

Docket Item #16
BAR Case #2003-0245

BAR Meeting
November 5, 2003

ISSUE: Alterations
APPLICANT: Glen Stone
LOCATION: 126 Prince Street
ZONE: RM/Residential

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends:

1. Denial of the new dormers;
2. Approval of the replacement window sash; and,
3. That no paint be applied to the east elevation and that it remain in its unpainted state.

NOTE: Docket item #16 must be approved before this docket item can be considered.

DISCUSSION:

Applicant s Description of the Undertaking:

Request to add front and rear dormers. Change window sash to wood 12 over 12 style. Paint east side of house.

Issue:

The applicant is requesting approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness to add dormers to the house at 126 Prince Street.

Dormers

Two options for the dormers have been proposed, In Scheme 1 three dormers are proposed for the front slope and three for the rear. In Scheme 2 two dormers are proposed for the front slope and three for the rear slope. Each dormer has an overall width of 3'9", a height of 5'9" and a depth of 8'6". Thus each dormer will remove approximately 17 square feet of roof area for a total loss of original building fabric of 102 square feet under Scheme 1 and 85 square feet under Scheme 2. The windows in each dormer are proposed to be six-over-six true divided light wood windows each 2' wide.

Replacement window sash

Each of the 5 windows on both the front and rear of the house are proposed to be replaced with new 12-over-12 true divided light wood windows.

The applicant has provided an actual sample of the proposed replacement sash which will be made available to members at the public hearing.

Painting of east elevation

The wood siding on the east elevation is unpainted. The applicant proposes to paint the siding. No color has been specified.

History and Analysis:

The house at 126 Prince Street is a three bay, two story attached frame building that likely dates from the late 18th century based upon construction techniques employed in the building. It is a largely intact example of a vernacular 18th century residence. The house is a remarkable survival. Despite documentary evidence, it appears that the house largely escaped the devastating fire of 1827 which destroyed the rest of the 100 block of Prince Street and portions of surrounding blocks. There was evidence of fire damage on the rear of the house.

Proposed dormers and alterations to existing building comply with zoning ordinance requirements.

Dormers

As noted in the Discussion section of docket item #16: In the experience of Staff, dormers were unusual on 18th century frame vernacular and uncommon on more high style buildings. Many of the dormers visible on extant 18th century building were later, early 19th century additions. Thus, in the opinion of Staff, the installation of dormers will substantially alter this plain vernacular house and change its unaltered roof line. Staff cannot support the installation of new dormers on an 18th century house because they will cause an unacceptable loss of original historic fabric and create a visually new house from what has existed for more than 200 years.

Replacement window sash

Two-over-two windows were installed in the building, likely in the late 19th or early 20th century and are inappropriate to the 18th century date of the building. The proposed new 12-over-12 true divided light wood windows are more appropriate to the original period of the house. Therefore, Staff supports the installation of the new replacement sash.

Painting of east elevation

The wood siding on the east elevation is unpainted. As the applicant notes in his supporting letter some of this siding has been painted. The siding that shows traces of paint is replacement siding that was removed from the rear of the house and installed on the east elevation ca. 1995 to replace rotten and deteriorated siding. The bulk of the existing siding on the east elevation is unpainted and has remained so since the house was constructed. Because paint was expensive and extremely labor intensive in the 18th century many frame houses were only painted on the front facade. As paint became much more affordable in the 19th century, these previously unpainted elevations were treated. Thus, the survival of an unpainted elevation on an 18th century house is extremely rare and 126 Prince Street is, thus, a very important building survival in the historic district that serves to visually explain 18th century building treatment. Therefore, Staff recommends that no paint be applied to the east elevation and that it remain in its unpainted state.

CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

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

Code Enforcement:

- C-1 New construction must comply with the current edition of the Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC).
- C-2 Alterations to the existing structure must comply with the current edition of the Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC).
- C-3 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.

Historic Alexandria:

No comment.