



CAMBRIDGE HISTORICAL COMMISSION

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Florrie Darwin, Scott Kyle, Michael Rogove, Alternates

June 15, 2026

To: Members of the Historical Commission

From: Eric Hill, Survey Director

Re: Case D-1827: A. F. Hamblet House (1847), 146 Spring Street, by Wei Zhang.

A demolition permit application to partially demolish two detached structures on the property at 146 and 146A Spring Street in East Cambridge was received on April 6, 2026. The owner was notified of an initial determination of significance for the older building closest to the street at 146 Spring Street and a public hearing was scheduled before the Cambridge Historical Commission for June 18, 2026. The Executive Director of the Cambridge Historical Commission did not find the building at 146A Spring Street significant for the purposes of the Demolition Review Ordinance; therefore it is not discussed in this report.



146 (front) & 146A (rear) Spring Street

CHC, June 2026

Site:

The site is located on the south side of Spring Street between Fifth and Sixth streets in East Cambridge. The 146 Spring Street lot had 3,800 square feet of land with two buildings; 146 Spring Street at the front of the lot, with 146A Spring Street built at the rear of the lot, with remaining open space paved with asphalt.

The property is located within a C-1 residential zoning district, which allows single- to multi-family dwellings with a four-story, 45-foot height limit for residential uses. The minimum front yard setback for C-1 zone is 10'0", and the minimum side and rear yard setbacks are 5'0".¹



146 Spring Street

Cambridge GIS

Description:

The A. F. Hamblet House at 146 Spring Street is a two-story Greek Revival single-family residence with telescoping two- and one-story ells off the rear. The house has a side-hall form with three bays on the façade with a gable roof oriented towards Spring Street. The westernmost bay contains the primary entrance, which is recessed and surrounded by simple pilasters and entablature as vernacular versions of the Greek Revival style.

¹ Chapter 5.40 in Cambridge Zoning Ordinance: A dwelling need not be set back from the street line or building line where such may have been established on the lot, more than the average of the setbacks of the buildings, other than accessory buildings, on the lots adjacent thereto on either side.

The property is covered with vinyl siding which likely covers the earlier asphalt siding that was installed in the 1950s. The residence likely originally included corner boards or pilasters which would be set underneath the remaining exposed entablature, and boxed gable ends on the façade. The wooden entablature runs both side elevations. All windows are vinyl replacements with single-pane sashes with all window trim covered except the wooden windowsills. The east side yard is enclosed by a chain-link fence and is largely paved as an asphalt driveway with curb-cut at the street. The rear house at 146A Spring Street is located at the extreme rear of the lot and appears to be within the side and rear setbacks.



146 Spring Street entry and entablature, June 2026



CHC



146A Spring Street behind 146 Spring Street (right), June 2026. CHC

History:

East Cambridge originated as a speculative real estate development at the beginning of the 19th century. In 1811 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, and the marshes to the south and west remained undeveloped until after the Civil War. Residential streets close to the factories, like Winter, Gore, and Spring streets filled with workers cottages, while managers and professionals lived on Otis and Thorndike streets closer to the Courthouse.

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, 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.



1824 Map of Cambridgeport Parish, zoomed to show East Cambridge and approximate location of 146 Spring Street. Peter Tufts, Surveyor.

Spring Street was first laid out in 1811 and extended between Second and Sixth streets. Development began closer to the Courthouse and gradually extended westward throughout the 19th century. The property at 146 Spring Street was constructed in 1847 by carpenter James M. Savage. The property was sold to Alvan Franklin Hamblet (1818-1862) who was listed in City Directories in the 1850s as a toll man on the Craigie Bridge and in the 1860 U.S. Census as a teamster. Alvan lived at 146 Spring Street with his wife, Sarah (Osborne) and two of their four children to survive into adolescence. Alvan died of paralysis in 1862 and his widow, Sarah Hamblet resided on Spring Street until selling the property in 1883 to Francis X. Fitzpatrick.



146 Spring Street in 1873 (left) and 1894 (right)

Francis Fitzpatrick (1845-1921) owned a considerable amount of real estate in East Cambridge and also worked as an insurance agent. He purchased 146 Spring Street and within a year, developed the site further when he constructed the double-house at the rear of the lot. Francis rented the properties to tenants and lived on the other side of town at 1810 Massachusetts Avenue. Mr. Fitzpatrick made headlines in 1907 when he was indicted for violating the Interstate Commerce Act and Anti-Lottery laws by smuggling lottery tickets from the Honduras through Mobile, Alabama. When he died in 1921 Fitzpatrick willed all of his property to his son, James, who later sold the Spring Street property to Elizabeth V. and William M. Hogan, an insurance dealer.

146 Spring Street was later sold in 1945 to Virginia O'Connell, the widow of John D. O'Connell, who covered the house with asphalt siding in 1955. The house was again re-sided with vinyl by the 1990s and at that time, the windows were also replaced with vinyl windows.



146 Spring Street in 1980.

CHC

Significance and Recommendation:

The A. F. Hamblet House at 146 Spring Street is significant as an early (1847) extant Greek Revival residence in East Cambridge that contributes to the Spring Street streetscape of mid-19th century wood-frame dwellings.



*146A Spring Street, 1884 (left); 146 Spring Street, 1847 (center left);
148 Spring Street, 1849 (center right); and 150-152 Spring Street, 1844 (right).*

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 applicant intends to partially demolish the existing structure by removing the roof and adding two additional stories, with the intention of converting it to a four-story multi-family residential building. The proposal also includes a similar treatment of the rear building at 146A Spring Street, which was deemed not significant by the Cambridge Historical Commission Executive Director and is thus not included in this report.



Existing elevation and applicant proposal for 146 Spring Street, North (Spring Street) Elevation.

Staff considers that a more appropriate architect treatment can be seen nearby at 129 Spring Street, shown below.



129 Spring Street

CHC staff, 2026

Staff recommends that the Commission hear testimony from the public and review the plans for the site before making a further determination.

cc: Peter McLaughlin, Cambridge Inspectional Services Department Commissioner
Wei Zhang & Guan Chunhua, Owners