

Docket Item #3
BAR CASE # 2007-0101

BAR Meeting
June 20, 2007

ISSUE: Railings
APPLICANT: Harriette Clark
LOCATION: 418 Wolfe Street
ZONE: RM/Residential

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

(Insert sketch here)

I. ISSUE:

The applicant is requesting approval of a certificate of appropriateness to install a metal railing on either side of the existing concrete steps at 418 Wolfe Street. The proposed railing will be iron with a black finish. It will have straight pickets and a lamb's tongue return at the end of the top railing.

II. HISTORY:

The row of seven brick porch-front rowhouses at 416-428 Wolfe Street were designed by George T. Santmyers in 1928 (Building Permit #745, 3/12/28). Santmyers was one of the most important architects of residential buildings in the metropolitan areas during the 1920s, 30s and 40s. He designed literally thousands of individual rowhouses in Washington, DC and hundreds of apartment buildings in Washington, Montgomery and Prince Georges County. He was one of the principal architects for Harry Wardman as he developed residential complexes in numerous areas of the District of Columbia. In addition, Santmyers designed a number of shopping centers in an Art Deco style on Georgia Avenue as well as in southeast Washington. (For a discussion of Santmyers and his work, see, for example, Hans Wirz and Richard Striner, Washington Deco: Art Deco Design in the Nation's Capital, (Smithsonian Institution Press, 1984); James M. Goode, Best Addresses, A Century of Washington's Distinguished Apartment Houses, (Smithsonian Institution Press, 1988) the Staff Report]; and, Peter H. Smith, The Montgomery Arms Apartment Complex, Silver Spring, Maryland, (Unpublished mss., 1989). Santmyers' residential buildings often display a veritable signature - a brick soldier course separating the ground level from the first story. Such is the case with this rowhouse at 418 Wolfe Street.

On October 20, 1993, the Board approved a rear addition and alterations at 418 Wolfe Street (BAR Case #93-186). The alterations approved by the Board included the replacement of the original brick columns on the front porch with wood columns. The Board subsequently approved after-the-fact alterations to the approved plans for the rear addition (BAR Case #94-93, 1/18/1995).

The front facades of a number of the houses in the row have been altered in a variety of ways. Some have had their porches removed. Others, like 418 Wolfe Street have had the brick porch columns replaced with wood. Two have added wood railings and two others metal railings at the front steps.

III. ANALYSIS:

The proposed alterations comply with the zoning ordinance requirements.

In the opinion of Staff, the proposed installation of black iron railings is appropriate. Although the steps on this row of seven brick porch-front houses do not appear to have been constructed with railings, the proposed railings are simple and unobtrusive. Similar railings have long been used throughout the districts for houses of various styles and periods. The simplicity of the railing design makes it appropriate for many applications and ensures that it will not detract from the architectural character of the building on which it is installed.

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 Handrails must comply with USBC 1009.11.

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.

Historic Alexandria:

No comments were received.