

Docket Item # 9  
BAR CASE #2009-0295

BAR Meeting  
January 6, 2010

**ISSUE:** Alterations  
**APPLICANT:** Duncan Blair for Patrick Street Associates, LLC  
**LOCATION:** 211 North Patrick Street  
**ZONE:** RB/Residential

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**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:** Staff recommends denial of the Certificate of Appropriateness to remove the existing slate roof and install a new standing seam metal roof and approval of authentic slate shingles in the same dimensions, color and pattern to match the existing historic roof to the extent possible.

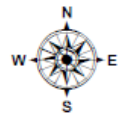
\*EXPIRATION OF APPROVALS NOTE: In accordance with Sections 10-106(B) and 10-206(B) of the Zoning Ordinance, any official Board of Architectural Review approval will expire 12 months from the date of BAR approval if the work is not commenced and diligently and substantially pursued by the end of that 12-month period. In the case for a certificate or permit for a project that requires a development special use permit or site plan under section 11-400 of the zoning ordinance, the period of validity shall be coincident with the validity of the development special use permit or site plan as determined pursuant to section 11-418 of the ordinance.

\*\*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 #2009-0295**

**1/6/2010**



**I. ISSUE:**

The applicant is requesting approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for alterations at 211 North Patrick Street. The applicant proposes to replace the existing historic slate roof with a new standing seam metal roof.

The applicant has provided photographs showing the existing condition of the slate roof, and asserted that the slate roof has reached the end of its useful life. The applicant proposes to remove the slate and install a new standing seam metal roof in prefinished black aluminum. The applicant has included a letter from Patrick Camus of Studio Camus LLC, which describes the current roof structure as insufficient to support a new slate roof and still meet current code requirements.

The applicant states that standing seam metal is a historically appropriate roof replacement material for the historic house. A number of photographs have been submitted by the applicant, including two photo simulations showing the proposed new metal roof.

The applicant has provided a sample of the metal roof material which will be available at the public hearing.

**II. HISTORY:**

The two-story, freestanding brick house at 211 North Patrick Street likely dates to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The vernacular Queen Anne style house has a front-facing gable, hipped roof and exposed rafter ends. The woodwork on the house is elaborate and the house appears to retain its original double front door, among many other original features. The house is not present on the 1877 Hopkins City Atlas of Alexandria, but is shown on the 1891 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map (this block of the City was not included on the 1885 Sanborn map). There have been very few modifications to the house since its construction. Map research shows that a small one-story addition was added at the rear of the house sometime between 1921 and 1941. According to the previous owner, the house was converted into doctor's offices in the 1940s.

The property consists of four lots of record fronting North Patrick Street. Improvements consist of the main house and a small one story brick shed at the north east corner of the property. The house is located on the northern boundary of the Old & Historic Alexandria District; the adjacent house to the north is located in the Parker-Gray Historic District.

Staff could locate only two Board approvals for the subject property:

- September 1, 1993, the BAR approved a fence (BAR CASE #1993-0158); and,
- December 6, 1995, the BAR approved a rear deck (BAR CASE #1995-0179).

More recently, in anticipation of the sale of the house, the Planning Commission and City Council approved an SUP for the continuation of a non-conforming office use for the doctor's office (SUP 2008-0023 & SUP 2008-0087). The house was subsequently sold and is currently vacant.

**III. ANALYSIS:**

The proposed replacement roof complies with the Zoning Ordinance.

The *Design Guidelines* state that: “A central tenet of the philosophy of historic preservation is that original historic materials should be retained and repaired rather than replaced. An informed and careful analysis of the existing condition should be made before any decision to replace historic materials is made. In the case of replacement roof, consideration should be given to retaining historic roof materials and encapsulating them below the new roof. In the case of a slate roof, it is almost always better to repair rather than replace the roof.” The *Design Guidelines* include the following guideline in relation to slate: “Historically, slate roofs were only used on masonry buildings in the districts; however, there is occasional use of slate as a decorative roof accent material on some wood frame buildings. The Boards strongly encourage the retention of existing slate roofs.”

Given that roofs are one of the dominant visual elements of buildings in the historic districts, the Board has established the following policy in the Old & Historic Alexandria District for determination of appropriate and compatible roofing materials:

1. The age of the structure and its architectural style;
2. The historic, cultural and architectural importance of the structure to the City of Alexandria;
3. The location of the structure within the Old & Historic Alexandria District or along the George Washington Memorial Parkway; and,
4. The visibility of the roof surface from a public street, way, pathway, easement or waterway.

In this case:

1. The Queen Anne style structure is well over 100 years old;
2. The architectural importance of this remarkably intact, freestanding structure is high. The presence of a two story freestanding masonry structure is unusual in a neighborhood of smaller attached frame rowhouses and conveys the wealth and status of the original owner;
3. The structure is located on North Patrick Street, which carries a high volume of automobile traffic as northbound US Route 1. As the most architecturally prominent building on the blockface, this structure is visible to many visitors and residents; and
4. The roof surface is highly visible from Patrick Street, as demonstrated in the attached photographs.

Staff believes that the applicant has demonstrated that the existing slate shingles are beyond repair, and that a new roof is necessary. The average live span of a slate roof is generally 60 to 125 years. Staff believes that the slate roof at 211 North Patrick Street is likely original to the construction of the house, making it approximately 120 years old. The applicant has provided a number of photographs which show significant damage due to cracking and spalling. The National Park Service’s Preservation Brief 29, *The Repair, Replacement & Maintenance of*

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*Historic Slate Roofs*, strongly encourages the retention of historic slate and repairing where needed. The NPS brief states that: "If 20% or more of the slates on a roof or roof slope are broken, cracked, missing, or sliding out of position, it is usually less expensive to replace the roof than execute individual repairs." The percentage of damage to individual slates appears to exceed 20% at 211 North Patrick Street.

The applicant argues that a replacement metal roof is historically appropriate. While metal roofs were available and widely used during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century when the house was constructed, the use of slate is also relatively common for Queen Anne masonry houses. Another local example of a Queen Anne house with a simple, unadorned slate roof is the French-Lawler house at 517 South Washington Street. The house at 211 North Patrick Street was constructed in a higher style than other houses in the neighborhood and using new slate will help to retain this distinction. As a freestanding building in the Queen Anne style, this building has one of the more complex roof forms found in the district, and with the retention of many of its original features, the house is rather remarkable in the district. The use of individual slate shingles complements the detail and complexity of the roof design; the use of standing seam metal would compromise the integrity of this character-defining feature and the building as a whole. Therefore, Staff finds that the new roof should be slate, matching the size and color of the original and not standing seam metal as proposed by the applicant.

In addition, although Staff is in agreement with the applicant that the existing slate should be replaced, Staff does not believe that the applicant has provided sufficient engineering documentation to demonstrate that the roof structure - which has supported a slate roof for over 100 years - is inadequate. However, based on the letter from Mr. Camus, Staff believes that it would be a good idea for the applicant to retain a structural engineer to analyze the existing roof framing to determine whether it is sufficient to support any type of roofing. If it is determined that additional reinforcing is necessary, the City engineers in the Office of Building and Fire Code Administration will be pleased to review and assist with building permit application for this work, if necessary.

**IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:** Staff recommends denial of the Certificate of Appropriateness to remove the existing slate roof and install a new standing seam metal roof and approval of authentic slate shingles in the same dimensions, color and pattern to match the existing historic roof to the extent possible.

**STAFF:**

Stephanie Sample, Historic Preservation Planner, Planning & Zoning  
Stephen Milone, Division Chief, Land Use Services

**V. CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS**

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

Code Administration:

- C-1 Prior to the issuance of a demolition permit or land disturbance permit, a rodent abatement plan shall be submitted to Code Administration that will outline the steps that will be taken to prevent the spread of rodents from the construction site to the surrounding community and sewers.
- C-2 Roof drainage systems must be installed so as neither to impact upon, nor cause erosion/damage to adjacent property.
- C-3 Additions and Alterations to the existing structure must comply with the 2006 edition of the Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC).
- C-4 Additions and 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-5 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-6 Permission from adjacent property owners is required if access to the adjacent properties is required to complete the proposed construction. Otherwise, a plan shall be submitted to demonstrate the construction techniques utilized to keep construction solely on the referenced property.

Office of Historic Alexandria:

- S- 1 Repair/replace deteriorated slate roof with authentic slate of similar dimensions and color.

**VI. IMAGES:**



**Figure 1: Aerial image of 211 North Patrick Street (facing south).**

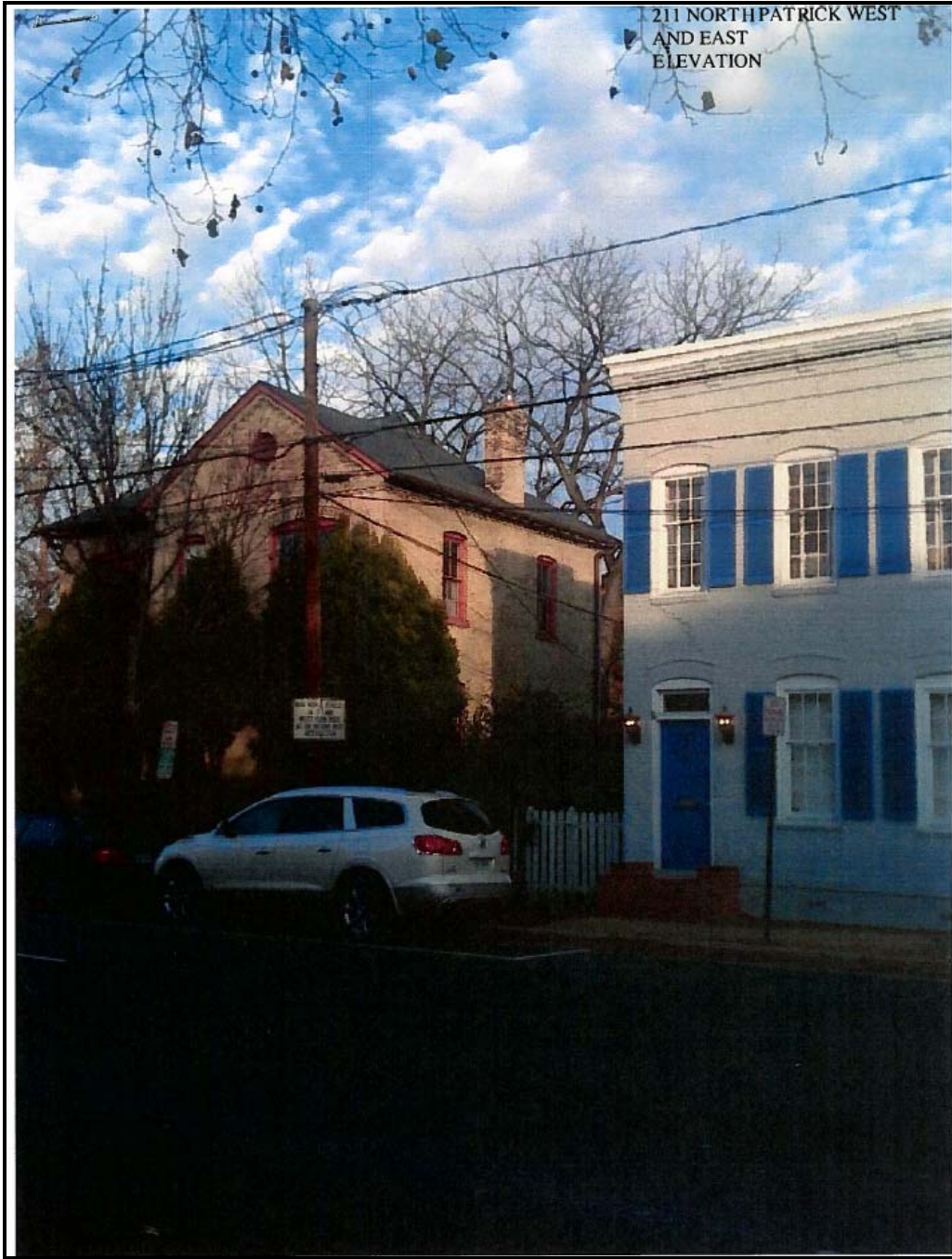


**Figure 2: Aerial image of 211 North Patrick Street (facing east).**



**Figure 3: Front facade.**

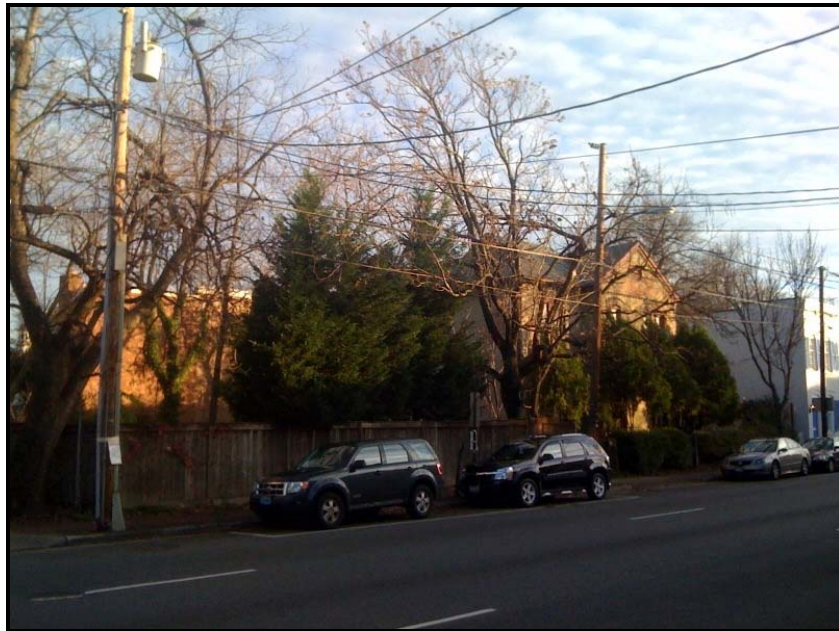




**Figure 4: Front/side facade.**



**Figure 5: Photo of house looking southeast.**



**Figure 6: Photo of house looking southeast.**



**Figure 7: North elevation of house.**



**Figure 8: Photo of buildings across North Patrick Street.**



**Figure 9: Photo of buildings across North Patrick Street.**



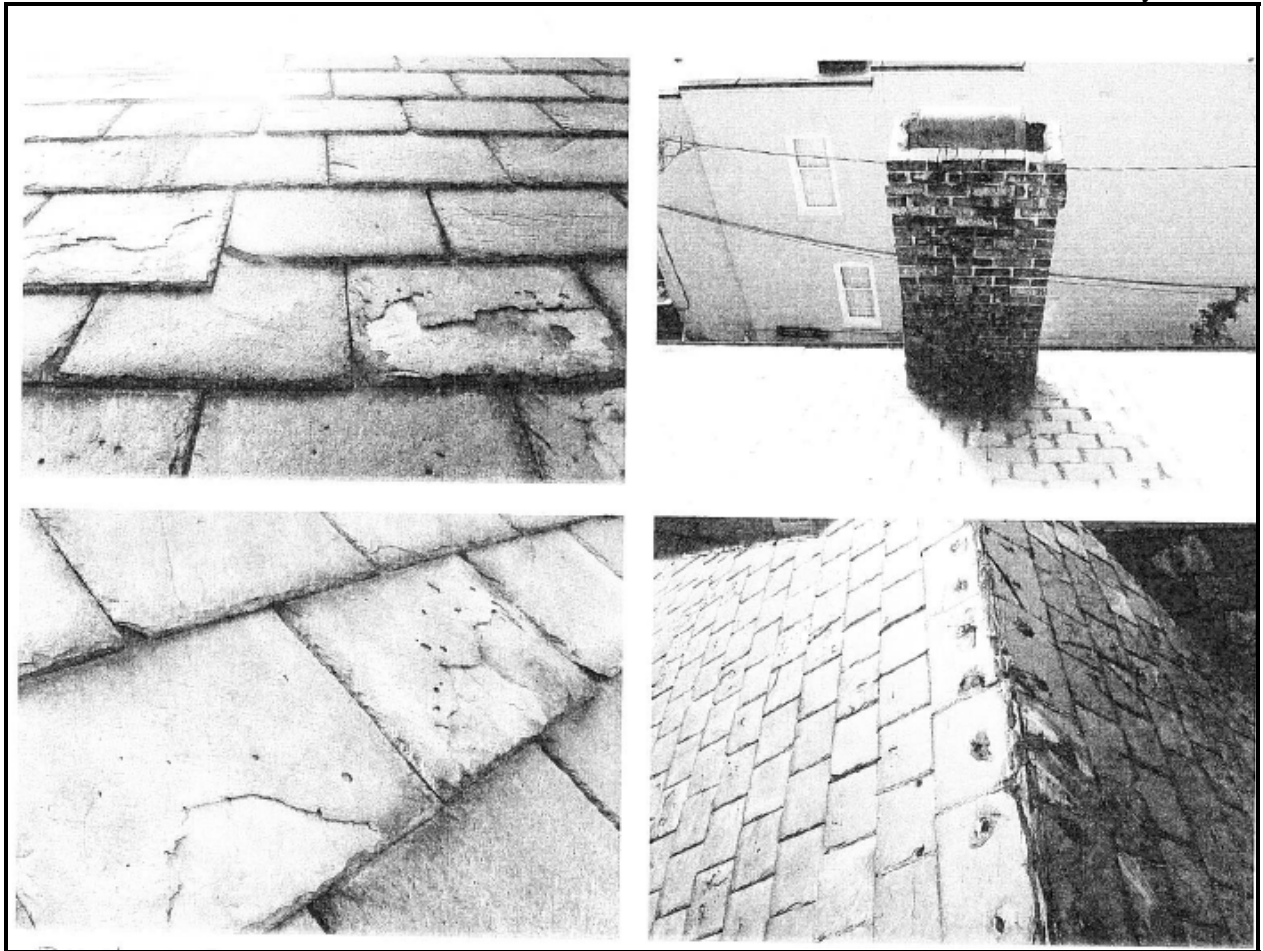
**Figure 10: Photo of buildings across North Patrick Street.**



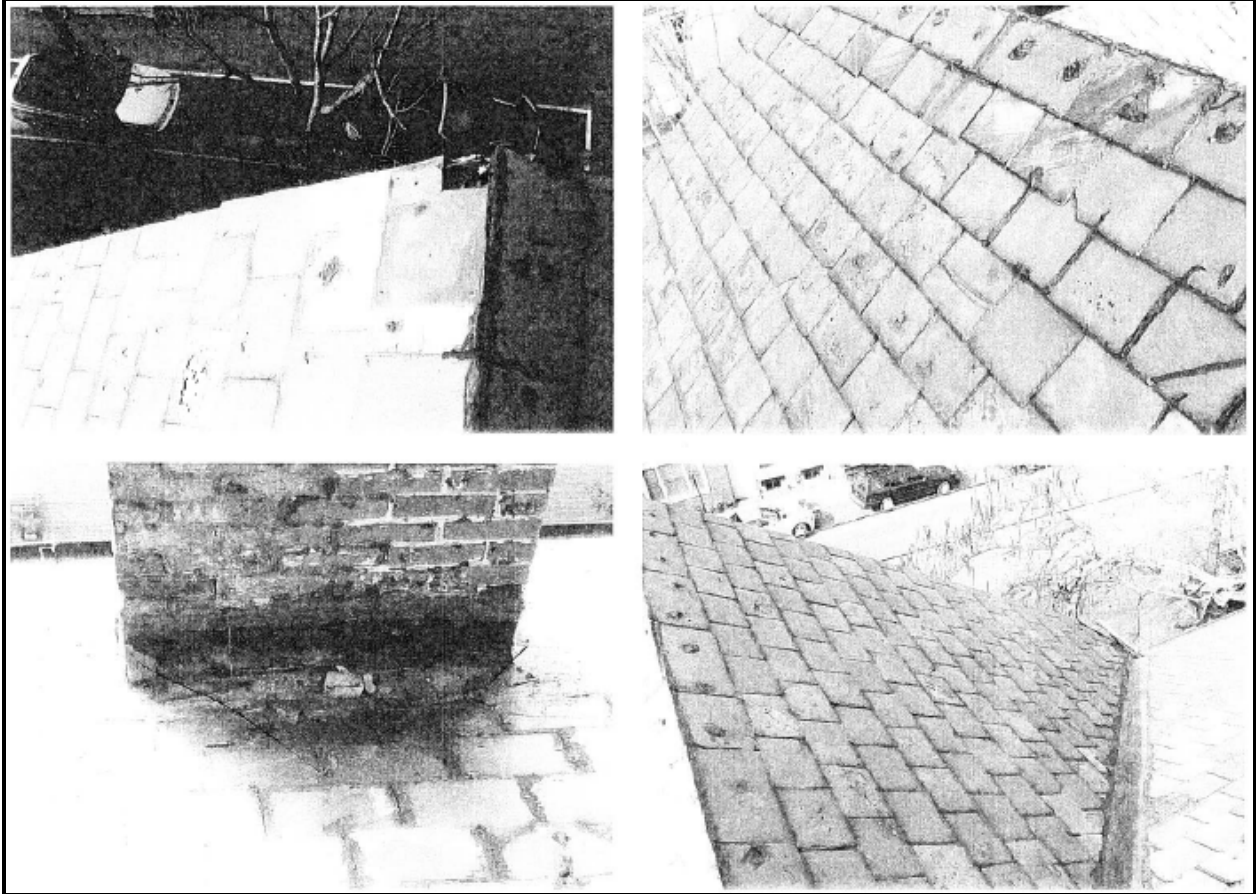
**Figure 11: Photo of damaged slate.**



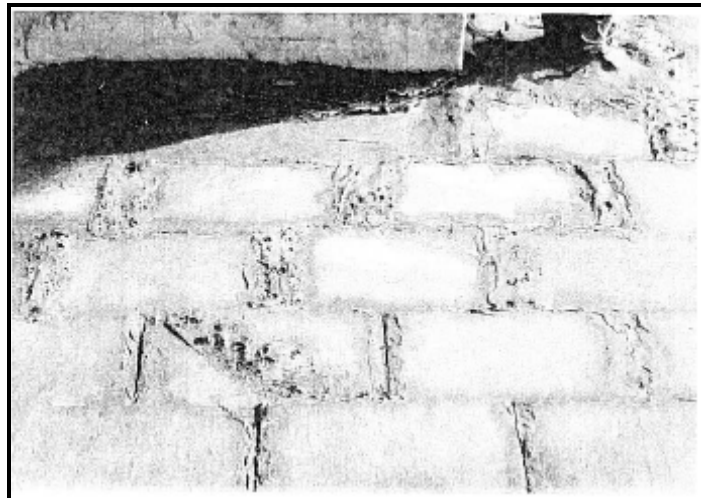
**Figure 12: Photo of damaged slate.**



**Figure 13: Photos of roof with damaged slate.**



**Figure 14: Photos of roof with damaged slate.**



**Figure 15: Photo of damaged slate.**

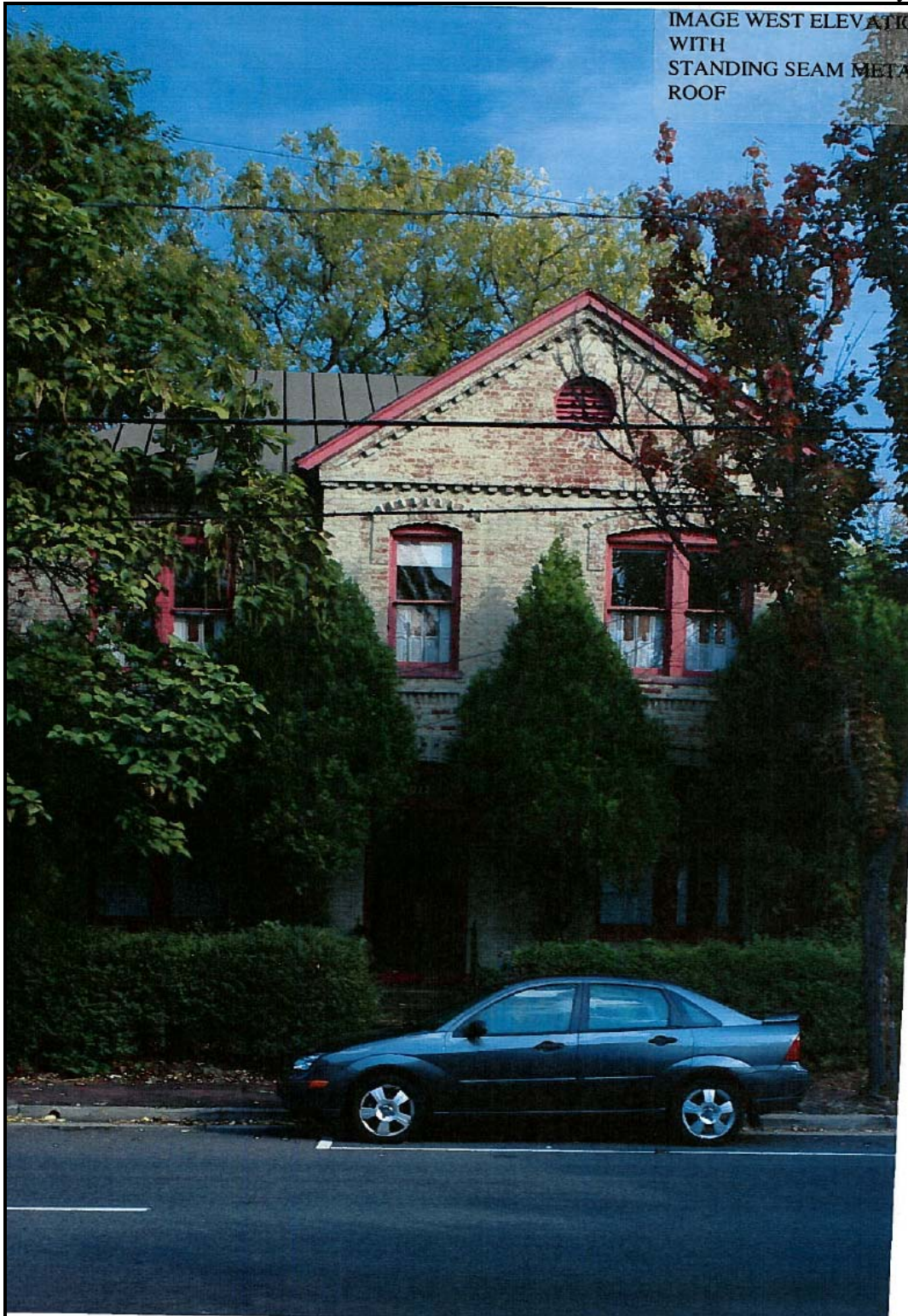


Figure 16: Photo simulation of house with metal roof.



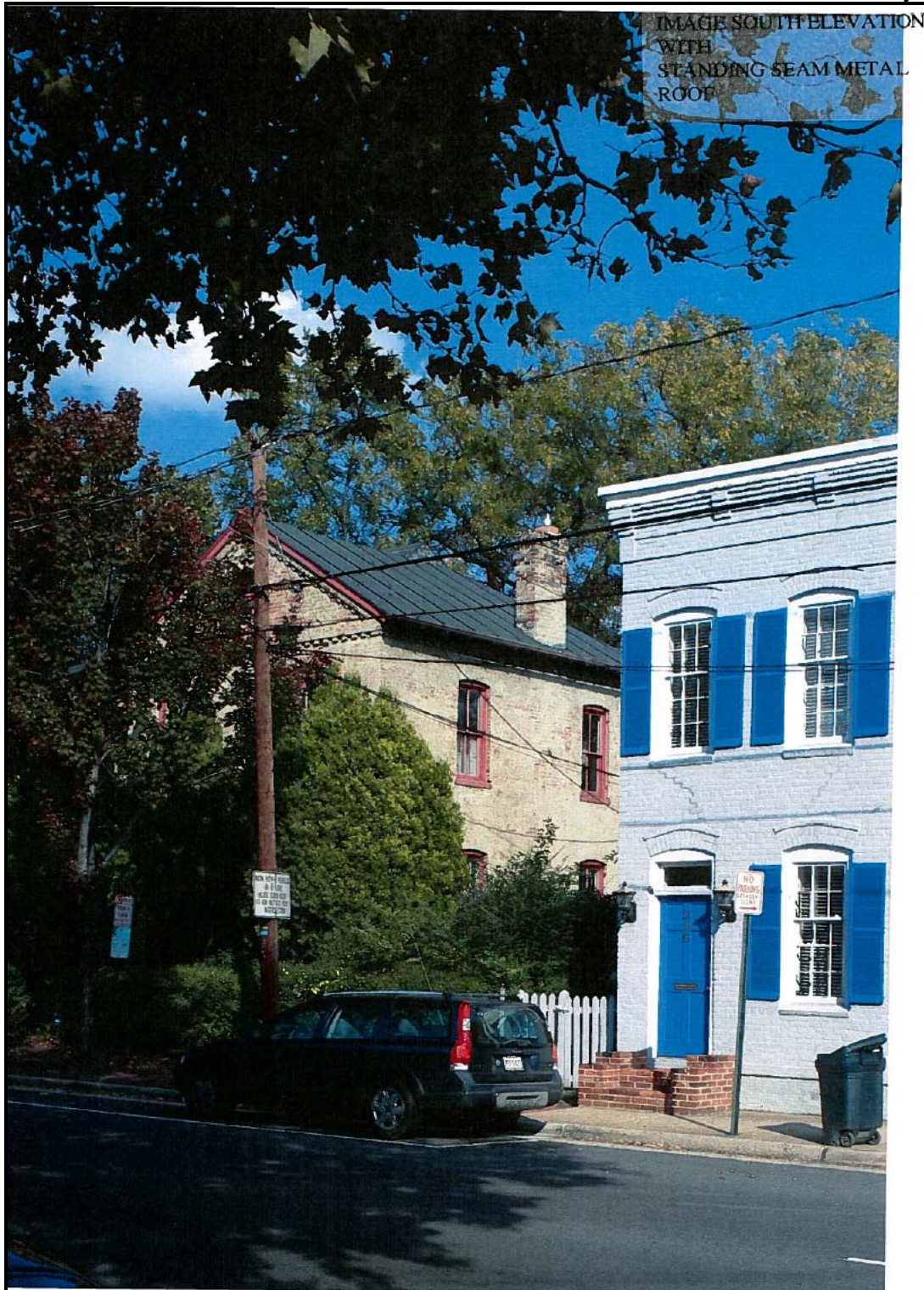


Figure 17: Photo simulation of house with metal roof.