

Brookline Preservation Commission Demolition Application Report

Address: 46 Babcock Street
Applicant: Alexander Argiros
Building Type: House (Full) & Garage (Full)
National Register Listing (if Applicable): None



Historical/Architectural Significance:

The portion of Babcock Street adjacent to Harvard Street was built out in an earlier phase of development than the Graffam-McKay area to the north, which was created after 1894 to serve Boston commuters via the widened Commonwealth Avenue. Between Harvard and Devotion Street, single family homes were built prior to 1893 on deep lots that included space at the rear for stables or barns. In 1872, Avery & Maynard, a produce vendor with shops in Faneuil Hall, Boston, purchased a 40,000 sq. ft. lot in this location. The land was subdivided, and John Avery built a house and stable at 48 (now 46) Babcock Street in 1874. Avery lived in the home until at least 1878. The rest of the parcels were sold off by 1875, most to Charles Stearns.

With the increasing housing demands of Boston commuters by 1900, the lots at 48 Babcock and neighbor 40 Babcock Street were redeveloped. Both homes were relocated to the rear of their lots, and large brick apartment buildings were built in front, abutting Babcock Street. Interestingly, the properties remained under separate ownership during this transition, with both owners continuing to live in the relocated homes at the rear of the properties. The owners of 48 Babcock Street at this time were Kate and William Jones, who had purchased the home by 1891. William, a merchant tailor, had emigrated from England in 1869 while Kate was born in Massachusetts, the daughter of Irish immigrants. The couple were married in 1887. In 1893, Kate petitioned the Town to extend sewer service to Babcock Street. In 1902, William passed away unexpectedly; the same year the home was relocated and the brick apartment building at the present 48 Babcock Street was constructed. This work required the demolition of the existing stable. Kate continued to live at 46

Babcock Street until at least 1920, when the Census listed her as head of household, living with her son George Abbot, 3 boarders and a maid.

This Census record is the first indication of the home being used as a lodging house and a two family residence, though the 2 family status was not recognized by the Assessor's office until 1958. The first lodging house application was granted to Emma Mae Harlance in 1928, who was a resident, not an owner, of the property. The license was maintained, under different operators, until 1960. At this time the license was terminated due to unresolved violations. A 1961 report confirmed a total of 12 lodgers living in the home, which was noted to be in violation of all lodging house regulations and in general poorly kept. In 1999 the property was again cited for illegal lodging house operations.

The 2 ½ story, hipped roof home was designed in Colonial Revival style with symmetrical two story bay windows on the façade. Multiple styles of dormers exist on the roof today, indicating that some may have been added in later renovations. The front entrance has been reconfigured, likely in 1948, when a building permit was issued to add additional egress stairs to the second floor. Other changes to the home over time include the front and rear porches, rebuilt in 1920, and a metal fire escape to the 3rd floor, added in 1948. In 1974, aluminum siding was installed.

The brick, single story, flat roofed garage at the property was constructed by 1927. Typical of the form of the Apartment Row Garage, the simple structure was built to serve the apartment buildings constructed at 48 & 40 Babcock Street on an adjacent lot that was otherwise vacant at the time. One bay of this garage is located on the property of 46 Babcock Street. This portion of the building is proposed for full demolition, leaving the remaining bays of the row garage located on the property of 52/58 Babcock Street intact.

The house at 46 Babcock Street meets the following criteria for an initial determination of significance:

c. The building is associated with one or more significant historic persons or events, or with the broad architectural, cultural, political, economic, or social history of the town or Commonwealth; and

d. The building is historically or architecturally significant in terms of its period, style, method of construction, or its association with a significant architect or builder, either by itself or as part of a group of buildings.

The house at 46 Babcock Street does not meet the traditional standard of integrity of setting, having been moved from its original location and completely surrounded by development from different periods than the original construction. In spite of this, the building in its current location offers compelling evidence of the evolving needs of the Town and its residents at the turn of the 20th century. The original massing of the building is evident and original materials may be preserved beneath the aluminum siding.

The garage at 46 Babcock Street meets the following criteria for an initial determination of significance:

c. The building is associated with one or more significant historic persons or events, or with the broad architectural, cultural, political, economic, or social history of the town or Commonwealth; and

d. The building is historically or architecturally significant in terms of its period, style, method of construction, or its association with a significant architect or builder, either by itself or as part of a group of buildings.

The garage at 46 Babcock Street retains integrity of location, design, setting, feeling, materials, and workmanship.



Aerial view of 46 Babcock Street, looking east.



Aerial view of 46 Babcock Street, looking north.



Aerial view of 46 Babcock Street, looking west.



Aerial view of 46 Babcock Street, looking south.



View of 46 Babcock Street from Babcock Street, visible to the rear, between the two brick apartment buildings



Façade, 46 Babcock Street



Right elevation, 46 Babcock Street. 1st garage bay next to the house is proposed to be demolished, leaving the remaining bays on the property of 52/58 Babcock Street intact.



Entrance detail



View from right, showing 46 Babcock behind neighbors 38 & 40 Babcock Street



Town of Brookline Atlas, 1874



Town of Brookline Atlas, 1907



Town of Brookline Atlas, 1927