

Docket Item #11  
BAR Case #2003-0235

BAR Meeting  
November 5, 2003

**ISSUE:** Addition & alterations

**APPLICANT:** Dr. Lawrence Singer

**LOCATION:** 809 Cameron Street

**ZONE:** CD/Commercial

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**BOARD ACTION, OCTOBER 15, 2003:** On a motion by Ms. Neihardt, seconded by Ms. Quill the Board approved the alterations to the north, west, and south elevations and deferred for restudy alterations to the front facade. The vote on the motion was 6-0.

**REASON:** The Board agreed with the Staff analysis that the proposed alterations to the north, west, and south elevations were appropriate, but believed that additional attention should be given to the proposed third floor addition including the design of the porches and the cornices on the second and third floor levels.

**SPEAKER:** Richard Clausen, project architect, spoke in support

### STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends approval of Alternative #2 with the condition that the applicant provide Staff with front elevation drawings that include all necessary notes concerning materials and treatment and that Staff have the opportunity to approve the content of the notes.

### 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.

Update: The applicant has submitted two alternatives for the front (south) elevation for the Board s consideration. Both add a third story to the east side and seek to unify the design so that the building reads as one. The Board approved the plans for the north, east and west elevations at the October 15, 2003 hearing.

#### Issue:

##### Alternative #1

This alternative is similar to that presented to the Board at the October 15, 2003 hearing. It ties the two sides of the building together with a continual cornice at the top of the second story and adds a porch to the new east side addition to balance that on the west. The design incorporates minor differences in the detailing of the third story cornice and porches to convey a distinction between the two sides while still maintaining an overall sense of unity.

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).

The Italianate cornice, which was previously to be replaced is now retained in full and will be replicated across the west side. The narrow cornice at the top of the second story on the west side will be removed and the bay will be extended up to match the height of the bay on the east. The existing Queen Anne style porch on the west side third story will be removed and replaced with a new porch with a more classical appearance. The same porch, except for a minor cornice detail, will be placed on the front of the new east side third story addition. The porches will have a hip roof clad in standing seam metal and square posts. While the previous plans

eliminated the c.1899 paired full length windows with arched, stained glass transom in the west side third story, the current design retains the assembly but appears to substitute fully glazed doors for the windows. On the east side, the door to the porch will be a single, fully glazed door flanked by oval windows. The corbeled brick cornice of the new east side addition will be similar to that on the west side, but simpler. The westernmost bay of the new addition and easternmost bay of the existing third story addition will each have one-over-one windows with segmental arch lintels with a decorative keystone. It is assumed that the windows will be wood. Due to the height of the Italianate cornice, these windows will have to be shorter than the existing third story window.

#### Alternative #2

This alternative is similar to Alternative #1, but somewhat simpler. It omits the third story porches as well as the minor differences in the detailing to create a building in which the two halves are mirror images of each other.

As with Alternative #1, for the most part the first and second stories will remain as they are. The basement windows will be replaced and all other existing windows are assumed to be repaired and retained. (The drawing has no notes so Staff is assuming that all trim, windows and doors are wood). Also like Alternative #1, the front entryway will be modified somewhat. The entablature will be shortened in length. The drawings do not indicate whether the existing columns are to remain or be replaced.

As with Alternative #1, the two windows will be restored to the blank area above the central doorway in the second story of the front facade. The proposed windows will be in the same location and will apparently replicate in all respects the windows which were removed in 1969. They will have segmental arch lintels with a decorative keystone to match the existing and, unlike those in Alternative #1, will be two-over-two windows. 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). It is not known whether these windows will be true divided light or simulated divided light. They should match the existing two-over-two third story window.

The Italianate cornice will be retained on approximately two thirds of the east side and will be replicated on the west side, where, as in Alternative #1, the bay will be extended to its former height matching the east side bay. The center area of the building will not have the heavy Italianate cornice, but instead will have a narrow cornice similar to the existing west side cornice. This cornice will be located just above the restored windows. As with Alternative #1, the existing Queen Anne style porch will be removed and the existing 1899 paired window with transom assembly will be retained with the windows converted to fully glazed doors. Unlike Alternative #1, the porch will not be replaced. The window in the easternmost bay of the existing west side third story will remain at its existing size. The new east side third story addition will be a virtual mirror image of the west side, replicating and continuing the raised brick moulding at the top of the windows and the corbeled brick cornice. The doorway over the east bay will match the appearance of that to the west, with double doors and an arched transom. It is not known if the transom on the east side will be stained glass like that on the west. Again,

materials are not noted on the drawings and Staff is assuming that the east side will match the historic materials of the west side.

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.

#### History and Analysis:

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 porch 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 porch 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.

Staff previously expressed its opposition to the third story addition and to the concept of unifying the two buildings as one new entity. If there was to be an east side addition, Staff felt that it should be a clear expression of its own period, while the existing building should be kept as it is, a testament to a succession of alterations. However, the Board has approved the third story in concept and the applicant appears to be committed to a unified approach to the facade. Therefore, presented with the choice between the two alternatives, Staff has a slight preference for Alternative #2. This alternative is simpler and somehow seems more respectful of the existing building. Alternative #2 does not add any new architectural elements, but rather works with the existing vocabulary to create a new and more harmonious whole. Staff appreciates that Alternative #1 seeks to distinguish between the two sides by using several fairly subtle differences, within the overall unified scheme. Preservation philosophy does generally encourage distinctions between the design of the old and new. However, when the overall intention is to have a unified appearance it is not clear that these minor differences are not particularly effective. Alternative #2 dispenses with the differences and achieves a cleaner appearance as a result. Alternative #2 does not retain the east side Italianate cornice in its entirety, as a number of Board members requested. However, by sacrificing the center section, it avoids the somewhat squat appearance of the third story seen in Alternative #1 and allows the existing third story window on the west side to remain at its full length. In addition, it picks up the narrower Queen Anne cornice from the west side and transplants it to the center section. Lastly, Alternative #2 retains the two-over-two windows in the center section, reflecting the original scheme as seen in historic photographs and on 803 & 805 Cameron Street, the buildings to the east. While Staff regrets the loss of the Queen Anne style porch from the c.1899 west side

third story addition, it would prefer to see it simply removed, rather than replaced with an new design as is the case with Alternative #1.

To conclude, Staff recommends approval of Alternative #2 with the condition that the applicant provide Staff with front elevation drawings that include all necessary notes concerning materials and treatment and that Staff have the opportunity to approve the content of the notes.

## 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.