

Docket Item #7
BAR CASE #2005-0057

BAR Meeting
April 6, 2005

ISSUE: Alterations
APPLICANT: Ed Miller
LOCATION: 214 South Henry Street
ZONE: CL/Commercial

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends deferral for restudy:

1. To investigate whether the original wood siding remains and, if so, whether it can be repaired and retained. The applicant is to remove the masonite and bricktex siding in several representative locations on both buildings, in consultation with BAR Staff;
2. To use a more historically appropriate door, such as a four panel wood door; and,
3. To use two-over-two or one-over-one (in order of preference) double hung wood windows rather than the proposed six-over-six windows.

I. ISSUE:

The applicant is requesting approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for alteration to the house at 214 South Henry Street. The proposed changes are described below:

Siding

The houses are currently clad in wide, beaded masonite siding which is in a deteriorated condition. The applicant proposes to replace the masonite siding with hardiplank lap siding with a 6" exposure. The siding will be smooth and will be painted. Harditrim will be used for corner boards and for a vertical trim piece on the north elevation.

Windows

The house currently has modern replacement six-over-six wood windows. These windows are in poor condition and the applicant proposes to replace them with Pozzi brand aluminum windows with simulated divided light muntins. It is not clear whether the existing trim, which does not appear to be historic, will remain.

Door

The front doors are currently four panel wood doors with a row of lights at the top. The existing doorways are just under 3' wide. Neither the doors or trim appear to be historic. The applicant proposes to replace the door with a similar type door.

The south side and rear elevations of the house is partially visible from the public alley to the south.

II. HISTORY:

The house at 214 South Henry Street was constructed in the mid-19th century and appears on the Hopkins map of 1877, the first year the City was mapped.. The footprint and basic massing appears basically as built. However, the original exterior elements have all been replaced or covered over, including the siding, roofing, windows and doors.

The two story, frame, house at 214 South Henry Street is typical of the housing constructed for middle- and working-class Alexandrians throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries. These houses were constructed directly across from the T. J. Fannon & Sons Coal and Wood Yard and within view of the Southern Railroad yard and roundhouse.

For much of their history, the houses were owned by the Fannon family and presumably were maintained as rental properties. There is no record of BAR review for this house.

III. ANALYSIS:

The proposed alterations comply with the zoning ordinance requirements.

Staff commends the owners for seeking to renovate this property by replacing the door, windows, and siding. These components are in a deteriorated condition. Moreover, they are not original fabric and are, in fact, historically inappropriate. Therefore, Staff has no objection to their removal. However, Staff believes the application could be improved by the use of elements that are more appropriate to the period of the house. Some minor modifications to the proposed renovation could go a long way to restoring the late 19th century architectural character that has been lost through prior renovations.

For example, the proposed six-over-six windows are not historically appropriate for these late 19th century houses. By the time of construction, two-over-two windows were routinely used for modest houses such as these and one-over-one windows were just beginning to be used, though generally for more expensive buildings. Staff recommends using a solid four-panel door, a type appropriate to Victorian era houses.

Similarly, the proposed replacement door is a Colonial Revival style door and, as such, is not appropriate to the 19th century date of construction of the house. Staff believes that a 19th century style front door would be more appropriate.

With respect to the proposed use of Hardiplank, the Board has reviewed a number of other applications for the use of fiber cement siding and has adopted the following policy with respect to the product:

1. That fiber cement siding not be installed on an historic structure;
2. That historic materials should not be removed to install fiber cement siding;
3. That fiber cement siding replace other artificial or composite siding;
4. That the nails not show in the installation of the siding;
5. That smooth, beaded siding be installed; and,
6. That BAR Staff may administratively approve the installation of fiber cement siding on *non-historic* buildings (those constructed in 1975 or later).

Staff believes the above guidelines require that additional information be obtained before a decision can be made about the appropriateness of hardiplank. The house at 214 South Henry Street is historic, but is currently clad with masonite, a non-historic composite material. What is not known is whether the original wood siding exists under the masonite.

In 2003, in a virtually identical case the Board approved the replacement of deteriorated Masonite siding with HardiPlank siding on the sides and rear of the adjacent twin houses at 216 and 218 S. Henry Street (BAR Case #'s 2003-0089 & 2003-0090, May 21, 2003), new wood siding on the front facade and new true divided light two-over-two wood windows.

In 2002, on a similar case concerning a request for fiber cement siding for four properties just around the corner, at 1000-1006 Prince Street (BAR Case #2002-168, July 17, 2002), at the Board's direction, further investigation revealed that the original wood siding existed under layers of masonite and bricktex. Although it was determined that the wood siding was too damaged to retain, new wood siding was installed to match the original. Interestingly, the original siding had been a narrow beveled siding on the front and a wider German siding on the sides and rear. Several months later, a request for fiber cement siding at 523 Duke Street culminated in the retention of the historic wood siding (BAR Case #2002-252, October 16, 2002). There the removal of masonite siding revealed intact wood siding that required only minor patching.

To conclude, Staff recommends deferral of the application for restudy to reconsider the proposed treatment of the siding, door and windows. With respect to the siding, Staff recommends that the existing masonite siding be removed in several areas on the house to allow the applicant and Staff to determine whether the historic siding remains and, if so, whether it can be retained.

IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Therefore, Staff recommends deferral of the application for restudy:

1. To investigate whether the original wood siding remains and, if so, whether it can be repaired and retained. The applicant is to remove the masonite and bricktex siding in several representative locations on both buildings, in consultation with BAR Staff;
2. To use a more historically appropriate door, such as a four panel wood door; and,
3. To use two-over-two or one-over-one (in order of preference) double hung wood windows rather than the proposed six-over-six windows.

CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

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

Code Enforcement:

- C-1 All exterior walls within 5 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. This condition is also applicable to skylights within setback distance.
- C-2 New construction must comply with the current edition of the Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC).
- C-3 Alterations to the existing structure must comply with the current edition of the Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC).
- C-4 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.