



CAMBRIDGE HISTORICAL COMMISSION

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Date: July 28, 2017

To: Members of the Historical Commission

From: Sarah L. Burks, Preservation Planner

Re: D-1460: 64 Pearl Street, Hastings-Munroe House (1827-1828)

An application for substantial demolition of the house at 64 Pearl Street was received on June 14, 2017. The applicant was notified of an initial determination of significance, and a public hearing was scheduled for August 3, 2017.

This is the same property that was the subject of a previous demolition application in January 2008. The property was subsequently studied for landmark designation, but in May 2009, the Commission voted to not forward the report to the City Council for designation and terminated the landmark study. A copy of the 2009 draft report is attached.

The property has changed hands a couple of times since it was last before the Commission. In 2013, George Makrigrannis sold the property to the Sailors Court LLC, of which he was an officer. The 64 Pearl Street LLC purchased the property in October 2016 for \$1,100,000.

The nature of the demolition threat stems from the fact that the house's small scale and historic method of construction is significantly under the development potential in the C-1 zoning district that encourages multi-family residences of a denser nature. The allowable zoning envelope in the C-1 zone, the desirability of the location, and Cambridge's strong housing market has continued to put pressure on the property to be developed to a greater extent. The current owner proposes adding a floor to the existing house and constructing a second detached dwelling at the back of the lot, with two parking spaces in the courtyard between the buildings.

Significance and Recommendation

The Hastings-Munroe House at 64 Pearl Street is a locally rare example of a late Federal side-hall cottage, with transitional stylistic characteristics of the Greek Revival period constructed in 1827-28. The house is historically and architecturally significant for its associations with the broad architectural and social history of the City as a rare surviving example of Federal style architecture; for its association with the Munroe family, who inhabited the house from the 1830s until the 1960s; and for its period, style and method of construction, which reflects early settlement patterns in Cambridgeport.

I recommend that the Commission consider the proposed plans for new construction, and hear public testimony before making a further determination.

cc: Ranjit Singanayagam, Inspectional Services Commissioner
Mahmood Firouzbakht, 64 Pearl Street LLC
Jai Khalsa, Khalsa Design

Hastings-Munroe House
64 Pearl Street
Landmark Designation Preliminary Study Report
L-88

Prepared by:
Sarah Burks, Preservation Planner
Paul Trudeau, Preservation Administrator
Cambridge Historical Commission
May 1, 2009

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Executive Summary

The Hastings-Munroe House at 64 Pearl Street is a locally rare example of a late Federal side-hall cottage, with transitional stylistic characteristics of the Greek Revival period constructed in 1827-28. The house is historically and architecturally significant for its associations with the broad architectural and social history of the City as a rare surviving example of Federal style architecture; for its association with the Munroe family, who inhabited the house from the 1830s until the 1960s; and for its period, style and method of construction, which reflects early settlement patterns in Cambridgeport.

A. Address, Parcel Number and Zoning

64 Pearl Street, built in 1827-28, is located on the southeast side of Pearl Street in Cambridgeport, between Franklin and Auburn streets. The parcel is identified as lot 32 of map 93. The lot contains 4,564 square feet. It is recorded in book 35996, page 245 of the Middlesex South Registry of Deeds.

The lot is located in a Residence C-1 zoning district, which allows single to multi-family dwellings with a .75 FAR limit, 35-foot height limit, and a density of 1,500 square feet per dwelling unit. The assessed value for the land and building according to the FY2009 real estate online assessor's database was \$589,100.

B. Ownership and Occupancy

The house was constructed as a single-family residence in 1827-28 by Charles Hastings, a housewright. The property has changed hands several times since its construction, most notably to the Munroe family, and has retained its single-family, residential use. The property is currently owned by George Makringiannis and is vacant. Mr. Makringiannis has owned the property since 2002.

C. Area Description

The house stands in a densely-built up section of Cambridgeport, which is characterized by a mix of single and multi-family dwellings and small commercial storefronts. The primary multi-family dwellings in the immediate vicinity are early 20th-century triple-deckers, which dominate the streetscape and are in stark contrast to the 1 ½ story house.

The house is located on the southeast side of Pearl Street between Franklin and Auburn streets, three blocks south of Central Square. Neighboring buildings include an 1886 Italianate double-house at 66-68 Pearl Street, an 1830 late Greek Revival with a storefront addition at 65 Pearl Street, and early 20th-century Colonial Revival triple-deckers at 52, 54, and 56 Pearl Street. The house abuts the northwest corner of the Salem-Auburn Streets National Register District.

Pearl Street experiences moderate to heavy traffic as it is one of only a few southbound roads in Cambridgeport east of Western Avenue with access to Memorial Drive, the others being Magazine and Sidney streets. Traffic is heavier in the vicinity of 64 Pearl Street because of its proximity to Central Square.

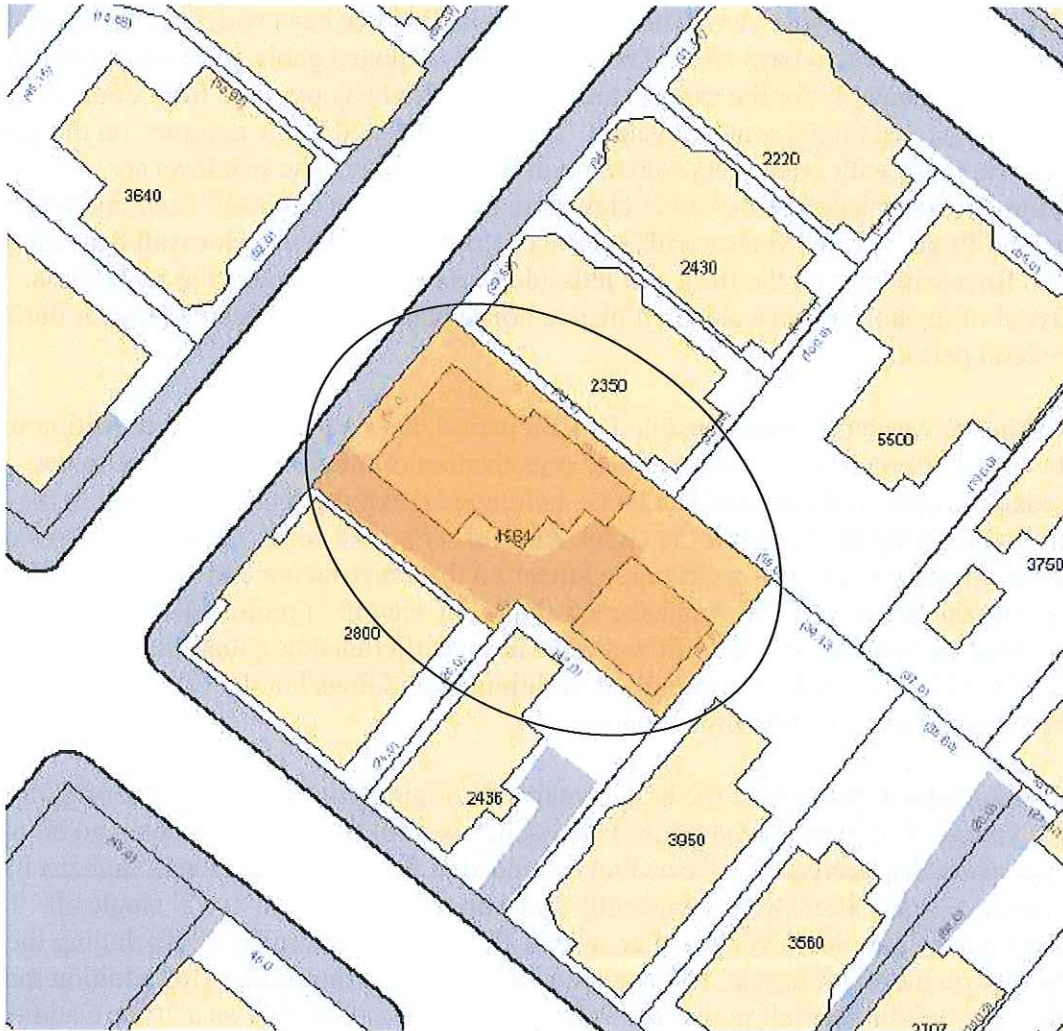
D. Planning Issues

Planning concerns for the Hastings-Munroe House relate primarily to its small scale and historic method of construction in a zoning district that encourages multi-family residences of a denser nature. At a public hearing on January 3, 2008, the Cambridge Historical Commission heard Mr. Makringiannis' proposal to demolish the house and construct a three-story townhouse unit on the site. The Commission found the house

“significant” and “preferably preserved” under the Demolition Delay Ordinance. The Commission voted to initiate a landmark study of the property at a public hearing on June 5, 2008.

The allowable zoning requirements in the C-1 zone, the presence of additional development potential on the site, and Cambridge’s strong housing market will continue to put pressure on the property to be developed to a greater extent. The three-story, 3,422 square foot multi-family townhouse proposed by Mr. Makringiannis would comply with zoning regulations.

E. Map



1. Property Map of 64 Pearl Street, City of Cambridge GIS, April 24, 2009

II. Description

A. Type and Use

The Hastings-Munroe House at 64 Pearl Street is a wood-framed, single-family residence. A two-car garage is located in an accessory building at the rear of the lot. The house has served as a single-family residence since its construction in 1827, but is currently vacant.

B. Physical Description

The building is a 1½-story house with the front door on the south elevation, which is oriented toward the side yard. The south elevation is three bays wide and the street-facing west elevation is two bays wide. The gable roof is oriented gable end to the street. A shed dormer, presumably for the stair, is located in the third bay over the front door. A full porch is located on the south elevation. The original fluted Doric columns on the porch were replaced with brick piers sometime in the late 1960s. The windows are symmetrically placed on the street elevation, two windows on the 1st floor and two on the second floor. A brick veneer with a stone cap runs along the exterior wall beneath the first floor windows on the front and left-side facades, which covers the foundation. The layout of the house is in a side hall plan, a house plan that first became popular during the Federal period.

The house was built during the late Federal period, but its form shows a transition into the Greek Revival style. The three-bay organization of the front façade date to the Federal origins of the house. The Doric-columned porch was probably added in the 1830s or 1840s during the height of the Greek Revival style. The cedar shingles that now clad the house appear to cover a closed pediment on the street-facing end wall, with a classical entablature between the first and second floors. A section of removed shingles above a boarded-up opening on the north wall reveals an earlier cladding material, likely wood clapboards. The windows retain their traditional mouldings but the original wood sash have been replaced with vinyl windows.

Although the main body of the house retains its original footprint, the ell configuration has varied. City Atlases and house book sketches from the late 1800s show an ell of three parts that decrease in size as they extended to the east. Atlases and Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps after 1894 consistently show an approximate 20' x 15' single ell. The current configuration reveals a later second-floor addition over the ell, including the dormer on the south façade, which expanded the overall footprint. This addition may date to a building permit pulled in 1968 (#67288), described only as a "type 6 addition" and without specifications on dimensions. Historical Commission survey photographs from 1965 show the pre-dormer configuration, as well as the original Doric columns (see photograph attachments in section IX). The two-car garage was added to the site in 1991 (building permit #051641).

C. Current Photographs



2. Streetscape view of Pearl St., looking north, 64 Pearl St. second house on right, April 2009. Photo by P. Trudeau



3. 64 Pearl St., south (right) elevation, April 2009. Photo by P. Trudeau



4. 64 Pearl St., front and left side elevations, April 2009. Photo by P. Trudeau

III. History of the Property

A. Historic Development Patterns

1. Deed History of the Property

The property on which 64 Pearl Street was constructed in 1827-28 was purchased by Edward and John Stevens from William Watson on May 6, 1805 (Middlesex South Registry of Deeds, book 160, page 361), subsequently sold by Edward Stevens to James Ellis on November 20, 1806 (Middlesex South Registry of Deeds, book 169, page 375). Charles Hastings purchased the land from Ellis on February 28, 1827 (Middlesex South Registry of Deeds, book 272, page 444), and was taxed by the City for \$500 for one house in 1828. The house changed hands several times over the next few years before being purchased by Henry P. Munroe from J.B. Rice on May 13, 1835 (Middlesex South Registry of Deeds, book 341, page 274). The house remained in the Munroe family until the 1960s. The property was deeded to Mr. Makringiannis by Georgoulis Valentia on July 29, 2002 (Middlesex South Registry of Deeds, book 35996, page 245).

2. Development History of Parcel and Surroundings

The Cambridgeport settlement originally focused on Lafayette Square and the Cambridgeport Meetinghouse at the intersection of Main Street and Massachusetts

Avenue. The settlement of Cambridgeport was made possible by the construction of the West Boston Bridge in 1793. Prior to that time, there were only three houses in Cambridge east of Quincy Street, and the area south of present Massachusetts Avenue was completely unpopulated. Most of Cambridgeport was controlled by William Jarvis and Francis Dana. Andrew Craigie also owned portions of Cambridgeport and all of East Cambridge. Jarvis and Dana worked with the Proprietors of the West Boston Bridge to lay out Massachusetts Avenue and Main Street, but did not otherwise develop a master plan for the area.

The only substantial parcel of land south of Massachusetts Avenue that was not owned by Francis Dana belonged to William Watson. In 1800 and 1801, Dana and Watson laid out Pearl, Brookline, and Franklin Streets, and began to sell lots there and on Massachusetts Avenue.

Watson (ca. 1755-1811) was a glazier who lived near Harvard Square. According to one source, he received this tract as "compensation for maintaining an aged colored woman, formerly a slave, called Venus Whittemore; although by some defect in the written obligations, she finally became a public charge and died in the almshouse May 4, 1825, aged 107" (Paige, 681). The title to this land, which ran between Pearl and Brookline Streets from Massachusetts Avenue to Valentine Street, and along William and Cottage Streets to Pleasant Street, has not been searched but may have originated with Samuel Whittemore (1693-1784), the previous owner of Watson's house in Harvard Square and a possible former master of Venus Whittemore.

After an initial burst of construction before the Embargo of 1809-1813, there was little building until the economy recovered in the mid 1820s. The neighborhood was fully developed by the end of the 1840s, although some infill construction continued until the end of the 19th century. The area has remained essentially intact from the first period of settlement in Cambridgeport.

While Watson soon sold his Massachusetts Avenue frontage, sales south of the avenue were slow. Watson divided his land into parcels containing 10,000 to 16,000 square feet, which may have been more than the market could absorb. In 1805, he sold the 10,000 square-foot lot 9 at the corner of Pearl and Auburn streets to Edward and John Stevens, which led to the eventual sale of the lot to Charles Hastings and the construction of the house at 64 Pearl Street in 1827-28.

IV. Significance of the Property

A. Historical Significance

The historical significance of the Hastings-Munroe House relates to its relationship with the development of the Watson tract in Cambridgeport, demonstrating its associations with the economic history of Cambridge. Additionally it is significant for its relationship to the Munroe family, which resided there for over 100 years, demonstrating its associations with the broad cultural and social history of Cambridge.

Henry P. Munroe was a music teacher. He was born in Massachusetts ca. 1804, married in 1827, and died in 1878. His widow, Eunice, remained at 64 Pearl Street for a few more years and then the property passed to their children. According to Lucius Paige's *History of Cambridge*, Amos Munroe, father of Henry, lived at the corner of Pearl and Auburn streets from about 1805 until his death in 1829. The oldest of the Munroe houses was at 129 Auburn Street, and was it razed in 1923. Another Munroe family house remains at 131 Auburn Street, which was built by 1836.

Charles H. Munroe, relationship to Henry unknown, later owned 64 Pearl Street and lived there from 1904 until his death in 1946. Charles began his working career as a teamster, later starting his own boat chartering business on the Charles River after suffering from health-related problems as an employee with the National Biscuit Company. He operated sightseeing tours of Boston and Cambridge from the river in the 1920s and 1930s. One of his boats, the "Flo and Ruby", could carry 100 passengers. Munroe's obituary in the April 4, 1946 edition of the *Cambridge Sun* provided context of his "legendary" status as the skipper of the "Flo and Ruby":

"Few persons knew the Charles river, from the Basin to Watertown, as did Capt. Munroe. His recital of its features of historic interest, from the start to the return of the "Flo and Ruby's" daily trip, was part and parcel of it. Facts and figures, even poetical recitations, made the trip one to be remembered. It was more than a trip up and down the river, it was an education. Capt. Munroe was a philosopher and elocutionist combined...[the "Flo and Ruby"] had a noble history; she had contributed much to the history of the Charles. An institution, so to speak, while Capt. Munroe lived and piloted her, she now becomes a legend."

Charles' widow, Mary A. Munroe, was listed as resident as late as the 1954 directory. The property left the family by 1963, when the house was occupied by Cambridge policeman, Edward J. Loder and his family.

B. Architectural Significance

The architectural significance of the Hastings-Munroe House relates primarily to its period, style and method of construction as an example of a late Federal side-hall cottage, with transitional stylistic characteristics of the Greek Revival period. The house abuts the Salem Street/Auburn Street National Register district and could easily have been included in this district as a contributing building, being consistent in period and style with other houses in the district. This neighborhood contains many of the oldest houses remaining in Cambridgeport. The small scale of the buildings and the narrow streets retain the village quality of Cambridgeport in the first half of the 19th century.

However, early-20th century development on this block of Pearl Street lends further proof of the house's architectural significance to the area. Engulfed by triple-deckers, it is one of the lasting remnants of the modestly-scaled cottages that reflect the early development of Cambridgeport.

V. Relationship to Criteria

A. Article III, Chapter 2.78.180 a.

The enabling ordinance for landmarks 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 . . .

B. Relationship of Property to Criteria

The Hastings-Munroe House at 64 Pearl Street meets criterion (1) primarily for its associations with the broad architectural and social history of the City as a rare surviving example of Federal-period architecture, and secondarily for the importance of its associations with the Munroe family. It meets criterion (2) for its architectural significance in terms of its period, style, and method of construction. It conveys many of its original architectural qualities in its form and massing, and reflects the modest, cottage-style housing typical of early Cambridgeport development.

VI. 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 options for the permanent long-term protection and preservation of the Hastings-Munroe House. It is not located in an area that is currently being considered for local historic district designation. While it is adjacent to the Salem Street/Auburn Street National Register district, and would be eligible for individual listing on the National Register of Historic Places, National Register listing would not permanently protect and preserve the house.

No plans are underway for neighborhood conservation district study in the area surrounding the property.

C. Staff Recommendation

The Hastings-Munroe House at 64 Pearl Street is a rare surviving example of Federal style architecture (as altered in the Greek Revival period), and is representative of early settlement and development patterns in Cambridgeport. Its modest scale and design are important features of the streetscape, reflective of its period of construction. For these reasons, the house is an architecturally and historically significant building. Recent alterations, however, have comprised its architectural integrity, notably the reconstruction of the front porch and removal of original Greek Revival columns. The installation of vinyl windows, wood shingle cladding, brick veneer, and a dormer have also contributed to the overall downgrading of the building's integrity. These alterations undermine the case for landmark status, although there remains a unique preservation opportunity to return the building to its original state.

Although the building's ties to the Munroe family demonstrate its association with the broad cultural and social history of Cambridge, the question remains as to whether this connection measures up to the standards of a landmark designation.

It is the staff recommendation that the Commission and staff continue to discuss preservation and development options with the applicant but to not forward a recommendation for landmark designation to the City Council.

VII. Historic Documents, Photographs and Maps

See attached pages for the following remaining illustrations:

5. Map of Early 19th Century Landholdings in Cambridgeport, Cambridgeport, Survey of Architectural History in Cambridge, p. 18.
6. Map of Cambridgeport Land Use in 1815, Cambridgeport, Survey of Architectural History in Cambridge, p. 20.
7. Hales Map of Cambridge, 1830.
8. Walling Map of Cambridge, 1854, detail of Cambridgeport neighborhood.
9. House book sketch of 64 Pearl Street, 1878, City of Cambridge Engineering Department.
10. Cambridge Historical Commission survey photograph of 64 Pearl Street, 1965
11. Cambridge Historical Commission survey photograph of 64 Pearl Street, 1965, showing porch column detail

VIII. Bibliography

1. General Sources

Cambridge Sun. "Capt. Munroe, Skipper of Famous Pleasure Craft 'Flo and Ruby,' Passes," obituary of Charles H. Munroe, April 4, 1946, p. 1.

Hail, Christopher. Cambridge Buildings and Architects. Cambridge, 2002.

Paige, Lucius R. History of Cambridge, Massachusetts 1630-1877, with a Genealogical Register. Cambridge: The Riverside Press, 1877.

2. Government Records and Sources

Cambridge Historical Commission, Cambridgeport, Survey of Architectural History in Cambridge, by Bainbridge Bunting and Robert B. Rettig. Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1971.

Cambridge Historical Commission, Old Cambridge, Survey of Architectural History in Cambridge, Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1974; manuscript for revised edition, Ch. IV, "Residential Neighborhoods," 2005.

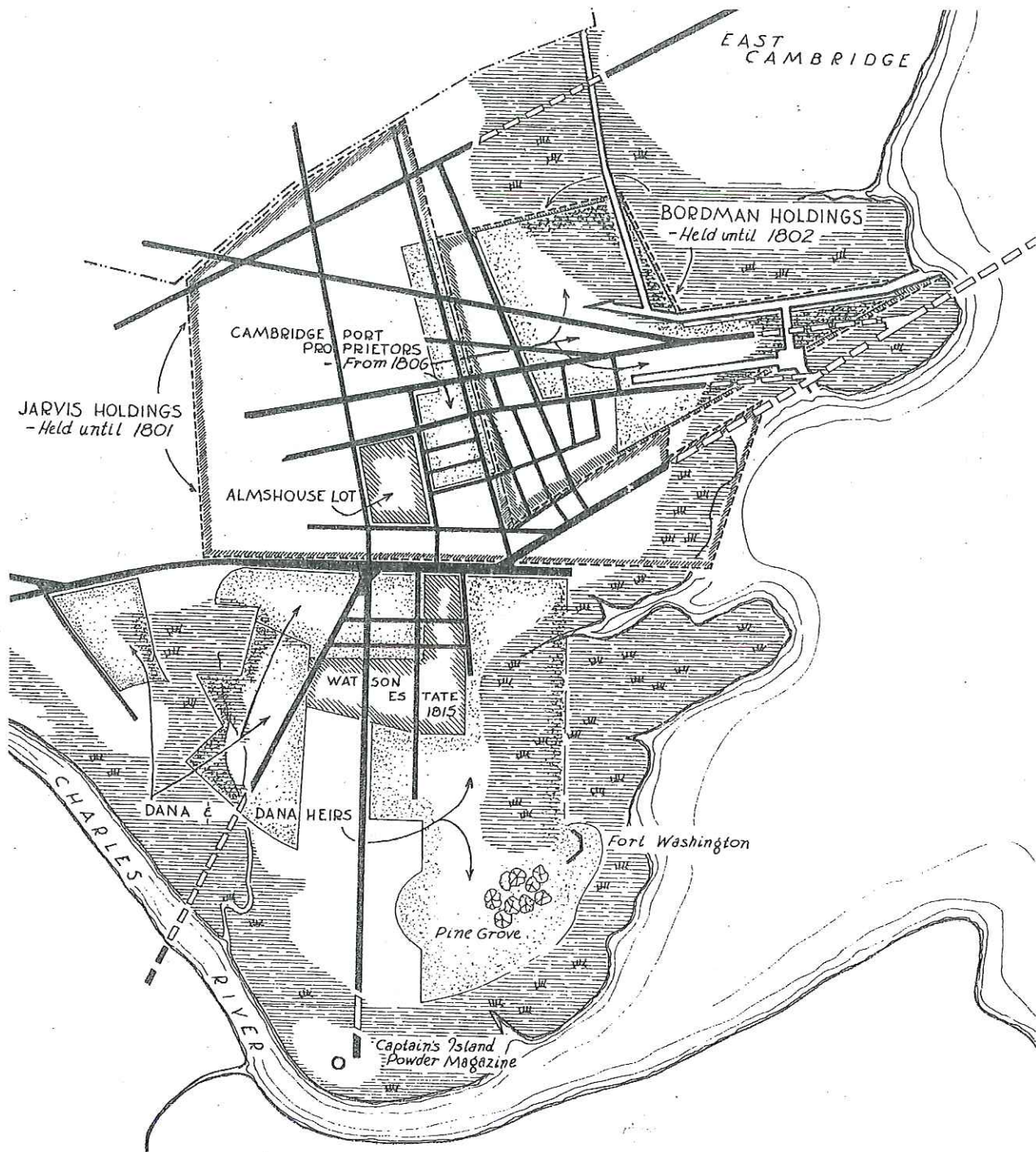
Cambridge Historical Commission, survey files for 64 Pearl Street

Cambridge, Massachusetts. Vital Records to 1850, Volumes I and II.

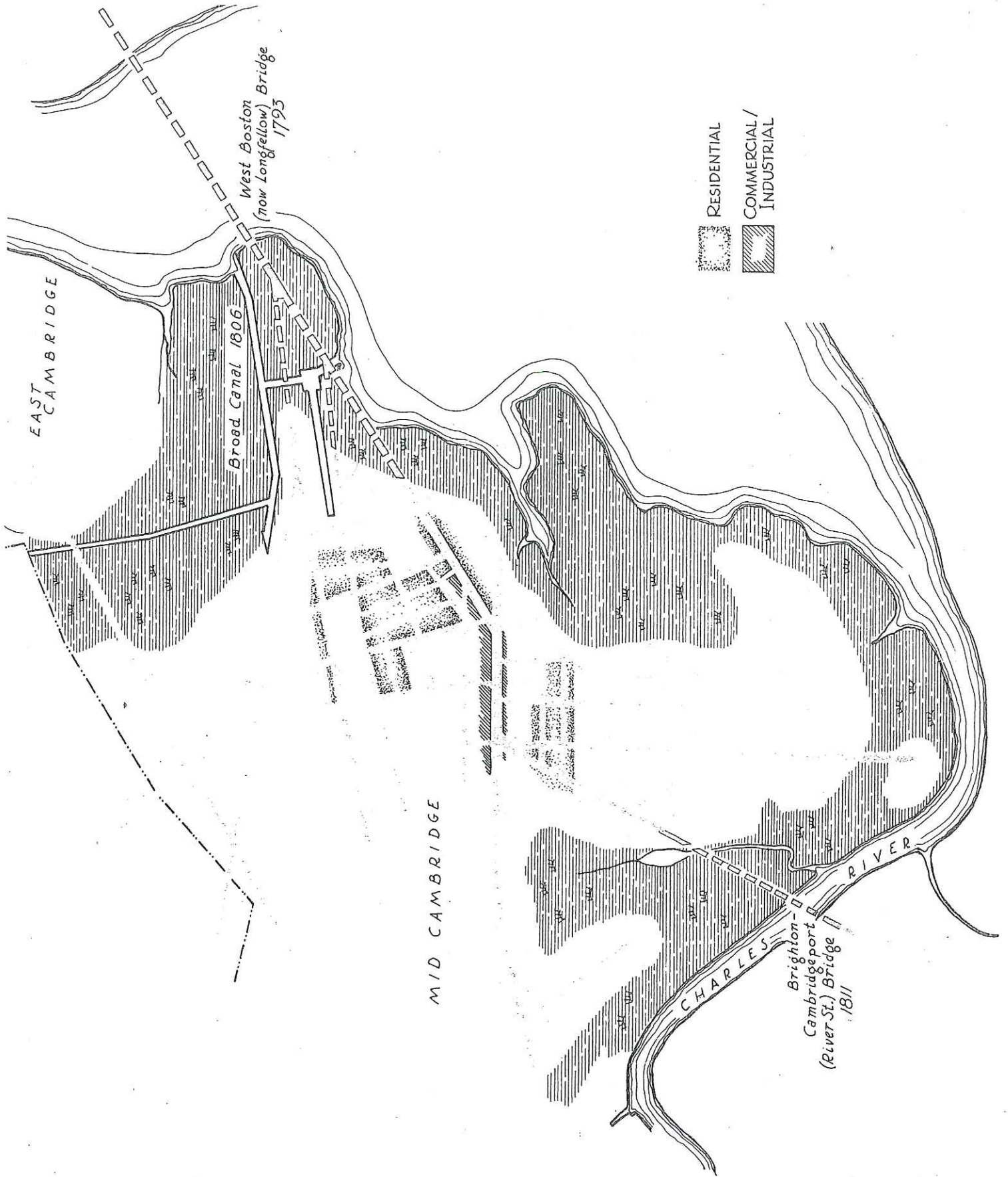
Middlesex South Registry of Deeds, records for 64 Pearl Street.

3. Other Records

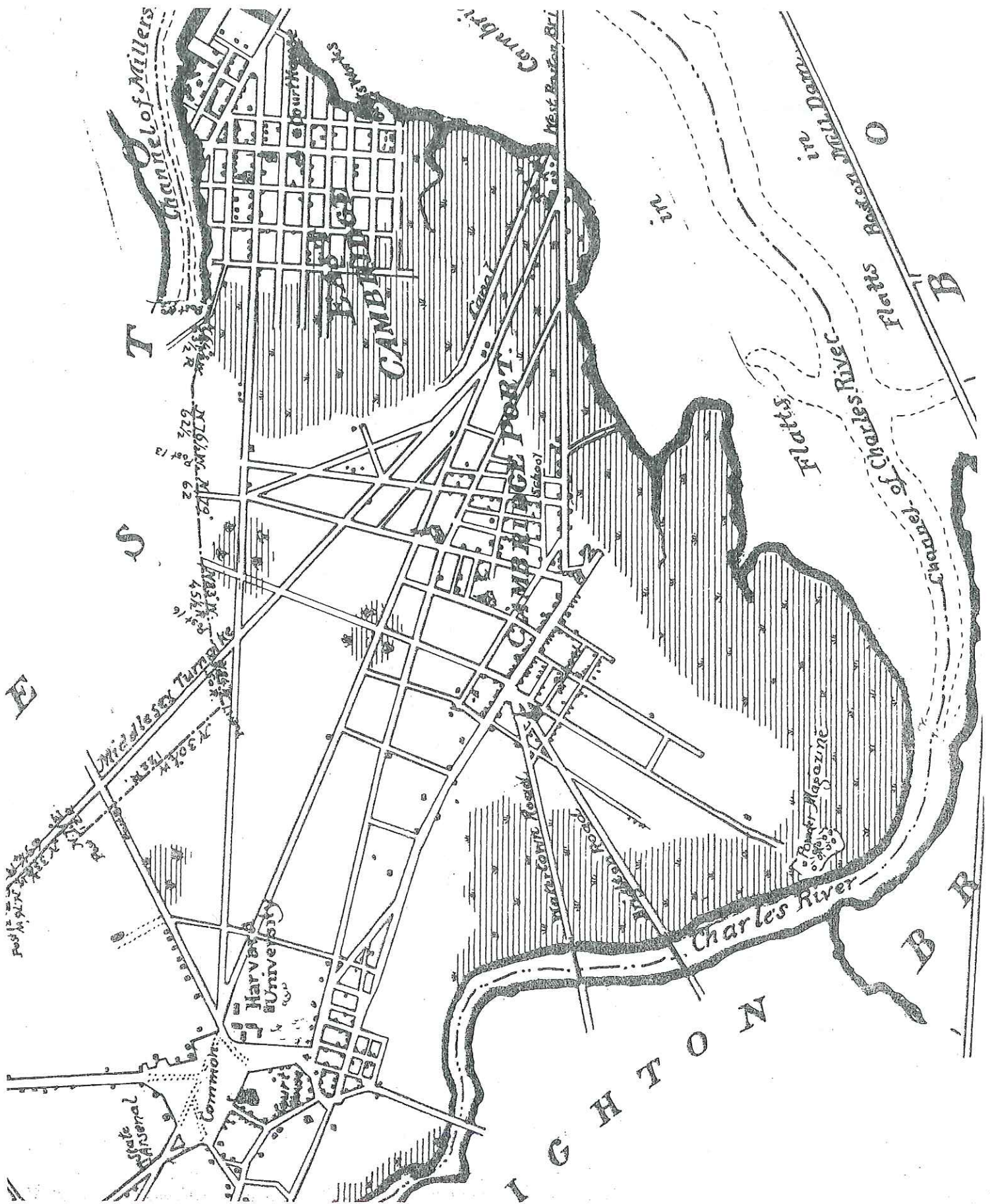
Cambridge City Directories.



5. Map of Early 19th Century Landholdings in Cambridgeport, Cambridgeport, Survey of Architectural History in Cambridge, p. 18.



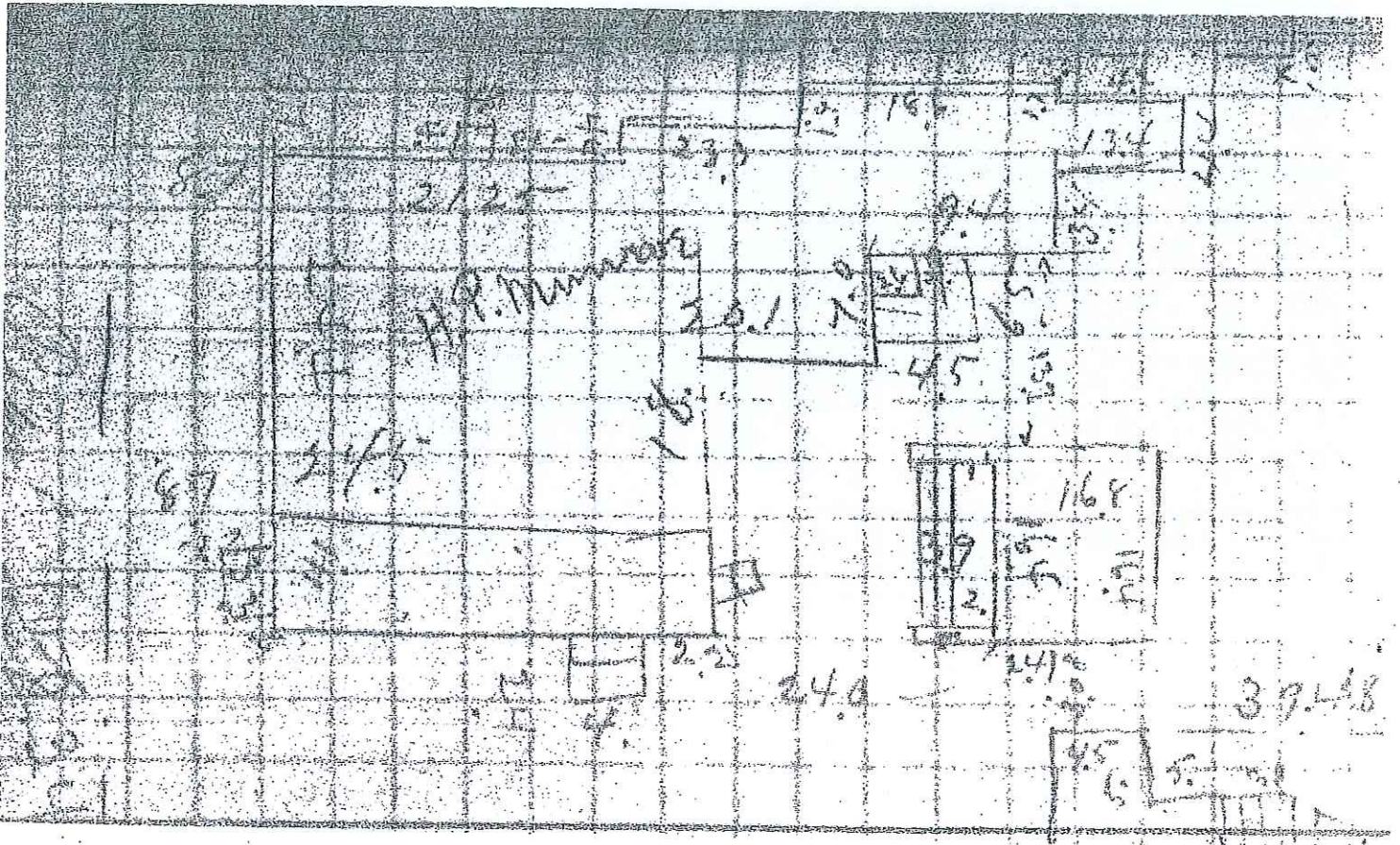
6. Map of Cambridgeport Land Use in 1815, Cambridgeport, Survey of Architectural History in Cambridge, p. 20.



7. Hales Map of Cambridge, 1830.



8. Walling Map of Cambridge, 1854, detail of Cambridgeport neighborhood.



9. House book sketch of 64 Pearl Street, 1878, City of Cambridge Engineering Department.



10. Cambridge Historical Commission survey photograph of 64 Pearl Street, 1965



11. Cambridge Historical Commission survey photograph of 64 Pearl Street, 1965, showing porch column detail

