



CAMBRIDGE HISTORICAL COMMISSION

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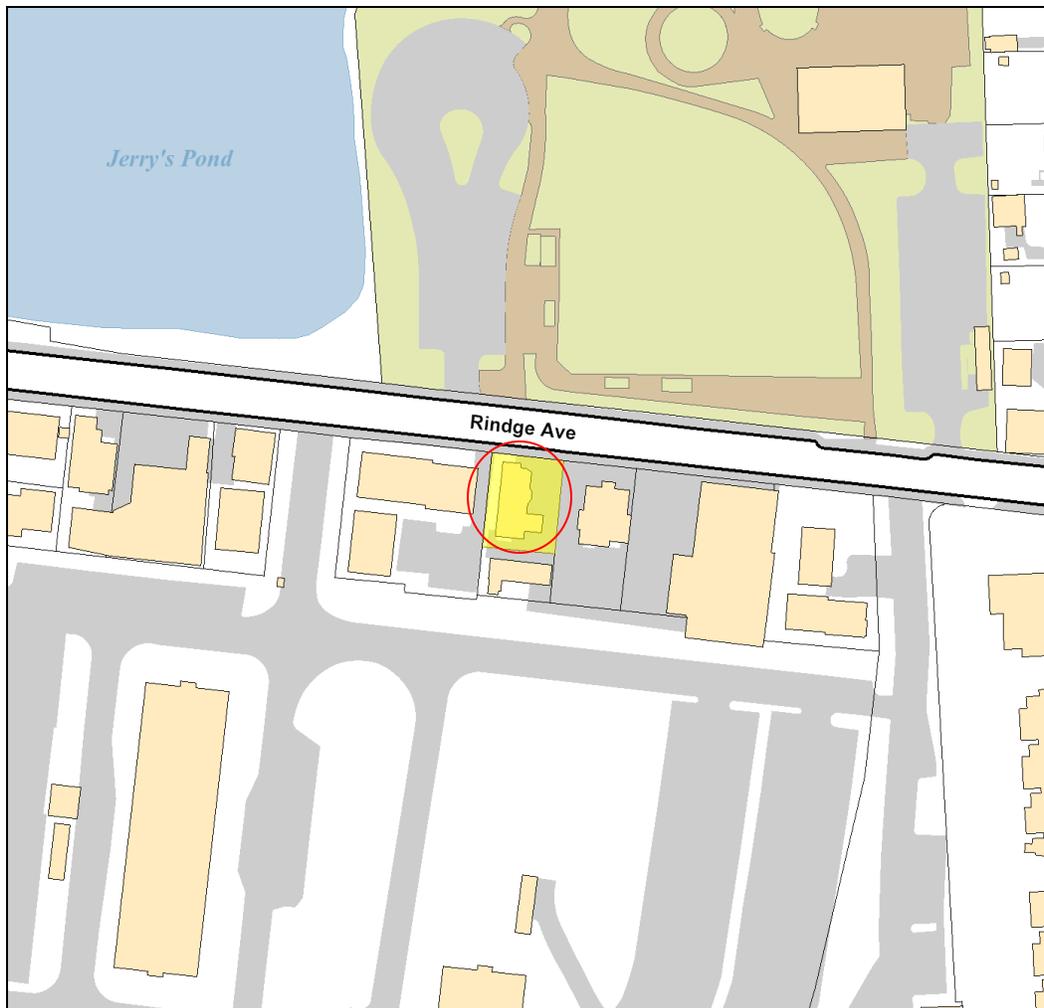
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Date: August 23, 2017
To: Members of the Historical Commission
From: Sarah L. Burks, Preservation Planner
Re: D-1466: 350 Rindge Avenue, Danehy House (by 1913)

An application for demolition of the house at 350 Rindge Avenue was received on August 15, 2017. The owner, Joseph A. Ferro, Trustee of the 340 & 350-350R Rindge Realty Trust, was notified of an initial determination of significance, and a public hearing was scheduled for September 7, 2017.



350 Rindge Ave (highlighted in yellow).

Cambridge GIS, August 2017

Site

The structure is located on the south side of Rindge Avenue, opposite the Comeau baseball diamond. It is a frame house on a brick foundation. The 2017 assessed value for the land and building is \$584,600. The structure is sited on a 3,325 square-foot lot in a C-1A Mixed Use Residential Overlay zoning district. The overlay district modifies the base residential district regulations in areas with substantial non-residential uses to encourage residential conversion and retail and consumer services to support residential uses. The C-1 base district permits an FAR of 1.25 and has a height limit of 45 feet. The same owner also owns two other houses (#344 and #350R) and the Ferro's Foodtown grocery store and laundromat (#336). The three other buildings have been determined to be not significant by the Executive Director and are not the subject of the Commission's September 7 hearing.

The proposal is for a single 4-story replacement building with commercial space on the ground floor and residential above. The proposed site plan shows a 19-space parking lot on the east side of the new building. The parking would service both the commercial spaces and the residential units.

Architectural Description

The house at 350 Rindge Avenue is a 2 1/2-story, front-gabled duplex on a brick foundation, with a two story ell. Two-story, three-sided bay windows project on the front and east sides. A two-story porch on the front façade overlook the city park across the street. The house was covered with white aluminum siding in 1962 and does not exhibit many stylistic design features at this time. The addition to the ell on the east side was constructed in 1952. The windows were replaced in 1985.

Current Condition

The current condition of the structure is fair, and it is currently occupied.



History

The 1842 extension of the Charlestown Branch Railroad from Miller's River to Fresh and Spy Ponds opened up North Cambridge for the brick industry and for suburban development. Several subdivisions were platted by the owners of the brickyards and other land speculators for the mostly-Irish worker population.

The lot at 350 Rindge Avenue was first subdivided for Irish brickyard workers by Horace Hews in 1849. Hews divided up a strip of land along Rindge Avenue (then called Kidder's Lane and later Spruce Street), which he had purchased from Nathaniel J. Wyeth, into seven lots. He then contracted Erastus Hutchinson to build several workers cottages on the lots between 1851-56.

A house was constructed on this lot in 1856 and occupied by the James and Mary Trant family. James was an Irish laborer who likely worked in the nearby brick yards. A portion of the 1856 house was moved to the rear of the lot (now 350R) in 1913. An 18' x 22' addition was built onto the remainder of the house at the front of the lot, resulting in the house we see today at 350 Rindge. From what I can determine from city House Books and building permits, the front half of this house with the front and side bays is the portion that was built in 1913. The owner at this time was Ellen M. Trant Danehy. She lived at 344 Rindge Avenue with her husband Daniel P. Danehy. Daniel Danehy was an undertaker and funeral director well known in North Cambridge at the time. After his death in 1904, his wife and oldest son took over the funeral business.



The large clay pits behind Hews' subdivision, where the Rindge apartment towers are now located, were successfully owned by the following brickmakers: Wyeth (1844-1849), Hubbell (1849-1863), Bay State Brick (1864-1900), and New England Brick (1900-1950). The brickyards closed in 1951 and like most of the other clay pits the pit south of Rindge Avenue was filled and used as a site for a large public housing project. The mammoth twenty-two story Rindge Towers were built in 1968 and 1970.

After the Irish population had moved away from the area and began working in other occupations, a large population of French-Canadians moved in and began to work the brickyards. Among the French Canadian residents was the LaCroix family of 350 Rindge Avenue. George LaCroix operated a broom factory at this address out of a two story workshop at the back of the house. His son, George, continued and expanded the business. George partnered with Eugene Ehlert and opened The Bay State Broom Company on Pemberton Street.

Significance and Recommendation

The house at 350 Rindge Avenue is significant for its relationship to the Hews subdivision, Rindge Avenue brickyards and Irish and French immigrant populations, demonstrating the house's associations with the broad cultural, economic and social history of Cambridge. It is the staff recommendation that the structure be found significant for these reasons.

The house is in fair condition and could be rehabilitated. Staff encouraged the applicant to study incorporating some or all of it into the development proposal for the larger site because of its contribution to the streetscape as far as its scale, massing, and orientation in relation to the neighboring buildings at 354 Rindge Avenue. The Commission should hear the applicant's presentation and public testimony before making any further determination.

cc: Ranjit Singanayagam, Inspectional Services Commissioner
Joseph A. Ferro, owner
Laura Cella-Mowatt, Davis Square Architects