

Docket Item #15  
BAR Case #2003-0235

BAR Meeting  
October 15, 2003

**ISSUE:** Addition & alterations

**APPLICANT:** Dr. Lawrence Singer

**LOCATION:** 809 Cameron Street

**ZONE:** CD/Commercial

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## STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends:

1. Approval of the alterations to the rear (east, west and north facades), including the addition of the two story wrap around porch;
2. Approval of the restoration of the two center second story windows on the front (south) facade;
3. Denial of the new third story addition; and,
4. Denial of all alterations to the front (south) facade except for the above mentioned window restoration.

NOTE: Docket item #14 must be approved before this docket item may be considered.

## DISCUSSION:

### Applicant s Description of the Undertaking:

Permission to add new third floor @ east front, redesign exist. third floor @ west, add porch to second floor rear (3 sides) & change windows on rear elevation and add windows to front.

### Issue:

The applicant is requesting approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for a third story addition on the east front of the building and alterations to the front, rear and sides of the building. The work is described in more detail below:

### Third Story Addition

The proposed third story addition will be located on the east half of the main block of the building formerly known as 807 Cameron Street. It will match the late 19<sup>th</sup> century third story addition on the west half of the building in its size and massing, creating a uniform roofline on the front and back. The new construction will be of brick to match the existing in size, coursing, and pointing. It will have a corbeled brick cornice, similar to, but simpler than that to the west. On the front (south) facade, it will have an arched one-over-one wood window on the west and a wood balcony centered over the existing two story bay at the east. The window will have a segmental arch lintel matching the existing in appearance. The balcony will have a wood paneled base and square wood columns supporting a standing seam metal roof. Beyond the balcony in the front wall of the new addition will be a fully glazed door flanked by oval windows. The east side of the addition will be blank. The rear (north) wall will have a recessed porch with wood pilasters and trim. Two small square windows will be located in the recessed wall of the porch. The porch will be flanked by one-over-one rectangular wood windows.

### Alterations to the Front (South) Elevation

For the most part the first and second stories will remain as they are. The basement windows will be replaced with new wood windows but all other existing windows will be repaired and retained. However, the front entryway will be modified somewhat. The existing round columns will be replaced with new square wood columns and the entablature above will be replaced with new wood trim which will extend only across the opening, rather than to the bays on either side as the existing does.

Two windows will be restored to the blank area above the central entryway in the second story of the front facade. The proposed windows will be in the same location and will replicate in nearly all respects the windows which were removed in 1969. They will be wood, one-over-one windows with segmental arch lintels with a decorative keystone to match the existing. Staff notes that the original windows in this location had two-over-two sash (as seen in pre-1969 photographs of 807 & 809 Cameron and still remain on 803 & 805 Cameron Street).

On the third story, the applicant proposes to make a number of alterations which make the existing west and new east sections more unified in appearance. The existing narrow metal or wood cornice at the top of the second story on the west side and the heavy Italianate wood cornice at the roofline on the east side will be removed and replaced with a new wood cornice extending across the entire facade at the top of the second story windows. The existing third story wood balcony on the west side will be replaced with a new balcony similar to that proposed for the new addition to the east. The two balconies will differ in minor details. The western balcony will have round rather than square columns and will have a dentil molding at the cornice. The existing paired full length windows with arched stained glass transom leading to the balcony will be replaced with a single, fully glazed door with flanking oval windows, matching that proposed for the new east side addition. The window to the east of the balcony is shown in the drawings as a one-over-one window. The notes do not call for the window to be replaced, but it is currently a two-over-two window, most likely original to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century construction.

On the east side of the main block, an existing basement window will receive new wood sash and the existing chimney will be extended up to the top of the new third story and will match the chimney on the west side. The rear ell will be wrapped on the east, north and west sides with a two story frame porch. The porch will have square wood columns, a simple wood picket railing on the second story and a standing seam metal roof continuing the slope of the ell. The windows on the first story of the east side of the ell will be replaced with new one-over-one wood windows. On the second story, the existing windows will be removed and replaced with three fully glazed sets of french doors.

The rear (north side) of the main block will have minor alterations. On the east end, a one-over-one wood window will be installed in the first story, where the ghost of a lintel suggests an earlier window had been. On the second story, a non-original metal casement window will be replaced by fully glazed french doors. On the west end of the main block, on the second story a wood casement window will be set high in the wall to light the kitchen beyond. The submitted materials do not indicate whether this is a new or existing window opening. Above the ell on the third story of the main block, the two existing windows will be replaced with new wood windows. The north side of the ell will be altered by the addition of the two story porch and a number of changes in the fenestration. On the first story, four new matching one-over-one wood windows will be installed where there are currently two windows of differing size and type and a door. The back entryway will be located in the westernmost bay of the ell, where there is now a door into the enclosed side porch. The new entryway will consist of a four panel wood door with transom and wood surround. The door will be accessed by a ramp with wood railings. On the second story of the ell, the two outermost windows will be replaced with rectangular wood one-over-one windows while the center two windows will be bricked in.

On the west side, the existing two story porch will either be repaired and retained or replaced. The first story will be enclosed with four regularly spaced sets of paired, one-over-one wood windows. The walls will be brick. The second story will have an open porch matching that on the east and north elevations. There will be, from north to south, a fully glazed french door, two small, one-over-one windows and a fully glazed door. The submitted materials do not indicate what the existing openings are on this elevation, which is currently hidden by the existing enclosed second story porch. The west side of the main block has an existing window in the basement, second and third stories. Each of these will be replaced by a new wood window. The second story window lighting the kitchen will be a casement while the third story window will be a one-over-one double hung window.

The location of the HVAC units has yet to be determined, but will probably be on the ground at the rear of the building. The applicant is aware that, if it is decided to mount them on the rooftop, further coordination with the Board of Architectural Review will be required.

The brickwork is currently painted green while the trim is cream. The proposed new paint scheme, which will cover both existing and new construction, is a tan body with cream trim. A paint chip will be made available to board members at the hearing.

The building is a prominent landmark on the 800 block of Cameron Street. The east and west side elevations are partially visible from the sidewalk at Cameron Street. The rear of the building is visible at a distance from Muir Court, the public alley which runs east west at the north end of the block, and in views through the parking areas that consume a good portion of the interior of the block.

#### History and Analysis:

As discussed in docket item #14, the Victorian townhouse now known as 809 Cameron Street was built as two separate houses (809 & 807 Cameron Street) between 1877 and 1885. A third floor addition with wood balcony was added to 809 Cameron Street (the western half) circa 1899. In 1939, the central entranceway linking the two buildings was added (Permit #3218, September 11, 1939). In 1969, the two center windows on the second floor were bricked in (Permit #26105, 3/17/1969 and BAR approval February 12, 1969). More recently, in 1992, the Board approved the reconstruction of the wood balcony on the third story of the western half of the building and, in 2002, approved after-the-fact the capsulation and enclosure of the second story porch on the west side (BAR Case #92-0046, 2/19/1992 and BAR Case #2002-0096 & 0070, 6/19/2002).

The proposed third story addition and alterations comply with the zoning ordinance requirements.

In the opinion of Staff, the proposed alterations to the sides and rear are acceptable while the new third story addition and most of the proposed alterations to the front are not. The rear ell has been subject to numerous alterations of the fenestration over the years while still retaining integrity in terms of its basic massing. Thus, Staff is not overly concerned about the extensive alterations to the existing fenestration which are proposed. The massing of the ell will be

retained albeit behind the two story porches. There is precedent for both one and two story porches on the building, and the relatively simple design of the porch is appropriate for its location at the rear of the house.

On the other hand, Staff believes the addition of the third story and alterations to the front to create a new more unified appearance are inappropriate. They significantly alter the character of the existing building which, as discussed in docket item #14, clearly expresses three stages of construction: the Italianate core, particularly strong on the east side; the late Victorian third story with a Queen Anne style balcony on the west side; and the grand Colonial Revival entrance uniting the two buildings at the first story. While not the most harmonious or rational design, the resultant asymmetrical assemblage is attractive and unique. As a matter of preservation principle, Staff is generally opposed to the addition of another story to the front of an historic building. Such a prominent addition will inevitably alter the architectural character of the historic building. Staff strongly believes that the existing wood balcony, which is faithful to the original c.1899 design, should be repaired and retained. In addition the two different cornices, each an expression of its own style, should be retained. The existing full-length paired windows and stained glass transom at the third story balcony clearly date to the Queen Anne addition and should also be retained. If the applicant wishes to increase the ease of access to the balcony, perhaps one or both of the window sashes could be replaced with a door while retaining the appearance of the paired sash. Lastly, Staff believes the 1939 Colonial Revival entrance, now over 60 years old, has achieved its own significance and should be retained as is.

Staff commends the applicant for proposing to restore the second story center windows, which were removed in 1969. This late alteration did not add to the composition, as the c.1899 and 1939 additions did, but rather diminished it. Staff does note that the original windows were two-over-two, but would not object to the replacement windows being one-over-one.

On the other hand, should the Board determine that a new third story addition is appropriate, Staff believes that great care must be taken to assure that the new construction is a clear expression of its own period. The new east side third story should be recognizably different from the west side, while also being compatible with the existing building. The currently proposed design, although it does use subtle differences in molding profiles, cornices and porch posts, seeks to unify the old and new rather than to maintain the distinctions between the different periods of construction, over 100 years apart.

To conclude, Staff recommends:

1. Approval of the alterations to the rear (east, west and north facades), including the addition of the two story wrap around porch;
2. Approval of the restoration of the two center second story windows on the front (south) facade;
3. Denial of the new third story addition; and,
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## CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

Legend: C - code requirement R - recommendation S - suggestion F- finding

### Code Enforcement:

- F-1 The existing building is classified as 5B (Combustible / Unprotected) construction. The proposed project requests use of a 3<sup>rd</sup> floor addition for use as living quarters. The USBC limits 5B construction for R3 (Residential) use to two stories and 4800 square feet. The applicant is not permitted under code requirements to construct the proposed project without meeting the requirements of the USBC and applying for a change of construction type from 5B to 5A (Combustible / Protected).
  
- C-1 The current use is classified as B; the proposed uses are B and R. Change of use, in whole or in part, will require a certificate of use and occupancy (USBC 115.4) and compliance with USBC 118.2. including but not limited to: limitations of exit travel distance, emergency and exit lighting, a manual fire alarm system, and accessibility for persons with disabilities.
  
- C-2 The proposed alterations to the structure contains mixed use groups and is subject to the mixed use and occupancy requirements of USBC 313.0.
  
- C-3 New construction must comply with the current edition of the Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC).
  
- C-4 Alterations to the existing structure must comply with the current edition of the Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC).
  
- C-5 Construction permits are required for this project. Plans shall accompany the permit application that fully detail the construction as well as layouts and schematics of the mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems.
  
- C-6 All exterior walls within 3 feet from an interior property line shall have a fire resistance rating of 1 hour, from both sides, with no openings permitted within the wall. As alternative, a 2 hour fire wall may be provided.
  
- C-7 Prior to the issuance of a demolition permit or land disturbance permit, a rodent abatement plan shall be submitted to Code Enforcement that will outline the steps that will taken to prevent the spread of rodents from the construction site to the surrounding community and sewers.
  
- C-8 Roof drainage systems must be installed so as neither to impact upon, nor cause erosion/damage to adjacent property.
  
- C-9 A soils report must be submitted with the building permit application.

- C-10 Permission from adjacent property owners is required if access to the adjacent properties is required to complete the proposed construction. Otherwise, a plan shall be submitted to demonstrate the construction techniques utilized to keep construction solely on the referenced property.
- C-11 A wall location plat prepared by a land surveyor is required to be submitted to this office prior to requesting any framing inspection.

Historic Alexandria:

Although I am generally opposed to constructing a third floor, this project creates a much more attractive final product.