



CAMBRIDGE HISTORICAL COMMISSION

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November 1, 2018

To: Members of the Historical Commission
From: Charles Sullivan
Re: D-1497: Murphy house, 2 Chetwynd Road (1928)

An application to demolish the structure at 2 Chetwynd Road was received on October 4, 2018. The applicant was notified of an initial determination of significance and a public hearing was scheduled for August 6.

Site

The structure, a 1 ½-story dwelling, is located on the northern corner of Chetwynd Road and Newell Street.



2 Chetwynd Road. Cambridge GIS, Assessor's map, October 2018.

The house is sited on a 4,756 square foot lot in a Residential C-1 district. This is a multi-family residential district, which permits an 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 \$838,400 (Map 205/Parcel 86).



2 Chetwynd Rd. center, with 4 Chetwynd Rd. at right and Newell Street at left. October 2018. CHC photo.

The neighboring properties on Chetwynd Road are all similar 1½-story transitional cottages constructed by the same developer, Porter Realty Trust. Behind 2 Chetwynd, a larger late-Craftman/Dutch Colonial at 25 Newell, also built by the Porter Realty Trust, fronts Newell Street and was built in 1928.

Architectural Description

The building at 2 Chetwynd Road is a 1½-story transitional cottage house with a low-pitched side gable roof, constructed in 1928. A shed dormer containing three windows is centered over the home at the front elevation. A center-right entrance comprises a 12-light front door with a fixed awning above. The property once had a full-width front porch which was later enclosed with ganged 2/2 windows along the entire front elevation. Three fluted columns have been retained and frame the enclosed porch, with one at each end and one centered to the left of the front door. All other windows on the property appear to have 6/1 wood sash, most with aluminum storm windows installed over them. There is a single 8-lite window at the west (corner side) elevation. The original siding was covered in 1964 with aluminum siding. The house sits upon a raised concrete block foundation with a set of three brick steps to the door. A low chain-link perimeter fence follows the lot line along the side elevation along Newell Street where it ends in a chain-link gate. A driveway is located to the north (behind) the house with access off Newell Street.



2 Chetwynd Rd. October 2018.

The new owner proposes to demolish the house and construct two three-story detached homes with a shared driveway between the buildings off Newell Street.

History

The 1842 extension of the Charlestown Branch Railroad from the Miller's River to Fresh Pond opened up North Cambridge for the brick and ice industries and for suburban development. The area that is now traversed by upper Raymond Street was rich in clay deposits; most of the north slope of Avon Hill between Raymond and Sherman Streets, including today's Raymond Street Park, was originally mined by local brick makers, like the New England Brick Company, and by A. H. Hews & Co., which made clay flower pots.

Throughout the years, many brick manufacturers were created, disbanded and consolidated in Northwest Cambridge and by the First World War, much of the industry was located around the clay land along Sherman Street. From the late 1840s through the early 1900s, many colonial farms of Northwest Cambridge were partitioned for residential subdivisions. Since most farms in Northwest Cambridge were about ten acres or less, the subdivisions were smaller than in other parts of the city. At the time, maximum use of land was key in arrangement of streets and lots and the straight edge was the principal tool, with an emphasis on identical lots. Typically, lot size was the driving factor in type and cost of the home built upon it, with smaller lots catering to workers and larger lots for more affluent buyers.

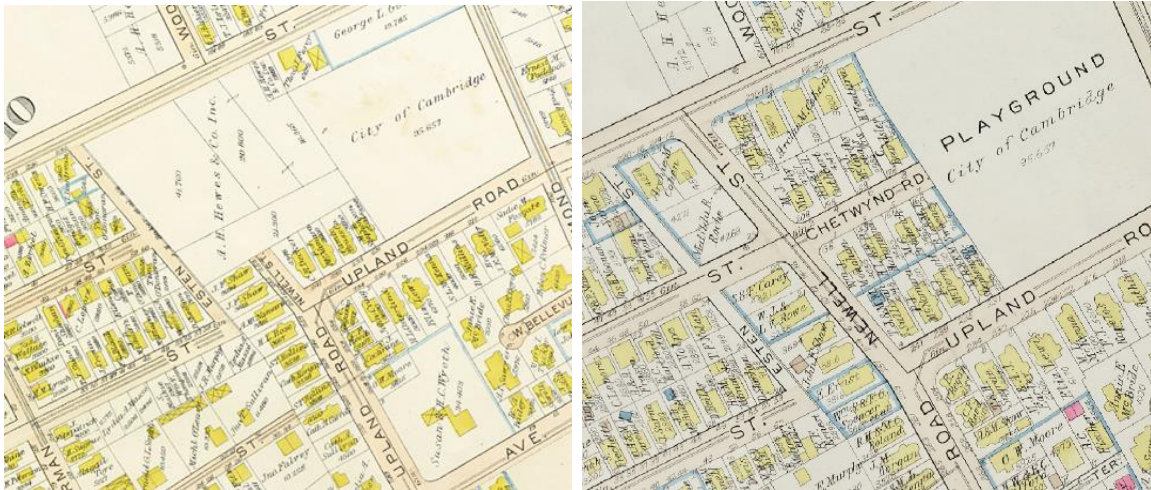
The land where Chetwynd Road currently sits was previously owned by Albert H. Hews, a prominent pottery maker and until the time of his death the largest producer of florist-ware and red earthenware (flowerpots) in the country. Mr. Hews died in 1903 at his home in Weston, survived by his wife, Mary Cook Hews. Mrs. Hews passed away in 1925. The property was likely sold off and purchased by the Porter Realty Trust. Soon after, Porter Realty created the subdivision of Chetwynd Road as well as constructing many new homes along Newell Street and the southern side of Walden Street.

Chetwynd Road was laid out as a dead-end street and named by the Porter Realty Trust in 1928 with even numbered addresses on the north side of the street. The street was originally laid out as a private way for all eight properties and later approved as a public way a year later by the City of Cambridge. All eight properties were owned and built by Porter Realty Trust in 1928 and sold off the following year.

The Porter Realty Trust first appears in 1924 when it purchased the Knowles Estate after the passing of Mrs. Sarah Knowles in 1923. The estate purchase included two four-family properties as well as a vacant lot. The group, comprised of two sets of brothers, included: Simon W. Markel, Edward Markel, George E. Rudnick, and Julius A. Rudnick, all of Roxbury. They later expanded in 1927 with the purchase of the Potter Block in Porter Square, which they demolished and constructed the Porter Theater, at 1994 Massachusetts Avenue, from plans by architect George Nelson Jacobs of Boston. The corporation had offices in the building. The Porter Realty Corporation was a prominent developer in Cambridge between 1924 and 1939, who often purchased properties and renovated units for sale or created small subdivisions with speculative housing, much like Chetwynd Road.

The property at 2 Chetwynd Road was purchased in 1929 by David C. Murphy and his wife, Mary. David was a World War I veteran and later worked as a member of the Cambridge Fire Department at Ladder #1. Shortly after moving into their new home, they would begin growing their family and had five children. David Murphy later died in 1966

leaving behind his wife and children. The home remained in the Murphy family even after Mary Murphy's passing in 1968 when it was then granted to their children. According to an abutter on Chetwynd Street the home was in the family from its construction in 1928 until 2017, when Rita Murphy (Fisher) who lived in the home passed away.



1916 (left) and 1930 (right) Bromley Atlas maps.



2 Chetwynd Road in 1970s. Photograph from survey file.

Significance and Recommendation

I recommend that the building at 2 Chetwynd Road be found significant for its associations with the Albert H. Hews company and in the context of the predominantly

pre-WWII residential neighborhood of Chetwynd Road which features eight nearly identical homes by the same builder, Porter Realty Trust.

The Commission should hear testimony from the applicants and neighbors and review the plans for replacement construction before making a further determination.

cc: Mahmood Firouzbakht