

Brookline Preservation Commission

Local Historic District Report

Local Historic District: Pill Hill

Applicant: Douglas Plante

Address: 103 Walnut Street



Statement of Significance: This house is the oldest in the Pill Hill Historic District and one of only a few that survive from the 18th century. According to research by Nina Fletcher Little it was constructed in about 1798 by Eliphalet Spurr before Boylston Street was constructed and when Walnut Street was the main east-west thoroughfare through town. Spurr established a line of coaches to carry people between the Punch Bowl Tavern in Brookline and Boston. After Spurr died in 1817 this became the home of Eliza Aspinwall and her invalid brother Thomas until their deaths in 1842 and 1843. During the 1850s it was owned by the Leeds family with the house occupied by Benjamin Leeds. The 1871 town map records the house being used as an “Infant Asylum.”

The house is very significant as a locally rare example of Federal Period architecture. The original house appears to have been the two story front section one room deep. Over the front entrance is a Doric portico that dates from the 1830s or 1840s (based on stylistic considerations). It may have been added around 1843 when the house was sold by the Aspinwall family. The present two story rear wing is probably a replacement of the original kitchen/wood shed wing that probably was only one story high. Early maps show a carriage barn on the property.

Based upon file photographs, the interior is largely intact in terms of Federal Period woodwork. There are three formal mantelpieces, one in the Greek Revival style and two dating from the 1850s or 1860s.

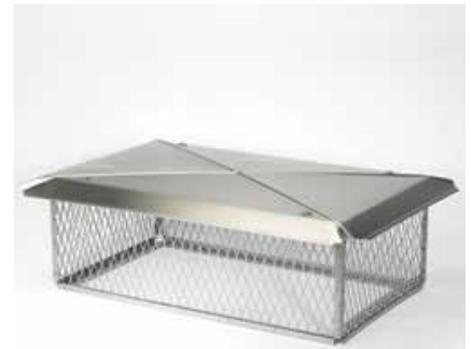
Proposed Alterations: Application for a Certificate of Appropriateness to remove chimney pots and caps and install new stainless steel caps on chimneys of house; to install 6-foot high wood stockade fence for approximately 60 linear feet along north (rear) yard of property; and to install HVAC condensing unit within area between the house and stone retaining wall in north (rear) yard.

Applicable Guidelines: Chimney pots are historic features and should be retained whenever possible... For fences directly abutting Route 9, or abutting commercial properties that face Route 9, height limits permitted by zoning apply. If a new fence or wall is on or near the top of a retaining wall and exceeds 42", then the overall height of the new fence or wall and retaining wall should be measured from the grade on the lower side of the retaining wall, and the visual impact of the combined height from the lower side should be taken into account... Roof top HVAC and other mechanical elements, including soundproofing elements, should be placed out of view.

Preliminary Findings: The chimney pots contribute to the historic character of the property. The proposed condensing unit should be obscured from view by lattice or other screenings, Because of the open character of the streetscape along this section of Boylston Street, a lower open wood or metal fence or cedar board fence would be more appropriate than the proposed stockade,



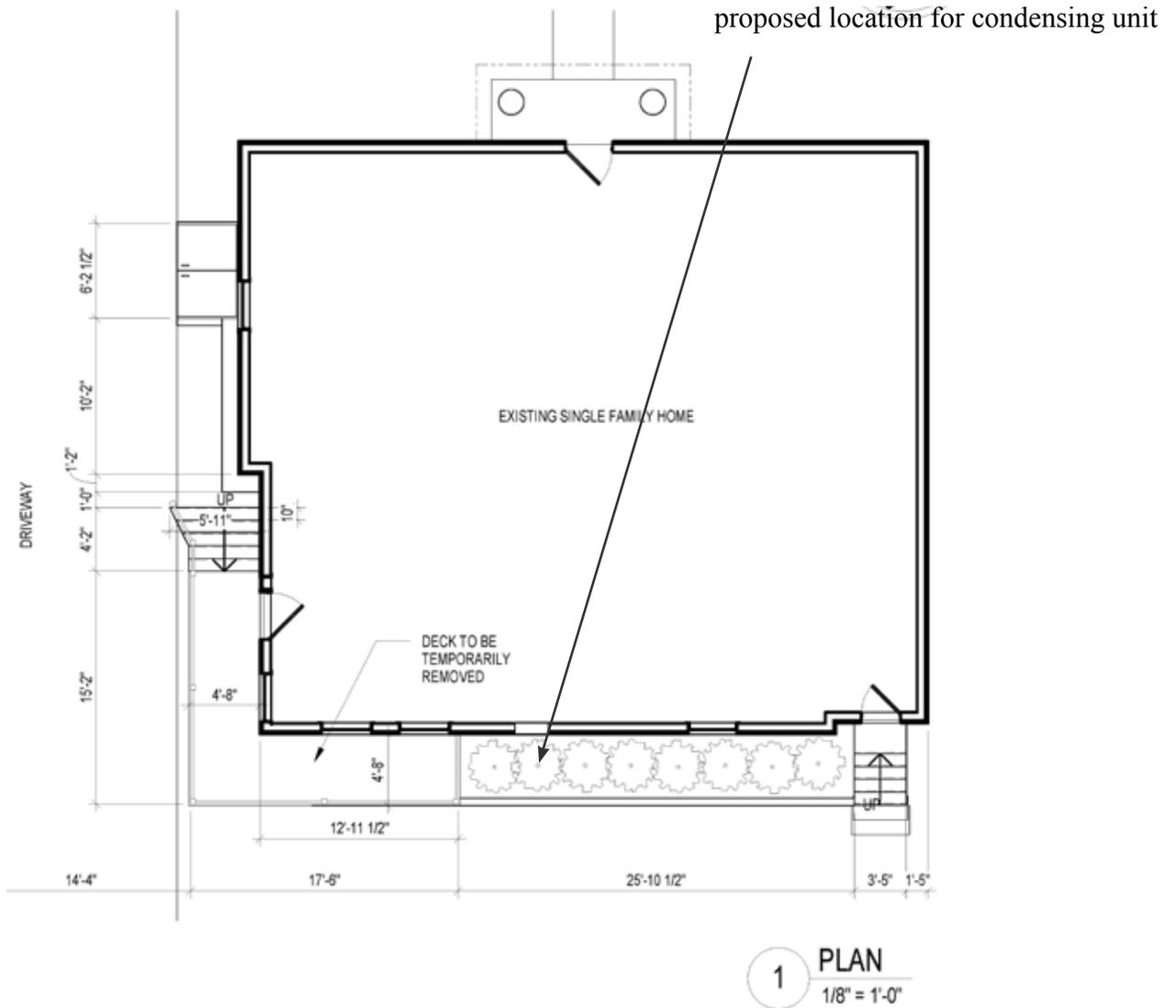
Existing conditions - Walnut St



Proposed type of stainless chimney cap



Double pots from west chimney





fence proposed atop stone wall



streetscape along Boylston Street



existing conditions of wall
along rear property line

