

Docket Item # 18  
BAR CASE # 2007-0199

BAR Meeting  
October 3, 2007

**ISSUE:** Alterations  
**APPLICANT:** Thomas C. Hockaday  
**LOCATION:** 426 S. Fairfax Street  
**ZONE:** RM/Residential

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**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:** Staff recommends denial of the application.

(Insert sketch here)

**I. ISSUE:**

The applicant is requesting approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for the installation of a new door surround and transom at the residential townhouse at 426 South Fairfax Street. A new pedimented door surround with a Greek Revival style entablature, presumably of wood is proposed to be installed. The new surround and transom will replicate that at the adjacent townhouse at 424 South Fairfax Street.

**II. HISTORY:**

426 South Fairfax Street is a freestanding two story, three bay townhouse pre-dating at least November 3, 1797 (Mutual Assurance Society policy date). Ethelyn Cox in *Alexandria Street by Street* notes that the property is "probably 18th century" (p. 49). This property has been documented in house history by Ruth Lincoln Kaye dated January 1994. During a review of the property for an addition in 1995 staff conducted research on the property and examined the interior of the house.

It is clear from both documentary and physical evidence that the residence retains essentially the same form and footprint that were insured by the Mutual Assurance Society in 1797. On the insurance plat the rear kitchen section of the property is indicated as "1 story"; that section is today two stories in height. It is likely that the kitchen section was raised to a full two stories sometime during the 19th century. The rearmost addition to the property was constructed ca. 1972.

In 1995 the Board considered a proposal to demolish portions of the roof of the house to allow construction of an addition (BAR Case #95-0051, 5/4/95). The Board denied that demolition because it involved demolition of 18<sup>th</sup> century fabric. The applicant appealed the Board's decision to City Council which overturned the Board and approved the demolition. Based upon the Council's approval the Board approved the design for an addition to the house on 8/16/95 (BAR Case #95-0052).

**III. ANALYSIS:**

The proposed alterations comply with zoning ordinance requirements.

The existing door surround is consistent with the vernacular 18<sup>th</sup> century architectural character of the house and is similar to door surrounds for frame buildings of the same period in the historic district and in the Commonwealth. However, the façade of the house displays stylistic characteristics reflective of architectural tastes and vogues in Alexandria over the last two hundred years. For example, the wood cornice has Italianate characteristics and likely dates from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century; the window hoods are characteristically found on Greek Revival style wood buildings; the German lap siding is a 20<sup>th</sup> century replacement; and, the entry steps and metal railings are also 20<sup>th</sup> century. The window and door openings are likely original, but with replacement windows and door. Thus, a replacement door surround in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is well within the realm of changes that have occurred on the façade. In some respects then the new door surround can be viewed in the tradition of the mix and match of architectural styles reflected on the façade.

However, the historic district ken seeks to preserve as much original architectural fabric and character of existing historic building as possible. Therefore, on balance it would be the strong preference of staff to retain the existing vernacular door surround and transom. Therefore, staff recommends denial of the application.

**IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends denial of the application.

CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

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

Code Enforcement:

No comments.

Historic Alexandria:

R-1 Approve as submitted specifying wood materials.