

DATE: March 30, 2010

TO: Eileen McGettigan, Assistant City Solicitor

FROM: Brian Lever, Senior Preservation Planner

CC: Candace Havens, Director, Planning and Development

SUBJECT: Landmark Designation – 17-19 Channing Street

At their regularly scheduled meeting and public hearing on February 25, 2010, the Newton Historical Commission unanimously voted to designate the property located at 17 Channing Street (Assessor's # 12010-0006) as a local landmark under Newton City Ordinance T-288, Sections 22-60 through 22-73. In accordance with the ordinance, I am requesting that a legal description of the above-mentioned property be recorded with the Middlesex County recorder. The property is recorded under Book 26955, Page 309, and has been owned by Maria Palmina Fierimonte since 1996. A copy of the Commission's record of action is attached.

Thank you for your help. Please let me know if any additional information is needed in order to record the property. Also, I would greatly appreciate it if you could send me verification that it has been recorded so that I can add a note to my file.

NEWTON LOCAL LANDMARK REPORT

Thayer House

17-19 Channing Street

**Prepared for:
Newton Historical
Commission
February 2010**

Thayer House

17-19 Channing Street

1. *Name of Property*

- a. *Historic Name:* Thayer House
- b. *Common Name:* None

2. *Location*

- a. *Street Address:* 17-19 Channing Street
- b. *Zip Code:* Newton Corner, MA 02458
- c. *Assessor's #:* 12010 0006

3. *Classification*

- a. *Ownership of Property:* Private
- b. *Type of Property:* Residence
- c. *National Register Status:* Individually listed and within Multi-Resource Area

4. *Function or Use*

a. *Historic Functions:* Built circa 1860 as a two-family residence, this house continues to be inhabited, though now as a three family residence. It is unknown what if any outbuildings existed historically. A small modern shed is located at the property's southwest corner.

b. *Current Functions:* This house is located within densely developed residential neighborhood located along Channing Street. The house currently functions as rental property. The neighborhood is a mix of single and multifamily housing.

5. *Zoning*

The Zoning District is Multi Residence 2, which requires a minimum 10,000 square foot lot for single family use, and a minimum frontage of 80 feet.

6. *Description*

Neighborhood Description: The property is located at the northwestern end of Newton Corner, near the Watertown line, and stands at the south end of a densely developed residential neighborhood containing a mix of late 19th century and early 20th century houses. Channing Street runs north to south between Pearl Street and Washington Street. The area is a mix of single and multi-family housing. Channing Street is predominantly 19th century in architectural character. 17 Channing Street was one of the first homes built on the street and is located roughly equidistant

between the intersections with Washington Street and Pearl Street. Both intersections are approximately 300-feet away.

By 1869, the neighborhood around Channing Street was developed into house lots on land belonging to Phineas A Johnson, a cabinetmaker. Local Newton resident, developer, and businessman Joseph N. Bacon and Watertown resident Luke Forbes both bought and subdivided Johnson's land creating the neighborhood located on and around Channing Street. Until 1878, when it was incorporated as a city street, Channing Street was known as Linden Street and the neighborhood was built to serve bustling Newton Corner with its convenient rail transportation to Boston. With the exception of 34 Channing Street, an early 20th century Colonial Revival building, the historic homes along Channing Street were all built within roughly a ten-year period between 1860 and 1870.

Architectural Description:

(1) Materials:

Foundation: Fieldstone, concrete under 20th century addition

Walls: Vinyl siding *Roof:* Gothic Revival side gable /
Mansard style, asphalt shingle

Windows: Mixture of 6/6, 6/1, 4/4, 4/1, 2/2, 2/1, and 1/1 double hung windows. Some windows appear to be original wood windows; others are historic replacements as well as modern replacement windows.

Ornamentation: Gothic Revival / Second Empire Style

Vegetation: Little vegetation is present on the property. A small garden is located on the southern side and a small yard is at the rear of the property. Present vegetation does not appear to have historical significance.

(2) Verbal Description:

Historical appearance: 17 Channing Street is a unique example of late nineteenth century, Gothic Revival style construction style in the front portion of the building and Second Empire style with a mansard roof in the rear of the building. It is believed the front portion was constructed circa 1860 and the rear ell appears to have been built before 1874 and later altered. The rear ell appears on historic maps starting in 1874 and was likely built shortly after the construction of the building as both sections have identical field stone foundations, however the mansard roof does not appear on the 1878 birdseye map and does appear on the 1897 birdseye, suggesting it was later expanded and mansard roof added.

Gothic Revival, or often referred to as Carpenter Gothic style homes are a rare architectural style in Newton. The 1-½ story side gable front portion of 17 Channing Street exhibits classic features of Gothic Revival style including decorative scroll work at the eaves and under the windows, high peaked gable dormers, fluted columns with segmented scrolled capitals at the corners of the building, box cornice, field stone foundation, and interior brick chimney. The front façade is the most highly decorated consisting of the previously mentioned details as well as an enclosed front porch with paired fluted ionic columns, 2/2 wood windows, and pediment with decorative scroll work. The historic rear ell consists of a 1-½ story Second Empire addition with mansard roof, arched dormers, box cornice, and interior brick chimney. The south façade of the rear ell has two bay window projections flanking a side entrance and the north façade has one bay window projection adjacent to a side entrance. It is unknown if brackets were present under the eaves on the rear Second Empire ell.

Current appearance: Beyond the historic addition of the rear Second Empire ell, the footprint of the building was expanded twice with a small 20th century one story shed roof addition beyond rear Second Empire ell and two side entrances on the north side: one for the basement, and another sheltering an entrance for the first floor. The most significant changes however are replacement windows, vinyl siding, and the replacement front doors, which appear to date to the 1970's. The addition of vinyl siding may have caused the loss of historic detail such as brackets and decorative scrollwork. It is also possible that historic detail and wood siding remains under the vinyl siding. The roofing materials has also been replaced, now asphalt shingles and concrete steps and modern railings have been added to the entrances as well as a metal spiral staircase at the rear of the building connecting ground level to the second floor.

7. *History of Property*

a. *Deed History:*

1996 (Book 26955, Page 309) granting property to Maria Palmina Fierimonte from the estate of Joseph Palazzo

1974 (Book 12701, Page 59) granting ½ interest in property to Joseph and Elizabeth Palazzo from Luigi Palazzo

1971 (Book 11998, Page 54) granting ½ interest in property to Joseph and Elizabeth Palazzo and ½ interest in property to Luigi Palazzo from Albert Raymond II and Barbara Raymond

1970 (Book 11916, Page 6) granting property to Albert Raymond II and Barbara Raymond from Ann C. Mitchell

1963 (Book 10241, Page 577) granting property to Ann C. Mitchell from John Boermeester et ux

1941 (Book 6527, Page 111) granting property to Marion G. Boermeester from Frank and Mildred Forsyth heirs of Boardman E. Forsyth

1917 (Book 4144, Page 516) granting property to Boardman E. Forsyth from Mable F. Crocker (heir of Stephen O. Thayer)

1866 (Book 986, Page 567) granting property to Lydia A. and Stephen O. Thayer from Joseph N. Bacon

1863 (Book 912, Page 31) granting a portion of the property excluding the double cottage to Joseph N. Bacon from Luke Forbes.

1858 (Book 804, Page 472) granting property to Luke Forbes from Phineas A. Johnson

b. Development History:

Since 1858, this property has been sold ten times. During much of the 1850's the neighborhood that is now Channing Street was owned by Phineas A. Johnson, a cabinetmaker, who resided and operated a shop on the property. By 1863, deed research indicates that Channing Street had been laid out and 17 Channing Street had been built with the property owned by Luke Forbes. It is unclear whether Johnson or Forbes built the home. An 1855 town map shows homes in the neighborhood along Washington Street and no Channing Street present, while an 1866 map shows Channing Street and what appears to be 17 Channing Street. Given that the home fronts on Channing Street and that Johnson owned and resided at the property before Channing Street was laid out, it seems likely that Forbes built the home after purchasing the property in 1858 and the road being laid out. Forbes then sold the property to Joseph N. Bacon who quickly sold it within a few months to Stephen and Lydia Thayer in 1866. The Thayer's and their children Emma and Mabel owned the home for 51 years, the longest continuous ownership in the history of the building since 1858.

Stephen Thayer was a printer in Boston during the 1860's and resided in 17 Channing Street with his wife Lydia and daughters as well as the occasional boarder. In the 1870's, Thayer partnered with William L. Stiles (who resided nearby on Pearl Street) to form Thayer and Stiles, a kitchen furnishing goods store. Thayer and Stiles was located at 392 Centre Street in a building known as the Elliot Block (later demolished with the creation of the Massachusetts Turnpike). Thayer and Stiles sold crockery, glassware, woodenware for laundry and kitchens as well as tables, cutlery, lamps, and kerosene. Thayer and Stiles loaned crockery for parties and events.

Thayer and Stiles sold and repaired ranges, stoves, and furnaces. The company was also an agent of the Highland Foundry Company.

Thayer resided at 17 Channing Street until he moved to Westboro State Hospital late in life where he died at age 73 on May 21, 1904. Thayer had three wives who resided with him over time at the property. Thayer's first wife and mother of their children was Lydia A. Gordon. In 1872, Thayer married Ellen L. Davis and in 1875 Abigail Sanger. Thayer's daughter Emma married Elwyn E. Snyder a clerk (later manager) at Thayer and Stiles on February 10, 1891 and resided at the home until approximately 1906. On November 22, 1892, Thayer's younger daughter Mabel married Carlton Howes Crocker. After Stephen Thayer's death ownership of the home passed to his children. His daughter Mabel kept the home as rental property until selling it in 1917 to Boardman E. Forsyth. Like the Thayers, Forsyth and his heirs resided in one half and rented out the other. This use of the property as both home and rental property continues to the present.

Channing Street is an excellent example of a densely developed late 19th century neighborhood. With the exception of 31 Channing Street and 341 Washington Street, every 19th century home on the street remains. As well as 17 Channing Street, 7 Channing Street (a Second Empire cottage style home) is also listed on the National Register of Historical Places. The historic character of this neighborhood is in good condition.

8. *Significance of Property*

- a. *Period of Significance:* The period of significance for 19 Channing Street is circa 1860-1917. This period encompasses both its construction and long-term use as a residence and rental property by the Thayer family. This property is also known historically as the Thayer House in the Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System.
- b. *Historical Significance:* Historically, the structure is important for its contribution to the architectural history of Newton as a unique combination of historic architectural styles (Gothic Revival and Second Empire), as the residence of local merchant Stephen O. Thayer, and as a contributing element in the 19th century character of Channing Street. The property is also historically associated with the development of Newton Corner during the late 19th century as a desirable urban village residence in proximity to railroad transportation to Boston.
- c. *Architectural Significance:* The building is architecturally significant as an example of 19th century architecture that incorporates significant features of the Gothic Revival and Second Empire styles. The building has retained its original lot configuration and most of its defining architectural details with some additions and alterations. Gothic Revival is a rare architectural style in Newton. A search of the Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System reveals

only 58 listings of Gothic Revival style residences in the City, some of which have been significantly altered or demolished. The building is also a unique combination of late 19th century Gothic Revival and Second Empire architectural styles.

- d. *Landmark Designation Criteria:* The Thayer House meets criteria for landmark designation as set forth in Section 22-93 of Newton's Ordinance T-288. The property is:
- Individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places
 - Associated with the development of Channing Street, Newton Corner, and of the village development in Newton resulting from an increase in railroad access.
 - Historically and architecturally significant for its intact representation of the Gothic Revival and Second Empire styles in the late nineteenth century and as one of the first buildings built on Channing Street.
 - Historic location and setting has been retained and is compatible with future preservation and use
 - Representative of the original design retaining most of its original fabric and features

9. *Recommendations*

a. *Preservation Recommendations:* The property has been maintained with some alterations including vinyl siding and replacement windows. The building has also retained the massing, style, and appearance of its period of historic significance. Remaining historic features should be retained and future alterations done in a historically sensitive manner.

b. *Important Features:* The defining features of this building are the general size and massing of the structure and its dormers, mansard roof, front porch, and detailing. The Gothic Revival gables, scrollwork, and columns are important elements as well as the Second Empire detailing seen in the arched dormers and mansard roof. These features define the structure and its period of construction.

10. *Standards for Design Review*

a. *General Standards:* All projects affecting the property should be evaluated by considering the effect that proposed changes would have on the general design, arrangement, texture, material and size the features involved and the relationship of such features to the surrounding area. In the case of additions, the appropriateness of size, shape and location of the additions is of critical concern. The Secretary of

Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation should provide a baseline for review of changes to the landmark property.

b. *Specific Standards:* Specific design standards have been addressed in the existing maintenance of the property with regard to height, proportion of windows and doors, scale, and architectural detail. The same principles should be applied in developing a design for changes and in reviewing proposed changes, such that the key features retain their prominence and continue to stand out as excellent examples of the nineteenth century architecture and that the structure itself retains its identity as a nineteenth century residence with Gothic Revival and Second Empire influences. Thus the following specific design standards refer to potential changes to the existing structure:

Exterior Walls:

- Existing vinyl siding should be maintained, when replacement is necessary painted wood clapboard is recommended as well as exploration to see if other historic features remain under the siding and can be retained and/or restored.
- Decorative elements should be preserved and only replaced by like materials and design when necessary.
- No new openings should be allowed on the front façade or those sides visible from Channing Street.
- No existing openings should be filled in on the front façade or those sides visible from Channing Street unless appropriate windows and treatment can be used to replace newer replacement windows.

Windows:

- Surviving historic windows should be retained and repaired if possible. If replacement is necessary, the replacements should match as closely as possible the original window in materials, style, and design. Existing inappropriate replacement windows should be replaced with replacements matching as closely as possible the original window in materials, style, and design.

Entrances/Doors:

- The original front entrance design and arrangement should be retained.
- Replacement doors should be fabricated to match the style and materials of the originals and the construction period of the structure.

Roof:

- No changes should be made to the pitch or style of the roof; roof materials should be replaced with historically sensitive materials.

11. *Notification*

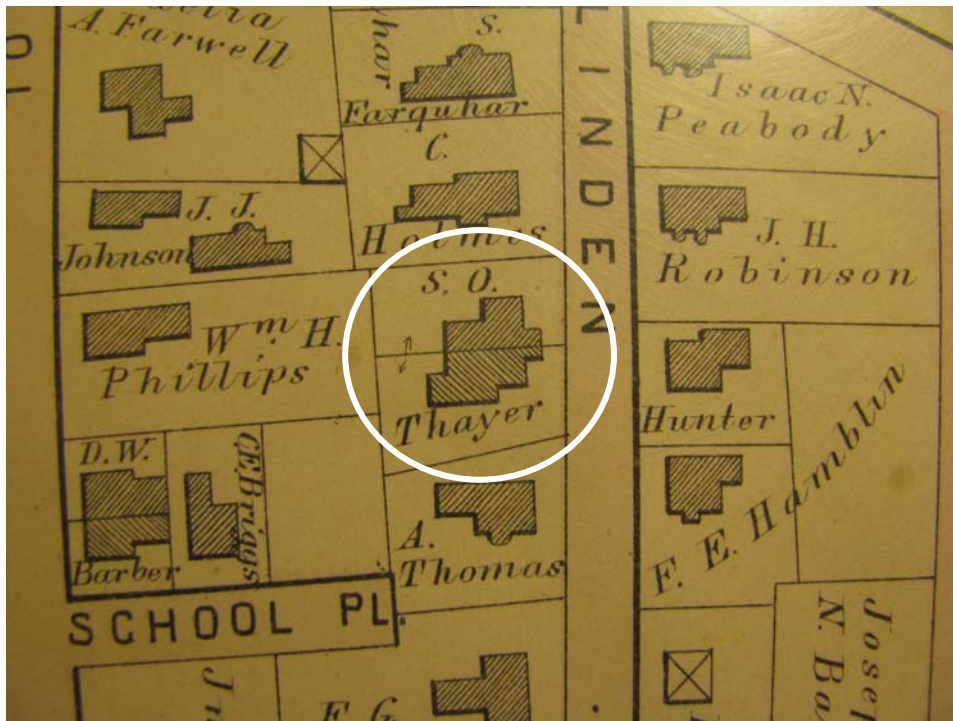
The following properties are considered abutters for the purposes of notification. Owners of these properties should receive notice when this property is considered for landmark designation and for any future under the Landmark Ordinance.

<u>ADDRESS</u>	<u>S/B/L</u>
25 Channing Street	12010 0007
14-16 Thornton Place	12010 0019
30 Thornton Street	12010 0020
11 Channing Street	12010 0005
12 Channing Street	71003 0013
20 Channing Street	71003 0012
24-26 Channing Street	71003 0011

Historic Photographs and Maps



1866



1874



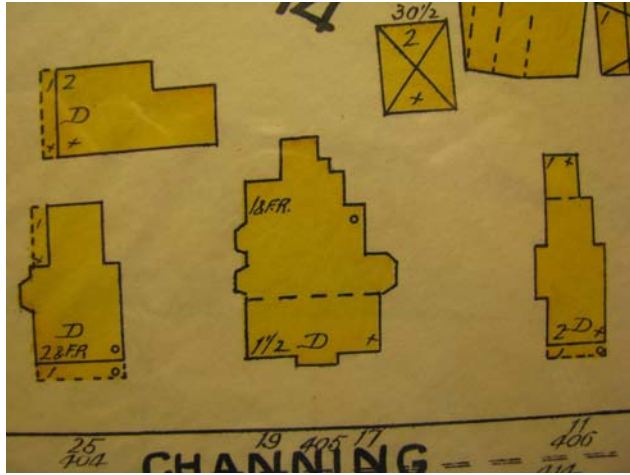
1878 birdseye



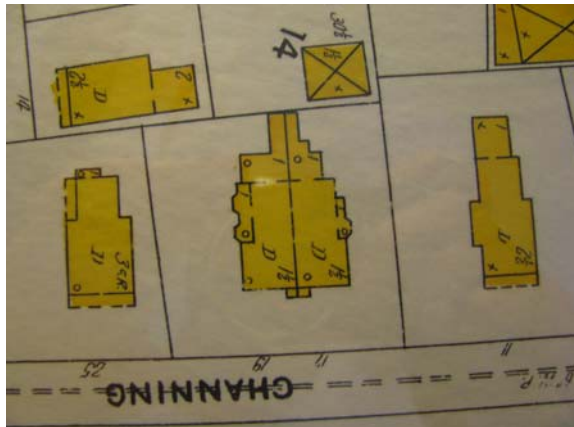
1897 birdseye



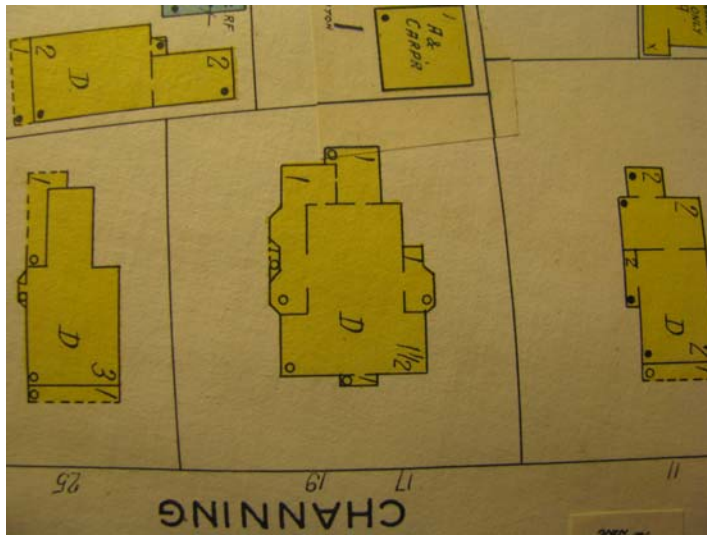
1886



1892



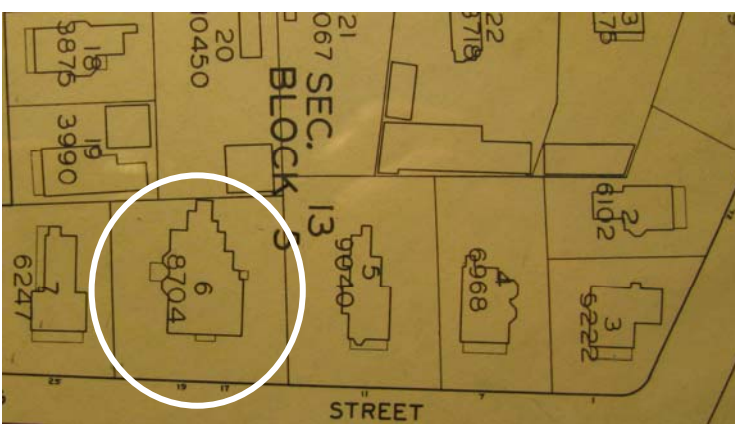
1903



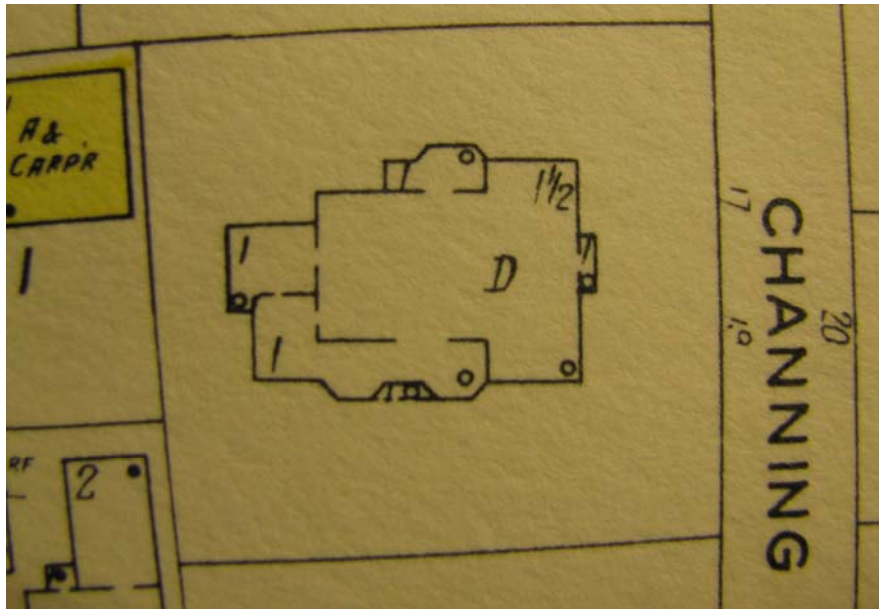
1931



Channing Street 1931



1946



1960

Current Photographs



Front facade



Front / South facade



South facade



South / Rear façade



Rear / North facade



North façade



Front / North facade