



City of Cambridge

Agenda Item No. 11
IN CITY COUNCIL

June 23, 1997

- ORDERED:** That the structures located at 1380 through 1392 Massachusetts Avenue and 2 through 14 J.F. Kennedy Street, designated on Assessors' map 160 as parcel 69, and historically known as the Read Block, be designated as a protected landmark pursuant to Chapter 2.78, Article III of the Code of the City of Cambridge, as recommended by vote of the Cambridge Historical Commission on June 5, 1997; and be it further
- ORDERED:** That this designation is justified by the important associations of the Read Block with the broad architectural and social history of the City of Cambridge and by the architectural significance of its style and period of construction as stated in the Final Landmark Designation Report dated June 5, 1997, prepared by the Cambridge Historical Commission; and be it further
- ORDERED:** That the effect of this designation shall be that no construction or alterations shall be made to the designated structures that would in any way affect the exterior architectural features visible from a public way unless the Commission shall first have issued a Certificate of Appropriateness, a Certificate of Nonapplicability, or a Certificate of Hardship with respect to such construction or alteration. Notwithstanding this designation, and subject to review and approval of construction details in general and alterations to the existing storefront at 2A John F. Kennedy Street in particular, the Read Block may be altered in conformance with plans and elevations prepared for the Cambridge Savings Bank by Symmes, Maini and McKee Associates, dated June 5, 1997; now therefore be it
- ORDERED:** That in making determinations, the Commission shall be guided by Section VI, Standards for Design Review, of the Landmark Designation Report, by the applicable sections of Chapter 2.78, Article III, and by the above-referenced plans, which are incorporated into this Order.

In City Council June 23, 1997.

Adopted by a yea and nay vote:-

Yeas 9; Nays 0; Absent 0.

Attest:- D. Margaret Drury, City Clerk

A true copy;

D. Margaret Drury

ATTEST:-

D. Margaret Drury,
City Clerk

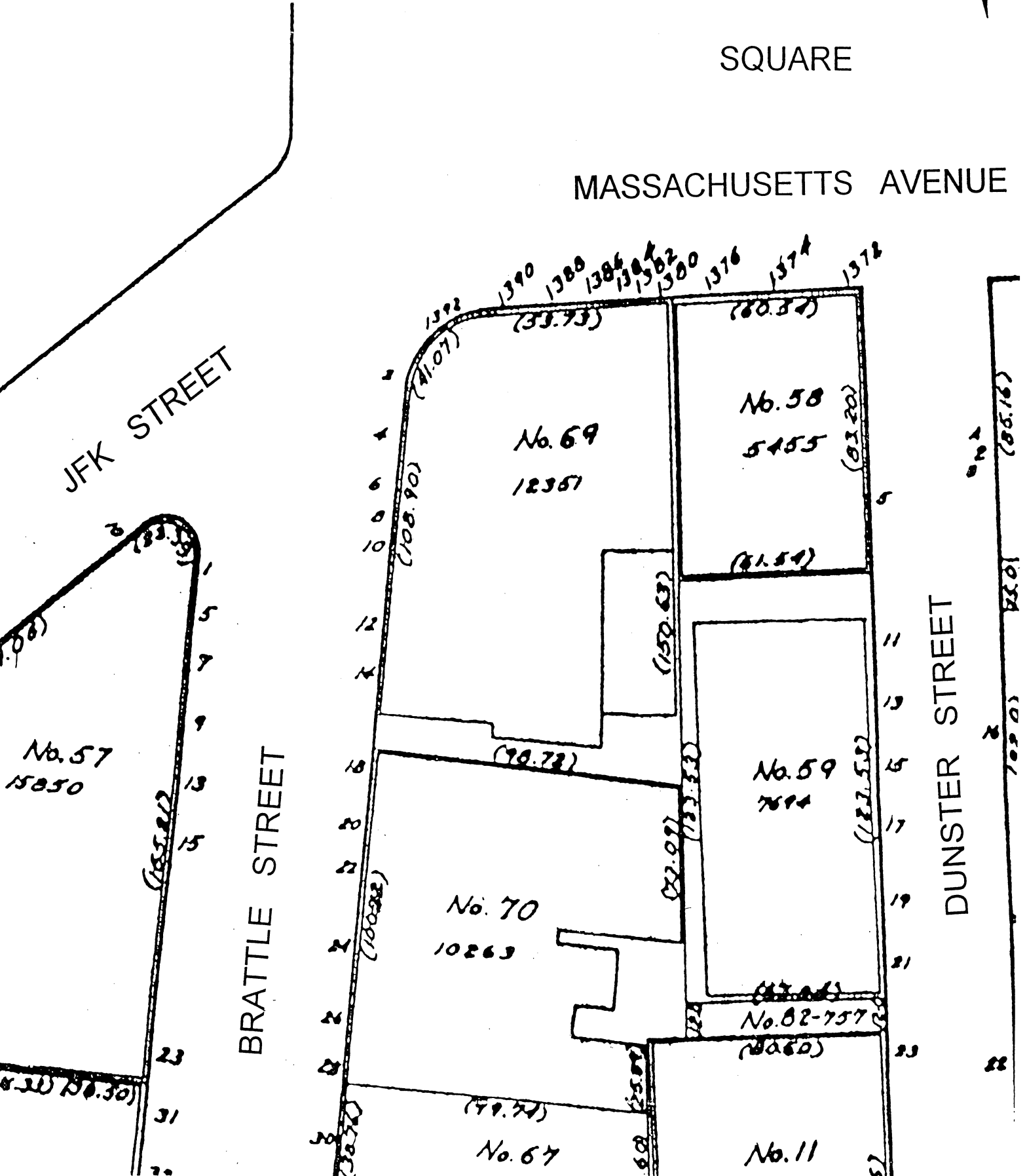
READ BLOCK

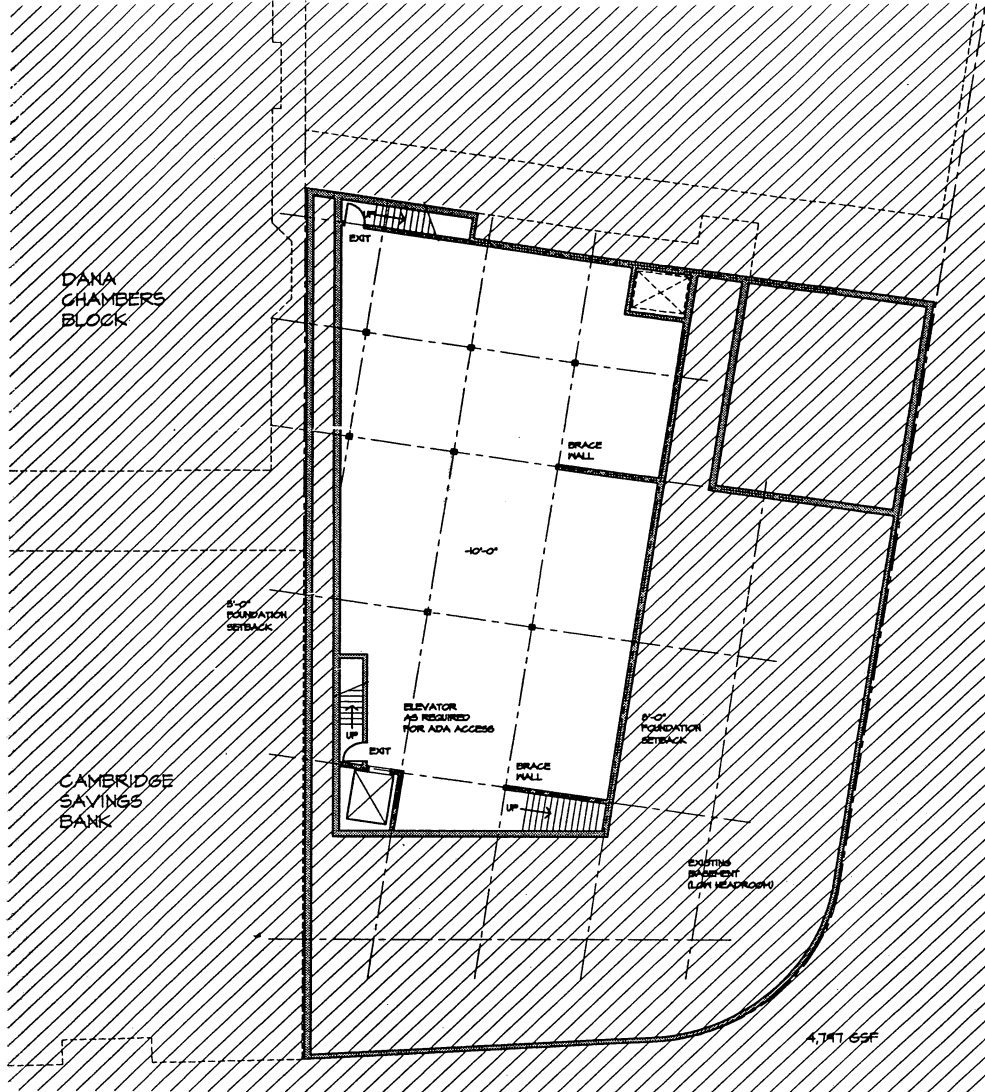
1380-1392 MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE, 2-14 JFK STREET
CAMBRIDGE ASSESSOR'S MAP 160, PARCEL 169

DESIGNATED AS A LANDMARK BY CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL ON JUNE 23, 1997
CAMBRIDGE HISTORICAL COMMISSION

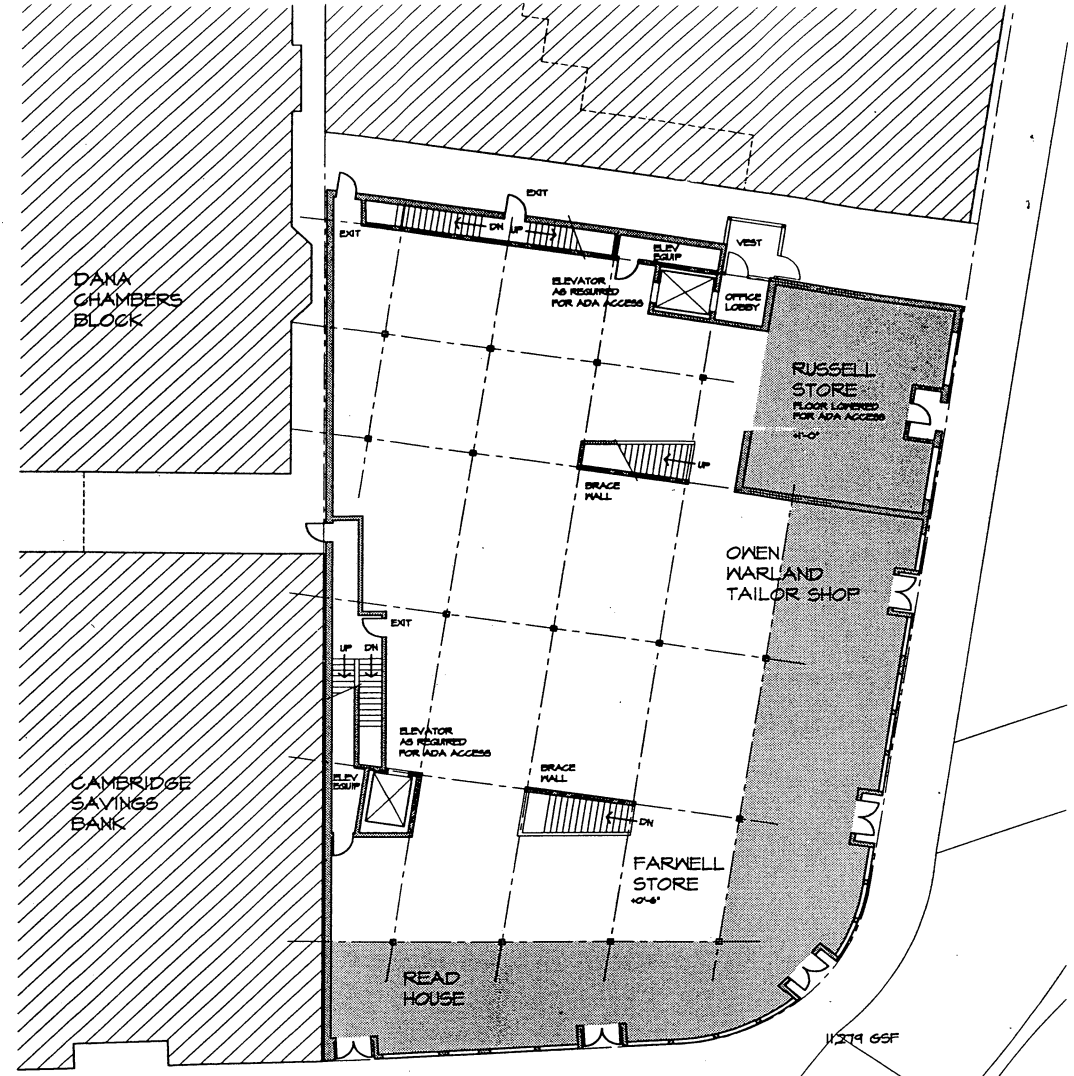
HARVARD
SQUARE

MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE

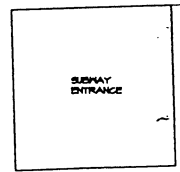




BASEMENT
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GROUND FLOOR
SCALE: 1" = 20'

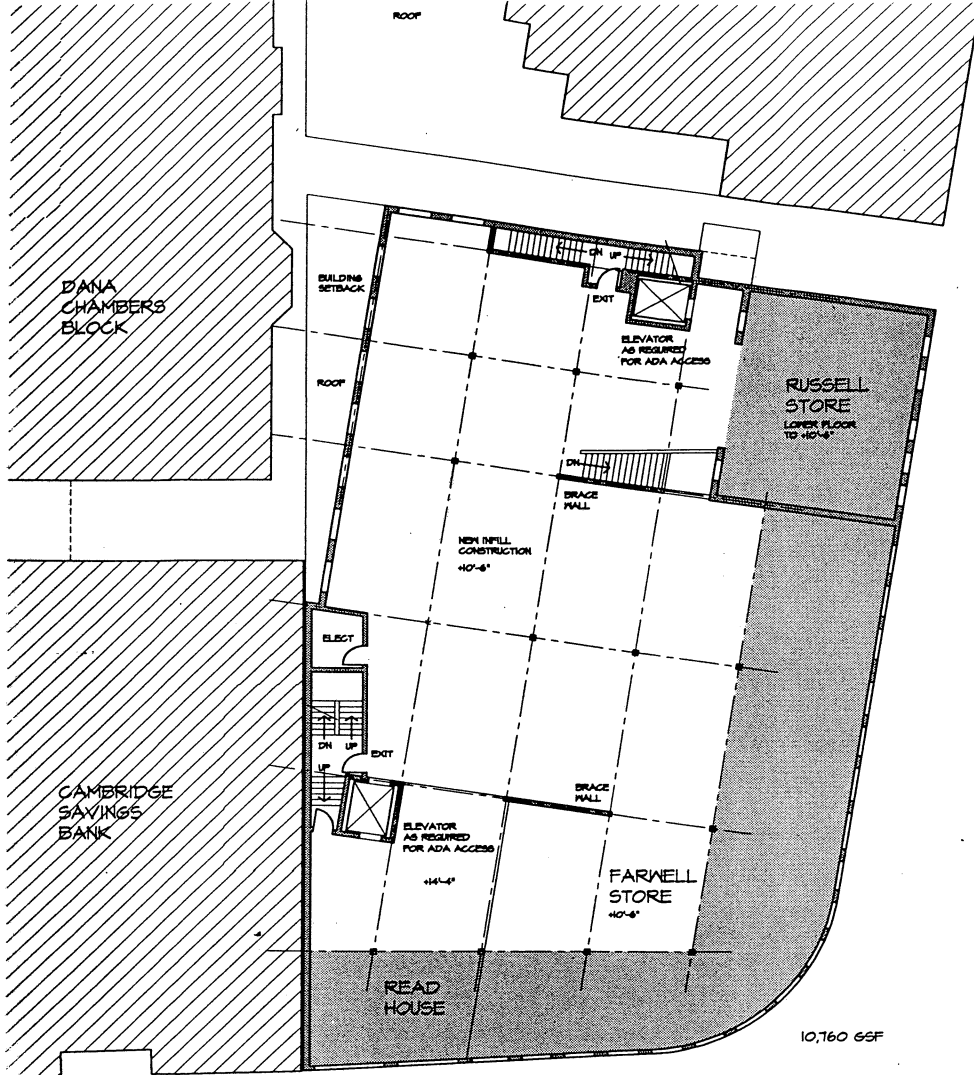


**CAMBRIDGE SAVINGS BANK
READ BLOCK**

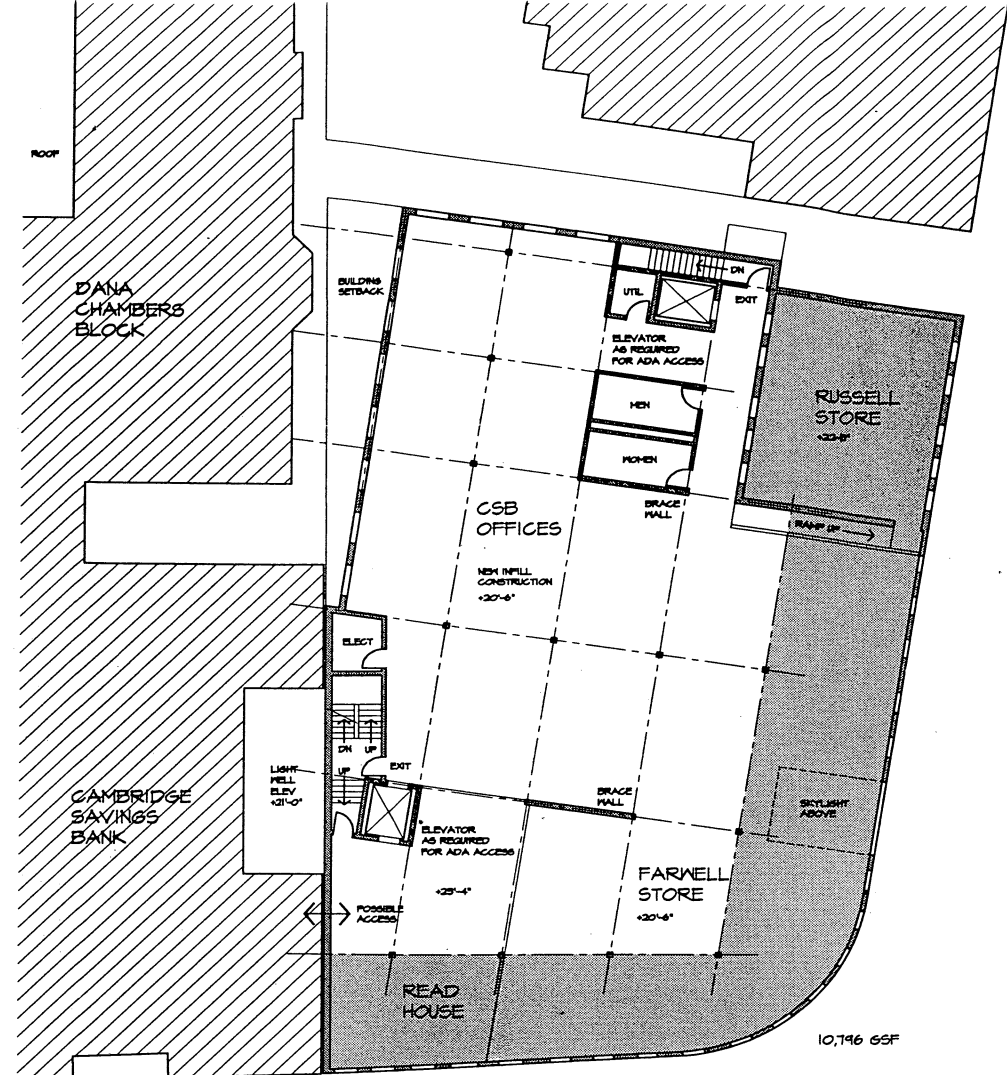


SYMMES MAINI & McKEE ASSOCIATES
5 JUNE 1997

Read Block Designation Order
Cambridge Historical Commission
June 5, 1997
Sheet 1 of 5



SECOND FLOOR
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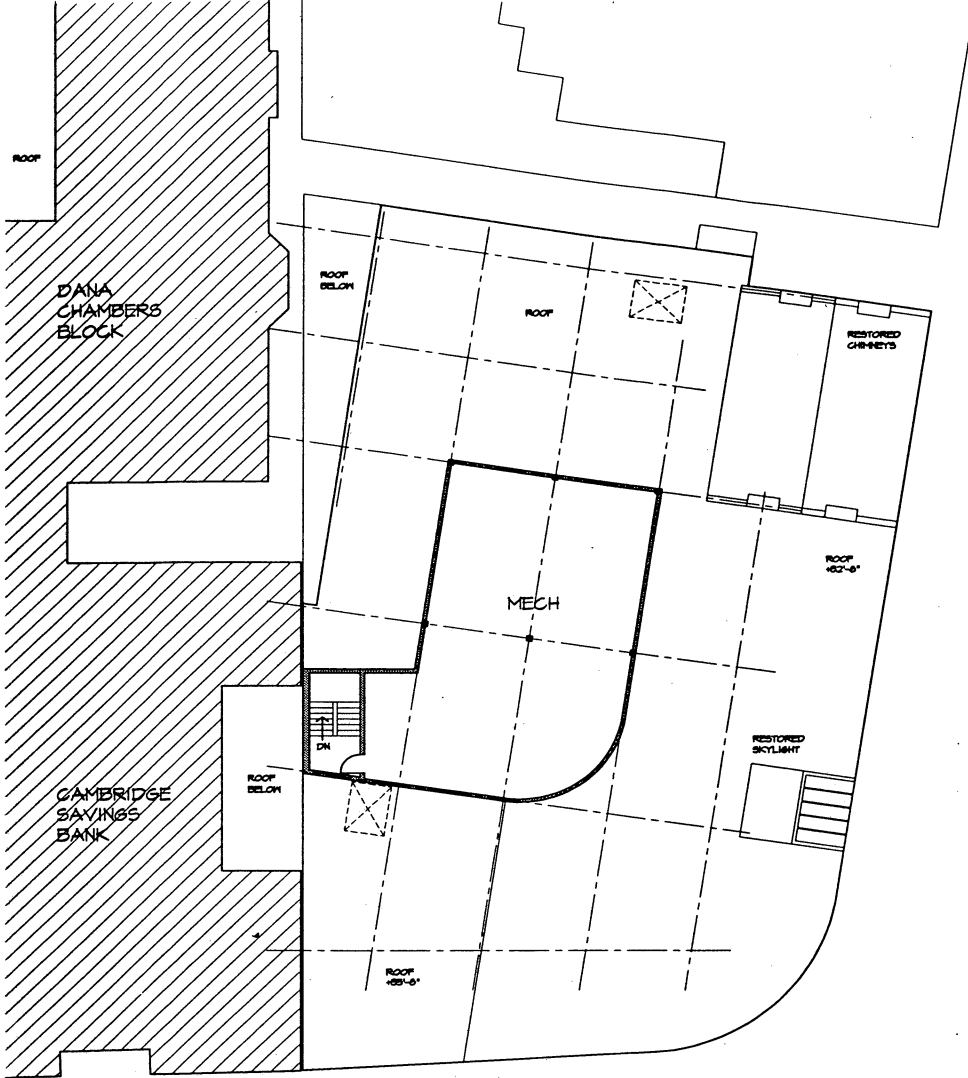
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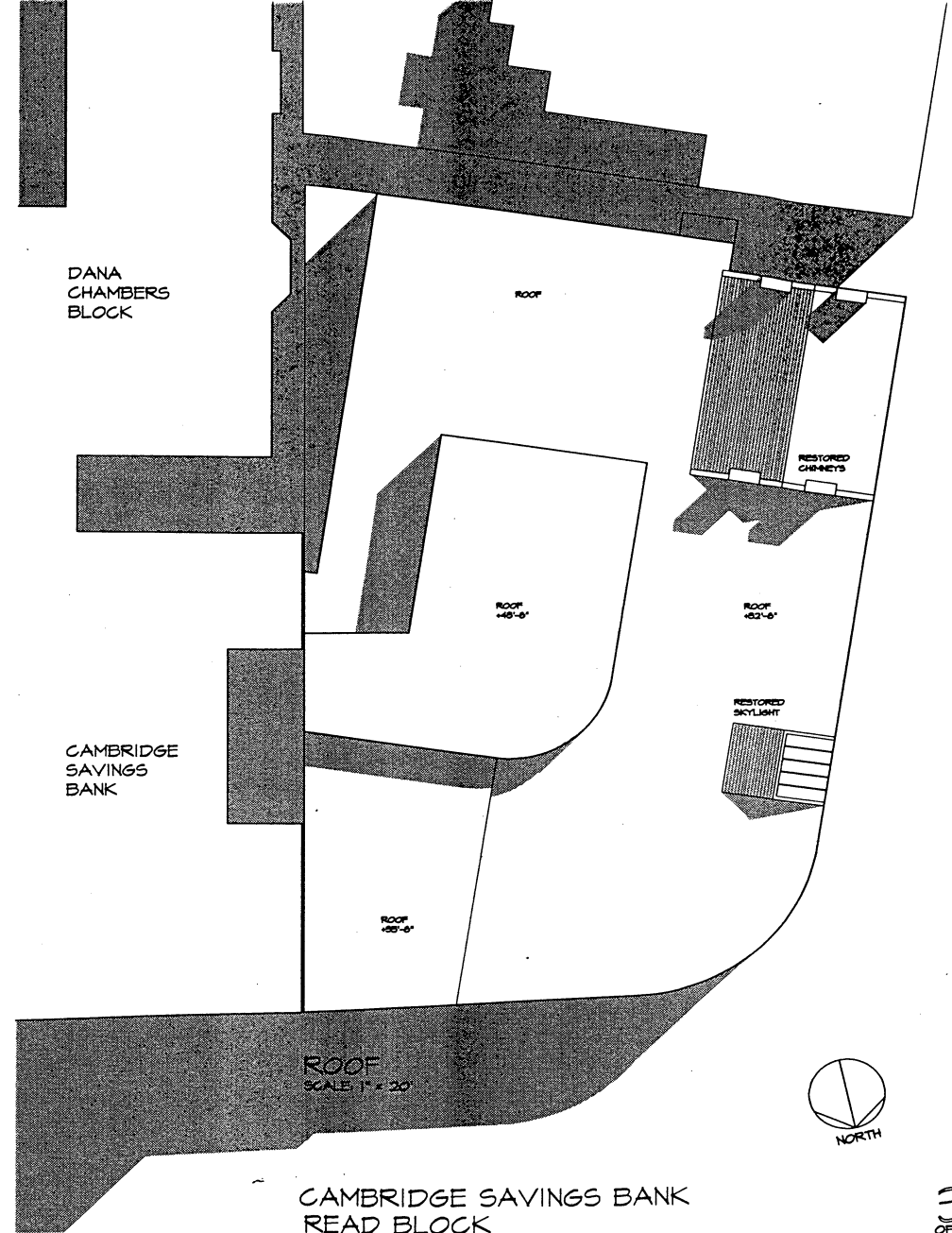
SYMMES MAINI & MCKEE ASSOCIATES
5 JUNE 1997

CAMBRIDGE SAVINGS BANK
READ BLOCK

Read Block Designation Order
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ROOF/MECH
SCALE: 1" = 20'



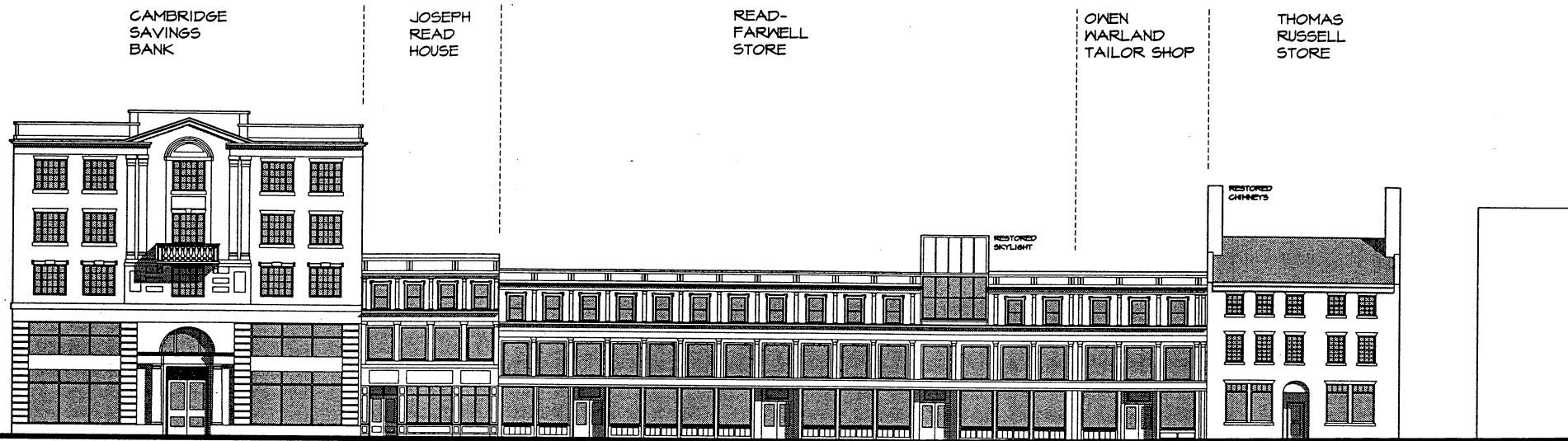
ROOF
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CAMBRIDGE SAVINGS BANK
READ BLOCK



SYMMES MAINI & MCKEE ASSOCIATES
5 JUNE 1997

Read Block Designation Order
Cambridge Historical Commission
June 5, 1997
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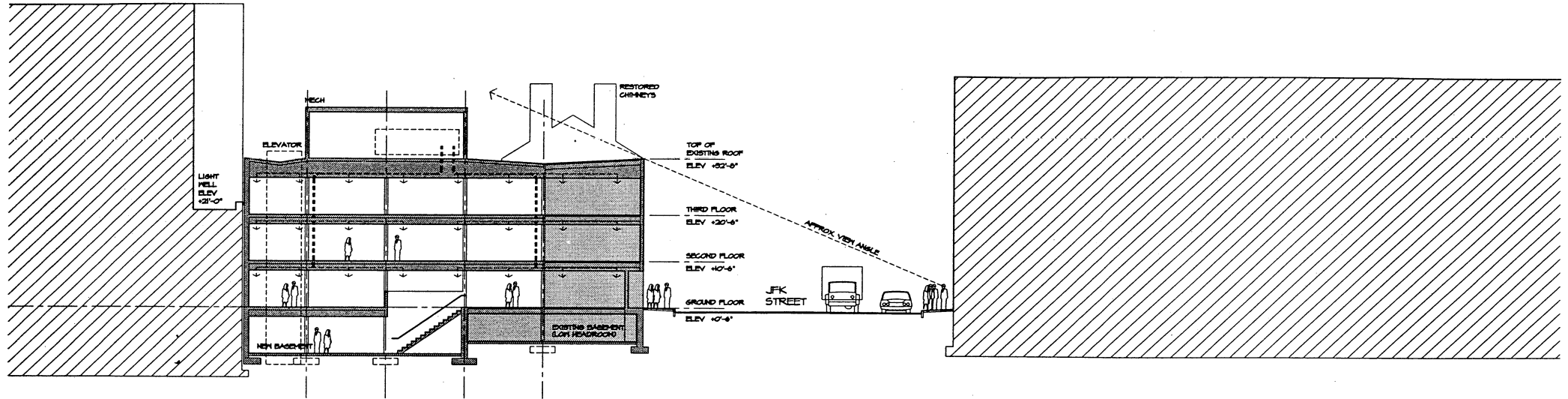
PROPOSED ELEVATION
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SYMMES MAINI & MCKEE ASSOCIATES
5 JUNE 1997

Read Block Designation Order
Cambridge Historical Commission
June 5, 1997
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CAMBRIDGE SAVINGS BANK
READ BLOCK

CAMBRIDGE
SAVINGS
BANK



SECTION LOOKING SOUTH

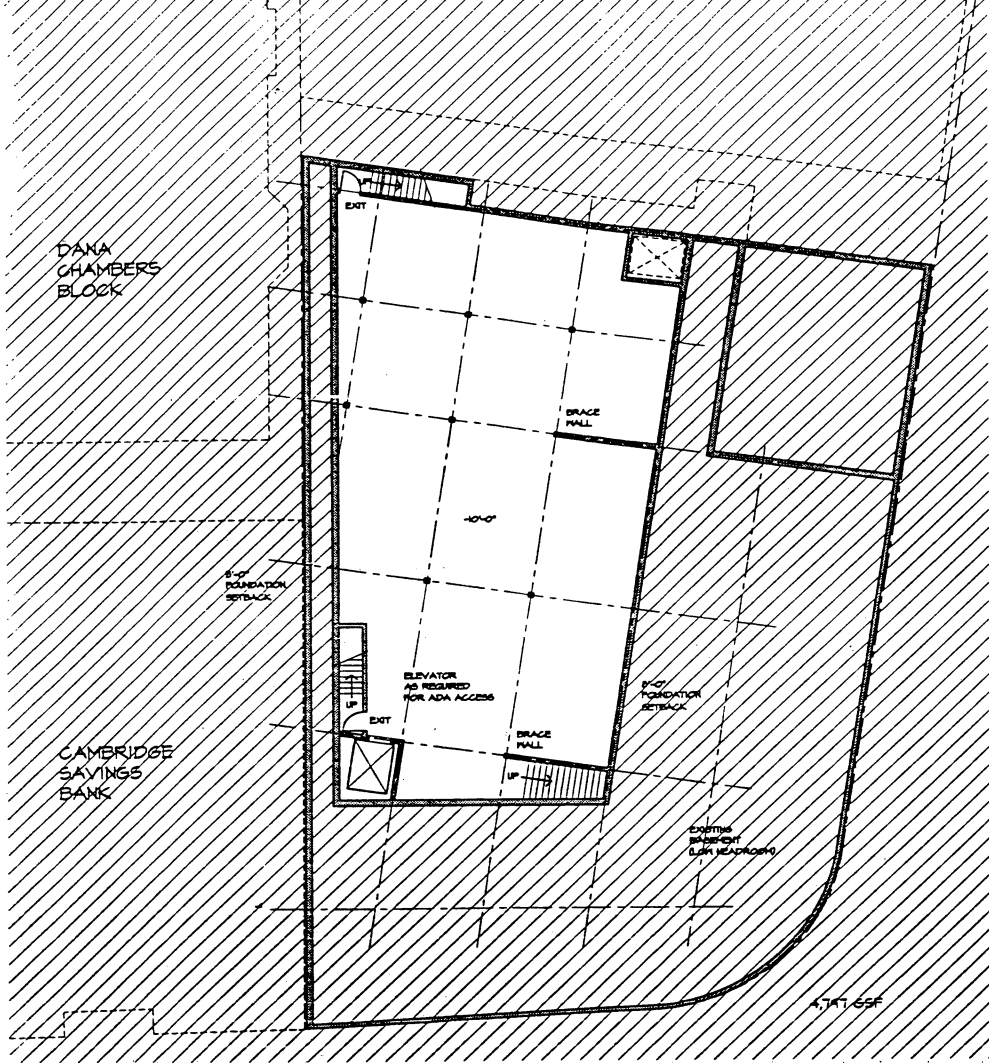
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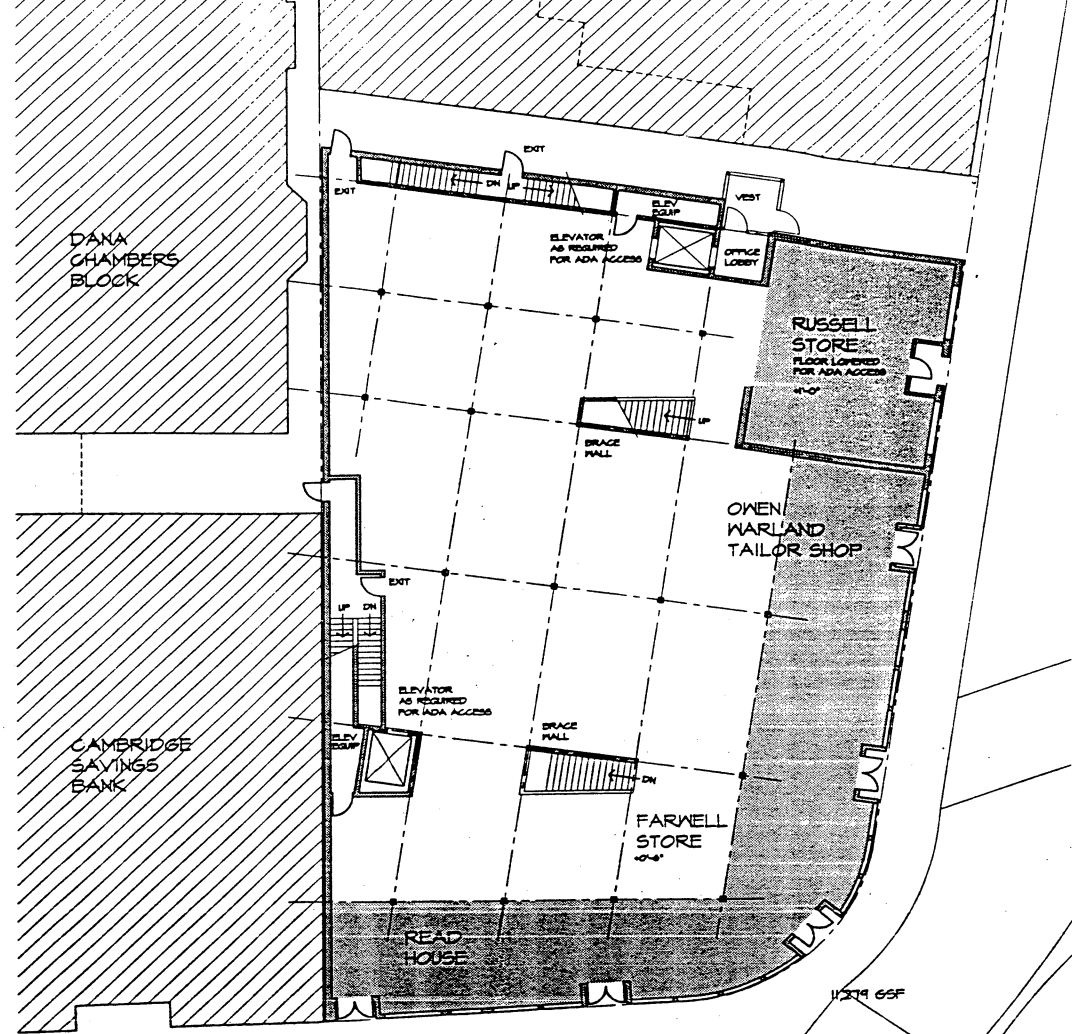
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READ BLOCK

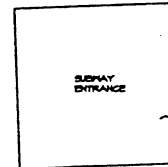
Read Block Designation Order
Cambridge Historical Commission
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BASEMENT
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GROUND FLOOR
SCALE: 1" = 20'

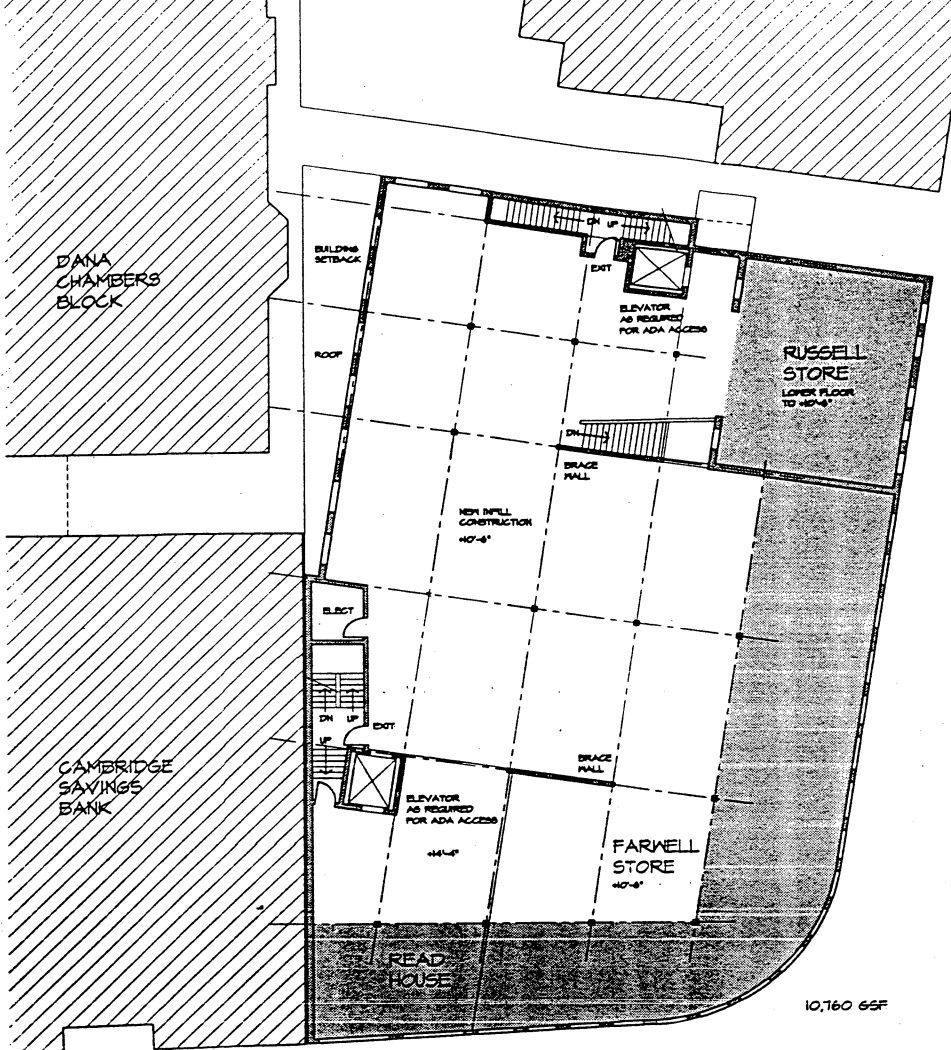


CAMBRIDGE SAVINGS BANK
READ BLOCK

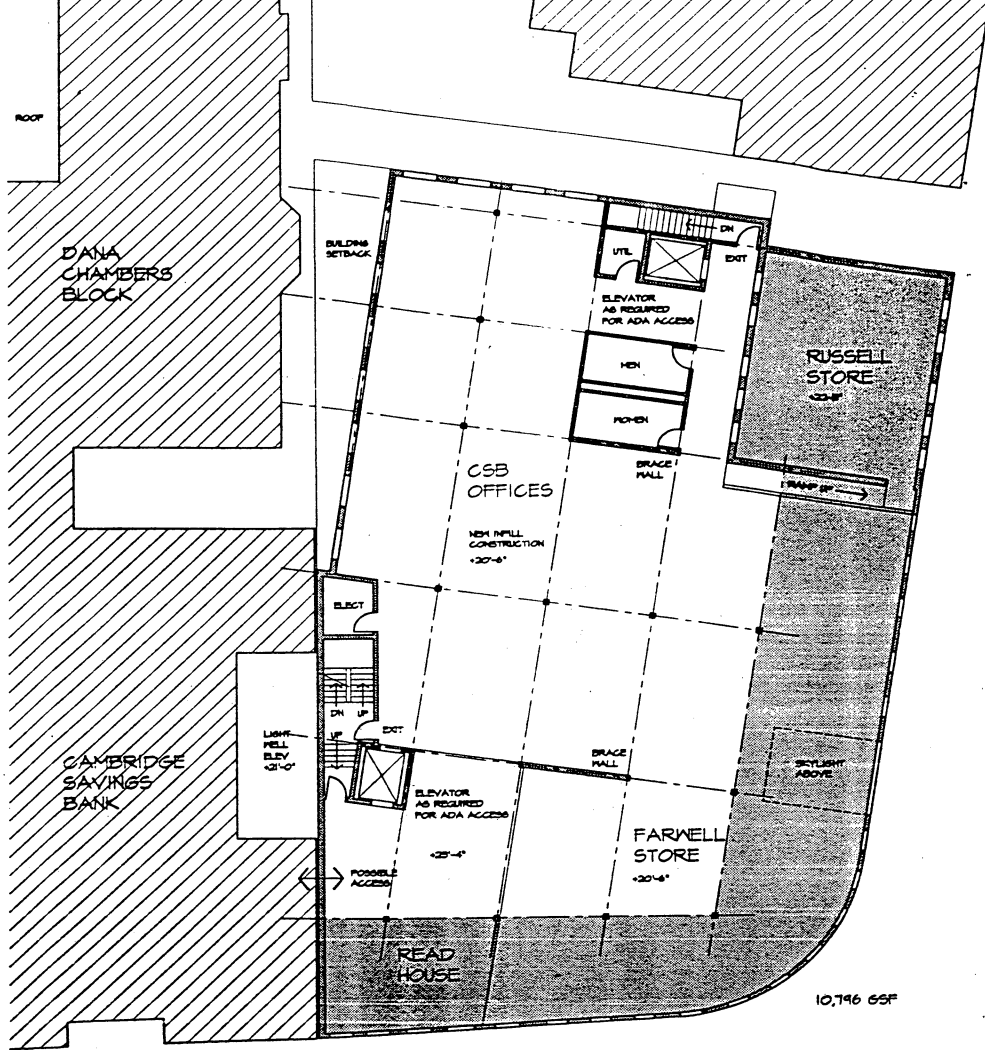


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5 JUNE 1997

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Cambridge Historical Commission
June 5, 1997
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SECOND FLOOR
SCALE: 1" = 20'



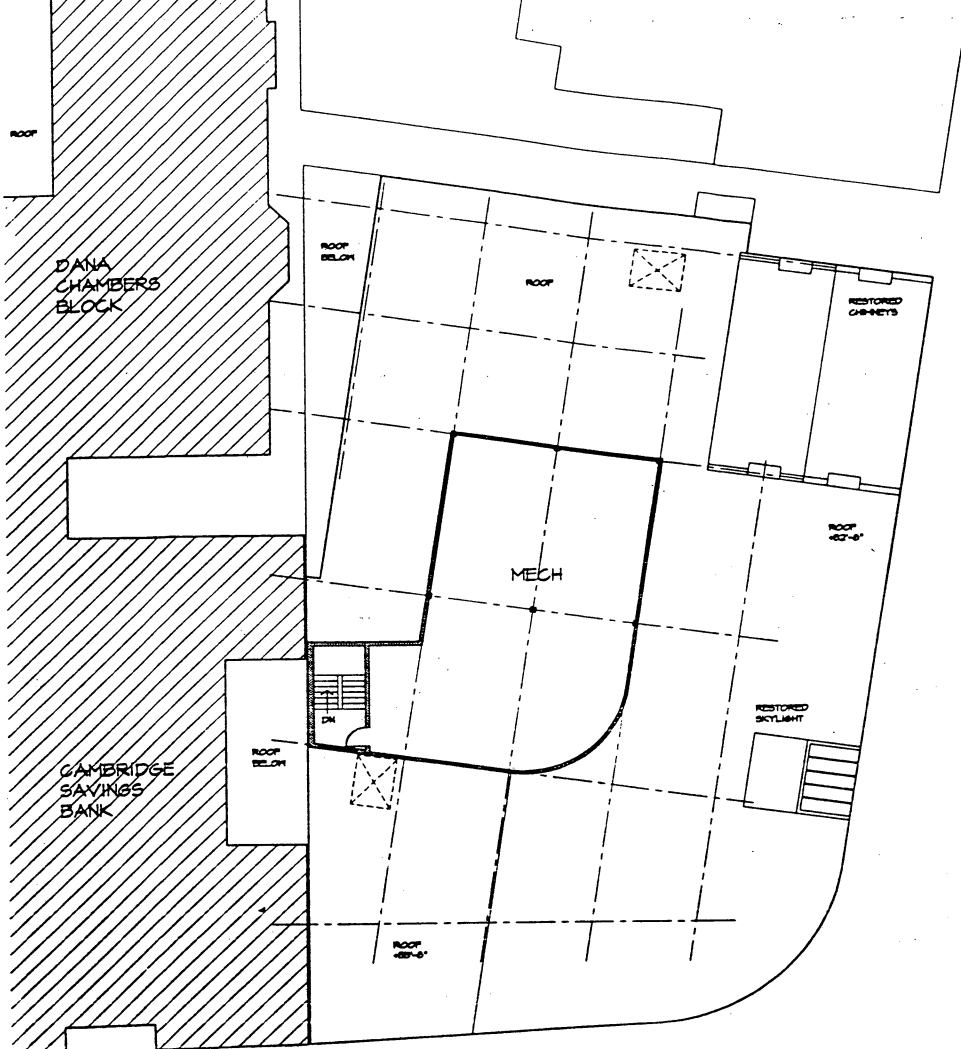
THIRD FLOOR
SCALE: 1" = 20'



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Read Block Designation Order
Cambridge Historical Commission
June 5, 1997
Sheet 2 of 5

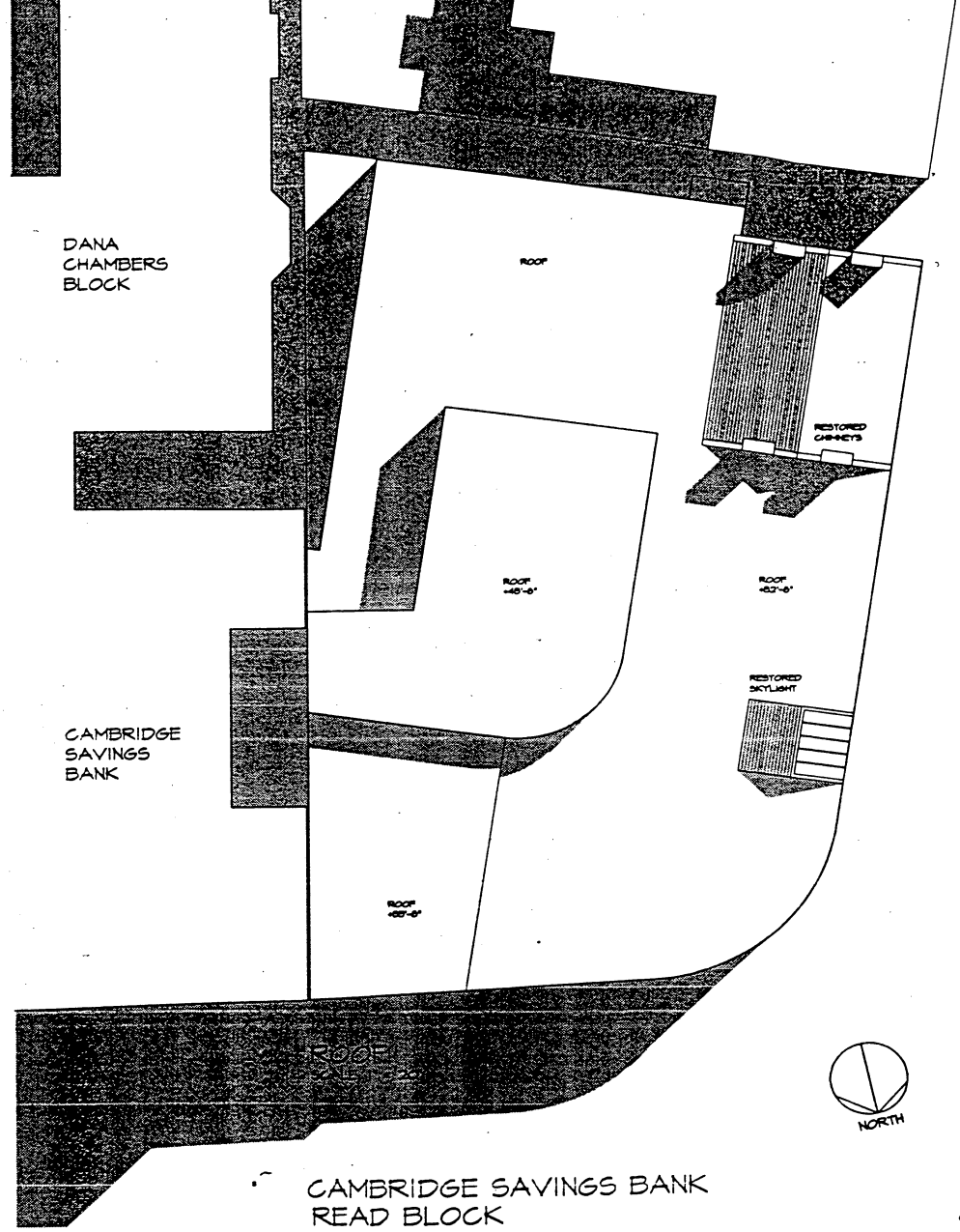
CAMBRIDGE SAVINGS BANK
READ BLOCK



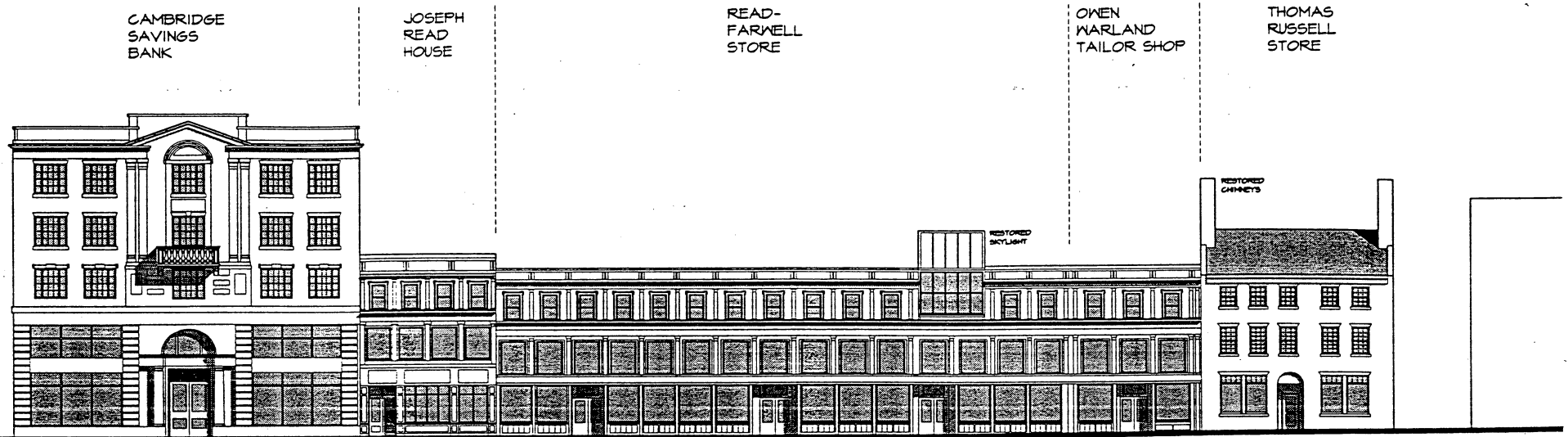
ROOF/MECH
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CAMBRIDGE SAVINGS BANK
READ BLOCK



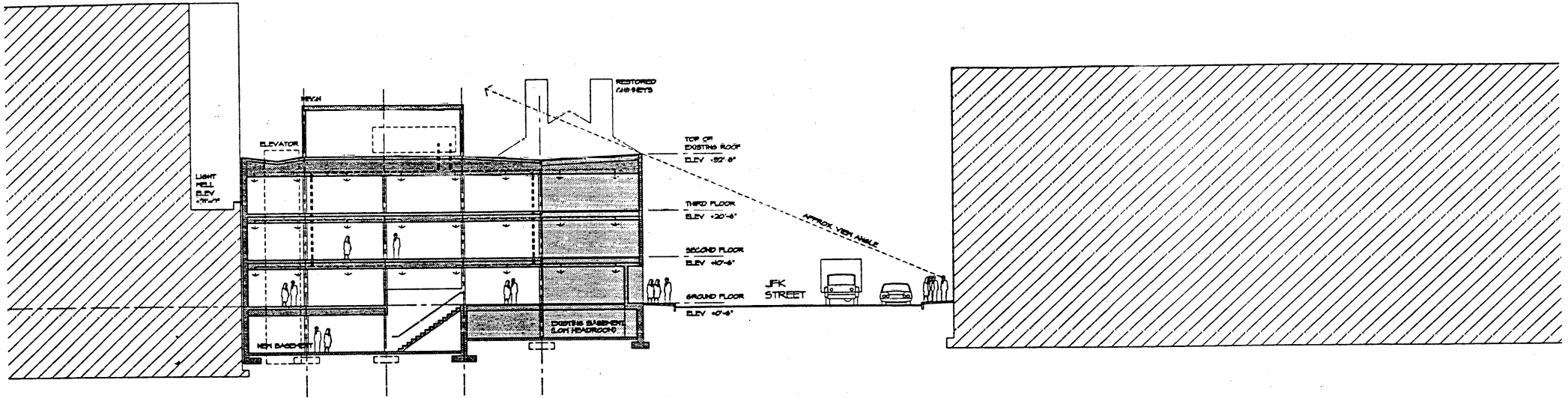
PROPOSED ELEVATION
SCALE: 1" = 20'

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June 5, 1997
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CAMBRIDGE SAVINGS BANK
READ BLOCK

CAMBRIDGE
SAVINGS
BANK



SECTION LOOKING SOUTH
SCALE: 1" = 20'

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5 JUNE 1997

Read Block Designation Order
Cambridge Historical Commission
June 5, 1997
Sheet 5 of 5

CAMBRIDGE SAVINGS BANK
READ BLOCK



Cambridge Historical Commission

City Hall Annex, 57 Inman Street, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 02139. 617/349-4683, Fax 617/349-4669, TTY 617/492-0235



William B. King, *Chairman*, Allison M. Crump, *Vice Chairman*, Charles M. Sullivan, *Executive Director*.
Suzanne R. Green, Dorothy LeMessurier, Helen F. Moulton, Robert G. Neiley, Jo M. Solet, *Commission Members*.
M. Wyllis Bibbins, Jennifer Jones, Anthony C. Platt, *Alternates*.

June 11, 1997

Robert W. Healy, City Manager
City Hall
Cambridge, Mass. 02139

Dear Mr. Healy:

On June 5, the Historical Commission unanimously voted to recommend designation of the Read Block at 1380-1392 Massachusetts Avenue and 2-14 J.F. Kennedy Street as a landmark under Chapter 2.78, Article III, of the City Code.

The proposed designation order is on page 30 of the attached Landmark Designation Report. It incorporates a plan proposed by the Cambridge Savings Bank, the owner of the property, to restore the facade of the Read Block to its 1896 appearance and incorporate a significant portion of the historic structure in a new three-story building that will be built in the rear of the premises. The Commission feels that this scheme meets its objectives for historic preservation, and requests that you transmit its recommendation to the City Council for its consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Charles M. Sullivan".

Charles M. Sullivan
Executive Director

FINAL LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT

THE READ BLOCK (1896)

consisting of the:

JOSEPH READ HOUSE
1380 MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE (c. 1780-82)

READ-FARWELL STORE
1384-1392 MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE (c. 1792-1800)

OWEN WARLAND TAILOR SHOP
6-8 JOHN F. KENNEDY STREET
(c. 1780)

THOMAS RUSSELL STORE
10-14 JOHN F. KENNEDY STREET
(c. 1820)

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Landmark Designation Report
Prepared by Charles M. Sullivan
Cambridge Historical Commission
June 5, 1997

Summary and Proposed Designation Order

FINAL LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT

THE READ BLOCK (1896)

The Read Block consists of four buildings dating from c. 1780 to c. 1820 that were unified behind a single facade in 1896. Individually, the buildings represent the largest concentration of late 18th and early 19th century commercial structures in Cambridge, while the Read Block as a whole is the most significant wood frame commercial structure remaining in Harvard Square.

The entire block has been threatened with destruction by recent redevelopment proposals, but the Cambridge Savings Bank and the Historical Commission have reached an agreement on a project that will entail restoration of the 1896 facade and partial preservation of the structures behind them. In addition, the storefront at 2A J.F. Kennedy Street will be specifically protected, subject to Commission review and approval of future alterations.

The Commission believes that this designation plan offers the best opportunity for preservation of these significant buildings, and offers the following proposed designation order for consideration by the City Council:

ORDERED:

That the structures located at 1380 through 1392 Massachusetts Avenue and 2 through 14 J.F. Kennedy Street, designated on Assessors' map 160 as parcel 169, and historically known as the Read Block, be designated as a protected landmark pursuant to Chapter 2.78, Article III of the Code of the City of Cambridge, as recommended by vote of the Cambridge Historical Commission on June 5, 1997.

This designation is justified by the important associations of the Read Block with the broad architectural and social history of the City of Cambridge and by the architectural significance of its style and period of construction as stated in the Final Landmark Designation Report dated June 5, 1997, prepared by the Cambridge Historical Commission.

The effect of this designation shall be that no construction or alterations shall be made to the designated structures that would in any way affect the exterior architectural features visible from a

public way unless the Commission shall first have issued a Certificate of Appropriateness, a Certificate of Nonapplicability, or a Certificate of Hardship with respect to such construction or alteration. Notwithstanding this designation, and subject to review and approval of construction details in general and alterations to the existing storefront at 2A John F. Kennedy Street in particular, the Read Block may be altered in conformance with plans and elevations prepared for the Cambridge Savings Bank by Symmes, Maini & McKee Associates, dated June 5, 1997.

In making determinations, the Commission shall be guided by Section VI, Standards for Design Review, of the Landmark Designation Report, by the applicable sections of Chapter 2.78, Article III, and by the above-referenced plans, which are incorporated into this Order.

I. Location and Economic Status

A. Address

The buildings comprising the Read Block consist of the Joseph Read House, 1380 Massachusetts Avenue (c. 1780-82); the Read-Farwell Store, 1384-1392 Massachusetts Avenue (c. 1792-1800); the Owen Warland Tailor Shop, 6-8 John F. Kennedy Street, (c. 1780); and the Thomas Russell Store, 10-14 John F. Kennedy Street, (c. 1820).

The FY 1997 assessed value of the property is as follows:

<u>Address</u>	<u>Assessors' Map</u>	<u>Area</u>	<u>Building</u>	<u>Total</u>
1390 Mass. Ave.	160/69	12,351	\$767,700	\$4,843,500

The property is zoned Business BB and is located within the Harvard Square Overlay Zone. Permitted uses include business, general retail, and offices with a FAR of 4.0, and multifamily residential with a FAR of 3.0. The height limit is 60', but can be increased to 80' if certain setback requirements are met. Most projects in the Overlay Zone are subject to a design consultation with the Harvard Square Advisory Committee. The overlay zone was created "to preserve the unique functional and visual environment of the area."

B. Ownership and Occupancy

The Read Block was owned by the Wyner family until it was acquired by the Cambridge Savings Bank in 1994. The Block has historically been occupied by restaurants, retail stores, and at least one bank, with offices and service businesses on the upper floors. The Wursthau, a major restaurant tenant since the 1930s, closed in 1996. Currently, a significant portion of the building is vacant.

C. Area Description

Harvard Square, which is now Cambridge's main commercial district, originated as Newtowne, the original settlement in present-day Cambridge. One of the few planned settlements in New England, Newtowne was laid out on a grid-plan, with straight streets intersecting at right angles, and set on a small hill at the head of a tidal creek near the Charles River. The streets surrounding the Read Block, including John F. Kennedy Street and Massachusetts Avenue, are part of the original settlement, while Brattle Street follows the course of the brook that led to the Charles River. Harvard Square, which is the intersection of these three major streets, is the core of the vibrant business district that shares the same name.

Newtowne was renamed Cambridge in 1638, and remained the only village within the present city limits until the West Boston (Longfellow) Bridge opened Cambridgeport to settlement in 1793. In the 18th century, businesses in the village were located along present J.F. Kennedy Street, anchored at one end by the marketplace and at the other by a courthouse on the present site of the Harvard Cooperative Society. After 1793, the general reorientation of travel and the construction of new highways to the West Boston Bridge caused the center of the business district to shift northward to the intersection of Brattle and J.F. Kennedy streets, at what is now Harvard Square proper.

As the village developed in the 19th century, most commercial construction took place in Harvard Square and along Brattle and Eliot streets, leaving the older properties on the periphery relatively intact. In the early 20th century, Harvard University began to build its undergraduate houses along the Charles River waterfront, and the remaining early structures in the village experienced new pressures for development. However, the small lots, narrow streets, and complex ownership patterns of the 17th century village hindered development and helped the traditional core retain its character.

In the late 19th century, construction of private dormitories and clubs transformed the streets east of Harvard Square proper, giving the area an air of modernity that was belied by the archaic frame buildings along Massachusetts Avenue between Dunster and J.F. Kennedy Streets. These buildings were unified behind an up-to-date facade in 1896, and were thenceforth known as the Read Block. The completion of the subway in 1912 concentrated commercial development in Harvard Square, and after World War I the surroundings of the Read Block were completely filled with new masonry mixed-use buildings. Except for the construction of the Harvard Trust Company building in 1956 and Holyoke Center in 1960-65, Harvard Square in the vicinity of the Read Block retains the architectural character of the early 20th century.

In large measure, the survival of the Read Block on one of the most valuable parcels in Harvard Square is an historical accident. Ownership of the buildings passed to the heirs of William Read upon his death in 1884. With some interruptions, the property was owned for current income rather than appreciation for over a century. Before renovations were undertaken in 1992 the owner's basis in the property had probably been reduced to a negligible amount, allowing current rental income to satisfy the beneficiaries. The purchase price at the time of sale in 1994, however, reflected the full development value of the land, and

required a capital investment difficult to support without a full build-out of a new structure.

D. Planning Issues

During the recession of the early 1970s, there was little expectation that Harvard Square would become commercially desirable without major public-sector intervention. In 1976, the General Court agreed to sell most of the MBTA yards, which had been planned as the site of the Kennedy Library; part went to Harvard for academic purposes and part to private development. The construction of the first phase of the Kennedy School in 1978, the Wainwright (formerly Coolidge) Bank building in 1980, University Place in 1982, and Charles Square in 1984 placed new emphasis on the southwest sector of Harvard Square. The completion of 119 Mount Auburn Street in 1989 was immediately followed by the severe recession of the early 1990s. One Brattle Square, which opened in 1992, was the last project undertaken during this extraordinary period of real estate development; others, at One Eliot Square and 10-18 Eliot Street, were cancelled and are not likely to be revived in the near future.

The development of the southwest sector between 1976 and 1992 filled almost all available sites outside the original village within the Harvard Square Overlay Zone. Only two projects have occurred within the village since the completion of Holyoke Center in 1966, and these - 28 Brattle Street (Wordsworth Books) in 1975 and 1280 Massachusetts Avenue in 1985 - were relatively minor projects that replaced one or two buildings. A third, on Winthrop Square, will restore two significant structures in conjunction with a condominium project.

The presence of the Old Cambridge Historic District on the northwest of the Harvard Square business district, the Half Crown Neighborhood Conservation District on the west, and Harvard University on the north and south coupled with the scarcity of available large parcels or assemblages on the periphery of Harvard Square proper, now serves to focus development on the core of the old village. This area has escaped redevelopment because of its small parcels and diversity of ownership, but the passage of time and the growing demand for new space will end the relative exemption from development that this area has enjoyed until the present.

There are no recent studies of the demand for space in Harvard Square. In the 1970s, the city adopted a policy of encouraging new office buildings at Alewife and in East Cambridge, but demand in Harvard Square continues to be strong from relatively small professional practices and consulting firms. In addition, Harvard University has become

a large consumer of office space and has recently acquired several buildings in Harvard Square rather than construct new office space on its campus.

Demand for retail space continued to be strong even through the recession. Anecdotal evidence indicates that the most lucrative tenants are national chains that require relatively large floor plates. Small, owner-operated retailers that have traditionally occupied less-desirable retail space in older buildings in the Square cannot compete in the rental market for new retail space.

The result of these trends is that the village core of Harvard Square is threatened as never before by large-scale removal of small, architecturally-diverse traditional structures. The experience of the 1980s shows that, with few exceptions, developers are no longer willing to work on a small scale, but wish to assemble lots into parcels of at least 10,000 square feet.

E. Recent Developments

In 1988, the Read Block was listed as a contributing building in the Harvard Square National Register District. As early as 1991, the Historical Commission voted to undertake a study of the block as a potential landmark, but the study was never begun.

Justin Wyner, a trustee for the previous owner of the Read Block, informed the Commission staff in 1992 that work was underway to repair structural damage caused by the rooftop billboard and a collapsed foundation. Mr. Wyner was told about the significance of the building and kept the staff informed of the progress of the work. Mr. Wyner placed the property on the market in the spring of 1993, and in April was notified by the City Manager of the historical importance of the site and the desirability of avoiding controversy in developing it.

In April, 1993 the Cambridge Savings Bank alerted the staff that it was interested in acquiring the property, and were told about its historical importance. The Bank's senior management, the Executive Director of the Commission, and the Community Development Department's Director of Urban Design explored the significance of the Read Block and discussed the feasibility of replacing some or all of the component structures with a new building. The Commission staff allowed that the Read Block had been altered and extended many times, and that some parts of the structure might be sacrificed if a consensus indicated that the overall project met the city's goals for this area.

The goals pursued by the city staff in these discussions were based on the objectives of Cambridge historic

preservation ordinances and the Harvard Square Overlay Zone. In general, these call for preservation of significant buildings over fifty years old and careful attention to context in the development of new buildings.

The Bank acquired the property in 1994 and in July informed the staff of its intent to clear the site and construct a new building. In February, 1995, the Bank selected The Stubbins Associates (TSA) to design its new building. By late spring, the Bank and its architects were engaged in discussions with community groups about the proposal, and the Historical Commission received an informational presentation on June 29, 1995. This initial plan called for removing all the structures on the site and constructing a full build-out of the allowable floor area of approximately 49,400 square feet. The proposed building would be three stories tall, with a penthouse set back from the facade and faced with light-colored masonry and brick. A through-block covered arcade would link Massachusetts Avenue with John F. Kennedy Street. Over the next six months the Bank presented its plans to numerous community organizations.

On February 1, 1996, the Historical Commission evaluated the significance of the Read Block and voted to undertake a landmark designation study as prescribed by Chapter 2.78 of the City Code. Under amendments adopted in 1995, this action initiated a one-year study period during which the building would be protected as if it were already designated as a landmark.

In summary, the Bank's proposal evolved from complete redevelopment of the site to a project that would retain both the Russell Store and the Read House. More complete preservation alternatives that were developed at the Commission's request were found financially infeasible by the Bank. The goals for the landmark designation effort evolved as the Commission learned more about the site and its development possibilities. These goals came to include the following:

1. **Preserve the historic fabric of the Read Block and its constituent structures.** The Read Block contains significant parts of the three oldest commercial buildings in the city, as well as a significant remnant of an 18th century residence. The fabric of the buildings comprising the Read Block, although compromised by later alterations, is not duplicated elsewhere in Cambridge. The 1896 facade itself represents an ingenious and unique solution to the problem of unifying four (originally six) diverse structures and adapting them for modern commercial purposes.

2. **Preserve the diverse architectural character of Harvard Square.** The frame buildings on the south side of Harvard Square represent the last group of early commercial structures in the village. The Read Block facade, although only a century old, is highly significant, and its multiple entrances and small scale impart an important degree of complexity to the urban environment of Harvard Square.
3. **Preserve the remaining wood-frame buildings in Harvard Square.** Until the 1950s, the Harvard Square neighborhood was a rich mixture of frame and brick buildings of all periods and styles. Despite the presence of extensive clay beds in Cambridge, wood was used for construction almost exclusively until the mid-19th century and persisted in three-decker apartment houses as late as 1916. Masonry was used for institutional and commercial buildings, as well as for the Gold Coast apartment buildings and clubs that were built in large numbers between 1890 and 1910.

Frame buildings give Harvard Square much of its diverse character, both architecturally and in terms of use. Originally residential, for the most part, they offer flexible, inexpensive space for small retailers, services, and professional offices. However, they are vulnerable to redevelopment because they typically cannot attract premium rents and have a low value relative to the land they occupy. Many frame buildings have been removed since the mid-20th century; between 1966 and 1989, eleven such structures disappeared from the Mount Auburn Street-Brattle-Story block alone.

Deliberations on the proposed landmark designation began at the Commission meeting of May 2, 1996, with a presentation by the Cambridge Savings Bank and TSA. William LeMessurier, the structural engineer, believed that the block was beyond recovery, and Andrea Gilmore, a preservation consultant, reported that little visible 18th century fabric remained. The Bank's second scheme would retain the facade of the Russell Store, but replace all the other buildings on the site with a four-story structure with a clock tower and a fountain at the corner of Massachusetts Avenue and J.F. Kennedy Street.

In this initial meeting, the Chair pointed out that the Commission's function was to evaluate the significance of the Read Block, and not to engage in design review of the proposed new structure; however, the Commission wished to engage in a constructive dialogue concerning possible alternatives. At a continuation of the discussion on June 13, the Bank contended that the remaining fabric of the building lacked integrity and was in ruinous condition.

In a series of five monthly meetings between August and December, 1996, the Bank presented and then repeatedly refined a revised scheme that preserved the Russell Store and the Read house at the opposite ends of the property. All the recent one- and two-story additions in the center of the block would be removed, along with both the Read-Farwell Store and the Warland tailor shop. These structures would be replaced with a new four-story building on the corner. The four walls of the Russell Store would be preserved and the missing chimneys rebuilt, while the ground floor of the Read House would be recreated with an open courtyard between it and the new building that would be accessible from both Massachusetts Avenue and Dunster Street. The new building would be sheathed in wood with a clear stain finish. This became known as the "bookends" scheme because it preserved the historic buildings at each end of the site.

Throughout this period, the Executive Director and the CDD Director of Urban Design met repeatedly with TSA and the Bank's management team to discuss enhancements that would increase the preservation content of the project and meet the urban design goals of the Overlay Zone.

In the five Commission meetings in the fall of 1996 there was much discussion about the essential character of the Read Block and how it should be preserved. The Bank's architect contended that, in addition to its structural problems, the 1896 facade of the Read Block was a "travesty" that should not be perpetuated. The Commission seemed to agree that the "bookends" scheme had considerable merit, in that it preserved two significant wood structures and met many of the City's urban design goals. However, many observers had reservations about the scale and finish of the new building, the viability of the courtyard next to the Read House, and the lack of specificity about the configuration of the retail space on the first floor. Moreover, some Commission members disagreed about the significance of the facade, and were not convinced that the Read-Farwell store could not be restored.

On October 3, the Bank agreed to extend the study period for ninety days, or until May 5, 1997, and in December the Chair scheduled a public hearing on the landmark proposal for January 7, 1997.

At the January 7 hearing, which was attended by over 130 people, the Commission examined the Read Block in the light of the criteria for landmark designation in Chapter 2.78 and once again reviewed the Bank's proposal for the "bookend" scheme. Testimony was presented to the effect that restoration of the existing building would result in a loss to the Bank of \$10 million. The Commission concluded that the Bank had not convincingly explored the preservation

options for the Read Block, and continued the hearing until February 7.

Shortly after the meeting, the Bank decided to hire a consulting architect to advise on preservation issues. The firm of Finegold Alexander & Associates was instructed to pursue a full build-out of a mixed-use project, but to assume that the existing buildings had already been landmarked. The Finegold firm then proceeded to research the history of the buildings and investigate their structure and fabric, consulting frequently with the staff of the Historical Commission.

The January hearing finally resumed on April 3. The Bank reported that all three Finegold schemes would result in a loss, which would be prohibited by Federal banking regulations. Nonetheless, the Finegold firm presented the three options that they had developed, with varying degrees of preservation of historic fabric. Scheme A allowed preservation of almost all the existing historic fabric; Scheme B allowed partial preservation; and Scheme C preserved only the facade and the Russell Store. Finegold's engineering consultants had determined that the wood framing system was viable and could be tied to a new structural system to support new construction. The condition report also estimated that about 50% of the facade needed to be replaced.

The Bank's lead architect, Easley Hamner of TSA, noted that the three proposals by Finegold Alexander & Associates would each result in a net capital loss to the Bank. Scheme A represented a net capital loss of \$15 million; Scheme B, \$7 million; and Scheme C, \$4 million. These losses were attributable to the lower rents that would result from insufficient basement retail space, low ceiling heights, and poor circulation; new space was inherently more valuable than rehabilitated old space. He concluded that the facade was in even worse shape than previously thought. Only two options were feasible for the Bank: 1) a facadectomy (Finegold's Scheme C) or (2) the resurrection of the Read House and the Russell Store accompanied with new construction at the corner (TSA's bookend proposal).

At this point, the Historical Commission voted unanimously to direct the staff to prepare a landmark designation report with a recommendation to the City Council to designate the buildings for consideration at a public hearing on June 5, 1997. On May 22, the Bank voluntarily extended the protection period until July 31, 1997.

F. Map

II. Description

The Read Block consists of four structures dating from c. 1780 to c. 1820 that were unified behind a single facade in 1896. The publicly visible exterior of the Read Block consists of a three-story frame structure that wraps around the corner of Massachusetts Avenue and J.F. Kennedy Street. The adjoining Russell Store retains its original brick front, but has otherwise been functionally incorporated into the Block.

The facade of the Read Block is a Classical composition that incorporates large plate glass store windows on the ground floor. On the second and third floors, the scale of the window openings gradually diminish. The facade is adorned with Doric pilasters supporting intermediate cornices and geometrically-detailed window casings that place these features in sharp relief against the flush-board exterior walls. This detailing is carried uniformly around the entire facade, except for a large skylight that originally served a photographer's studio. In addition, in the 1920s the Read House was raised about three feet to gain greater ceiling height on the first floor.

Modern alterations have obscured parts of the facade. The Wursthause Restaurant displays *faux*-Bavarian half-timbering and plaster, capped with a shingled band that replaced the original cornice. Original storefronts still exist at 1392 Massachusetts Avenue and 2 J.F. Kennedy Street. Overall, the condition of the Read Block facade is poor to fair due to deferred maintenance.

The component structures of the Read Block are described as follows:

A. Joseph Read House, 1380 Massachusetts Avenue
(c. 1780-82)

The Joseph Read House was built in about 1780 as a Georgian style, center entrance 3 1/2 story house with its gable end facing the street. Two ells were placed at the back of the house, and a separate stable stood at the back of the lot. The first photographs of the site show that a storefront had already been inserted into the street facade, and the house retained this configuration for the rest of the century.

The alterations of 1896 involved removing the front four feet of the gable end to allow Massachusetts Avenue to be widened. The pitched roof and gable end were removed, and the original structure disappeared behind the new facade. Behind the facade, however, the house retained its domestic character, with a clapboarded exterior, residential windows, and second floor bay window looking south. The ground floor disappeared behind infill structures until 1926, when the

upper floors were raised and a new masonry structure was inserted to accommodate a restaurant. Further alterations occurred in about 1985, when the Bank of Boston remodelled the restaurant storefront. Above the first floor, however, the structure retains its 1896 appearance on all sides, while most of the interior finish dates from the same period.

B. Read-Farwell Store, 1384-1392 Massachusetts Avenue
(c. 1792-1800)

The Read-Farwell Store may have originated as a Georgian style, gable-end house similar to the Read House, but by 1821 it had been expanded into a store, and in about 1855 it was given the broad Greek Revival gable end prominently featured in early photographs. The street widening project of 1896 removed about eight feet from the Massachusetts Avenue end of the building, which was further reduced by the curve of the facade. Recent structural examination indicates that the heavy timber frame of the structure is consistent with its late 18th and early 19th century date.

The remodelling of 1896 involved raising the roof to capture the third floor and integrating the framing of a curved facade across the truncated Massachusetts Avenue facade. In the rear, the original footprint of the building is apparent. As at the Read House, the first floor has been buried in later additions, but the clapboard walls of the Read Farwell Store rise up to the third floor level. The facade bridges the gap between the Reed House and the Read-Farwell Store, creating a false front at the third floor.

C. Owen Warland Tailor Shop, 6-8 John F. Kennedy Street,
(c. 1780)

The Owen Warland Tailor Shop was built as a store and residence, and when it was first photographed it appeared as a 2 1/2 story building built right on the sidewalk, with the flank of its gable roof facing the street. The roof appears to have been slightly higher than that of the Read-Farwell Store.

The building apparently retained its original footprint in the renovations of 1896, but lost its pitched roof. The division between it and the Read-Farwell Store is expressed only in a double pilaster on the facade. In the rear, it is barely distinguishable from the adjacent store.

D. Thomas Russell Store, 10-14 John F. Kennedy Street,
(c. 1820).

The Thomas Russell Store alone retains its original integrity. Built of brick, it has a five-bay facade with a center entrance leading to the staircase. The storefronts

are modern, but the first floor has probably always been in commercial use. The masonry is characteristic of the Federal period, with tight joints, brownstone lintels and sills, and an arched opening above the center entrance. The four gable end chimneys were removed in the 1950s. When the Read Block was consolidated in 1896, the buildings were joined on the interior; the only change to the exterior was painting to match the adjacent new facade.

III. History and Significance of the Property

A. Historic Development Patterns

The Read Block represents the shift of commercial activity away from the river and toward the intersection that became known as Harvard Square in the mid-19th century. The initial focus of trade in Cambridge was along Water (now Dunster) Street, at the foot of which was the ferry, and at the marketplace on Wood (later Boylston, now J. F. Kennedy) Street. Trade shifted fully to Wood Street after the opening of the Great Bridge in 1660. The completion of the West Boston Bridge in 1793 reinforced the drawing power of the courthouse, the meetinghouse, and the college, and drew trade to the future Harvard Square, where mass transit lines converged in the mid-19th century. Only in the 20th century did retail trade expand significantly beyond Harvard and Brattle Squares.

The earliest commercial building in Harvard Square whose appearance is documented is the three-story Read House at 1380 Massachusetts Avenue. Built between 1780 and 1782 and placed with its gable end directly on the street, it served as the house and shop of Joseph Stacy Read, a saddler and the town postmaster.

With the first wave of prosperity following the opening of the West Boston Bridge in 1793, other commercial buildings were constructed immediately east and west of the Read House. These included Willard's Tavern (1797) on the present site of the Cambridge Savings Bank and the Read-Bartlett-Beals house and store, later known as Farwell's Corner or the Read-Farwell Store (c. 1792-1800). The latter structures, along with the Read House, Willard's Tavern, and Owen Warland's tailor shop (c. 1780), were refaced into a single structure by heirs of the Read family in 1896.

The Embargo of 1807 and the War of 1812 inhibited commercial growth, but by the 1820s a second period of expansion was under way, directed by Levi Farwell, arguably Harvard Square's most important early-19th-century entrepreneur. Farwell's marriage in 1818 brought to him properties in the village that the Read and Bordman families had been accumulating since 1640. Andrew Bordman kept a store on the east corner of present Dunster Street and Massachusetts Avenue, and his brother, Aaron, maintained a locksmith and clock shop on the west corner. Bordman descendants continued at both locations into the 19th century, having meanwhile acquired the lot at present J.F. Kennedy Street and Massachusetts Avenue. In 1820, Farwell constructed a brick tenant house on present J. F. Kennedy Street, which he rented to storekeeper Thomas Russell, and three years later put up a brick store at what is now 1372-1374 Massachusetts

Avenue. By 1829, Farwell controlled much of the southeast corner of the village square.

After Prudence Farwell's death in 1847, their estate was broken up. The property on the Square was acquired largely by Joseph Read's son, William, whose descendants maintained control of the western half of the Boylston-Massachusetts Avenue-Dunster Street block until 1917. When Read purchased the Farwell store in 1855, the Cambridge Chronicle described it as "the most valuable lot of land of its size in the city" (Sept. 15, 1855). The long-term ownership of such a large and central group of properties contributed to the preservation of significant remnants of early commercial architecture in the Square.

The 1830s and '40s saw further commercial development on the northwest corner of the Square. In 1832, Harvard College built Graduates Hall, later known as College House, for students of the fledgling law school. This three-story brick dormitory, with stores on the ground floor, was the largest and most up-to-date commercial building of its day as well as the first in a long series of dormitories that would dominate Harvard Square by the end of the century.

In 1841, Lyceum Hall was constructed between College House and the Blake stores on the site of the fourth courthouse. Shops were placed in the high granite basement, an arrangement that subsidized the hall and acknowledged the value of the building's location. Alexander Ramsey's brick apothecary shop of 1847 carried the line of brick construction established by College House around to Brattle Street; its granite post and lintel storefronts, three-story form, and paired end-wall chimneys emulated the older building, and the two bracketed Lyceum Hall with neat commercial construction. By 1847, the south and west sides of the Square flanking Brattle Street consisted of a continuous line of stores and shops that formed the nucleus of Harvard Square's commercial district.

The next period of significant expansion in Old Cambridge coincided with the institution of regular horsecar service to Boston and resulted in the nearly continual building and rebuilding of commercial structures. By the end of the 1860s, a hierarchy of sorts had emerged in the patterns of land use: there was a core of shops and stores between Harvard and Brattle squares and along Boylston (formerly Wood) Street, carriage manufacturers and livery stables on Church Street, building tradesmen's shops on Palmer Street, and the stables and carbarns of the street railway lines on Dunster Street.

The largely private dormitories and clubs that transformed the architectural character of the village in the second half of the 19th century were often mixed-use buildings that

combined ground-floor stores with rooms for students upstairs. The earliest private dormitories, Harvard Hall and Little's Block, followed the architectural precedent of College House, except that cast-iron piers were used instead of granite. Two later dormitories, Holyoke House (built by the college in 1870) and Hilton's Block (later the Fairfax), were architecturally advanced for Cambridge commercial buildings and echoed the new French style of architecture current in Boston for more than a decade. This trend was reinforced when a mansard roof and four-story central pavilion were added to College House in 1870.

Other than the dormitories, few new commercial buildings were erected until after the Civil War. Often, old stores were remodeled to suit new tastes. In 1855, for example, the Read family raised and enlarged Levi Farwell's store (which had become a bookstore and would later be a grocery), adding the broad gable roof that stands out in 19th-century photographs of Harvard Square. Beyond the Square, the bulk of the commercial buildings built before 1870 were vernacular frame structures, some relatively crude and many altered haphazardly over time.

The reconstruction of the Read Block in 1896 transformed a disorganized, unsightly, and distinctly old-fashioned side of Harvard Square. The heirs of William Read hired the Cambridge partnership of James R. and William P. Richards, designers of many tract houses in Old Cambridge, to unify and reface four buildings there, and soon the West End Street Railway extended elements of the design to the corner of Dunster Street. The result was a vernacular, yet dignified, classical facade that unified the entire block. Despite the raising of 1380 Massachusetts Avenue to accommodate the Waldorf Restaurant in the 1920s and some inappropriate modern storefronts, the Read Block remains an asset to the Square and a vicarious reminder of the 18th-century buildings embedded in its core.

In the last quarter of the 19th century, much of Harvard Square was transformed by the construction of private dormitories and clubs for wealthy undergraduates. Some of these buildings, like the A.D. Club and Hamden Hall at 1260 at 1270 Massachusetts Avenue, contained stores on the ground floor. Architecturally, these buildings expressed the transition from Queen Anne to Neoclassical, a movement that culminated in the construction of Dana Chambers on Dunster Street by the Cambridge Savings Bank in 1897.

By this time, however, the tide of architectural fashion was running strongly toward the Georgian Revival, a style that was pioneered by McKim, Mead & White's Johnston Gate in 1889. President Eliot soon adopted the Georgian as Harvard's preferred style, and in 1897-1901 fought a losing battle to convince the First Parish, Unitarian, to build a new church

in the now-standard red brick and limestone trim. The Georgian Revival style was advocated by a committee of the Harvard Square Business Men's Association in 1913 as a means of enhancing the area's reputation as an elite shopping district by relating commerce to the prestige of Harvard College and the Gold Coast. Most of the buildings put up over the next fifteen years were in this style.

One of the first Georgian buildings was the Brattle Block, 1-8 Brattle Street, which was built in 1913 by George L. Dow, the owner of a large number of Harvard Square properties in the 20th century. Unlike the old buildings, which ran in a ragged row of varying cornice heights, materials, and styles, the Brattle Block gave the street a crisp symmetry with the Abbot Building. The Cambridge Savings Bank also adopted this style for its new building, designed by the Cambridge firm of Newhall & Blevins in 1923. The last and finest 20th-century Georgian Revival commercial building in the Square was the Harvard Co-operative Society's 1924 store, designed by Perry, Shaw & Hepburn. After a thirty-year hiatus in commercial construction caused by the Depression and World War II, the same firm gave Harvard Square its first modern building when it was chosen to design a new headquarters for the Harvard Trust Company in 1956.

Since the construction of Holyoke Center in 1960-65, most new construction in Harvard Square has taken place on peripheral sites not visible from the Square itself. Holyoke Center itself was a massive redevelopment project, designed in an aggressive and idiosyncratic style by the Catalan architect Josep Luis Sert. A 1979 office and retail store at the corner of Brattle and Story Street is an unimaginative variation on Sert's style, while 1280 Massachusetts Avenue, designed by Symmes, Maini & McKee in 1985 in an early exercise in contextualism, is widely regarded as one of the best modern buildings in Harvard Square. In this diverse context, the Read Block stands out for its apparent age, its material, and its unique style.

Component Buildings of the Read Block

1. Joseph Read House, 1380 Massachusetts Avenue (c.1780-82).

The three-story Read House at 1380-1382 Massachusetts Avenue is the earliest commercial building in Harvard Square whose appearance is documented, and the second-oldest surviving building in the Square (after the William Brattle House). Built between 1780 and 1782 and placed with its gable end directly on the street, it served as the house and shop of Joseph Stacy Read, a saddler and the town postmaster.

Joseph Stacy Read was descended from Christopher Read, a tanner, who arrived in Cambridge from Boston in 1674. Three

subsequent generations of Reads maintained a tanning business at the family property on Brattle Street, near Appian Way. James Read, Joseph's older brother, inherited the business and built the present Read House (now occupied by the Graduate School of Education) in 1773. After serving in the Revolutionary War, Joseph Read purchased a lot at the corner of present Massachusetts Avenue and J.F. Kennedy Street and built the present house, where he worked as a saddler and served as postmaster. If the usual custom was followed, the house also served as the Cambridge post office during Read's tenure. He died in 1836, and the commercial use of the house intensified.

As originally built, the Read House was three stories high with the end of its gabled roof facing the street. The house was six bays deep, and, rather uncharacteristically, the entrance faced west toward J.F. Kennedy Street rather than east. Photographs show that the house was a typical vernacular Federal-style structure, with narrow corner boards and little or no decorative detailing.

By the Civil War, the ground floor had been given a storefront with plate glass windows, which was occupied by a succession of retail tenants until the reconstruction of 1896, when the roof was removed and it was given a new facade. In 1926, the entire building was raised approximately three feet to accommodate a cafeteria-style restaurant. It is now occupied by the First National Bank of Boston, for which the storefront was reconstructed into its present form in about 1985. The earlier fabric of the house is visible in the rear, where the characteristic Federal-style main house and ells rise above the later one-story service structures. A second story bay window, which appears to date from the immediate post-Civil War period, projects from the rear of the ell.

2. The Read-Farwell Store, 1384-1392 Massachusetts Avenue (c.1792-1800).

Farwell's Store, on the corner of Massachusetts Avenue and John F. Kennedy Street, is the third-oldest commercial building in the city. It was originally constructed by Joseph Stacey Read as a house between 1792 and 1800, on the site of a house once occupied by the poet Ann Bradstreet and her husband, Simon. In 1800, Read sold the property to Joseph Bartlett, a 1782 graduate of Harvard College who had probably rented it since returning to Cambridge in 1795. When Bartlett sold the house in 1802 it contained both a dwelling house and store. The nature of Bartlett's modifications is unknown, but intriguing; his "taste was very singular. In Woburn he painted his house black, with white window-sashes and green doors. [Later] in Saco he built a house of round form, and painted it fiery red" (Paige, 484).

In 1808, the house and store were acquired by Richard Bordman, a bricklayer, whose family had owned other property on the same block since 1640. Bordman died in 1816, and in 1818 his widow, Prudence, married Levi Farwell, one of the most prominent and successful Cambridge businessmen of the time. Beginning as a storekeeper's assistant, Farwell rose to become Steward of Harvard College and a founder of the First Baptist Church and the Andover-Newton Theological School. At the time of his death he was the largest commercial property owner in Harvard Square.

Farwell is credited with expanding the original house toward J.F. Kennedy Street in about 1821; its appearance at this time is unknown. In 1855, the property was acquired by William Read, Joseph Stacey Read's son, who gave the building its broad Greek Revival gable end that dominates early photographs of Harvard Square.

William Read's heirs continued to administer the property for many years after his death, and apparently considered developing the site several times. In 1886, the Cambridge Chronicle reported plans to erect a five-story brick building on the corner, and referred to a plan "made some years ago but never executed" (January 2, 1886). Ten years later, the traffic situation in Harvard Square led the city to plan a street widening that would remove about four feet from the West End Street Railway's offices at the corner of Dunster Street and more than seven feet at the corner of J.F. Kennedy Street. At first, the Read heirs decided to keep their two buildings separate, since they wished to rebuild in wood and the city was insisting on a brick facade. The city apparently relented, however, because the Cambridge Chronicle soon reported that "Read's Block in Harvard Square has been greatly improved since the front was cut off. The plate glass windows, the graceful sweep of the circular corner, and the graceful addition of a story, really make a wonderful change" (September 5, 1896).

The Read heirs went on to remodel the interior of the building, but did not carry out their threat to evict a restaurant "deemed objectionable on a floor with offices" (Ibid.). At this time, the tenants included a newsdealer, shoe store, and grocery on the ground floor, with a restaurant on the second and third floor. In 1917, the Read heirs finally sold the premises, which was termed "the largest piece of privately owned property in Harvard Square," to the Harvard Amusement Company, which may have intended to build a theatre there. However, the property was soon sold to the Wyner family, whose descendants sold it to the Cambridge Savings Bank in 1993.

The publicly visible facade of the Read-Farwell Store remains as it was constructed in 1896. The Cambridge

partnership of James R. and William P. Richards developed a unified treatment for all the buildings owned by both the Reads and the West End Street Railway, extending from the corner of Dunster Street to the Russell Store. To unify an assemblage that included both frame and brick structures of widely different ages, styles, and proportions, the Richards firm first established a uniform cornice line. All the frame buildings were then given a new, uniform facade, with an intermediate cornice at the second floor level and a common window sill elevation regardless of the floor heights within. Pilasters were scaled to the diminishing floor heights, and window sizes and treatments were reduced and simplified on the upper floors. Only a photographer's skylight interrupted the smooth curve of the street facade. In effect, the architects devised a wooden screen to unify and conceal a heterogeneous collection of buildings; the extent of their artifice can be detected between the Read House and the Farwell Store, where the facade bridges the gap between the two structures with a blind window.

Despite later alterations, the exterior of the Read-Farwell store remains substantially intact. While several store fronts retain their original appearance, the Wursthau Restaurant gradually replaced many original features with a peculiar ersatz-Bavarian architecture on the ground floor.

The firm of J.R. & W.P. Richards was listed in Boston directories over an extended period between 1853 and 1920: the earliest Cambridge work of the elder, Joseph R. Richards, was 24 Craigie Street (1868), while the last recorded work of the firm in Cambridge was 35 Upland Road (1899). The reconstruction of the Read Block is certainly their best-known work, although the firm was also responsible for the Pi Eta Hall at 91-93 Winthrop Street (1896).

3. Owen Warland Tailor Shop, 6-8 John F. Kennedy Street (c. 1780).

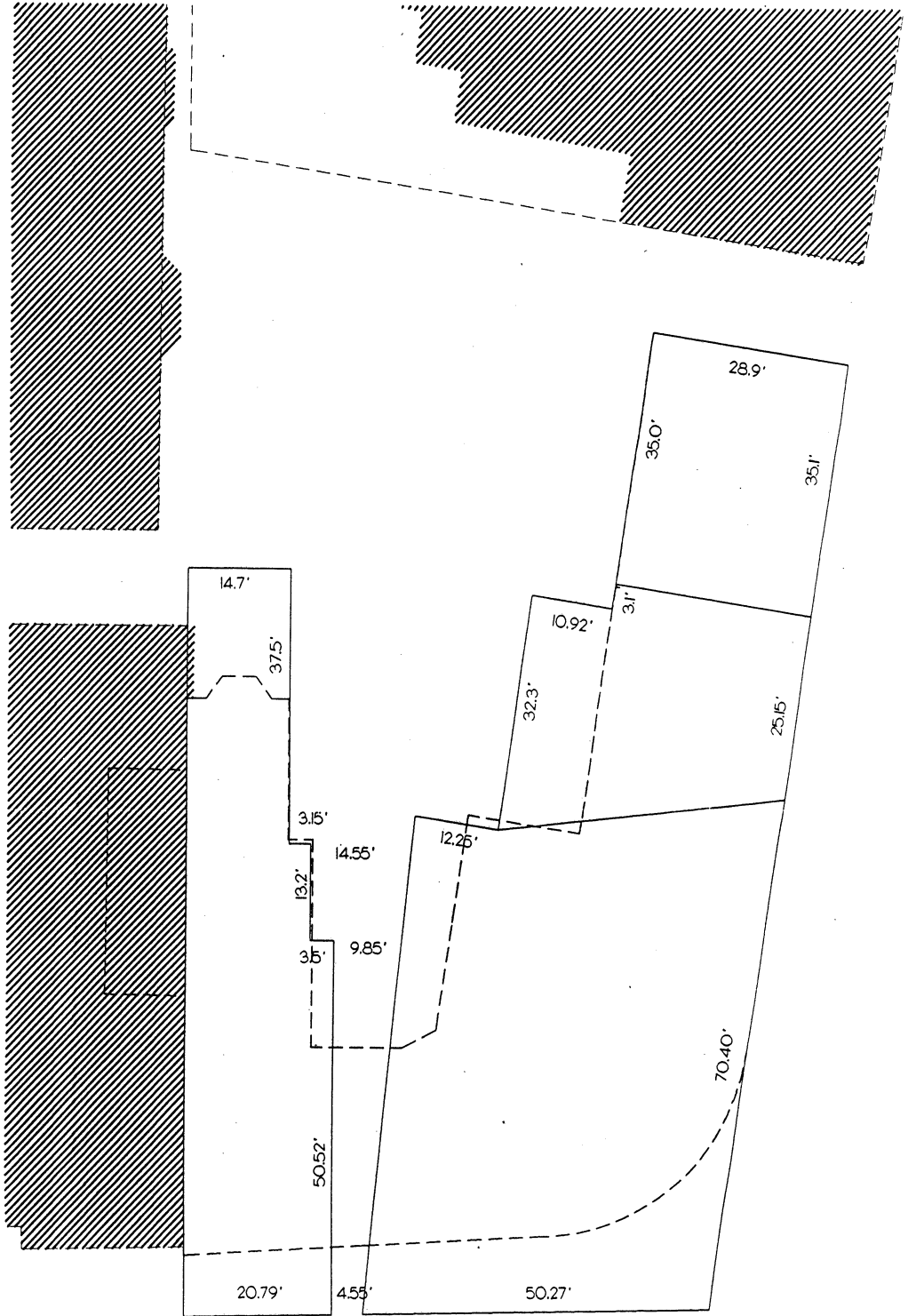
The Warland family were variously shoemakers and tailors in Harvard Square from the late 17th century. Owen, a tailor, also dealt in real estate, and purchased the premises at 6-8 J.F. Kennedy Street in 1780 with his shop already on it. He died in 1793, and his grandchildren sold the property to Levi Farwell in 1841. William Read acquired the building with the rest of Farwell's property in 1855.

There are no adequate views of the Warland shop before it was unified with the other buildings on the block in 1896. While the rear of the building is clearly differentiated from its neighbors, from the street the division between it and the Read-Farwell store cannot be discerned. The main dining rooms of the Wursthau Restaurant now occupy this building.

4. Thomas Russell Store, 10-14 John F. Kennedy Street
(c. 1820).

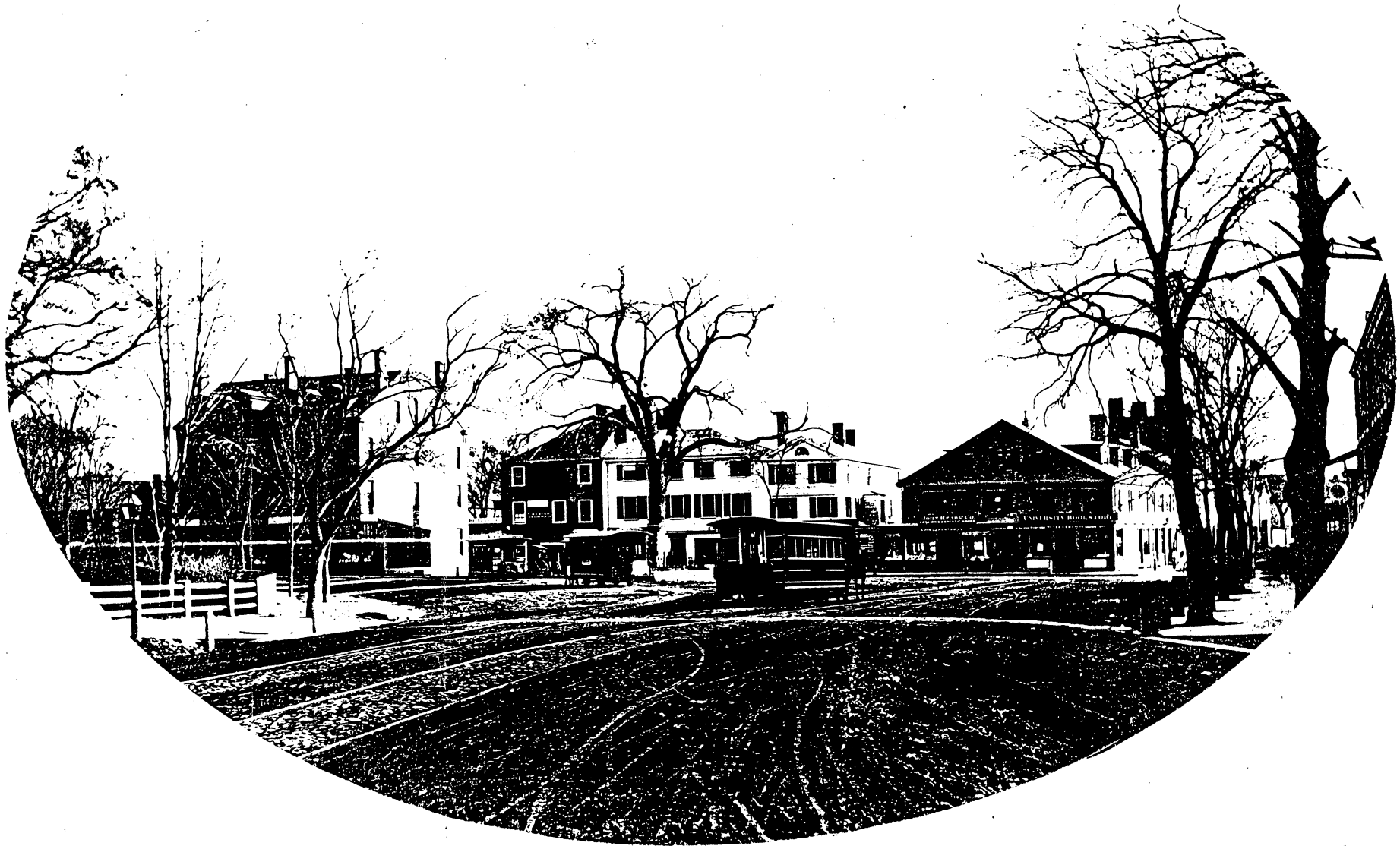
The Thomas Russell Store was built by Levi Farwell in 1820 on a site that had a long history of occupancy by small commercial enterprises. Farwell evidently built the building on speculation, as it was immediately rented to Thomas Russell, a furniture dealer. The Russells also had a long history of commercial enterprise in the village, having settled there in 1635. Thomas Russell kept his shop until his death in 1857; an earlier building occupied by him was moved from Harvard Square to Bow Street in the 1850s, where it is now occupied by the Cafe Pamplona.

The Russell Store is one of the few brick buildings built in Cambridge before the Civil War, apart from those put up by Harvard University. The facade facing J.F. Kennedy Street is four bays across, with stone lintels and sills and a simple projecting cornice. When the Read properties were combined in 1896, the only change made to the building was to paint it to match its frame neighbors. The major distinguishing feature of the building, its Federal-style H-shaped chimneys, were removed about 1950, while later storefronts obscure the original facade on the ground floor.



1875 FOOTPRINT WITH EXISTING 2ND FLR FOOTPRINT DASHED IN

(1875 FOOTPRINT TAKEN FROM MEASURED DRAWING FROM AN ENGINEER'S FIELD NOTEBOOK, DATED 1875 AND FOUND ON FILE AT THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORICAL COMMISSION.)



Read Block, c. 1860



at the corner of Meade and Bowdoin St.

Read Block, 1909



Read Block, c1978



Russell Store, c 1970

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IV. Relationship to Criteria

A. Chapter 2.78, Article III, Section 2.78.180

Article II, Ch. 2.78 of the Cambridge City Code establishes procedures and criteria for designating landmarks. Proposed landmarks must be subjected to "an investigation and report on the historical, architectural and other relevant significance thereof" (2.78.180.B). Recommended properties must 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 (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.

B. Relationship of Property to Criteria

The Read Block has significance under criterion (1) for its associations with the broad architectural, economic and social history of the city through its connections to the former residential character of Harvard Square and its evolution to commercial use. It is of further significance under criterion (2) for its historic and architectural importance in terms of its incorporation of four of the oldest commercial structures in the city as well as for its vernacular Neoclassical facade. It also meets criterion (2) for its historically and architecturally significant associations with the firm of J. R. & W. P. Richards.

1. Joseph Read House, 1380 Massachusetts Avenue
(c.1780-82).

The Joseph Read House has significance under criterion (1) for its associations with the broad architectural, economic and social history of the city through its connections to the former residential character of Harvard Square and its evolution to commercial use. It is of further significance under criterion (2) for its historic and architectural importance in terms of its period of construction and style as a rare surviving 18th century house in Harvard Square as well as for its later incarnation as a vernacular Neoclassical commercial building. It also meets criterion (2) for its historically and architecturally significant associations with the firm of J. R. & W. P. Richards.

2. Read-Farwell Store, 1384-1392 Massachusetts Avenue
(c. 1792-1800)

The Read-Farwell Store has significance under criterion (1) for its associations with the broad architectural, economic and social history of the city through its connections to the former residential character of Harvard Square and its evolution to commercial use. It is of further significance under criterion (2) for its historic and architectural importance in terms of its period of construction and style as a rare surviving 18th century structure in Harvard Square as well as for its later incarnation as a vernacular Neoclassical commercial building. It also meets criterion (2) for its historically and architecturally significant associations with the firm of J. R. & W. P. Richards.

3. Owen Warland Tailor Shop, 6-8 John F. Kennedy Street,
(c. 1780)

The Warland Tailor Shop has significance under criterion (1) for its associations with the broad architectural, economic and social history of the city through its connections to the former residential character of Harvard Square and its evolution to commercial use. It is of further significance under criterion (2) for its historic and architectural importance in terms of its period of construction and style as a rare surviving 18th century house in Harvard Square as well as for its later incarnation as a vernacular Neoclassical commercial building. It also meets criterion (2) for its historically and architecturally significant associations with the firm of J. R. & W. P. Richards.

4. Thomas Russell Store, 10-14 John F. Kennedy Street,
(c. 1820).

The Thomas Russell Store has significance under criterion (1) for its associations with the broad architectural, economic and social history of the city through its connections to the former residential character of Harvard Square and its evolution to commercial use. It is of further significance under criterion (2) for its historic and architectural importance in terms of its period of construction and style as a rare surviving 19th century brick building in Harvard Square as well as for its later incorporation into the Read Block, a vernacular Neoclassical commercial building. It also meets criterion (2) for its historically and architecturally significant associations with the firm of J. R. & W. P. Richards.

V. Recommendations

A. Intent of Landmark Designation

The purpose of landmark designation is stated in Article III, section 2.78.140:

. . . 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 . . . 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 . . .

In the case of the Read Block, the intent of landmark designation is to preserve as much as possible of the significant fabric represented by the component structures while allowing meaningful improvements to take place. The four structures represent different periods of development and styles of architecture, and vary in their level of significance. The stated purposes of heritage preservation and environmental improvement may be accomplished in this case by careful intervention.

B. Preservation Options

The buildings comprising the Read Block are located in the Harvard Square National Register District, which was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1986. That determination protects buildings from the adverse effects of federally licensed, permitted or funded projects, and, by inclusion on the parallel State Register of Historic Places, from the adverse effects of state funded projects. Listing on the Register also makes properties eligible for an investment tax credit for an approved rehabilitation.

The National and State Registers provide limited protection from public projects through review by the Massachusetts Historical Commission. However, the Massachusetts Historical Commission cannot review privately funded projects.

At the local level, the Read Block is currently protected by a moratorium on inappropriate alterations that was imposed in February, 1996, when the current landmark designation study was begun, and subsequently extended with the consent of the Bank. During this period the properties are protected as though they were already designated as landmarks.

In addition, the properties are subject to the city's demolition delay ordinance (Chapter 2.78, Article II), which allows the Commission to find a building significant and

preferably preserved. A preferably preserved significant building may not be demolished for six months after the finding, and for such further time until the proponent acquires all the needed permits for the replacement structure.

The properties are subject to the provisions of the Harvard Square Overlay Zone, which establishes certain incentives for rehabilitation of contributing buildings in the Harvard Square National Register District and disincentives for demolition of preferably preserved significant buildings. However, the base zoning establishes maximum density and height limits that often encourage redevelopment, especially in conjunction with highest-and-best-use assessing practices.

Other options for preserving a particular structure include designation as a Landmark under Article III, placement of a preservation restriction on the property under the provisions of MGL Chapter 184, designation within a neighborhood conservation district under Article III, or designation within a local historic district under MGL Chapter 40C.

A preservation restriction, or easement, is a voluntarily-granted non-possessory right to control certain aspects of a property. The Historical Commission typically negotiates the same level of protection for a property as would be afforded by landmark or historic district protection, while the owner is able to claim a charitable deduction from income tax for the reduced value of the property. However, in this instance the owner decided to proceed with the landmark designation process.

Designation as an historic district or neighborhood conservation district depends on neighborhood-generated efforts to regulate architectural changes in the area. As a matter of policy, the Cambridge Historical Commission does not initiate such districts in the absence of neighborhood interest. The Commission is presently undertaking a study of the feasibility of establishing a Harvard Square historic district, but this effort is not expected to be completed until the fall of 1997.

In the absence of an historic district or the donation of an easement, the landmark option provides the greatest measure of protection for the properties.

C. Staff Recommendations

During the landmark designation process the Commission and the Cambridge Savings Bank reviewed several development proposals that preserved significant parts of the Read Block, but none of them were found to be mutually

acceptable. At the hearing on April 3, 1997, the Commission directed the staff to prepare a landmark designation recommendation for their consideration at the next hearing.

In the preliminary designation report presented on June 5, the staff recommended that the entire existing property be designated as a landmark, but under conditions that would allow limited development of the property. This recommendation was based on an evaluation of the significance of the four structures comprising the Read Block and on an assessment of the development plans put forth by the Bank. While the TSA plan restored two of the four component buildings of the Read Block and offered significant urban design advantages to Harvard Square, it inescapably destroyed the integrity of the Read Block itself. The Finegold plans were rejected by the Bank for financial reasons. However, Finegold's plans A (maximum preservation) and B (preservation of 30' perimeter) offered significant preservation of the Read Block while allowing new construction on the site, and the staff felt that they could be considered approvable by the Commission even if the property were designated as a landmark.

During the designation study process, differing evaluations of the structural integrity of the Read Block were put forth by the Bank's consultants. While the staff understood that the property had been compromised by years of neglect and inappropriate alterations, it believed that the property was capable of being renovated and rented as before. At the same time, the staff understood that the property might require a significant investment even to rent in its present configuration, and recommended that the Commission take the financial viability of the property into account in reviewing requests for future alterations.

D. Commission Findings

At a hearing on June 5, 1997, the staff presented its recommendation for landmark designation. The Cambridge Savings Bank then presented a new plan for the preservation of the Read Block. Designed by the architectural firm of Symmes, Maini & McKee Associates, this scheme was intended to be "economically viable" and capable of being "accomplished within the guidelines established if the buildings were to be landmarked" (all quotes from James P. Ingram letter, May 30, 1997).

The Symmes, Maini plans showed "that the existing facade will be restored to conform as closely as possible to the conjectural original condition drawing that the bank presented at the April 3, 1997 hearing and based upon the 1909 photograph of the building." The restoration of the facade would also conform to the Standards for Design Review contained in the Landmark Designation Report.

On the interior, the plans incorporated the existing wood frame structure to the depth of the first column line, or approximately 18 feet back from the facade. Beyond that point, the existing structures would be removed and a new three-story steel-framed structure would tie into the existing wood-framed structures. Floor levels would be maintained, except that the floors of the Russell Store would be lowered to match the surrounding floor levels.

The roof of the existing structure would be raised about three feet to allow horizontal air distribution ducts, and a small penthouse on the new structure would house elevator shafts and HVAC equipment.

The Commission and the public applauded the Bank's presentation. However, it was observed that the 1896 first floor plan did not include the entrance at 2A J.F. Kennedy Street, which had been occupied by the Tasty Sandwich Shop since 1928. The desirability of ensuring the continued existence of the Tasty had been the subject of extensive testimony throughout the landmark study process, although the Commission repeatedly observed that none of the statutes under which it operates allow it to regulate uses or landlord-tenant relationships.

The Commission then unanimously adopted a motion to amend the draft report and designation order to incorporate the Symmes, Maini & McKee scheme as proposed by the Bank, and also to protect the storefront at 2A J.F. Kennedy Street.

The designation as now drafted will allow the Bank to take Symmes, Maini & McKee's 1896 restoration scheme to the next level of the approval process with the assurance that the Historical Commission will approve all proposed alterations that are in conformance with it. The 2A J.F. Kennedy Street storefront would be specifically protected, but could be altered in the future with the approval of the Historical Commission. The tenancy of the Tasty Sandwich Shop will be unaffected by this determination.

VI. Statement of Standards for Design Review

A. Introduction

The Commission's primary charge under Article III is to review "all construction, demolition, or alteration that affects the exterior architectural features, other than color, of any landmark." This landmark study report describes exterior features that are among the characteristics which led to consideration of the property as a landmark. Except as the order designating or amending the landmark may otherwise provide, those features should be preserved and/or enhanced in any construction, demolition, or alteration of a landmark.

Section 2.78.220 sets general guidelines to be considered by the Historical Commission in reviewing changes to landmarks. Among other things, the Commission is directed to consider the historic and architectural value and significance of the site or structure, the general design, arrangement, texture and material of the features involved, and the relation of such features to similar features or structures in the surrounding area.

In all cases, a Certificate of Appropriateness, Hardship, or Non-Applicability must be issued by the Historical Commission before any changes may be made to a landmark. The Commission does not regulate the interiors of landmarks nor can it control changes to exterior architectural features not subject to public view. Nonetheless, Certificates of Non-Applicability must be issued for those changes.

B. General Standards

1. Historic and architectural features of the landmark shall be preserved.
2. Changes and additions to the landmark which have taken place over time are evidence of the history of the property and the neighborhood. These changes to the property may have acquired significance in their own right and that significance should be recognized and respected. However, removal of disfiguring alterations will be encouraged.
3. Deteriorated architectural features should be repaired rather than replaced.
4. When replacement of architectural features is necessary, the work should be based on physical or documentary evidence.
5. New materials should, whenever possible, match the material being replaced in physical properties, design,

color, texture, and appearance. The use of imitation replacement materials is discouraged.

6. The surface treatment of a landmark shall be done by the gentlest possible means. Sandblasting and other cleaning methods that damage exterior architectural features shall not be used.

7. Additions must not destroy significant exterior architectural features and shall not be incongruous to the historic aspects, architectural significance, or distinctive character of the landmark, neighborhood and environment.

8. Additions shall be done in such a way that if they were to be removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the landmark would be unimpaired.

C. Specific Standards

Insofar as possible, exterior alterations should conform to the conjectural original condition drawings prepared by Finegold Alexander & Associates.

When alterations are undertaken, field investigation should be undertaken during demolition to ensure preservation of original material, which should be incorporated into the renovation when reasonably possible. Alterations in compliance with the Finegold Alexander & Associates elevations and matching the original in material and workmanship shall be deemed approved without further review. Alterations that deviate from the Finegold Alexander & Associates elevations should be submitted for approval by the Historical Commission.

Disfiguring alterations, such as the Wursthau storefront, should be removed.

Signs should conform to current Cambridge regulations and should not be subject to additional review unless they are found not to conform.

1. Exterior Walls

a. Retain historic siding and trim, including existing sound siding and millwork, and replace in kind only if integrity is compromised.

b. Retain historic masonry elements and ensure that repairs and pointing are carried out to the highest professional standards.

2. Windows

a. Retain or repair all original windows.

b. Replacement windows should be wooden sash that replicate the existing dimensions and configuration as closely as possible.

3. Roof

a. Maintain all publicly visible historic features of the roofline.

b. Maintain original roofing material on all visible roof planes or replace with material of matching color and dimensions.

4. Other Elements

a. Retain all decorative detailing or replace to match existing.

b. Consider repainting exterior in appropriate colors.

VII. Proposed Order

ORDERED:

That the structures located at 1380 through 1392 Massachusetts Avenue and 2 through 14 J.F. Kennedy Street, designated on Assessors' map 160 as parcel 169, and historically known as the Read Block, be designated as a protected landmark pursuant to Chapter 2.78, Article III of the Code of the City of Cambridge, as recommended by vote of the Cambridge Historical Commission on June 5, 1997.

This designation is justified by the important associations of the Read Block with the broad architectural and social history of the City of Cambridge and by the architectural significance of its style and period of construction as stated in the Final Landmark Designation Report dated June 5, 1997, prepared by the Cambridge Historical Commission.

The effect of this designation shall be that no construction or alterations shall be made to the designated structures that would in any way affect the exterior architectural features visible from a public way unless the Commission shall first have issued a Certificate of Appropriateness, a Certificate of Nonapplicability, or a Certificate of Hardship with respect to such construction or alteration. Notwithstanding this designation, and subject to review and approval of construction details in general and alterations to the existing storefront at 2A John F. Kennedy Street in particular, the Read Block may be altered in conformance with plans and elevations prepared for the Cambridge Savings Bank by Symmes, Maini & McKee Associates, dated June 5, 1997.

In making determinations, the Commission shall be guided by Section VI, Standards for Design Review, of the Landmark Designation Report, by the applicable sections of Chapter 2.78, Article III, and by the above-referenced plans, which are incorporated into this Order.



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02139



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TEL 349-4300
FAX 349-4307

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT
ROBERT W. HEALY
City Manager

RICHARD C. ROSSI
Deputy City Manager

June 23, 1997

To The Honorable, The City Council:

I am hereby transmitting for your consideration the Historical Commission recommendations on the designation of the Read Block at 1380-1392 Massachusetts Avenue and 2-14 J.F. Kennedy Street as a landmark under Chapter 2.78, Article III, of the City Code.

Very truly yours,

Robert W. Healy
City Manager

RWH/mec

Consent Agenda #11

Reltave to the Historical Commission *S-410*
recommendations on the designation
of the Read Block at 1380-1392 Massachusetts
Avenue and 2-14 J.F. Kennedy Street as a
landmark uder Chapter 2.78, Article III, of the
City Code.

In City Council June 23, 1997

Order Adopted
9-0-0