

Statement in Support of Exemption from Review

45 Irving Street, Hingham, Massachusetts
Hingham Historical Commission, March 2nd

I want to begin by saying something plainly: I love this property. I am a designer by training and profession, and I understand what happened within these walls. That is not something I take lightly, and I hope my record with this Commission reflects that.

The Property and Its Significance

45 Irving Street is one of the most significant addresses in American design history. In 1937, William Addison Dwiggins, the man credited with coining the term "graphic designer" and one of the most influential American designers of the 20th century, built this studio by his own hand. He lived and worked here until his death in 1956. His complete archive, including over fifty hand-carved marionettes, original drawings for nineteen typefaces, his workbench, his tools, and his correspondence, now resides in a dedicated three-room gallery at the Boston Public Library.

The historically significant structure at this address is the 1937 studio. That building is the sole basis for this property's historic significance. I am in complete agreement with this Commission on that point, and I consider myself its steward.

What I Am Proposing

The proposed project is limited to the following:

1. Replacing the existing 1962 garage bay arches with those architecturally consistent with the 1937 studio
2. Connecting the updated 1962 structure and 2002 additions into a unified structure, ensuring the result reads as belonging to the 1937 building rather than as a collection of mismatched later additions
3. Adding a third garage bay, bringing the property to the maximum three bays permitted under Hingham zoning

The 1937 Dwiggins studio is not touched in any way. Not altered, not approached, not affected. It will leave this process exactly as it entered it.

Why This Project Honors the Property

The 1962 garage introduced arched garage door openings that have no relationship to Dwiggins' original architectural language. The 1937 studio is defined entirely by rectilinear geometry, with not a single curve anywhere in its design. An incompatible vision, sitting awkwardly beside the original for over sixty years.

What we are proposing is resolution. We are replacing an element that works against the 1937 building with something that finally honors its geometry and intent. The new third bay will feature barn doors that quietly recall the stable that once stood on this site, the very structure that drew Dwiggins here in the first place. My architect has stepped the third bay back from the existing structure so that the 1937 studio remains the clear focal point of the property.

The 2002 additions were constructed without Commission review and carry no historic designation whatsoever.

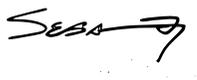
I have also been in contact with the property's third owner, now nearly 90 years old, who purchased 45 Irving Street directly from Dwiggins' trust. He has followed this project closely and offered his wholehearted support for what we are doing. That continuity of care across nearly seven decades means a great deal to me.

My Request

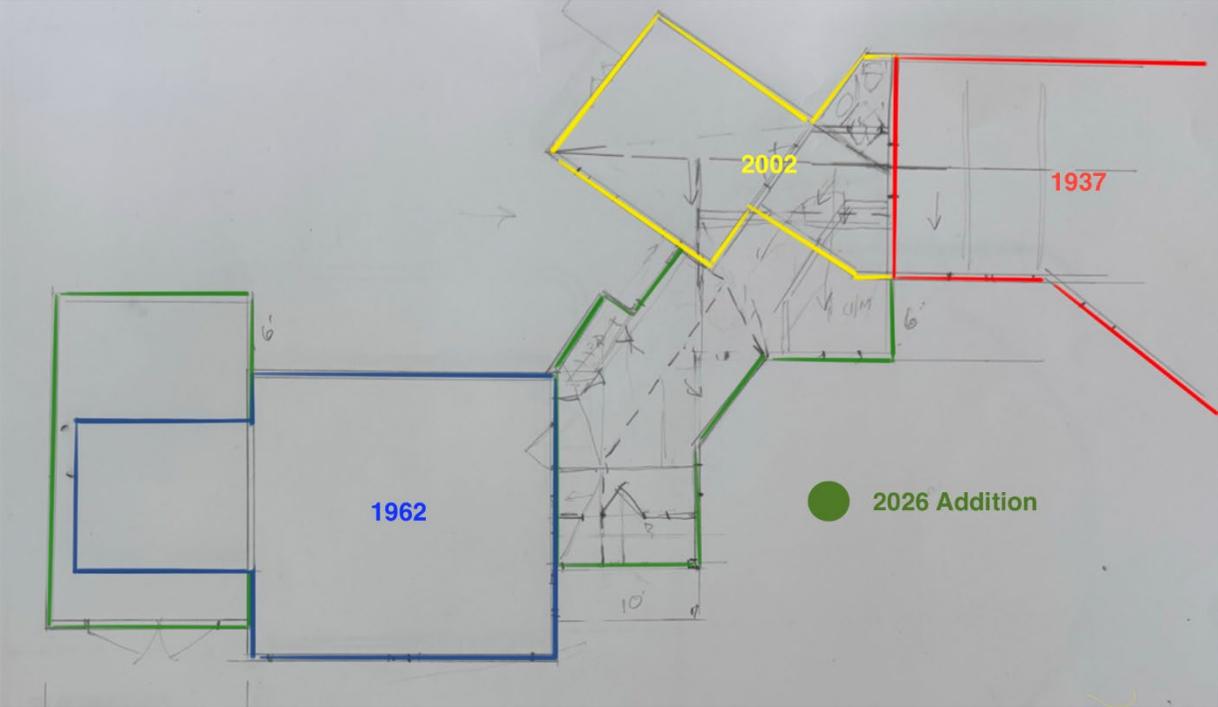
I am asking this Commission to confirm that the proposed work falls outside its jurisdiction, given that it does not touch the historically significant 1937 structure in any way, and that the elements being modified are non-contributing additions with no historic designation.

I appear before you because I respect what this address represents. When this project is complete, the 1937 Dwiggins studio will finally be the focal point it deserves to be, no longer surrounded by decades of architecturally inconsistent additions, but clearly present and honored at the heart of the property.

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "SESA" followed by a stylized flourish.





[Empty boxes for AREA and FORM NO.]

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
80 BOYLSTON STREET
BOSTON, MA 02116

Town _____

Address 45 Irving Street

Historic Name William Addison

Dwiggins House

Use: Present Home and studio

Original studio

Photo (3"x3" or 3"x5", black and white) Indicate address of property on back of photo. Staple to left side of form.

DESCRIPTION

Date 1937

Source Plaque

Style Traditional

Architect William Addison Dwiggins

Exterior Wall Fabric Wood shingles

Outbuildings Garage designed by

Edgar T. P. Walker, 1964

Major Alterations (with dates) 1965. Marionette theater converted to living-room, bathroom + kitchen. Alterations to rear windows and north ell.

Condition Excellent

Moved No Date _____

Acreage 30,136 sq. ft.

Setting Residence is located on the north-west corner of Leavitt and Irving Streets. Behind the property is a "deep kettle hole, a remnant of the glacial age" in this area. "1975 Kingham Conservators Land Trust map.

Recorded by _____

Organization _____

Date _____

Major alterations:

1965 - Marionette theater converted to living-room, bathroom and kitchen. Exterior alterations just to rear windows + window to north ell.

Sketch Map: Draw map showing property's location in relation to nearest cross streets and/or geographical features. Indicate all buildings between inventoried property and nearest intersection(s). Indicate north

outbdg

Edgar T. Walker designed re garage (1964)

1975 Hapham Map: "Next to his studio is a deep kettle hole, a remnant of the glacial age in this area."

Setting: set below Irving St., yard is a kettle hole

UTM REFERENCE Living Area: 1,699 sq. ft.

USGS QUADRANGLE Class: R-1/101

SCALE _____

NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA STATEMENT (if applicable)

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE Describe important architectural features and evaluate in terms of other buildings within the community.

State Place

" WAD

This building designed by
William Addison Dwiggins
served as his studio
1937 - 1956"

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE Explain the role owners played in local or state history and how the building relates to the development of the community.

Re Livery stable for Re fire dept, once located in
Re Tree Dept

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

