



CAMBRIDGE HISTORICAL COMMISSION

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November 1, 2019

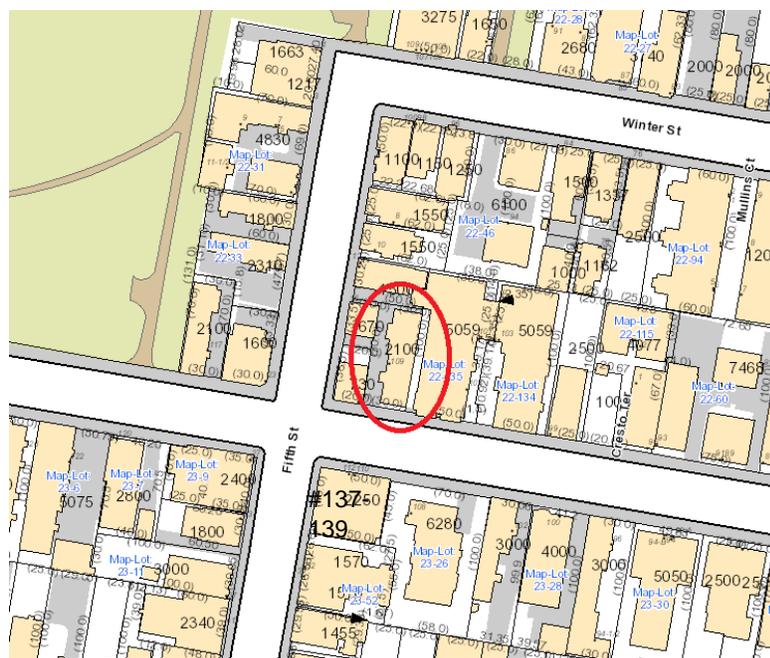
To: Members of the Historical Commission
From: Eric Hill, Survey Director
Re: Case L-132 / D-1529: Francis Tufts House, 109 Gore Street (1845)

An application to demolish the building at 109 Gore Street was received on May 14, 2019. The applicant, Patrick Stern, was notified of an initial determination of significance and a public hearing was scheduled for June 6, 2019.

On June 6, 2019, the Cambridge Historical Commission found the Francis Tufts House at 109 Gore Street to be significant and preferably preserved. The Commission's practice is to hold a hearing in the fifth month of the delay period to evaluate the potential of a property for landmark designation. This hearing marks the fifth month of the delay, which will expire on November 14, 2019.

Site

The Francis Tufts house is located on the north side of Gore Street, between Fifth and Sciarappa (originally Fourth) streets.



109 Gore Street

Cambridge Assessor's map, May 2019.

The two-family house is sited on a 2,100 square foot lot in a Residential C-1 zoning district. This is a multi-family residential district, which permits a FAR of .75 and has a height limit of 35 feet. The assessed value of the land and building, according to the online assessor's property database, is \$907,700 (Map 22, Parcel 66). The lot is 30'-0" wide and 70'-0" deep.

The neighboring properties on Gore and Fifth streets are a variety in age, style and form. The adjacent property to the east, the three-story brick building at 105-107 Gore Street (Hotel Richardson), was constructed in 1889 and is an example of a Victorian Gothic apartment/tenement house built for workers in East Cambridge. To the west, the properties at 111 Gore Street and 16 Fifth Street are two-story dwellings with flat roofs constructed in 1868. Across Gore Street, a two-story Post-War former social hall (108 Gore St., 1949) and a three-story brick double-house (110-112 Gore St., 1873) showcase the series of development and change in East Cambridge.



Staff photo of 109 Gore Street with 105-107 Gore Street (right) and 111 Gore Street (left). Photo taken 05/2019.

Architectural Description

The 1845 Francis Tufts house is a two-story center-hall house with a steeply-pitched gable roof, oriented gable end to the street. The street-facing elevation is two bays wide and the front façade (which faces west) is five bays wide with a center entrance. A later ell extends toward the rear which nearly doubles the size of the home. According to the Cambridge property database, the older gabled home is approximately 17'-0" wide and 34'-0" deep with the ell measuring at 17'-0" wide and 32'-0" deep. Both the main home and the ell have distinct entrances and appear to be used as separate units.

The Tufts house is a typical example of a Late-Georgian/Greek Revival worker's cottage in East Cambridge. This house type can still be found today, with many of the examples located on Gore and Winter Streets, north of Cambridge Street. The detailing is minimal, as with most worker's cottages, with the only exterior trim located at the windows, corners, and cornice.

In 1879, the City Engineer recorded the property with measurements almost exactly matching the existing conditions. From this date, we can verify that the rear ell was built prior to 1879.

The home is clad with stained wood shingles and sits atop a raised foundation. The only permit found for the property is from 1938 for the shingling of the house. All visible windows appear to be vinyl replacements, mostly with a 1+1 configuration. The entrance exists as an enclosed porch with a single storm door facing the street. The enclosure has a pent roof with a bracketed cornice below, which may have been added when the rear ell was constructed. On the west side, a single dormer penetrates the eave of the home.

The rear ell is taller than the main gabled structure and is rectangular in form with a flat roof. The overhanging eaves and paired brackets show a refined version of Italianate architecture. The main house and rear ell are visible from Gore and Fifth streets. A driveway on the west side of the lot is accessed from Gore Street. A chain-link fence runs the frontage on Gore Street and encloses the driveway and a small garden in the front-yard setback.



109 Gore Street in 1970 (top) and 1984 (bottom).

The proposed project calls for a complete demolition of the 1845 house, later ell and foundation. The replacement structure calls for a two-story, two-family structure with a side driveway. Since the June 6, 2019 public hearing, the applicants have not made any modifications to the proposed project but have signed a year's lease to rent it out. The house is currently occupied.



109 Gore Street, down driveway to rear ell (left) and view of property between 111 Gore Street and 16 Fifth Street (right).

History

East Cambridge originated as a speculative real estate development at the beginning of the 19th century. A grid of streets was laid out on the salt-marsh island known as Lechmere's Point, and residential construction began near the top of the hill along Otis and Thorndike Streets. Early industry developed along the Miller's River north of East Cambridge, and the marshes south and west of the neighborhood remained undeveloped until after the Civil War.

Much of the development of East Cambridge was undertaken by corporations and trusts, rather than individuals. Andrew Craigie, the speculator who conceived of East Cambridge and who secretly purchased much of the Lechmere estate, soon organized the Lechmere Point Corporation as a means of attracting other investors. The expense of filling large tracts of marsh land and building streets and utilities was beyond the resources of most individuals, and companies such as the Canal Bridge Corporation and the Cambridge Wharf Company undertook these projects with varying success in the first half of the 19th century.

The lot at 109 Gore Street was deeded to Atherton Stevens, an East Cambridge grocer who constructed worker's cottages on Winter and Gore Streets for rent or sale to artisans. Within a year of the home being constructed, the home was sold to Francis Tufts, a painter who then appeared to rent the home

shortly after. There is no known connection between Francis Tufts and Peter Tufts Jr., a surveyor who laid out East Cambridge.

According to the 1873 Hopkins Atlas, the property was owned by Mary McLanney, who does not appear as a resident in Cambridge Directories. By 1886, the property shows up on the Hopkins Atlas with Lauren F. Langley, a clerk, listed as the owner. By 1903, the owner is listed as an M. Mahoney who remains the owner until the 1930 Bromley atlas where a C.H. Silva is noted to be the owner. Throughout the history of the home, directories show renters listed as laborers, upholsterers, grocers and more living in either of the two units. Given the high turn-over rate for listings in the City Directories, it could be assumed that the two-family home was often rented out throughout its history.

Landmark Criteria and Goals

Landmarks are enacted by the City Council upon recommendation of the Historical Commission. The Commission commences a landmark designation study process by its own initiative or by voting to accept a petition of ten registered voters.

The criteria provided in the ordinance outlines eligible properties as:

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 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... (2.78.180.A)

The purpose of landmark designation is described in the ordinance, which was enacted 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 neighborhoods, 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; to foster appropriate use and wider public knowledge and appreciation of such neighborhoods, areas, or structures; and by furthering these purposes to promote the public welfare by making the city a more desirable place in which to live and work. (2.78.140)

Relationship to Criteria

Staff does not consider that the Francis Tufts House (109 Gore Street) meets criterion (1) for important associations “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.” The property could be considered to meet criterion (2) as architecturally significant in terms of its period and style within the context of the traditional Greek Revival gable-front workers cottages primarily located along Gore

and Winter Streets; though much of that historic context is gone immediately surrounding 109 Gore Street.

Staff Recommendations

The Francis Tufts House is a modest example of a Greek Revival workers cottage in East Cambridge. Its primary significance derives from its context as a remaining 1840s gable-front cottage in the Gore-Winter Street section of East Cambridge.

While the Francis Tufts House was found to be significant for the purposes of the demolition delay ordinance, it does not rise to the level of individual significance warranting designation as a Cambridge landmark. We recommend that the Commission take no action to initiate a designation study.

cc: Patrick Stern