

Docket Item # 4
BAR CASE # 2007-0028

BAR Meeting
February 6, 2008

ISSUE: Demolition/encapsulation
APPLICANT: Temple & Marty Moore by Robert Bentley Adams
LOCATION: 207 North Fairfax Street
ZONE: RM/Residential

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends denial of the application for the Permit to Demolish and Capsulate.

If the Board approves the application, staff recommends the following conditions:

1. Contact Alexandria Archaeology (703-838-4399) two weeks prior to any ground disturbing activity (such as coring, grading, filling, vegetation removal, undergrounding utilities, pile driving, landscaping and other excavations as defined in Section 2-151 of The Zoning Ordinance) on this property. City archaeologists will monitor all ground disturbance. If significant resources are observed during the monitoring, city archaeologists will conduct the appropriate investigation to insure that important information about the City's past is not lost as a result of this development; and
2. Alexandria Archaeology (703/838-4399) immediately if any buried historic structural remains (wall foundations, cisterns, wells, privies, etc.) or concentrations of artifacts are discovered during development. Work must cease in the area of the discovery until a City archaeologist comes to the site to record the finds;
3. The applicant must not allow metal detection to be conducted on the property, unless authorized by Alexandria Archaeology; and,
4. These requirements above must be included in the General Notes of all site plans, as well as on all site plan sheets that include ground disturbing actions. Additional statements may be required to be included on the Final Site Plans by Alexandria Archaeology.

BOARD ACTION, MARCH 7, 2007: Deferred prior to the public hearing at the request of the applicant.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION, MARCH 7, 2007: Staff recommends denial of the application for the Permit to Demolish and Capsulate.

BAR CASE #2007-0028
February 6, 2008

(Insert sketch here)

NOTE: This docket item requires a roll call vote.

I. ISSUE:

The applicant is requesting approval of a Permit to Demolish and Capsulate portions of the rear elevation of the freestanding residential townhouse at 207 North Fairfax Street in order to permit the construction of a new rear porch. This new construction is not visible from a public right-of-way and, therefore, will not be considered by the Board. The area to be demolished and capsulated covers approximately 210 square feet, an area that is 15' in length x approximately 6' in width and one story in height on the second floor level at the east (rear) elevation of the house.



Figure 1 - East elevation



Figure 2 - Upper portion of east elevation



Figure 3 - South elevation



Figure 4 - Center section of east elevation

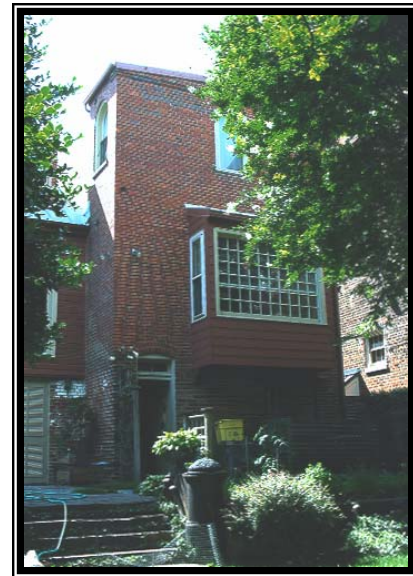


Figure 5 - Northern end of east elevation

II. HISTORY:

207 North Fairfax Street is a freestanding one and half story frame and brick townhouse dating from ca. 1760 and is one of the earliest standing residential structures in the City.

It is one of the most historically and architecturally significant residential buildings in the historic district and was part of the extant nucleus of the 18th century town that was the object of the creation of the historic district.

The building was built by John Dalton, an original founder of Alexandria and the partner of John Carlyle. John Carlyle's restored house of 1752 is now operated as a historic house museum by the Northern Virginia Regional Parks Authority.

Dalton served as one of the original Trustees of Alexandria. He was active as a supply agent during the Revolution and was a friend of George Mason of Gunston Hall, father of the Bill of Rights. Dalton was known to George Washington, a fellow Trustee of the town. Dalton's great-granddaughter, Ann Pamela Cunningham, created the Mount Vernon Ladies Association in 1852 and is credited with establishing the historic preservation movement in the United States.

The front of the house had a brick veneer façade applied in the late 19th century and the north half of the building was raised approximately a half story at that time and there have been other alterations.

That being so, the house still retains many elements that reflect its 18th century heritage. For example, the south elevation retains sections of 18th century wood siding. In addition, the historic 18th century footprint of the house remains and, it is the opinion of staff, based upon field observations with the project architect, that sections of the east elevation still retain elements of 18th century siding.

Apparently a one story frame section was added at the rear of the property in the late 19th century. According to information on historic maps it appears that this one story frame section was constructed at ground level and was built between 1877 and 1891 and was removed sometime in the interwar period between 1921 and 1941.

Staff notes that the property has been registered as an archaeological site (44AX46) with the Virginia Department of Historic Resources because of its potential to provide insight into activities in the early town during the eighteenth century. Because of the importance of the site, Alexandria Archaeology conducted test excavations of the rear yard in 1981.

III. ANALYSIS:

In considering a Permit to Demolish/Capsulate, the Board must consider the following criteria set forth in the Zoning Ordinance, §10-105(B):

- (1) Is the building or structure of such architectural or historical interest that its moving, removing, capsulating or razing would be to the detriment of the public interest?
- (2) Is the building or structure of such interest that it could be made into a historic shrine?
- (3) Is the building or structure of such old and unusual or uncommon design, texture and material that it could not be reproduced or be reproduced only with great difficulty?
- (4) Would retention of the building or structure help preserve the memorial character of the George Washington Memorial Parkway?
- (5) Would retention of the building or structure help preserve and protect an historic place or area of historic interest in the city?
- (6) Would retention of the building or structure promote the general welfare by maintaining and increasing real estate values, generating business, creating new positions, attracting tourists, students, writers, historians, artists and artisans, attracting new residents, encouraging study and interest in American history, stimulating interest and study in architecture and design, educating citizens in American culture and heritage, and making the city a more attractive and desirable place in which to live?

In the opinion of staff all of the criteria set forth in the zoning ordinance regarding demolition are met in this case except for #4 relating to the Parkway. Staff believes that the preservation of houses such as 207 North Fairfax Street was precisely the reason that the historic district was created more than 60 years ago. Proposing to demolish and capsulate a significant portion of an extant 1760s house does not respect the significant historic and architectural resources of Alexandria and the historic district. Staff cannot recommend approval of a Permit to Demolish and Capsulate for any section of this structure.

Therefore, staff recommends denial of the Permit to Demolish and Capsulate.

If the Board approves the application, staff notes the comments of Alexandria Archaeology and has included them as a condition.

IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends denial of the application for the Permit to Demolish and Capsulate.

If the Board approves the application, staff recommends the following conditions:

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BAR CASE #2007-0028
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- information about the City's past is not lost as a result of this development; and
2. Alexandria Archaeology (703/838-4399) immediately if any buried historic structural remains (wall foundations, cisterns, wells, privies, etc.) or concentrations of artifacts are discovered during development. Work must cease in the area of the discovery until a City archaeologist comes to the site to record the finds;
 3. The applicant must not allow metal detection to be conducted on the property, unless authorized by Alexandria Archaeology; and,
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CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

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

Code Enforcement:

C Prior to the issuance of a demolition permit or land disturbance permit, a rodent abatement plan shall be submitted to Code Enforcement that will outline the steps that will taken to prevent the spread of rodents from the construction site to the surrounding community and sewers.

Alexandria Archaeology:

F-1 The house on this property, built by John Dalton, dates to the mid-eighteenth century and may be the earliest standing structure in Alexandria. The property has been registered as an archaeological site (44AX46) with the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, because of its potential to provide insight into activities in the early town during the eighteenth century.

F-2 In 1981, Alexandria Archaeology conducted test excavations on the site. The yard area contained fill soils dating to the late nineteenth century, brought in to level the ground surface. These fill soils deepen toward the eastern portion of the yard.

R-1 Contact Alexandria Archaeology (703-838-4399) two weeks prior to any ground disturbing activity (such as coring, grading, filling, vegetation removal, undergrounding utilities, pile driving, landscaping and other excavations as defined in Section 2-151 of The Zoning Ordinance) on this property. City archaeologists will monitor all ground disturbance. If significant resources are observed during the monitoring, city archaeologists will conduct the appropriate investigation to insure that important information about the City's past is not lost as a result of this development.

R-2 Call Alexandria Archaeology (703/838-4399) immediately if any buried historic structural remains (wall foundations, cisterns, wells, privies, etc.) or concentrations of artifacts are discovered during development. Work must cease in the area of the discovery until a City archaeologist comes to the site to record the finds.

R-3 The applicant must not allow metal detection to be conducted on the property, unless authorized by Alexandria Archaeology.

R-4 The requirements stated in R-1, R-2 and R-3 above, must be included in the General Notes of all site plans, as well as on all site plan sheets that include ground disturbing actions. Additional statements may be required to be included on the Final Site Plans by Alexandria Archaeology.

Historic Alexandria:

This is a significant building, having belonged to John Dalton, partner of John Carlyle, who became a town trustee in 1750 (p. 36, Cox).

The proposed renovation seems to alter the character of the building too drastically, in particular the expanse of windows. A more compatible and less transforming design should be considered.