

The following appeared on Bostonglobe.com:

Headline: **City seizes control of historic farm in Mattapan** - The Boston Globe

Date: Aug. 14, 2013

Fowler-Clark farm, possibly the oldest remaining farmhouse in the city, was once one of many dotting a fertile Boston countryside, a rich ecosystem of arable land, orchards, and livestock. The area was, by one 17th-century account, a place of "fair cornfields and pleasant gardens." Now, sitting on a busy residential corner of Mattapan, near streets that have all too often seen gunfire and violence, the farm has fallen into disrepair. Weeds, tangled and haphazard, grow in the yard. Paper plates, candy wrappers, and half-eaten food accumulate by the fence. Inside, dust blemishes what remains of the house's ornate woodwork, and broken windows suggest intruders have entered. It was time, city officials said, for something to be done. So on Saturday, the city seized control of the farm, and contractors boarded up windows, repaired fencing, cut weeds, and hauled away trash

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So on Saturday, the city seized control of the farm, and contractors boarded up windows, repaired fencing, cut weeds, and hauled away trash. The farm, which once covered more than 11 acres on Norfolk Street, was designated a city landmark in 2006, though, until Saturday, little had been done to maintain or improve the house.



[Workers clean up historic Mattapan farm](#)

“This is not only a historically significant property, but it is also part of a neighborhood where people live,” said Lisa Pollack, spokeswoman for the city’s Department of Neighborhood Development. “We wanted to clean the brush, clear the debris, and make it a more attractive place for people to see when they open their doors.”

City officials said they hope eventually to find an owner interested in preserving this small piece of Boston’s agricultural and architectural history at 487 Norfolk St., whether as a private residence or neighborhood museum.

The farmhouse appeared on Norfolk Street between 1786 and 1806, according to probate records, just a few decades into the country’s founding. Historians speculate the house was built earlier, however, and moved to Mattapan from another location. In any case, city officials say the Fowler-Clark residence is one of only four farmhouses built in the city prior to 1806; its central chimney, wood sash, and pedimented entry porch make it emblematic of late 18th century Massachusetts architecture.

For this history, if nothing else, city officials hope the farm will be restored.

Upon securing the house and clearing the brush, contractors found several slabs of slate and wood, which will be kept and analyzed for historical significance. Brian Swett, the city’s chief of environment and energy, said the building has remained structurally intact, and much of the reworking will be largely superficial.