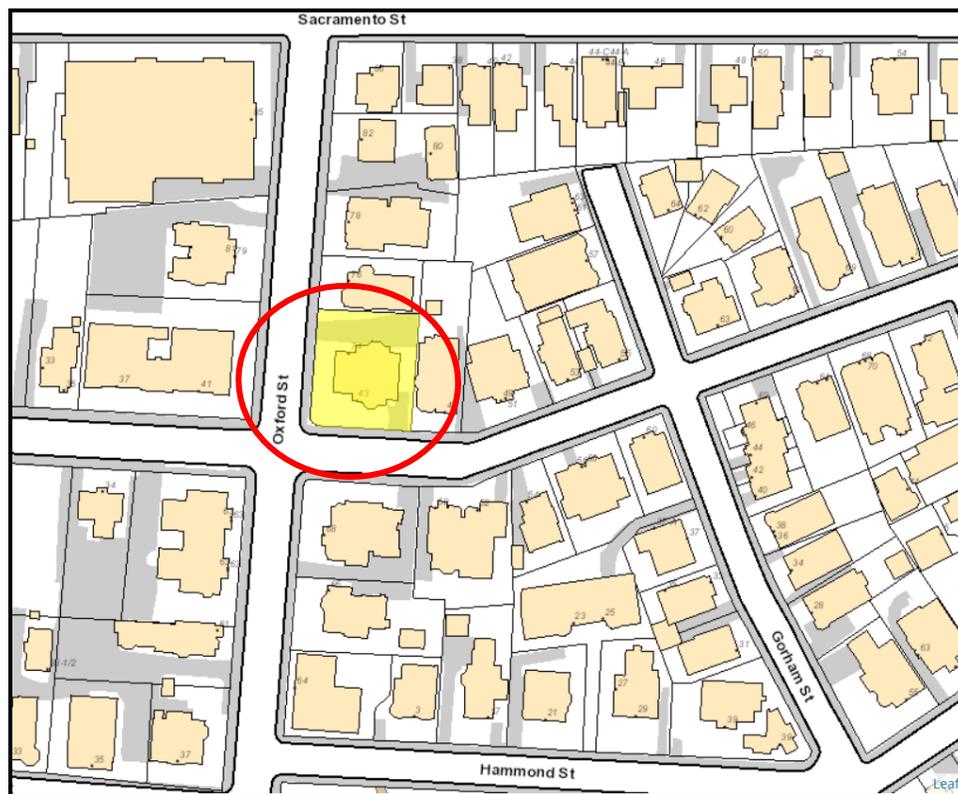
Designation of the Bridges house by the City Council as a Cambridge landmark would help preserve and protect the architectural features of this house and the historic character of its setting on a prominent corner in the Agassiz neighborhood.

Charles Sullivan and Sarah Burks
Cambridge Historical Commission
November 1, 2019

I. Location and Status

A. Address and Zoning

The George E. Bridges house is located on the east side of Oxford Street at the corner of Wendell Street. It is sited on an 8,157 square-foot lot in a Residence C-1 district. This is a multi-family residential district, which permits an FAR of 0.75 and has a height limit of 35 feet. The assessed value of the property, according to the online assessor's property database, is \$3,837,600, with \$1,809,600 attributable to the building (Map 150/Parcel 125). The previous assessment in 2018 was \$3,385,900.



74 Oxford/43 Wendell Street.

Cambridge GIS, Assessor's map

B. Ownership and Occupancy

The 74 Oxford Street, LLC purchased the property on April 19, 2018. The deed is recorded at the Middlesex South Registry of Deeds Bk 70894 / Pg 12. William Senné is the owner contact for the LLC. The structure is assessed as a greater than eight-unit apartment house. It has been unoccupied since at least the date of the demolition permit application on June 27, 2018.



74 Oxford/43 Wendell Street context, ca. 2016.

Bing Maps

C. Area Description

The surrounding neighborhood is entirely residential. With the exception of a brick apartment building across Oxford Street all the nearby properties are multi-family wood frame residences and well-kept dormitories of Lesley University. While the density is high, almost all the buildings have significant setbacks and open yards.

D. Context of this Designation Report

The current owner purchased the property in April 2018. A zoning review by ISD determined that only five units were legally grandfathered, though there had been twice that many tenant spaces in the building, not all of which contained private bathrooms. The owner initially planned to replace the Bridges house with five new units in four freestanding structures, but by the time of the Historical Commission's demolition delay hearing on July 12, 2018, he had agreed to work with the abutting property owners to design a proposal that would make use of the existing building. On this occasion the Commission found the building significant and preferably preserved, thereby delaying the demolition until January 2019.

On December 6, 2018, during the fifth month of the six-month delay, the Historical Commission held a hearing to consider whether to initiate a landmark designation study. The owner presented plans to construct four units in the existing structure while extending the cross-gable on the north side, adding dormers to the main roof, adding lightwells, and constructing a parking pad off Oxford Street. The neighborhood offered strong support for this proposal, and the developer asked the Commission to support his application for a variance and special permit. The Commission voted unanimously to initiate the landmark designation study and directed the staff to prepare a letter of support to the Board of Zoning Appeal.

The owner's application for zoning relief for a four-unit proposal was presented to the Board of Zoning Appeal in April 2019. Though the necessary variance was approved, a special permit for parking and driveway setbacks was denied. The owner then revised the plans so that he could build a three-unit project as-of-right, with substantially the same addition and selective demolition and alteration to the existing building that the Commission agreed to support in December 2018. On June 14, 2019 the owner applied for a building permit for interior demolition and to remove the exterior siding, but did not apply for a Certificate of Appropriateness; through an oversight on the department's part the permit was issued without staff review. The Commission's public hearing on November 7 will review the current design for a certificate of appropriateness as well as consider the landmark study report and formulate a recommendation to City Council.

II. Description



74 Oxford/43 Wendell Street, 2018

CHC photo

The George E. Bridges house at 74 Oxford/43 Wendell Street is a large 2½-story, two-family Queen Anne style building with a gable roof built in 1893. The plan is symmetrical around a central party wall, with cross-gables and two dormers on each side and two projecting bays under a large gable facing Oxford Street. Until recent construction most of the exterior was concealed by white vinyl siding installed in 1964, but the original brackets supporting the roof overhang, the porch columns, and the back door entrance canopies are still visible. The window sash, protected by aluminum storm windows, appear to be original, as are all the exterior doors. The roof is covered with asphalt shingles. The foundation is brick over ledgerstone. The house is set back from the corner with generous lawns on both frontages. Driveways north and south of the house offer parking for multiple cars. The Assessors rate the overall condition of the building as “fair.”

The house was built (and still presents) as a large two-family structure, divided down the middle with entrances on the left and right sides, but it was altered at some point to contain the owner’s unit and an apartment on the south side and ten rooms for rent on the north side. According to the

assessors it has a total living area of 5,584 sf (about 2,000 sf. on each of the first two floors and 1,500 on the third).

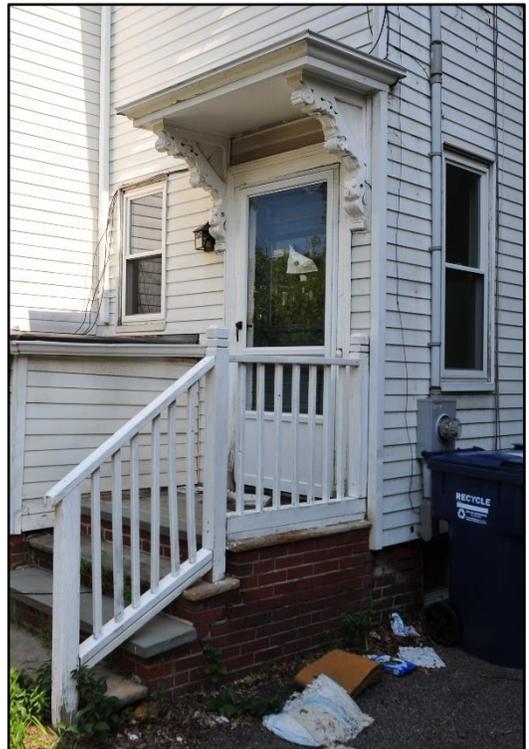


74 Oxford/43 Wendell Street, 1965

CHC photo



Front door, 74 Oxford Street, and back door, 43 Wendell Street, 2018



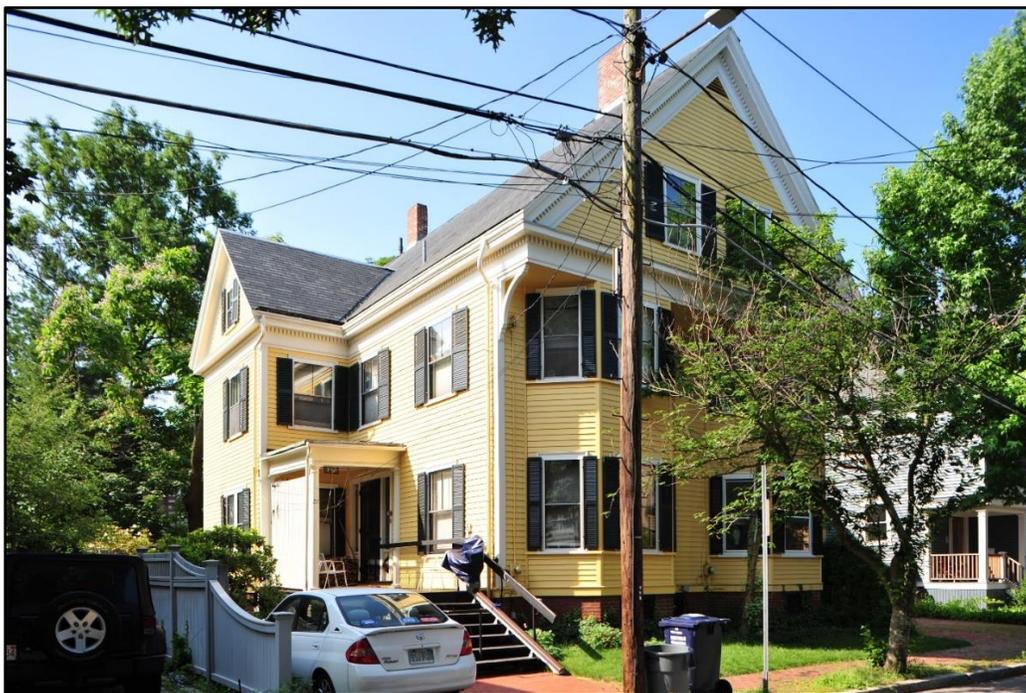
CHC photo

The architect of the Bridges house was Alberto Haynes (1849-1926), a native of Waltham who practiced architecture in Watertown and Boston. Haynes began his career as a draftsman in the office of Shepard S. Woodcock (1824-1910), a prominent Boston architect who was responsible for 150 churches, 50 schools, and uncounted commercial blocks, industrial buildings, and residences. Haynes struck out on his own in the 1880s with an office in Watertown, and many of his commissions were carried out in that vicinity:

Alberto Haynes was an architect fully versed in the fashionable styles of his time. He was born in 1849 and designed a number of important [structures] outside of Watertown, including the South Acton Congregational Church, West Concord Union Church and the Revolutionary War Monument in Sudbury.

In Watertown, he worked with the Watertown Land Company designing homes in their residential developments. On Russell Avenue, he designed #90 in the Queen Anne style and a few years later the Colonial Revival homes at #43 and #50 Bailey Road. His other buildings similarly illustrate Haynes' versatility, with Rational Revival homes on Bates Road, commercial buildings in Watertown Square, a municipal fire station on Main Street and additions to two churches along Mount Auburn Street: all in different styles (David J. Russo, "Architectural History of Watertown, Massachusetts")

Haynes designed only a handful of houses in Cambridge, but one of them at 25-27 Walker Street is almost a duplicate of 74 Oxford/43 Wendell Street. Built for real estate developer Thomas Stearns in the same year, 1893, 25-27 Walker Street displays its original clapboard siding, dentil cornice, and columned porticos; it lacks only the paired dormers on each side of the main gable.



25-27 Walker Street (1893, Alberto Haynes, architect), 2018

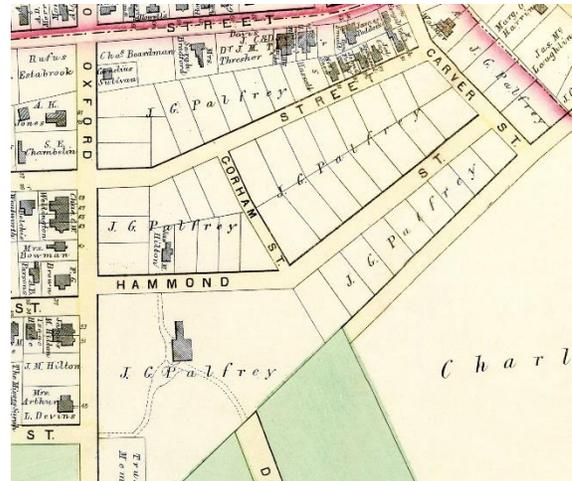
CHC photo



25 Walker Street, front door and porch detail CHC photo

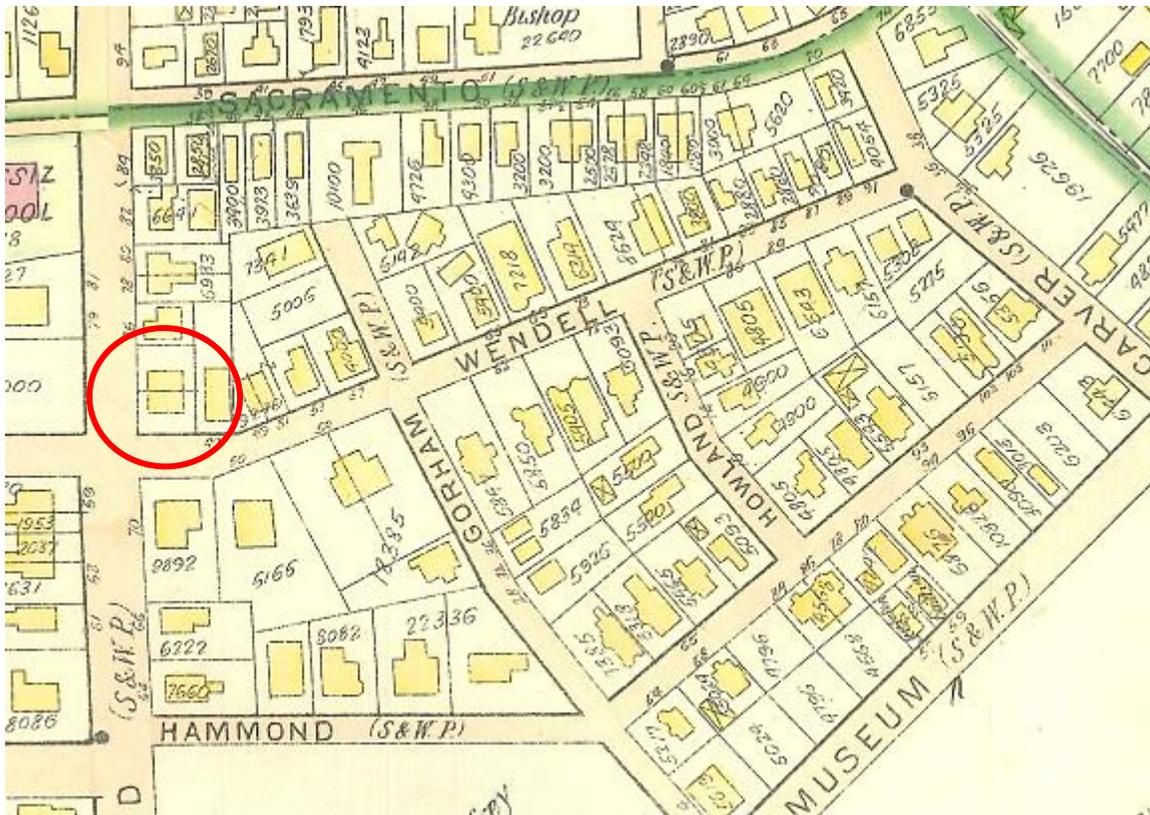
III. History and Significance of the Property

The Bridges house occupies a prominent corner in John Gorham Palfrey's 1849 subdivision of his estate, "Hazelwood." Palfrey bought 12 acres of fields and meadows from Edward Everett in 1831 when he was appointed Dean of the Harvard Divinity School. Palfrey thought that the construction of the Harvard Branch Railroad in 1849 would make his estate a gold mine, but he was sorely disappointed. As described in *Building Old Cambridge: Architecture and Development* (pp. 321-325), he gave up his seat in Congress to oversee its development, but despite construction of a platform for passengers at Carver Street he only sold four lots by the time the railroad closed in 1854. Over the next nine years he sold only nine more lots, while other developers' streets closer to the car line on Massachusetts Avenue filled up quickly.



John G. Palfrey's estate in 1854 and 1873

CHC



Palfrey Estate in 1900

CHC

John Gorham Palfrey died in 1881. Development of the Hazelwood estate began in earnest the next year when his son John, a West Point-educated veteran of the Civil War, inherited the property; coincidentally, a new car line opened on Beacon Street in Somerville, providing easy access to Kendall Square and Boston. Palfrey re-platted the subdivision, eased restrictions, and opened Museum Street on the old railroad grade.

Palfrey sold eighty lots over the next five years [after 1889], so the neighborhood could at last be described as a “fast growing locality” (*Cambridge Tribune*, Sept.

24, 1892). Many of the new houses were substantial two- or four family residences. At 2–4 Gorham Street, for example, Howard F. Peak, a roofing contractor, put up an “old fashioned kind of double house with brick wall between. Each side has ten rooms and a bath and each side has a tower on the corner, an open fireplace in the sitting room, slated roof, electric gas fixtures and the usual modern appliances” (ibid., Apr. 6, 1895).

The house that Maine native George E. Bridges built at 74 Oxford/43 Wendell Street fit this pattern quite precisely. By 1893 Bridges was 41 years old and well-established in his career as roadmaster for the Cambridge Railroad, where he started as a horsecar conductor in 1880. When the Boston Elevated Railway consolidated control of all local street railways in 1894 Bridges was appointed roadmaster of Division Seven, with responsibility for all the car lines passing through Cambridge and surrounding towns. He and his wife Mellie lived at 43 Wendell Street until a year before his death in 1915; they had no children, but usually accommodated a lodger. They rented the other side to a succession of tenants of whom the most prominent were John Maier, a Lutheran minister, and the Misses Pray, formerly of Melrose, who operated a kindergarten in 1912.

George’s widow sold the property in 1916 to Lester Graves, who a year later sold it to North Cambridge florist John McKenzie. McKenzie and his widow, Annie, rented both sides until her death in 1952. The next owner, Bernard J. Flannery, a Cambridge High School administrator who never married, lived in one apartment at 43 Wendell and rented out the rest of the building. Flannery’s heirs controlled the property from his death in 1970 at least until 2010, when they converted their ownership into the real estate trust that sold to the Oxford Development Partners LLC in 2016. The current owner, 74 Oxford Street, LLC, purchased the property on April 19, 2018.

For about ten years 74 Oxford was occupied by Rebecca Keyes, a widow who rented rooms to students and others; as the Depression took hold she expanded into real estate and insurance but apparently soon went under. The proximity of the property to Harvard University attracted many students; during a fire in 1933 the fourteen residents who were evacuated included six students at the Law School. The tenants included four women, five men, and three married couples. By this time the Cambridge Assessors listed the property as having ten rooms for rent on the 74 Oxford side and two apartments on the Wendell side. About three dozen wedding announcements in the 1930s and ’40s mentioned these addresses. The rooming house operation apparently changed little over the years; the 1968 directory listed five tenants at 74 and four, along with owner Bernard Flannery, at 43. The assessors records listed ten units.

R. E. KEYES
74 OXFORD STREET
Real Estate — Insurance — Mortgages
Property Managed
 Telephones: UNIV. 1935-1936
Apartments To Rent

Eight-Room Heated Apartment in two-family house; continuous hot water, janitor service, spacious grounds; \$180 per month. To be all newly renovated; tenant can pick and own indep.

Very Attractive, Sunny, Six-Room Heated Apartment on first floor; separate front door with porch; near two car lines; reasonable.

IV. Relationship to the Criteria

A. Criteria for Landmark Designation

The enabling ordinance for landmark designation states:

The Historical Commission by majority vote may recommend for designation as a landmark any property within the City being or containing a place, structure, feature or object which it determines to be either (1) importantly associated with one or more historic persons or events, or with the broad architectural, aesthetic, cultural, political, economic or social history of the City or the Commonwealth or (2) historically or architecturally significant (in terms of its period, style, method of construction or association with a famous architect or builder) either by itself or in the context of a group of structures . . . (City Code, Article III, Chapter 2.78.180.A)

B. Relationship of Property to Criteria

The George E. Bridges house is an architecturally significant and highly visible structure on the former Palfrey estate. This part of Cambridge is distinctive for the consistency of its residential architecture, as it was almost entirely built up in less than a decade. The neighborhood has seen few demolitions in the past several decades, and with the exception of some recent infill remains substantially intact as it was developed in the late 19th century.

The Bridges house meets criterion (1) for its associations with the social, economic, and architectural development of the Palfrey estate and the Agassiz neighborhood, and criterion (2) as architecturally significant in terms of its period and style and for its associations with the architect Alberto Haynes.

V. Recommendations

A. Article III, Chapter 2.78.140

The purpose of landmark designation is contained in the enabling ordinance, which is to:

preserve, conserve and protect the beauty and heritage of the City and to improve the quality of its environment through identification, conservation and maintenance of . . . sites and structures which constitute or reflect distinctive features of the architectural, cultural, political, economic or social history of the City; to resist and restrain environmental influences adverse to this purpose; [and] to foster appropriate use and wider public knowledge and appreciation of such . . . structures . . .

B. Preservation Options

Landmark designation or donation of a preservation easement are the only two options for the permanent long-term protection and preservation of the Bridges house. A preservation restriction would require considerable time to draft and execute. Further delay would lessen the likelihood of long-term preservation of this building. Landmark designation would be more expedient.

C. Staff Recommendation

The staff recommends that the Commission find that the Bridges house is eligible for landmark designation as defined in the ordinance for the reasons stated above and recommend to the City Council that the property should be a protected landmark under Article III, Chapter 2.78. The staff recommends incorporation of a set of development plans into the landmark order that meet the Commission's requirements for a Certificate of Appropriateness.

If implemented by the City Council, landmark designation would allow the Commission to review and approve future requests for publicly-visible exterior alterations with the goal of protecting the historic and architectural integrity of the building and its setting. Landmark designation would not regulate use or alterations to interior features.

VI. Standards and Criteria

Under Article III, the Historical Commission is charged with reviewing any construction, demolition or alteration that affects the exterior architectural features (other than color) of a designated landmark. This section of the report describes exterior architectural features that contribute to the style, significance and architectural integrity of the building. Except as the order designating or amending the landmark may otherwise provide, the exterior architectural features described in this report should be preserved and/or enhanced in any proposed alteration or construction that affects those features of the landmark. The standards following in paragraphs A and B of this section provide guidelines for the treatment of the landmark described in this report.

A. General Standards and Criteria

Subject to review and approval of exterior architectural features under the terms of this report, the following standards shall apply:

1. Significant historic and architectural features of the landmark should be preserved.
2. Changes and additions to the landmark which have taken place over time are evidence of the history of the property and the neighborhood. These changes may have acquired significance in their own right and, if so, that significance should be recognized and respected.
3. Deteriorated architectural features should be repaired rather than replaced when possible.
4. When replacement of architectural features is necessary, it should be based on physical or documentary evidence.
5. New materials should, whenever possible, match the material being replaced in physical properties, design, color, texture, and appearance. The use of imitation replacement materials is generally discouraged.
6. The surface cleaning of a landmark should be done by the gentlest possible means. Sandblasting and other cleaning methods that damage exterior architectural features shall not be used.

7. Additions should not destroy significant exterior architectural features and should not be incongruous to the historic aspects, architectural significance, or distinct character of the landmark, neighborhood, and environment.
8. Additions should be designed in a way that, if they were to be removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the landmark would be unimpaired.

B. Suggested Review Guidelines

1. Site Development.

Further additions to the Bridges house, if allowed, should respect the form, massing and materials of the original. Future alterations to publicly visible landscape structures, including walls, fences, paths, driveways, and the like, should be compatible with the original design and materials.

2. Alterations

a. Exterior surfaces

All original wood trim and cladding have been removed from the building. Exterior features should be restored based on photographic documentation or precedent determined at the 25-27 Walker Street house by the same architect. Care should be taken when cleaning or repointing the brick chimney and foundation walls to use gentle cleaning methods and appropriate mortar mix and pointing profiles.

b. Fenestration

Introduction of new window openings on the visible facades should be limited and consistent with the original fenestration pattern, size, and sash configuration. Existing replacement sashes should be restored and replaced. New window sash should conform to the original design of the wood sash (primarily 2-over-1 pattern of lights) as closely as possible. Storm windows may be installed or upgraded without review in conformance with current Commission guidelines.

c. Interior features

Although interior features are not subject to the jurisdiction of the Cambridge Historical Commission, the owner is encouraged to preserve examples of remaining original trim, fireplace mantles, paneling, and doors.

d. Secondary Structures

Fencing between the front wall planes of the house and street should be low, to preserve views of the facades. Paving and other landscape features should be traditional in design and material.

VII. Proposed Order

That the George E. Bridges house, 74 Oxford Street / 43 Wendell Street, be designated as a protected landmark pursuant to Chapter 2.78, Article III, Section 2.78.180 of the Code of the City of Cambridge, as recommended by vote of the Cambridge Historical Commission on _____, __, 2019. The premises so designated is the land defined as parcel 125 on assessor's map 150 and the structures thereon and the premises described in a deed recorded in Book 70894, Page 12 at the South Middlesex Registry of Deeds.

This designation is justified by the Historical Commission's findings of architectural and historical significance of the property as described in its designation study report and consistent with the landmark criteria provided in Chapter 2.78, Article III, of the Cambridge Municipal Code.

The effect of this designation shall be that review by the Cambridge Historical Commission and the issuance of a Certificate of Appropriateness, Hardship or Non-Applicability shall be required before any construction activity can take place within the designated premises or any action can be taken affecting the appearance of the premises, that would in either case be visible from a public way. In making determinations, the Commission shall be guided by the terms of the Final Landmark Designation Report, dated _____, 2019 with respect to the designated premises, by Section VI, Standards and Criteria of said report, and by the applicable sections of Chapter 2.78, Article III, of the Cambridge Municipal Code.