

Docket Item # 4
BAR CASE #2006-0079

BAR Meeting
November 1, 2006

ISSUE: Alterations
APPLICANT: John and Caren Camp
LOCATION: 208 South St. Asaph Street
ZONE: RM/Residential

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends approval of the application as submitted.

BOARD ACTION, OCTOBER 4, 2006: Deferred for lack of public notice.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends approval of the application as submitted.

BOARD ACTION, MAY 3, 2006: On a motion by Mr. Wheeler, seconded by Mr. Keleher, the Board denied the application as submitted, with a vote of 6-0.

REASON: The Board found the proposed alterations inappropriate to the historic house, that the window guards were improperly installed, and were concerned that the gate and guards had been installed prior to receiving approval of the alterations.

SPEAKERS: Caren Camp, applicant, spoke in support

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends approval of the application as submitted.

(Insert sketch here)

UPDATE: At the May 3, 2006 hearing, the Board denied the approval of the new garden gate and window guards that had been installed prior to the Board's meeting. The applicant filed an appeal to the City Council. The Board voted at the September 6, 2006 meeting to reconsider the action of May 3, 2006 and the applicant withdrew their appeal. Since then, the applicant has provided additional information to support the proposed garden gate and window guards, and addressed the method used for installing the window guards.

I. ISSUE:

The applicant is requesting after-the-fact approval of a replacement garden gate and new basement window guards at 208 South Saint Asaph Street. The proposed gate and window guards are fabricated of iron and have a decorative scrollwork pattern. The gate and guards are painted black.

The date of the wood paneled gate which was removed to install the new iron gate is not known. A circa 1959 photograph shows the brick gate piers. The brick wall and gateway may be significantly older, however, Staff could not locate any Board approvals for these features.

The Alexandria Historical Restoration and Preservation Commission holds an open space easement on the property. It has no purview over the existing improvements.

II. HISTORY:

The three story, Second Empire Victorian style brick residence at 208 South Saint Asaph Street was constructed in 1870 by William H. McKnight, according to Street by Street (Cox, p. 161). A two story brick, flounder style ell in the rear of the house runs along the north property line and appears to be original to the construction of the main house, based on its inclusion on the 1885 Sanborn Insurance map and a comparison of the brick bonding. For a period in the twentieth century, the house served as the "manse" for the Second Presbyterian Church (Cox, p. 161).

On May 8, 1963, the Board approved cast stone replacement steps at the front entry. The Board approved a one story addition on the June 16, 1993 (BAR Case #93-99). On January 19, 1994, the Board approved alterations to the previously approved plans for the addition (BAR Case #94-16). The addition was completed in 1994. More recently, the Board approved installation of a gas lantern at the front door on the December 7, 2005 consent calendar (BAR Case #2005-0259).

III. ANALYSIS:

The proposed alterations comply with the zoning ordinance requirements.

Although preferring the simple appearance of the existing unguarded windows and wooden gate, staff does not believe the proposed changes are inappropriate for the property. Decorative ironwork similar to that proposed in the application would have been available in the last quarter of the 19th century, when the house was constructed, and

was widely used for gates, guards and railings. Therefore, staff is not opposed to the proposed alterations.

While the window guards have been installed and in a manner which is contrary to the usual guidance for their installation, staff believes that the manner of installation is appropriate for this situation, based on several mitigating factors: 1) The front basement windows have a very narrow reveal, approximately 1 1/8" , which do not allow for guards to be installed within the window opening; 2) attempting to install the guards through the brick or the mortar joints would endanger the brick; 3) the guards have been installed through the metal header and the sill.

IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends approval of the application as submitted.

CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

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

Code Enforcement:

C-1 The installation of iron bars on basement windows shall comply with the USBC requirements for emergency escape and rescue.

Historic Alexandria:

The brick dwelling was begun by William H. McKnight, grandson of tavern-owner, William McKnight, in 1870 (Cox, p. 161). The proposed alterations are stylistically appropriate with the time period of the house.