

Docket Item # 8  
BAR CASE # 2009-0242

BAR Meeting  
November 4, 2009

**ISSUE:** Demolition/Encapsulation  
**APPLICANT:** William Cromley, Applicant  
**LOCATION:** 227 South Fairfax Street  
**ZONE:** RM/ Residential Townhouse Zone

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**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:** Staff recommends approval of the Permit to Demolish/Encapsulate with the conditions:

1. That the jack arch and the original opening width is retained when converting the window on the south ell to a door.
2. That the statements in archaeology conditions below shall appear in the General Notes of all site plans and on all site plan sheets that involve demolition or ground disturbance (including Basement/Foundation Plans, Demolition, Erosion and Sediment Control, Grading, Landscaping, Utilities, and Sheeting and Shoring) so that on-site contractors are aware of the requirements.
  - a. The applicant/developer shall call Alexandria Archaeology immediately (703-838-4399) if any buried structural remains (wall foundations, wells, privies, cisterns, 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 and records the finds.
  - b. The applicant/developer shall not allow any metal detection or artifact collection to be conducted on the property, unless authorized by Alexandria Archaeology.

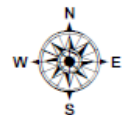
**\*\*EXPIRATION OF APPROVALS NOTE:** In accordance with Sections 10-106(B) and 10-206(B) of the Zoning Ordinance, any official Board of Architectural Review approval will expire 12 months from the date of issuance if the work is not commenced and diligently and substantially pursued by the end of that 12-month period.

**\*\*BUILDING PERMIT NOTE:** Most projects approved by the Board of Architectural Review require the issuance of one or more construction permits by Building and Fire Code Administration (including signs). The applicant is responsible for obtaining all necessary construction permits after receiving Board of Architectural Review approval. Contact Code Administration, Room 4200, City Hall, 703-746-4200 for further

information.



BAR CASE #2009-0242, 0243, 0245 11/4/2009



Note: This item requires a roll call vote.

### **I. ISSUE:**

The Applicant is requesting approval of a Permit to Demolish/Encapsulate at 227 South Fairfax Street. The permit to Demolish/Encapsulate proposes changes to the existing dwelling to include:

- Demolish the c1974 front entry door and fanlight transom.
- Demolish the elevations and chimneys of the c 1974 addition.
- Demolish approximately 5 sq. ft., of brick (2.5' x 2') beneath a window on the south elevation of the ell to create a door opening. Demolish the existing brick stoop.
- Demolish the c1974 brick wall along the east and south facades of the property.
- Demolish the existing c1974 wood folly located in the northern courtyard.

### **II. HISTORY:**

*Note: This historic context was developed based on deed and title research and a site survey. As research and rehabilitation continues on the building, this context might be revised based on additional physical evidence.*

This brick dwelling is an example of the evolution of a prominent Alexandria city house. It is believed that the house began as an early 1800s, 1-1/2 story outbuilding. The form of this original structure was absorbed into the two-story extension, as the two central bays of its first floor. The original structural timbers and whitewash on the interior are the only visible surviving features (Period 1).

After the four foot (4') alley along the northern property line was abandoned, it appears that this outbuilding was extended an additional five feet to the north (Period 2). Documentation of this footprint increase is visible in the interior kitchen where an exterior brick wall is recessed into the kitchen approximately five feet (5') from the current exterior wall. It is most likely during this time period when this building was raised to its full second-story height.

An addition onto the outbuilding's southern elevation is believed to be the third period of construction. Original surviving features in this massing include a box stair and wide plank floors which are indicative of early 1800s construction (Period 3).

The main massing of this house which faces South Fairfax Street was built in the Greek Revival style by George Plain, a prosperous house and sign painter about 1851-53 (Period 4). Surviving exterior and interior details remain, some of which include elongated windows, operable window panels, the entry entablature with its simple, yet stately Doric columns, and the wide denticulated cornice.

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After the sale of the home to Mr. John McLean, a wealthy fish and oyster merchant in 1870, it is believed that a two-bay hyphen was added to join the two buildings together and the “outbuilding” was converted into living quarters, as it is documented that Mr. Mclean was listed as having his mother move in with him during this period (the house’s footprint is completed by the 1877 Hopkins Map-Period 5).

In the mid-1970s, a major transformation to the house occurred. The Greek Revival details were stripped from the interior and exterior of the building to make the house more “Federal” in style. This included demolishing the recessed entry and its transom window on the front elevation and replacing it with a six-panel door and fanlight, adding elaborate trimwork in the interior, erecting a brick wall to enclose the southern courtyard and constructing a new, one-story, family room addition in the interior northern courtyard (Period 6).

### **III. ANALYSIS:**

In considering a Permit to Demolish/Encapsulate, 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, encapsulating 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 house?
- (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 Staff’s opinion, the subject proposal does not meet the above criteria.

Demolishing the non-historic addition and features on this high-style and architecturally significant dwelling provides a gateway for the rehabilitation of a historic resource that is prominently positioned on a corner lot within the historic district.

The demolition of the c1974 front entry door, and fanlight transom will remove non-historic building material which was conjecturally added to this historic doorway. These features do not contribute to the historic significance of the building and staff supports their removal.

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The c1974 addition was not constructed to complement the existing architectural style of the building. The addition's form, detailing and design vocabulary are not compatible with the existing historic massing. Therefore, the removal of this non-historic addition will improve the architectural integrity of the existing building.

The applicant's request to demolish approximately five (5) square feet of brick beneath a historic window and the adjacent brick stoop initially was a concern for staff. However, after site visits, the current physical evidence suggests that there have been alterations to this elevation. Staff finds that the proposal will not negatively impact the integrity of the resource as a whole, and considers the removal of a window and five (5) square feet of brick to install a door and the relocation of a brick stoop a minor change to a secondary elevation as long as the window's jack arch and opening width are retained.

The demolition request for the existing non-historic brick wall which encloses the southern courtyard is supported by Staff. This brick wall was erected in the 1970s and negatively impacts the environmental setting of the building, as it obstructs the view of this c1850 side (south) elevation. Staff commends the applicant's desire to replace this incompatible structure with a more appropriate addition.

Additionally, the proposed demolition of the 1970s wood folly located the northern courtyard is also supported by Staff. The folly abuts the historic north (side) elevation of the Greek Revival massing and thus obscures the view of this segment of the wall surface. The removal of this non-historic garden feature will allow more visual access to a portion of this wall surface which has not been visible for over thirty years.

The demolition proposed for this historic resource removes non-historic and incompatible details and replaces lost architectural features. It is for these reasons it is recommended that the Board support this application with the recommended condition.

#### **IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends approval of the Permit to Demolish/Encapsulate with the following conditions:

1. That the jack arch and the original opening width is retained when converting the window on the south ell to a door.
2. That the statements in archaeology conditions below shall appear in the General Notes of all site plans and on all site plan sheets that involve demolition or ground disturbance (including Basement/Foundation Plans, Demolition, Erosion and Sediment Control, Grading, Landscaping, Utilities, and Sheeting and Shoring) so that on-site contractors are aware of the requirements.
  - a. The applicant/developer shall call Alexandria Archaeology immediately (703-838-

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4399) if any buried structural remains (wall foundations, wells, privies, cisterns, 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 and records the finds.

- b. The applicant/developer shall not allow any metal detection or artifact collection to be conducted on the property, unless authorized by Alexandria Archaeology.

**STAFF:**

Michele Oaks, Historic Preservation Planner, Planning & Zoning

Stephen Milone, Division Chief, Zoning and Land Use Services

**V. CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS:**

Legend: C – Code Requirement R – Recommendation S – Suggestion F- Finding

Code Administration:

- C-1 Alterations to the existing structure must comply with the 2006 edition of the Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC).
- C-2 Alterations to the existing structure and/or installation and/or altering of equipment therein requires a building permit. Five sets of plans, bearing the signature and seal of a design professional registered in the Commonwealth of Virginia, must accompany the written application. The plans must include all dimensions, construction alterations details, kitchen equipment, electrical, plumbing, and mechanical layouts and schematics.
- C-3 Construction permits are required for this project. Plans shall accompany the permit application that fully details the construction as well as layouts and schematics of the mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems.
- C-4 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:

*Archaeology Finding:*

Historical research indicates a possibility that there was a free African American household on this corner in 1790. There were structures present on the street face in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and by 1830, tax records note the presence of a house at the corner of Duke and Fairfax streets. The lot therefore has the potential to yield archaeological resources that could provide insight into domestic activities in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

*Archaeology Recommendations:*

- \*1. The applicant/developer shall call Alexandria Archaeology immediately (703-838-4399) if any buried structural remains (wall foundations, wells, privies, cisterns, 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 and records the finds.
- \*2. The applicant/developer shall not allow any metal detection or artifact collection to be conducted on the property, unless authorized by Alexandria Archaeology.
3. The statements in archaeology conditions above marked with an asterisk "\*" shall appear in the General Notes of all site plans and on all site plan sheets that involve demolition or ground



disturbance (including Basement/Foundation Plans, Demolition, Erosion and Sediment Control, Grading, Landscaping, Utilities, and Sheeting and Shoring) so that on-site contractors are aware of the requirements.

**VI. IMAGES:**

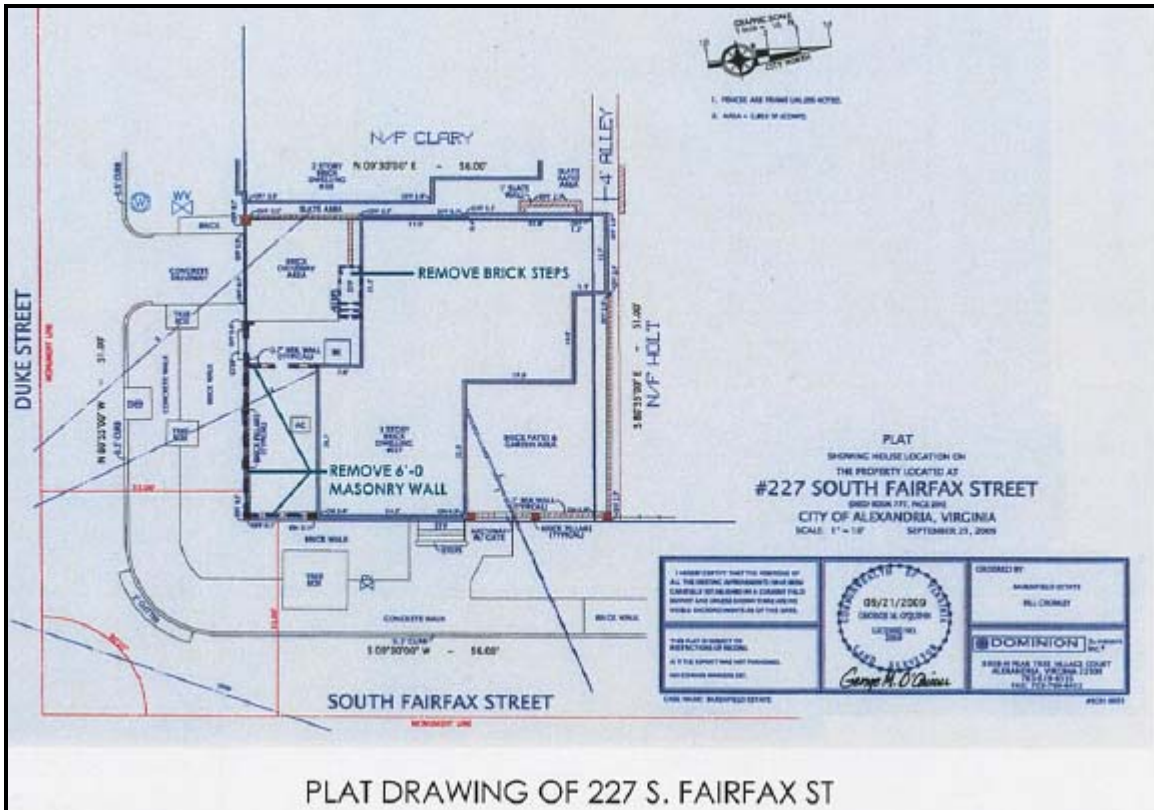


Figure 1: Plat showing Proposed Changes

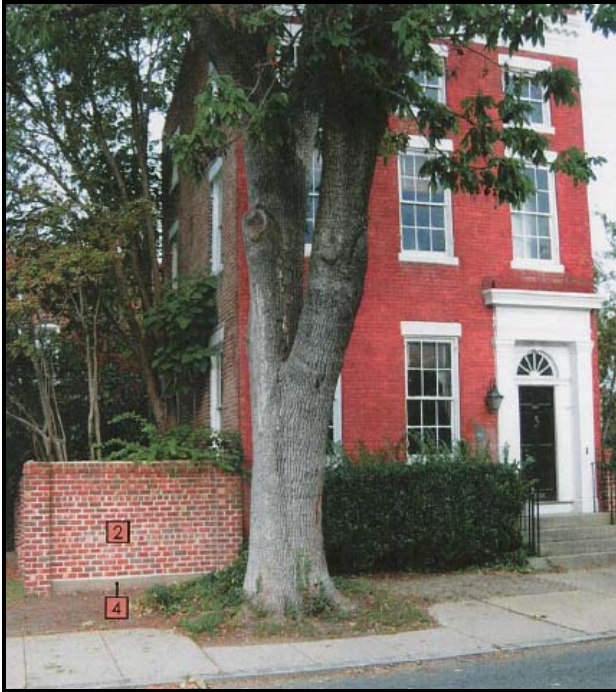


Figure 2: Existing Conditions – Front Facade

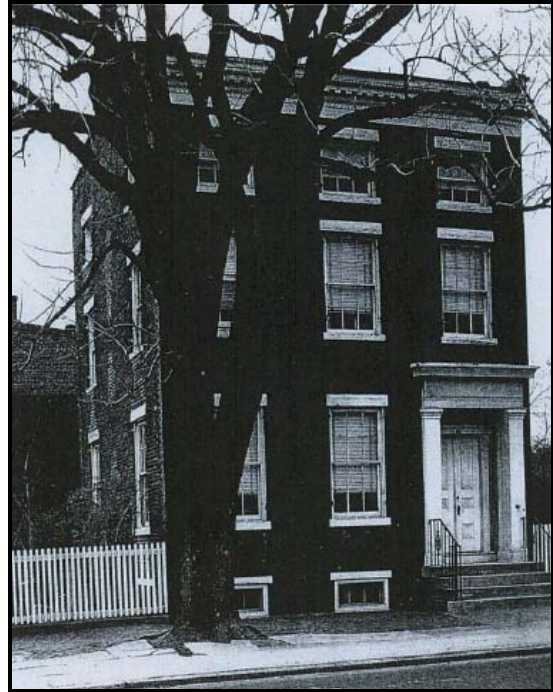


Figure 3: c1967 Photo of Front Facade



Figure 4: Proposed Changes to Fairfax Street Elevation (Front Façade)

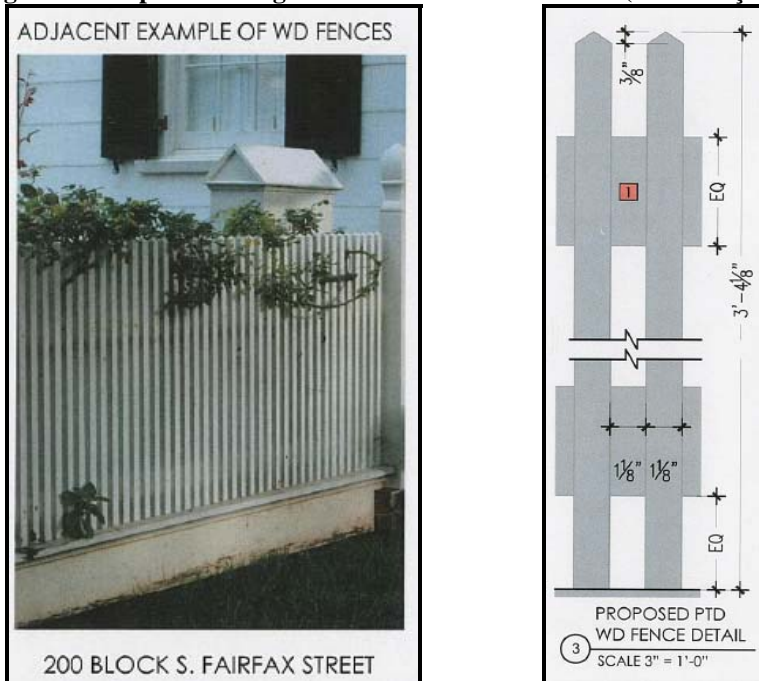
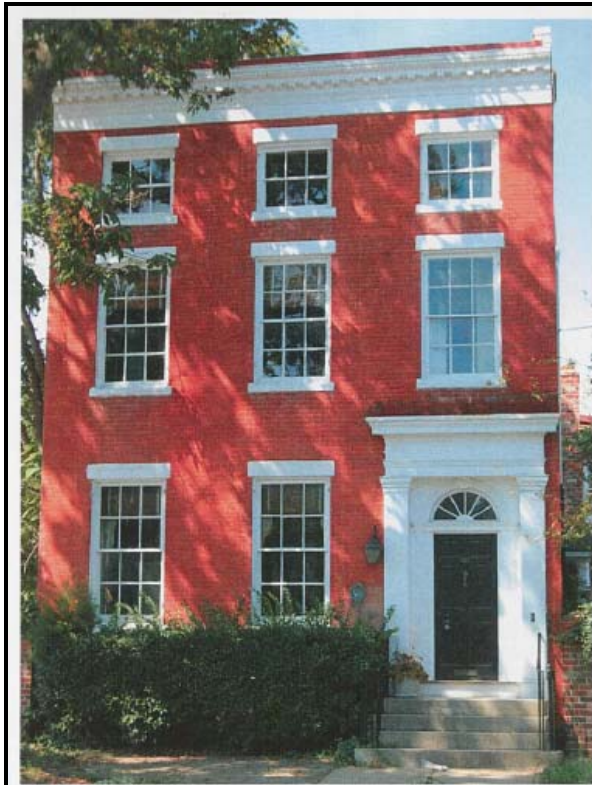


Figure 5: Proposed Pyramidal Fence to enclose south courtyard



CURRENT FRONT ENTRY ON 227 S. FAIRFAX ST

**Figure 6: Existing Front Entry and Surround**



FRONT ENTRY ON 227 S. FAIRFAX ST - CIRCA 1967

**Figure 7: c1967 Front Entry and Surround**

OTHER ADJACENT EXAMPLES OF GREEK REVIVAL ENTRIES



500 BLOCK DUKE STREET



400 BLOCK DUKE STREET



100 BLOCK N. FAIRFAX STREET

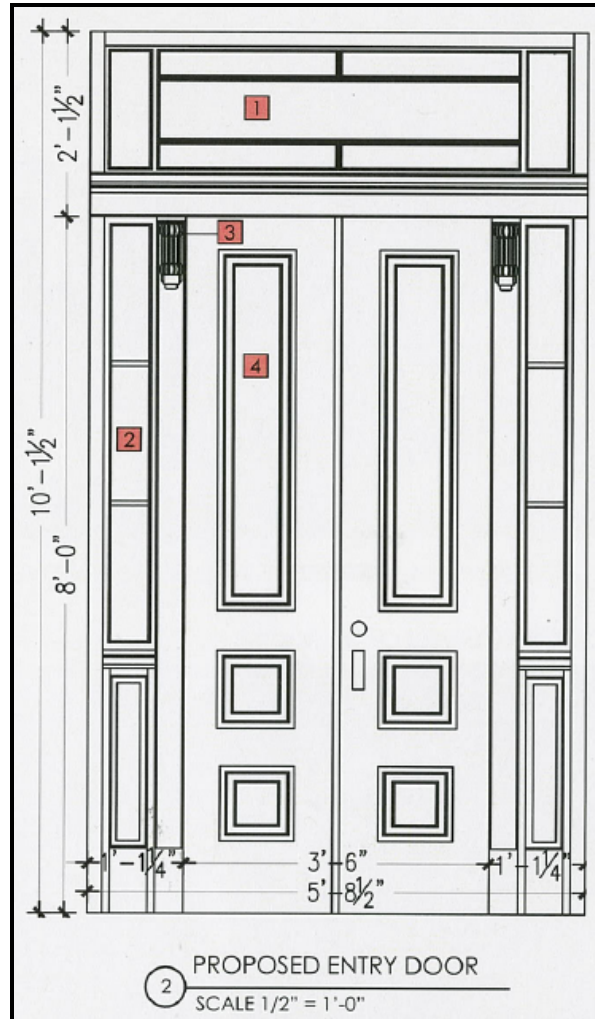
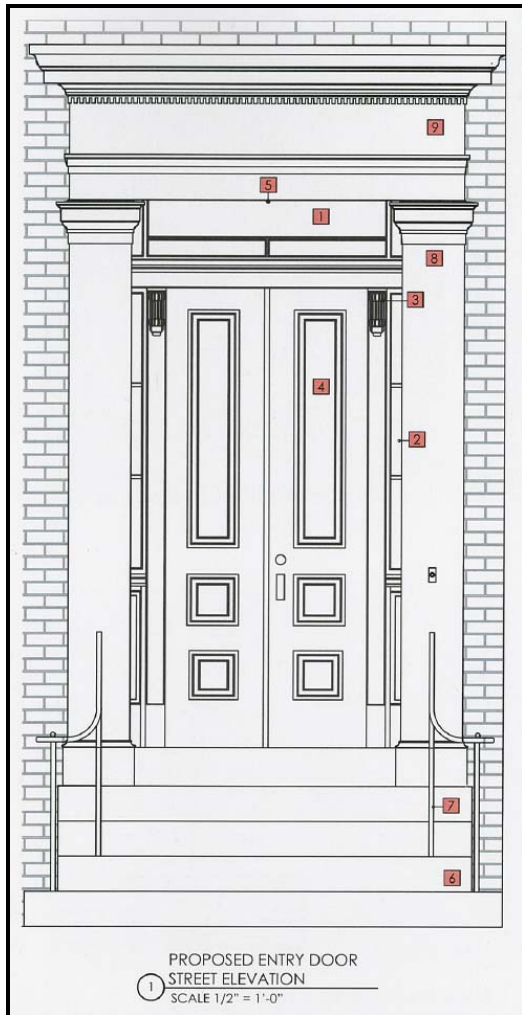


Figure 8: Proposed Changes to Front Entry

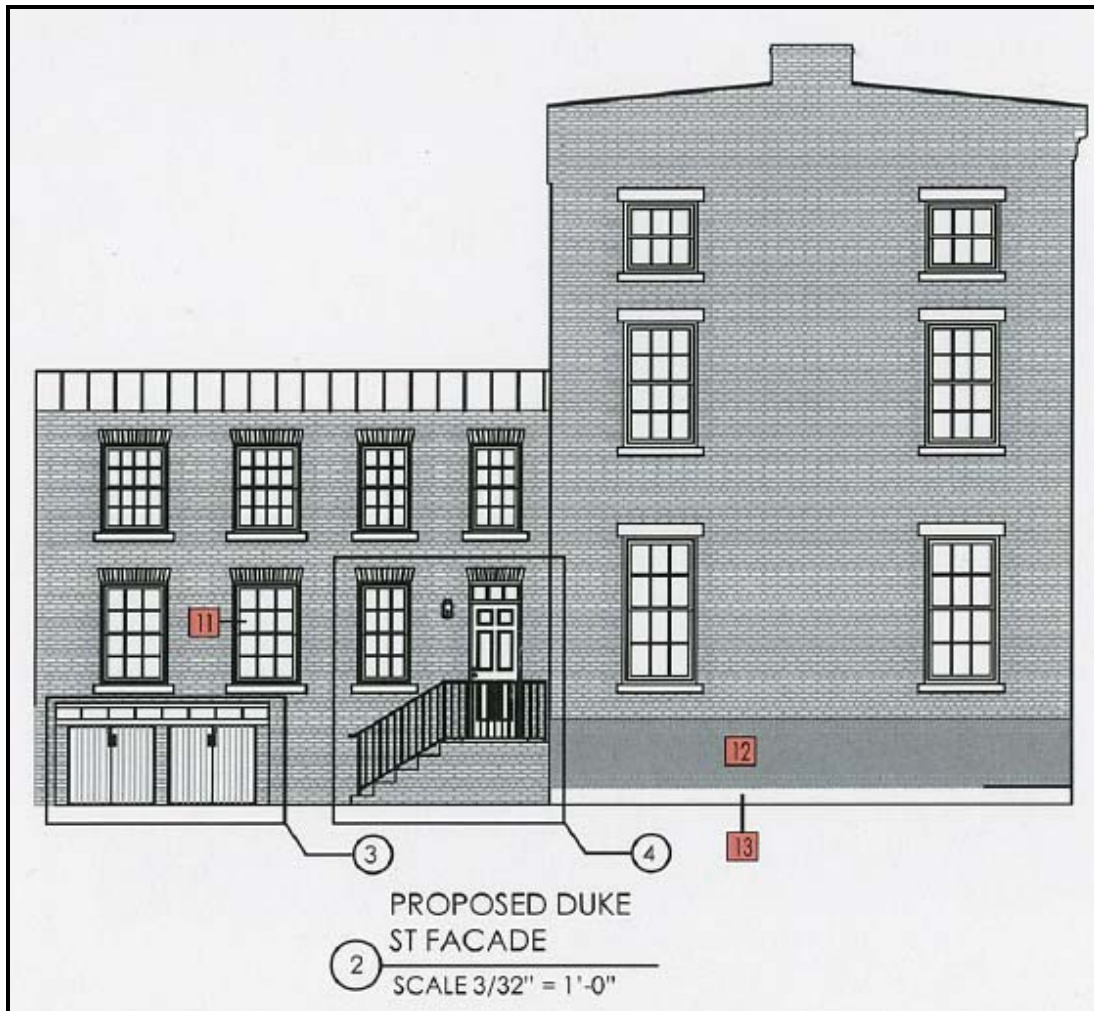


Figure 9: Proposed Changes – Duke Street Elevation

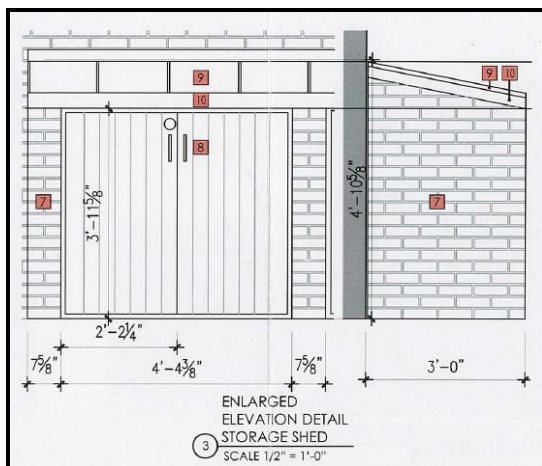


Figure 10: Storage Shed Detail

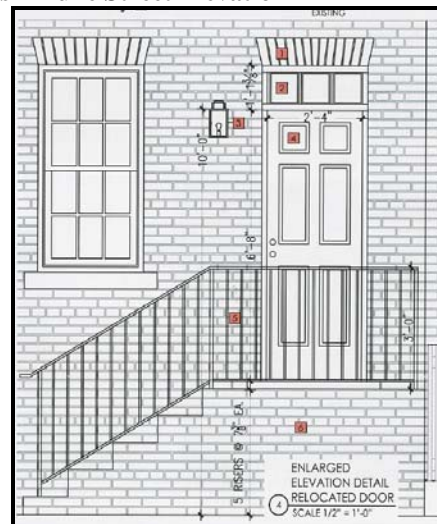
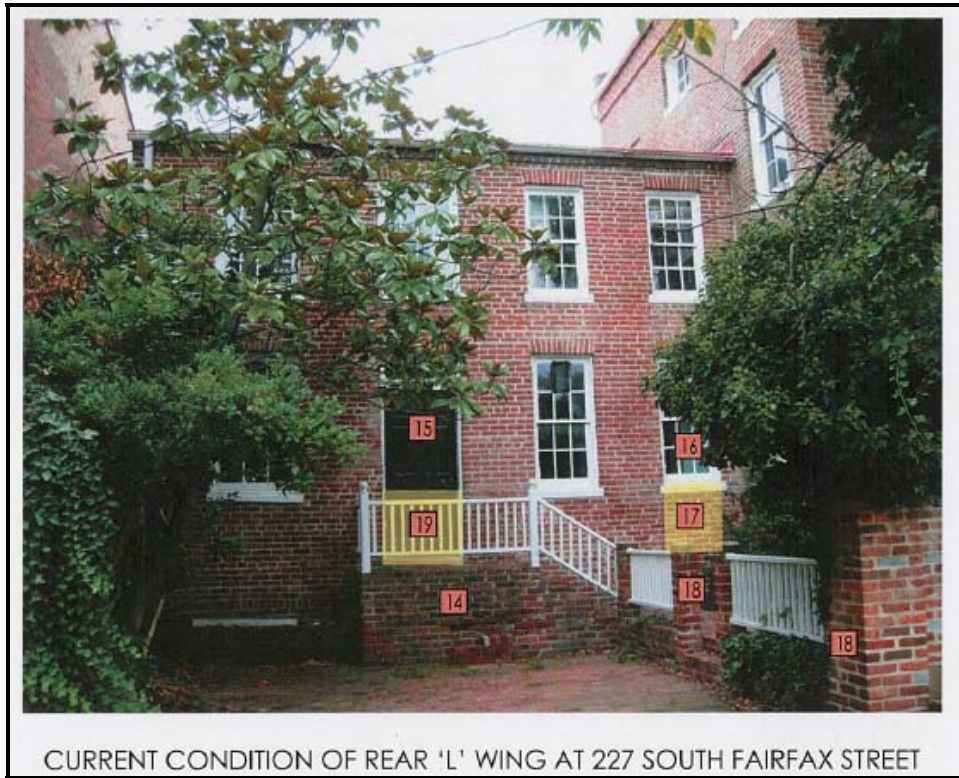
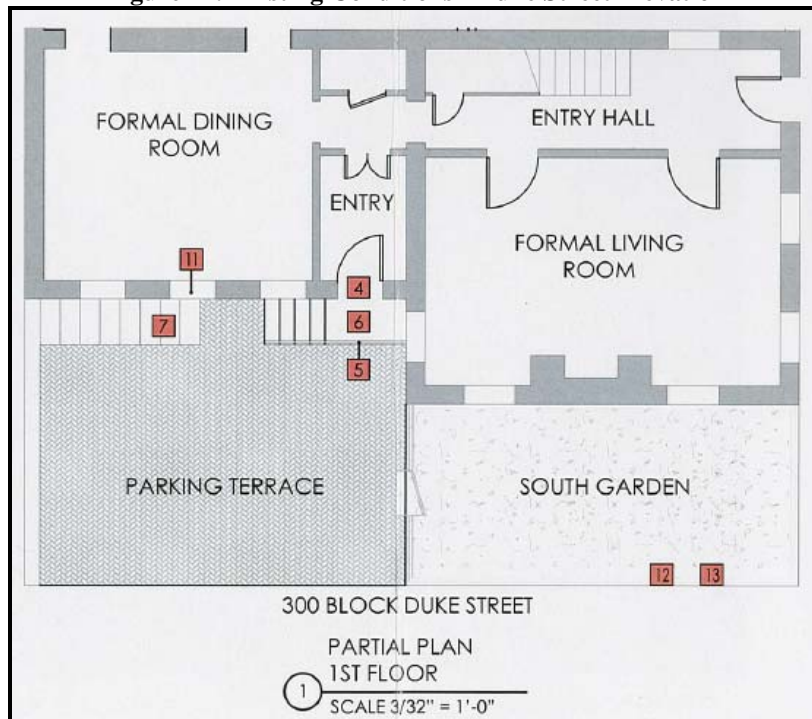


Figure 11: Relocated Door Detail



CURRENT CONDITION OF REAR 'L' WING AT 227 SOUTH FAIRFAX STREET

**Figure 12: Existing Conditions - Duke Street Elevation**



**Figure 13: Proposed Floor Plan**





Figure 14: Proposed Changes to Fairfax Street Elevation (Front Façade)

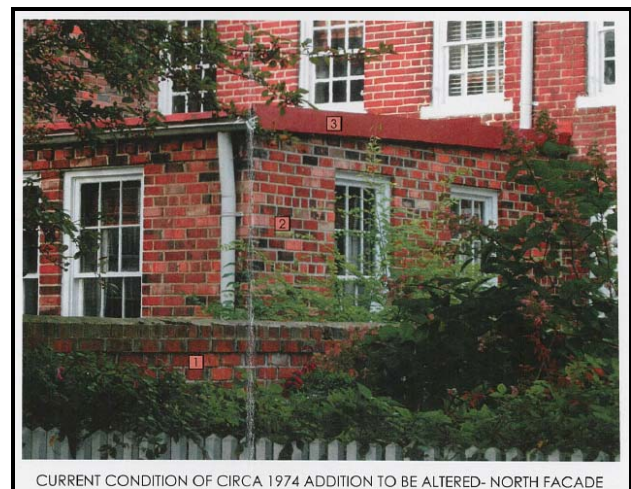
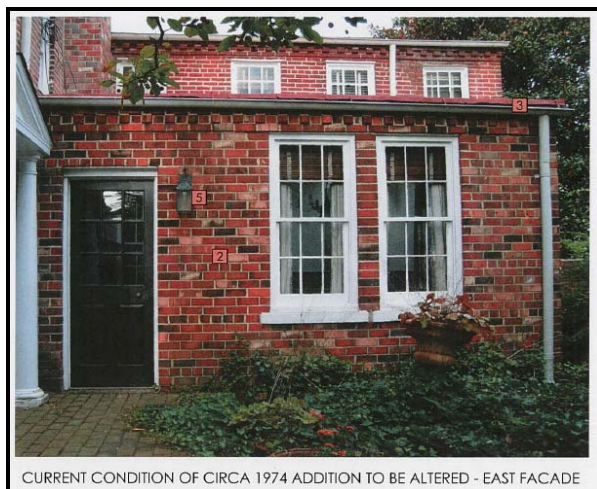


Figure 15: Existing conditions c1970s addition

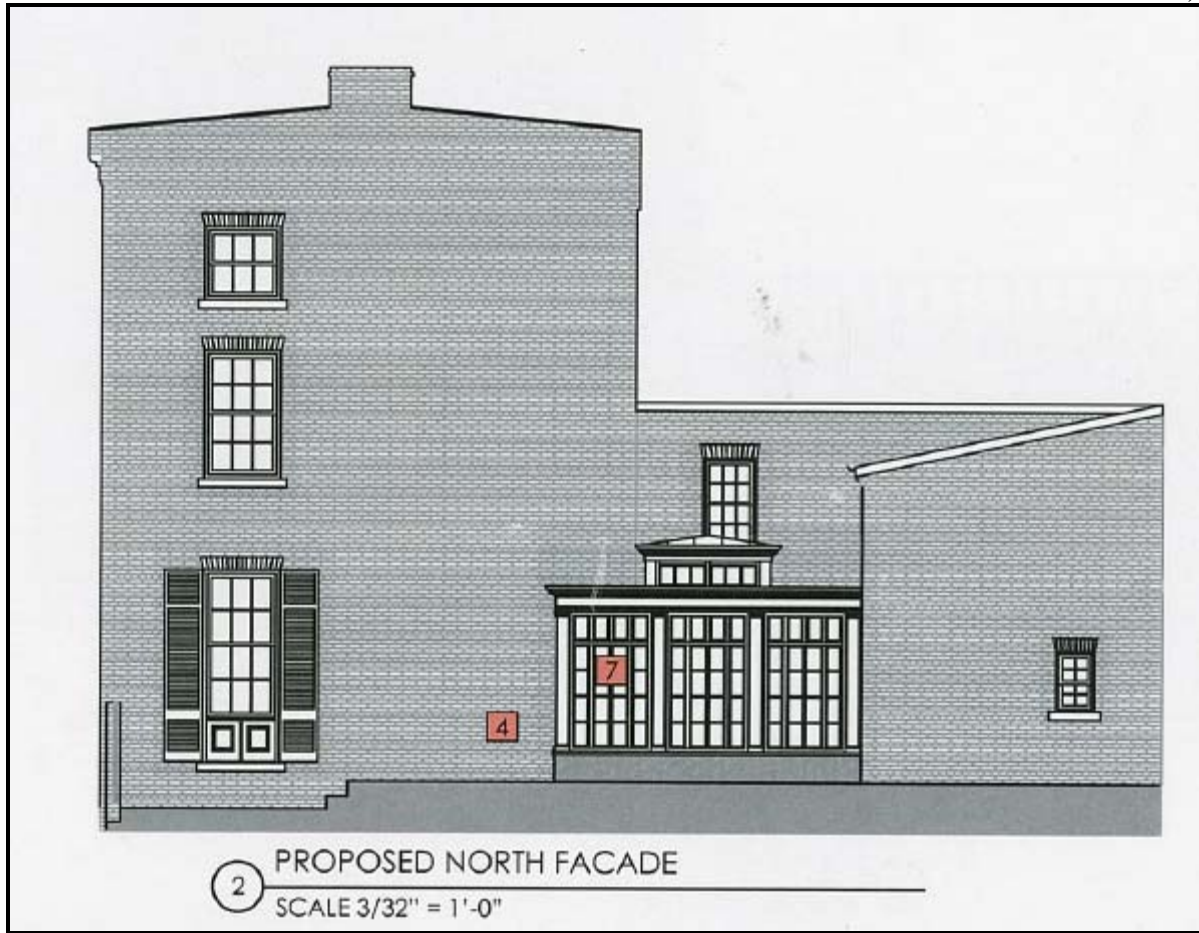


Figure 16: Proposed Changes – North Elevation



Figure 17: Proposed c1970s Folly to be demolished

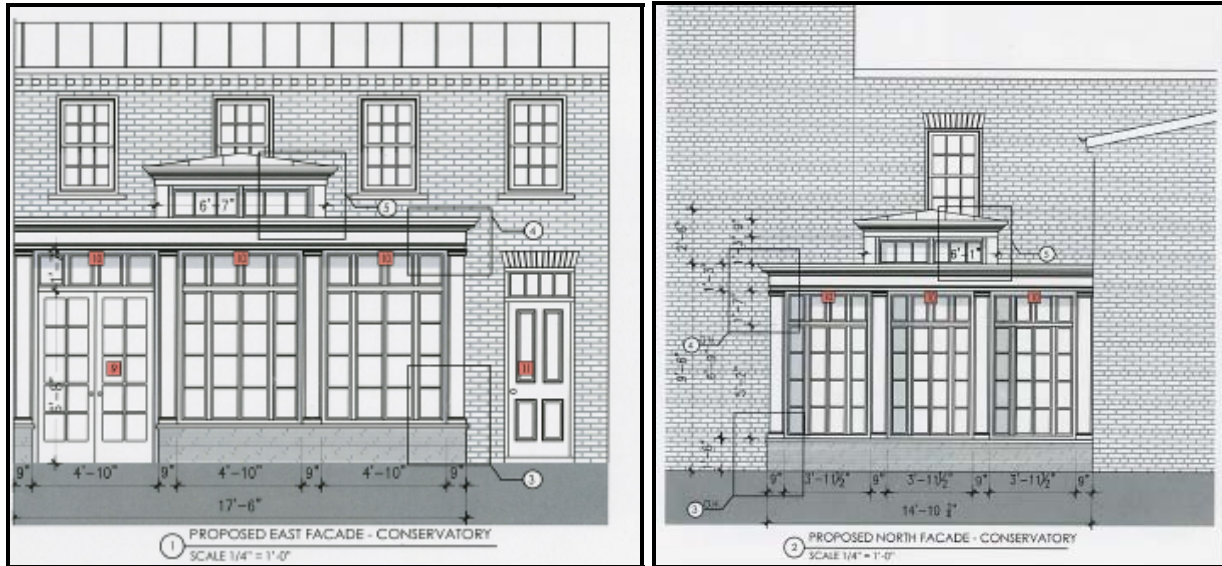


Figure 18: Proposed Conservatory Addition

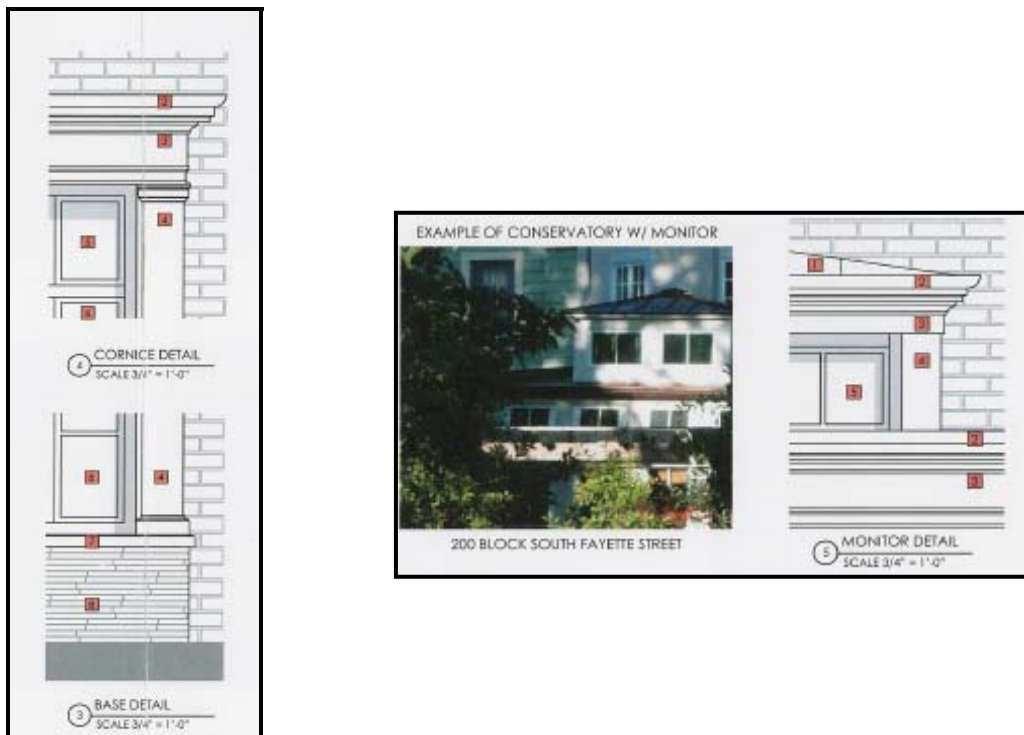


Figure 19: Detail Drawings for Conservatory Addition