

**PRELIMINARY
LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT**

**Jones and Hall Houses
66 and 68 Otis Street, East Cambridge, Mass.**



As originally built in 1846-47 by William Hall and Andrew Jones, this T-shaped house was the most elaborate double Greek Revival house in East Cambridge, combining unusual ornament and stock Greek Revival elements. The original ornament lasted for a century but the facade was unfortunately stripped of much of its original decoration in the 1940s and covered with asbestos shingles; the recessed entries, pediments and entablatures survived. The sided exterior remained relatively untouched until 2015 when the property was purchased by Mass Arc 1, LLC, a real estate development investment company, with plans for a full gut renovation.

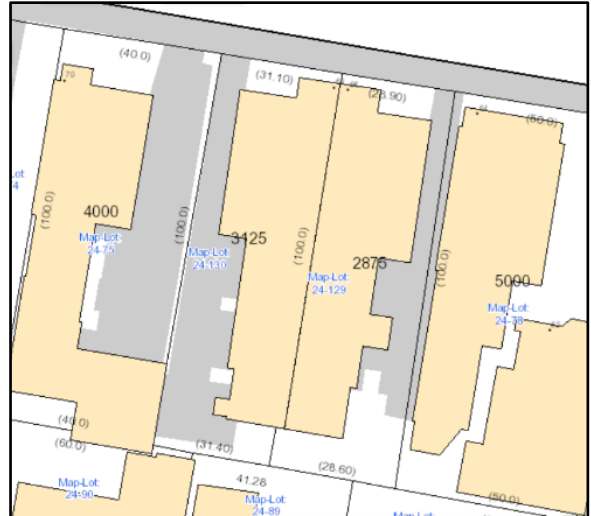
After the renovation was underway, a group of Cambridge voters petitioned the Historical Commission to study the building for landmark designation. Designation of the property by the City Council as a Cambridge Landmark could protect the remaining original features of the building's exterior and guide future owners in appropriate alterations and the potential for restoration of missing details.

Susan Maycock and Sarah Burks
Cambridge Historical Commission
June 30, 2017

Location and Status

A. Address and Zoning

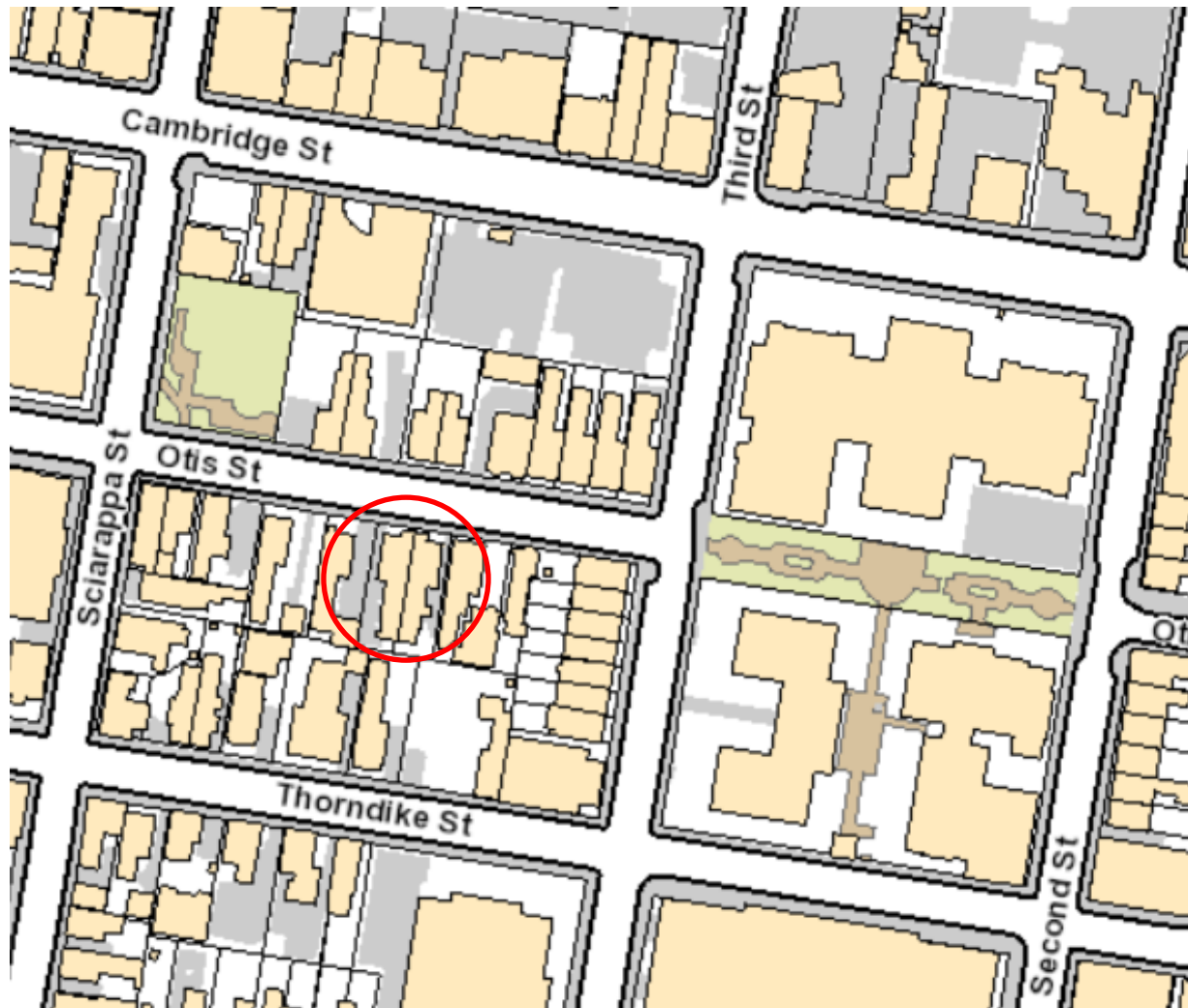
The Jones-Hall houses at 66-68 Otis Street occupy two lots (24-129 and 24-130) totaling 6,000 square feet on the south side of Otis between Third and Sciarappa streets. The zoning is Residence C-1, a multi-family district with a height limit of 35' and a requirement of 1,500 square feet of lot area per dwelling unit. The current building is non-conforming due to limited setbacks. The combined assessed value in 2017 was \$2.16 million, of which \$1.34 million was attributed to the building. Both were originally single-family houses but are now assessed as two-families. The Jones-Hall houses comprise a contributing building in the East Cambridge National Register District.



South side of Otis Street. 66-68 are second from left.

B. Ownership and Occupancy

In October of 2015, Mass Arc 1, LLC purchased both 66 and 68 Otis Street. The deeds are recorded in the Middlesex South Registry of deeds in Book 66187, Pages 301 and 434. Each side of the house has been converted to two units for a total of four. The two units in 66 are not yet occupied but are being marketed for sale for \$1,675,000 and \$1,475,000. The sale of unit 1 is currently pending. The two units at 68 are not yet finished. Exterior painting, trim and doors remain unfinished at this time.



Environs of 66-68 Otis Street

Cambridge GIS

C. Area Description

The Jones-Hall houses were built in 1846 on the upward slope of Otis Street near the highest point of the upland that became the heart of East Cambridge. Because this block was considered valuable and held off the market when the area was first platted in 1811, the earliest houses date from the 1830s and 1840s; the latest was built in 1871. The city's first Catholic church the gran-

ite Gothic Revival St. John's Church designed by Richard Bond, was built in 1842 on the westernmost lot of the block on the corner of Fourth (Sciarappa) Street. It was demolished in 1934 and the site is now a playground.

Of the freestanding houses on the block, 6 are wooden Greek Revival houses, 3 singles and 3 doubles; the latest and by far the most elaborate are the Jones-Hall houses built in 1846. The single Greek Revivals are located at 64 (1830s), 70 (1845), and 74 (1840) Otis on either side of the Jones-Hall houses and were typical sidehall plan houses set gable end to the street with fully articulated Greek pediments. According to Sanborn maps, each originally had a columned porch across the front, but only 74 has retained its porch, although now with Queen Anne turned posts instead of the original classical columns. Number 70 was inappropriately altered in 1969 and has recently been remodeled in a contemporary style. The two Greek Revival double houses across the street at 73-75 and 67-69 Otis are among the oldest buildings on the block. Built by local carpenter Abiel Goss in 1839, 67-69 is a particularly fine example of a double Greek Revival house with paired doorways with sidelights, a full entablature, and a one-story porch facing the street; it was restored in 1985-86.

Later houses on the block were primarily constructed of brick, including the elegant Greek Revival row at 55-61 Otis that William Hall built in 1851; the three-story double house at 80-82 Otis with handsome oriel windows and incised brownstone trim; and the substantial Mansard double house at 63-67 Otis built in 1871 for Daniel Sortwell, a prosperous distiller and East Cambridge bank president.

D. Context of this Designation Report

The Jones-Hall houses were identified during the Commission's 1960s survey of East Cambridge as having exceptional significance both individually and as a contributing building in the surrounding neighborhood. The East Cambridge National Register District, which is bounded by Cambridge and Spring streets from First to Fifth street, was listed in 1983 and includes a total of 114 properties.

While the building lost much of its ornamentation when asbestos siding was applied in the 1940s, until recently it retained its original windows and some original sash. The renovation which began in 2016, began with removal of the siding back to the sheathing, removal of the original windows and sash, a reorganization of the façade, and removal of original cast iron ventilators that had been covered by the siding. Only the pediments, entablatures, and paired entries in the frontispiece retained their historic integrity.

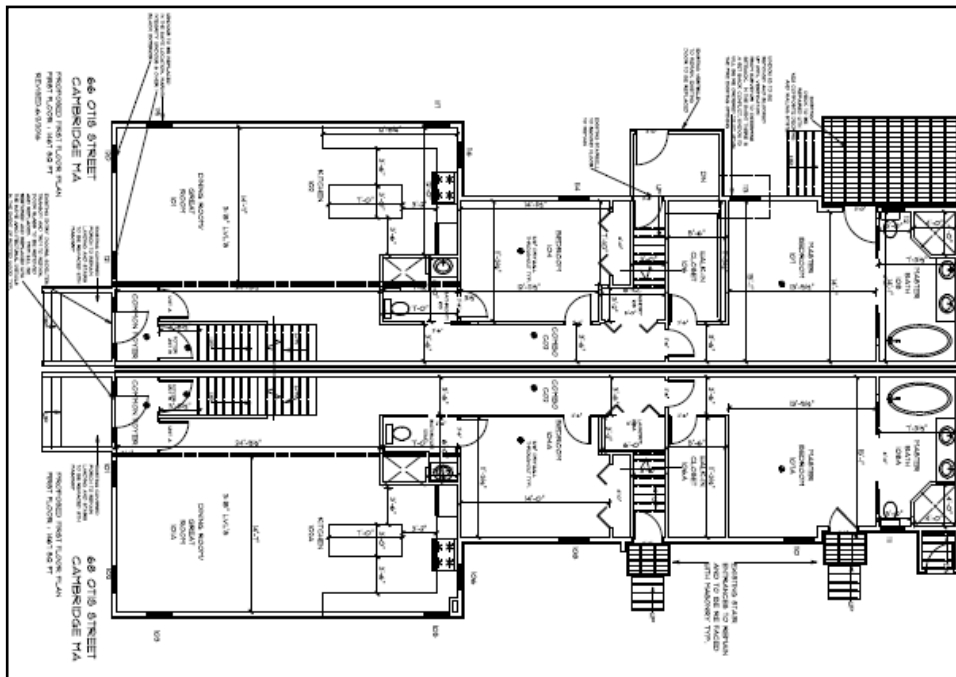
A citizen petition requesting that the Historical Commission initiate a landmark petition was accepted on June 4, 2016 and confirmed by a second vote of the Commission at a public hearing on the matter on July 7, 2016. A Stop Work order was issued by the Inspectional Services Department to assess compliance of the project with zoning regulations.

Once the stop-work order was in place the developer agreed to preserve the decorative sidelights and transom, paneling, and all other details of both entrances, and to not install windows in the frieze on the third floor. The two new entries on each side would be placed behind the existing

front doors, rather than replacing them. The two existing doors themselves, which are not historic, would be replaced with new doors in an appropriate pattern, and the vinyl floors in the entries would be replaced with bluestone. Also, the developer agreed to delete two proposed basement windows in the front foundation and submit a landscape plan for Commission approval.



During construction, 2016



Revised plans showing recessed entries to be restored

ISD approved the revised plans and lifted the stop-work order. Because the developer agreed to restore the remaining original features of the exterior and abandoned plans for any further exterior changes staff did not require him to file an application for a Certificate of Appropriateness to resume work. Construction details of a foundation cap, vents, and utilities were approved by staff.

The landmark study process protects a property under study for up to one year. That study period has expired and the Commission must now decide whether to forward the matter to the City Council with a recommendation for formal designation.



Recessed entries at 66 (left) and 68 (right) June 2017. The trim and etched glass, where existing, has been preserved in place, but a replacement door has not yet been installed at 66. Finish carpentry and paint are incomplete.

I. Description

The Jones-Hall houses comprise a six-bay, gable-roofed 2½-story Greek Revival-style double house with a cross gable containing recessed paired entrances. Until the recent renovation it retained its original windows and some of the original 6-over-6 and 6-over-9 wood sash. The ongoing renovation has resulted in a loss of the chimneys, ventilators and old windows and a change to the location, number and proportion of window openings.

The Jones-Hall houses were described in the Cambridge Historical Commission's 1988 publication, *East Cambridge*:

The best example of the exterior use of [ornament] in East Cambridge is 66-68 Otis Street, which has elaborate moulded consoles on the entrance porch and windows. As originally built in 1846-47 by William Hall, a lumber dealer, and Andrew Jones, a mason, this T-shaped house was the most elaborate double Greek Revival house in East Cambridge, combining both unusual ornament and stock Greek Revival elements. Ornamentation was concentrated on the projecting entrance bay, which has monumental two-story corner pilasters with Ionic capitals and is surmounted by a Classical entablature and pediment; the ends of the house display the same treatment with corner pilasters and pediments. The second-story windows on the entrance bay had the most elaborate detail, with pedimented caps supported by consoles and decorated rectangular panels above, while the second-floor windows on the main part of the house had simpler pediments. The long first-floor windows had projecting mouldings supported by similar decorative consoles. This moulded material lasted for a century, proving that it was durable, but the facade of the house was unfortunately stripped of much of its original decoration in the 1940s and covered with siding; only the recessed entrance, with paneled pilasters, decorative consoles, pediments, and entablatures, remains as evidence of the house's former glory. (pp. 105-106)

The photograph below shows the original pilasters, capitals, chimneys, ventilators, and windows.



66-68 Otis Street, 1938

Roger Gilman photo, CHC

II. History and Significance of the Property

In the 17th and 18th centuries, the present neighborhood of East Cambridge was just a small upland surrounded by two rivers and extensive salt marshes that completely isolated it from the rest of Cambridge. Although the first house was constructed there as early as the 1630s when it was known as Graves Neck and most of the land was owned in the 18th century by a wealthy Tory Richard Lechmere and known as Lechmere Point, no development took place, and the area was chiefly valued for its salt hay. All that changed after the Revolution when land speculator Andrew Craigie purchased over 300 acres between 1795 and 1808, completed a bridge in 1809 linking the upland directly to Boston, and organized the Lechmere Point Corporation (LPC) in 1810 to lay out and sell building lots.

The LCP's street plan was accepted in 1811. This contained two adjacent grids connected at the bridgehead and stretched from what is now Second Street to Sixth Street and Charles Street to the Miller's River; a few additional streets were planned to the west and south but these ran through impassible marsh. Blocks on the main north-south grid were uniformly 200' x 400' and were divided into 50' x 100' lots, although the lots along the main thoroughfare of Cambridge Street were only 25' x 100'. Lots were initially sold at auction only to proprietors to resell or develop, but the LPC reserved most of the four blocks abutting the intersection of Otis and Fourth streets because this was the highest land and they thought it would be more valuable after some development had taken place. Their calculation proved correct, as Otis and Thorndike streets later acquired some of the best examples of Greek Revival and Bracketed Italianate houses in East Cambridge.

By the 1820s Amos Binney, a wealthy merchant and U.S. Navy agent living in Boston, was the second largest LPC shareholder and a co-founder of the New England Glass Company; by the 1830s he was one of the largest land holders in East Cambridge where he owned 41 houses, mostly built on speculation. Binney's property included some of the residential lots in the blocks between Third and Fourth streets that LPC had initially reserved, including the lots on which 66-68 Otis now stand. In 1844 Andrew Jones, a mason, and William A. Hall, an East Cambridge lumber dealer, builder, and entrepreneur bought those two lots on the south side of Otis Street from the heirs of Amos Binney who had died in 1833. William Hall and his father Jesse Hall, also a lumber dealer and builder, developed several groups of Greek Revival dwellings in East Cambridge, including 36-46 Second Street in 1842 and 55-61 Otis Street in 1851.

Construction had begun in the 1830s on both sides of Otis between Third and Fourth with Greek Revival houses at 64, 73-75, and 67-69 Otis. In 1840 and 1845, two additional Greek Revivals were built on the south side at 74 and 70 Otis and owned by Andrew Jones; these backed up to several 1844-1845 Greek Revival houses at numbers 69, 71-73, 77, and 79-81 that faced the north side of Thorndike.

In 1847 William Hall and Andrew Jones were first taxed for the houses at 66-68 Otis Street. According to the Cambridge Directory in 1849 Jones lived on Otis Street but Hall lived in his row on South Second, probably in number 46. In 1848 Hall and Jones sold 66 Otis to William Fetridge, a Boston merchant. In 1852 Hall and Jones sold 68 Otis to Henry Whitney Jr. who was

chief clerk and book keeper at the New England Glass Company on nearby North Street. Whitney lived in 68 until 1856. The houses changed hands several times in the late 19th century, sometimes separately, sometimes together. In 1919 Michael and Julian Grossi purchased both sides, but lost the building to mortgage foreclosure in 1934. The East Cambridge Savings Bank sold the property to Gennaro Graziano in 1938; the property passed to his wife and children at his death in 1951. An interesting mix of twentieth century residents included Dennis Coughlin, drawtender, James Giuliano, ice dealer, Arthur DiBiase, bellhop, and Alexander Roulusonis, truck driver.

IV. Relationship to 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 Jones-Hall houses are historically significant under Criterion 1 as part of the second phase of development of the Lechmere Point Corporation's planned development of East Cambridge. The block of Otis between Third and Fourth street was reserved by the Corporation for this later period of development because it was considered to have the most desirable lots. The houses in this block were constructed between 1830 and 1860, with the 1846 construction of 66-68 Otis Street right at the middle of that range.

The houses are also architecturally significant under Criterion 2 as an important example of a double Greek Revival house in East Cambridge. The property was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1983 as a contributing building in the East Cambridge National Register District. Though altered and missing much of its original ornamentation, the cross gabled massing and remaining ornament on the entry porches helps it hold a strong architectural presence on this block of Otis Street. Landmark designation would protect the remaining original features of the building's exterior and guide future owners in appropriate alterations and the potential for restoration of missing details.

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 Jones-Hall houses. National Register listing alone cannot protect and preserve the building.

C. Staff Recommendation

The staff recommends that the Commission find that the Jones-Hall houses are eligible for landmark designation as defined in the ordinance for the reasons stated above and should be a protected landmark under Article III, Chapter 2.78.

The building maintains a commanding presence on Otis Street and contributes to the architectural character of the neighborhood. If implemented by the City Council, landmark designation would allow the Commission to review and approve publicly-visible exterior alterations with the goal of protecting the historic integrity of the building and its setting. The 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 are among the characteristics that led to consideration of the property as a landmark. 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. Deteriorated architectural features should be repaired rather than replaced.
3. When replacement of architectural features is necessary, it should be based on documentary evidence. Restoration of missing architectural features should be considered when non-original fabric is proposed for alteration or replacement.
4. New materials should, whenever possible, match the original material in physical properties, design, color, texture, and appearance. The use of imitation replacement materials is generally discouraged.
5. 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.
6. 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.
7. 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.

Additions to the Jones-Hall houses, if allowed, should respect the form, massing and materials of the original without slavishly imitating it.

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

Traditional exterior materials should be preserved insofar as practicable. Special care should be taken to protect and maintain the appearance of wood trim.

b. Fenestration

Introduction of new window openings on the visible facades should be compatible with the original proportions and locations of windows. Existing sash, if replaced in large numbers, should be compatible in pattern with the original windows and not with the 2016 replacements. Storm windows may be installed without review in conformance with current Commission policy.

c. Secondary Structures

Fencing at the front sidewalk should be kept low so that views of the house are not obstructed.

VII. Proposed Order

That the Jones-Hall houses, at 66 and 68 Otis 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 _____, __, 2017. The premises so designated is the land defined as parcels 129 and 130 on assessor's map 24 and the structures thereon and the premises described in deeds recorded in Book 66187, Page 301 and Book 66187, Page 434 at the South Middlesex Registry of Deeds.

This designation is justified by the high level of historical and architectural significance exhibited by the structure which is an important example of its type and the Greek Revival style and a contributing building in the larger East Cambridge National Register District.

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 _____, 2017 with respect to the designated premises, by Section VII, Standards and Criteria of said report, and by the applicable sections of Chapter 2.78, Article III, of the Cambridge Municipal Code.