



CAMBRIDGE HISTORICAL COMMISSION

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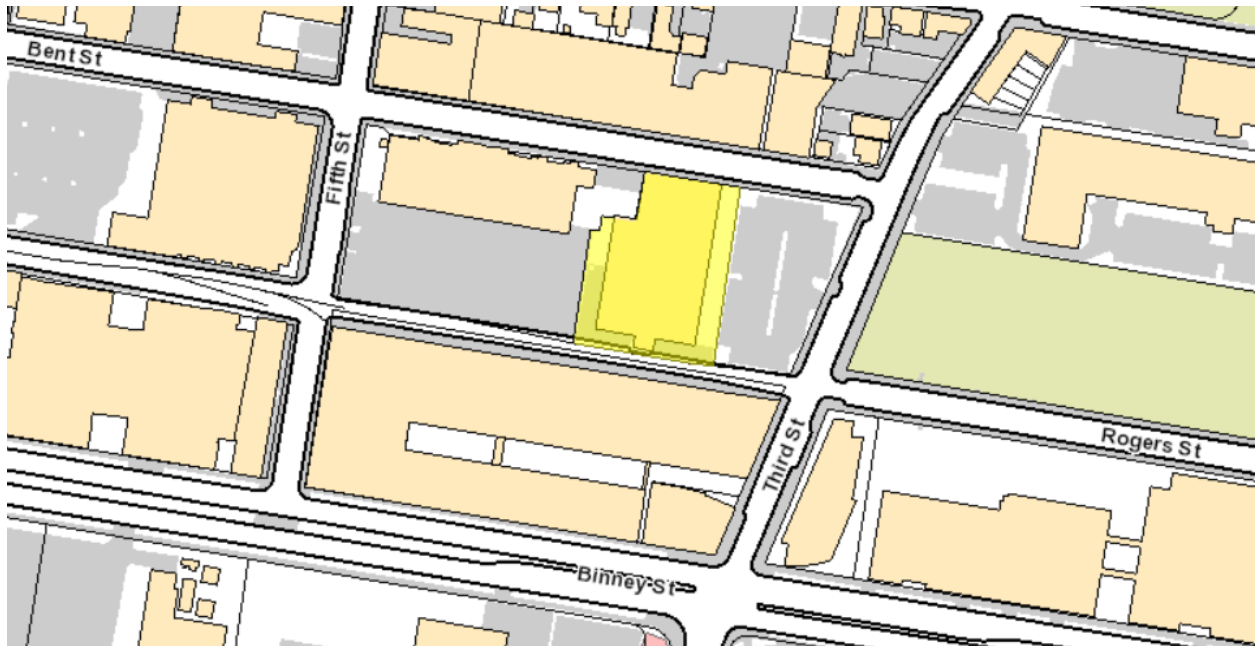
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November 28, 2016

To: Members of the Historical Commission
From: Charles Sullivan
Re: 101 Rogers Street, Evaluation for Landmark Designation Study

Background

On November 23, 2016, the Commission received a petition requesting the initiation of a landmark designation study of the Foundry Building at 101 Rogers Street. Pending confirmation from the Election Commission that the petition contains the names of at least ten registered voters, the staff placed the matter on the agenda of the December 1 meeting of the Commission.



In accordance with past practice, on December 1 the Commission will consider whether to accept the petition; if so, the protection provided by the landmark designation study will commence immediately, and the Commission will schedule a public hearing for its January 5 meeting to confirm its decision. The effect of initiating a study would be to protect the building for up to twelve months while the commission considers designation and prepares a recommendation to the City Council.



101 Rogers Street

Cambridge Assessing Dept. photo

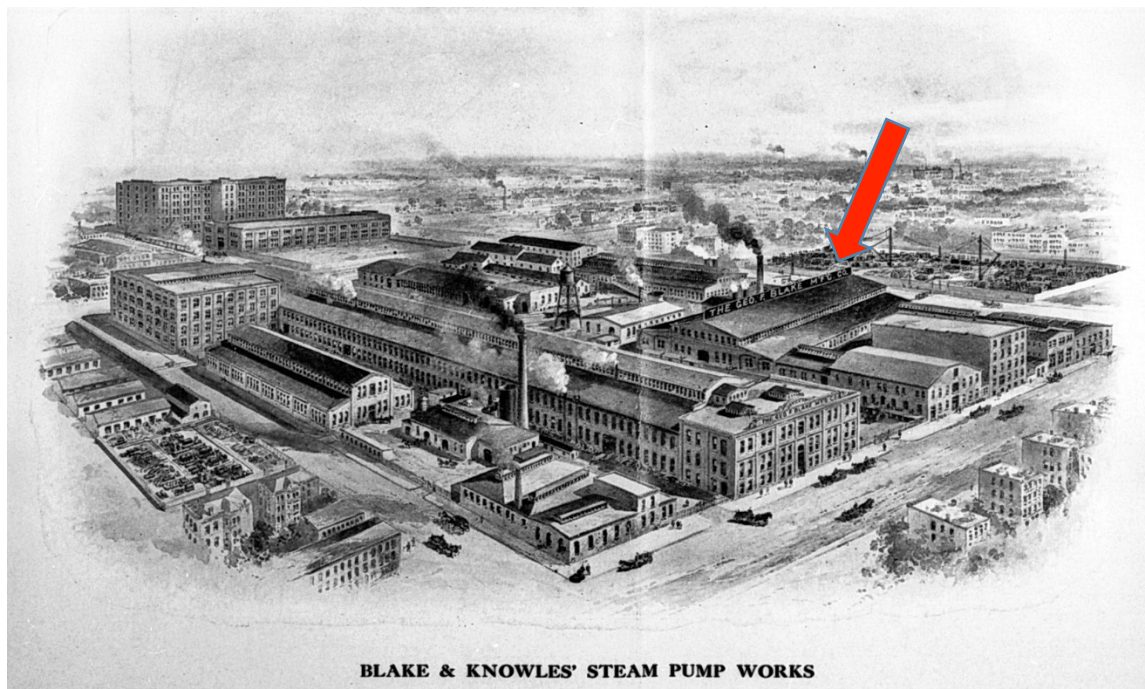
George F. Blake Foundry, 101 Rogers Street

The Foundry Building is historically associated with one of Cambridge's most important late 19th-century industries, the Blake & Knowles Steam Pump Works.

The business began when George Blake, a mechanical engineer, invented an innovative steam pump to keep the claypits of North Cambridge's brickyards free of water. In 1864, Blake and two partners, brickyard owners Peter Hubbell and Job A. Turner, started to manufacture pumps in Boston. In 1889 the company returned to Cambridge in its first major building, a machine shop and office at 265 Third Street. By 1896 the company employed 1,000 workers and manufactured a wide range of pumps for a variety of industrial applications. In 1897, Blake merged with the Crompton & Knowles Loom Works of Worcester and became the Blake & Knowles Steam Pump & Machinery Corporation. Blake & Knowles and seven affiliated companies were reorganized as the Worthington Pump & Machinery Corporation in 1916.

According to the National Register nomination for an adjoining portion of the complex, the Blake & Knowles Steam Pump Company "designed pumps to handle any fluid, semi-fluid, or liquor, acid or alkali, from the lightest pressure up to 25,000 pounds per square inch. Pumps for gas and vapor under vacuum or various degrees of compression and adapted to be driven by steam, air, or water pressure, and later by gas engines and electric motors, were all among the company's capabilities" (Webber, p. 8/3).

By the early 20th century, the company had become one of the nation's foremost pump manufacturers. The nomination continues, "Products at this time included pumps for marine use, waterworks, tanneries, soap works, cotton, woolen, paper and silk mills, for quarries, foundries, chemical works, mines, artesian wells, elevators, sewage facilities, fuel oil, air compressors, steam engines, etc. Practically every facet of modern industry required some sort of pump mechanism which the Blake & Knowles Works could provide" (Webber, p. 8/4).



Blake & Knowles Works, ca. 1910. Arrow indicates Foundry Building.

During World War I the company received government contracts for war materiel and substantially increased in size. Milestone achievements of the 1920s included diesel engine and locomotive pumps that set an industry standard. The Blake & Knowles works remained an important contributor to Cambridge industry until the Worthington Company consolidated operations in Holyoke, Mass. in 1927. In recent times the company's manufacturing buildings on the block bounded by Third, Sciarappa, Rogers and Binney streets have been adapted for residential and office use. They were listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1997, while the brass foundry has been protected by a preservation restriction since 2001.

The Foundry Building is the only Blake & Knowles building that is not designated in some fashion. It was designed by engineer L.H. Gager of Palmer, Mass, and constructed in 1890 with a footprint of 120' by 200'; it now contains 52,000 square feet of useable space. The foundry featured two innovative 35-ton electric traveling cranes, and had the capacity to melt 50 tons of iron each day. The central portion runs through from Rogers to Bent Street. It rises two stories and originally had clerestory windows on both sides of the monitor roof; this portion has been remodeled with siding and modern windows to support office use. The main block is flanked by one-story extensions, while the Rogers Street elevation features a vestibule added in 1988.

According to Marie Saccoccio, a neighborhood resident who is one of the petitioners, the foundry played an important role in women's labor history.

East Cambridge was surely a center of industry during the turn of the century but lost in the accounts is the historic and substantial role of the neighborhood women (notably Polish) who worked in its foundries. The evidence of their controversial contribution was memorialized by *The New York Times* in three articles appearing in September, 1911, and covered by the press as far away as San Francisco. The controversy concerned women in the workplace, doing a man's job, being paid half the man's hourly wage; lifting as much as 150 lbs. on the job; stripping from waist up because of the heat of the foundry itself; working far more hours than allowed by law. The public debate was so notorious that Governor Eugene Foss au-

thorized a raid on the premises by the State Police. Lieutenant Governor supported the action, as did Mayor Barry of Cambridge and various Congregational ministers. The debate extended to a formal meeting at Faneuil Hall. It appears the male workers from the foundries, represented by American Federation of Labor and Boston Central Labor Union, were the source of the complaints; they were undoubtedly seeking more hours for the men, rather than advocating for the increase in wages or better working conditions for women. The owners of the foundries, which included Governor Foss, asserted that the women were fully capable of doing a man's job with no mitigation necessary.

Within a year, despite an investigation that found no violation of existing law, Massachusetts passed the Employment of Women in the Core Rooms, Acts of 1912, Chapter 653, and the first Minimum Wage Act for Women in the Country, Chapter 706, Acts of 1912.

The Foundry Building entered separate ownership after the Worthington Company left in 1927. In 2009 the Alexandria Company agreed to transfer ownership to the city in partial mitigation of zoning relief for its projects along Binney Street, and the city accepted the deed in 2012. The city then leased the property to the Cambridge Redevelopment Authority, which took responsibility for the reuse of the property and developed the following goal statement:

The Foundry will be a creative, innovative center that offers a collaborative environment with a mix of cultural, educational, manufacturing, and commercial uses. The renovated multipurpose building will be designed for flexibility and will be accessible, inclusive, and welcoming to the public. The activities within will be multigenerational and multicultural, providing a citywide and neighborhood resource that is financially sustainable for years to come.

In August 2016 the CRA designated CIC/Graffito SP, working in association with Hacin+Associates, as the Kendall Square Foundry Development Partners for the revitalization of the building. Recently the planning process has become divisive, and reportedly the petition was filed in response to comments from a key party that the site should be cleared and redeveloped.

The Cambridge Historical Commission has no current jurisdiction over the Foundry unless it receives a demolition permit application. The CRA's agreement with the developer has few restrictions against alterations. According to an FAQ statement, "modifications to the building envelope could be considered and would be subject to approval under Article 19, Building Review under the City of Cambridge Zoning Ordinance. Modifications to the building entrances are expected as the current building configuration is not accessible." The possibility of demolition is not addressed in documents available on the CRA website.

Landmark Criteria and Goals

Landmarks are enacted by the City Council upon recommendation of the Historical Commission. The Commission commences a landmark designation study process by its own initiative or by voting to accept a petition of ten registered voters.

The criteria provided in the ordinance outlines eligible properties as:

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 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... (2.78.180.A)

The purpose of landmark designation is described in the ordinance, which was enacted 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 neighborhoods, 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; to foster appropriate use and wider public knowledge and appreciation of such neighborhoods, areas, or structures; and by furthering these purposes to promote the public welfare by making the city a more desirable place in which to live and work. (2.78.140)

Relationship to Criteria

The Blake & Knowles Foundry meets criterion (1) for its associations with the economic and social history of Cambridge. It also meets criterion (2) as being architecturally significant in the context of adjoining Blake & Knowles buildings that are already listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Staff Recommendations

For the reasons stated, the staff believes that the property at 101 Rogers Street is eligible for landmark designation. The Foundry Building is a very significant building in the industrial and social history of the city; demolition or destructive alterations should not be contemplated. However, the development process has become extremely controversial. It is unclear whether the building is actually threatened, and whether landmarking is warranted at this time.

The Commission should consider whether initiating a designation study would be effective in accomplishing the long-term preservation of the building.

cc: Tom Evans, CRA
Louis DiPasquale, City Manager