

Docket Item # 3
BAR CASE # 2010-0015

BAR Meeting
March 17, 2010

ISSUE: Permit to Demolish/Encapsulate

APPLICANT: Andrew H. Macdonald

LOCATION: 217 North Columbus Street

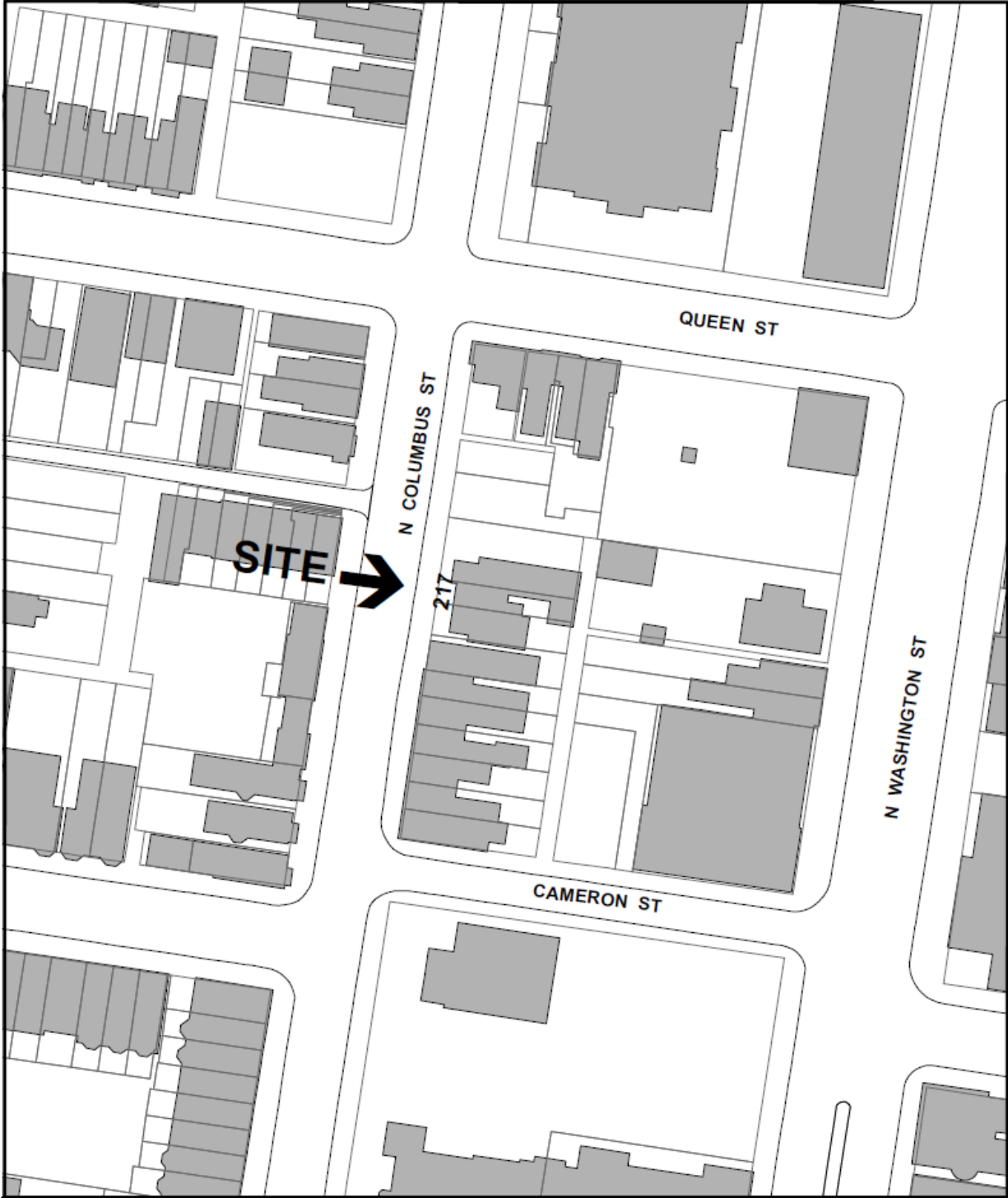
ZONE: RM/Residential

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

1. That the interior and exterior of the building is documented prior to the release of the Permit to Demolish. Documentation shall consist of 35 mm black x white, with one set of 4 x 6 photographs and negatives deposited at the Barrett Library; and
2. That the following archaeology conditions 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 (703/838-4399) two weeks before the starting date of any ground disturbance so that a monitoring and inspection schedule for city archaeologists can be arranged.
 - B. 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.
 - C. The applicant/developer shall not allow any metal detection or artifact collection to be conducted on the property, unless authorized by Alexandria Archaeology

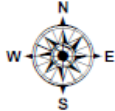
*EXPIRATION OF APPROVALS NOTE: In accordance with Sections 10-106(B) and 10-206(B) of the Zoning Ordinance, any official Board of Architectural Review approval will expire 12 months from the date of BAR approval if the work is not commenced and diligently and substantially pursued by the end of that 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, 703-838-4360 for further information.



BAR CASE #2010-0015

3/17/2010



Note: This docket item requires a roll call vote.

I. ISSUE:

The applicant is requesting approval of a Permit to Demolish the detached, one-and-one-half story wood frame garage at 217 North Columbus Street. The applicant intends to construct a small studio structure in its place. The wood frame garage is clad with vinyl siding and has an east sloping shed roof. Staff was initially contacted about the potential demolition of the garage because the sanitary drain, which runs under the garage slab, was in need of emergency repair and the garage was in danger of collapse during this excavation. An inspector from Code Administration visited the site and worked with the applicant to stabilize the garage so that the request for the Permit to Demolish could be heard by the BAR.

The footprint of the garage measures approximately 14 feet by 14 feet and the total area of demolition is approximately 156 square feet. The alley behind the house is private.

II. HISTORY:

The two-story, two-bay frame townhouse at 217 North Columbus Street is a townhouse originally constructed in 1886 in a Queen Anne style. It is the center unit of three attached townhouses (along with 215 and 217 North Columbus Street) which were built by T.H. Crilly and design by Glenn Brown, according to a notice in the Alexandria Gazette, April 14, 1886. Brown (1854-1932) is arguably one of the most influential architects of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Only the front façade of the adjacent townhouse at 219 North Columbus Street is largely unaltered from Brown's design, while the subject property and 215 North Columbus Street were both significantly altered in the early 1970s (the BAR approved the remodel of 217 North Columbus Street on September 20, 1972 and 215 North Columbus Street on April 19, 1972). The alterations essentially removed all of the original character-defining Queen Anne details.

According to Alexandria Archaeology, the lot at 217 N. Columbus Street has potential to yield significant archaeological resources with an ability to provide insight into domestic, industrial, and military activities. The property is on the city block that contains the Lloyd House, built around 1798 by John Wise at the corner of Queen and Washington Streets. This house was leased to Charles Lee (Attorney General under the administrations of Washington and Adams), James Marshall (brother of Chief Justice John Marshall), and Nicholas Fitzhugh (a circuit court judge) during the late 18th and early 19th centuries, and the current development lot could contain artifacts associated with these early residents. In 1810, Wise sold the property to Jacob Hoffman, a merchant and former mayor of Alexandria. Hoffman built a sugar refinery and warehouse on the block that fronted on N. Washington Street. The current development lot would have been located in the rear yard of the sugar refinery structures. By 1832, Benjamin Hallowell, a Quaker educator, had adapted the structures for use as the Alexandria Boarding School, which served as a hospital during the Civil War. A Civil War Quartermaster's map shows a dead house and other structures in the vicinity of the development lot. In January 2010, Alexandria Archaeology recorded the presence of a brick shaft in the garage on this lot; it was partially disturbed by the replacement of a broken sewer line at that time.

Staff's research of the Sanborn Fire Insurance maps suggests that between 1896 and 1902 there was a continuous, one-story accessory structure with a shingle roof at the rear of all three

adjoining properties at 217, 215 and 219 North Columbus Street. The footprint and one-story height of this accessory structure is consistent on the 1907, 1912 and 1921 Sanborn maps. However, in 1941, the footprint of the structure is larger and it is identified with an "A", which stands for automobile. Staff notes that the slope of the existing shed roof is too low to use the wood shingles available when indicated on the earlier Sanborn maps which suggests that the present 1 ½ story structure may have replaced the earlier one story outbuilding. Staff surmises, and a field inspection of the garage supports, that sometime between 1921 and 1941 the original accessory structure was replaced with the larger extant garage with a concrete slab floor.

Based on a brief field survey, Staff was unable to locate any cut nails in any part of the garage, confirming its 20th century construction. The studs on the east and west sides, as well as the joists and rafters, are rough sawn dimension lumber with circular marks and fastened with wire nails, typical of the early 20th century. A garage door was cut into the east elevation, facing the alley, with little structural reinforcement. The roof has a very low slope and is framed with 2x4s at approximately 2' on center. The rafters and sheathing are oxidized and appear to be early 20th century. The wall studs are as much as 6' on center and there is no sheathing or siding on the north wall, abutting the two story brick ell next door. The studs on the north and south walls are S4S and show no signs of oxidation and appear to be recent infill. The exterior is clad in vinyl siding. Staff believes approximately 40% of the fabric of the garage dates to the first half of the 20th century and the remaining materials date from the late 20th century. It also appears that some of the material used to construct the garage was reused from another building. The slab floor is badly broken from the expansive soil and the building is leaning significantly toward the south.

BAR and Building Permit Approvals

In 2006, the applicant submitted an application for a Permit to Demolish/Encapsulate and a Certificate for Appropriateness in order to demolish the garage, as well as portions of the rear of the house, to construct a rear addition (BAR Case #2006-00279 & 280). The application was withdrawn prior to the hearing.

In the past 20 years, Staff has administratively approved three building permits for the subject property:

- BLD 1995-01121: Reroof the flat garage roof – which is not visible from the right-of-way – with rubber membrane roofing.
- BLD 1999-00969: Reroof the gable roof portion of the house with a new, historically appropriate, standing seam metal tern roof.
- BLD 2007-01658: Installation of a skylight requiring less than 25 square feet of demolition in a location not visible from the public right-of-way.

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, 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 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?

Although portions of the one and one-half story, detached frame garage at 217 N. Columbus are over 50 years old, Staff does not believe that any of the criteria for demolition are met and the Permit to Demolish should be granted.

The existing structure has been substantially altered and only a small portion of the fabric of the existing building dates from the first half of the 20th century. Its apparent poor construction as a utilitarian automobile garage does not relate to the cultural or architectural significance of the Glenn Brown dwellings on the front of the lot. While Staff normally supports the retention of Alexandria's vernacular accessory buildings, in this case, what remains is not of unusual or uncommon design and its preservation would not preserve historic interest in the City. Therefore, Staff recommends approval of the Permit to Demolish.

Staff notes the comments of Alexandria Archaeology and recommends that they be included as conditions of approval. In addition, Staff recommends that prior to the release of the Permit to Demolish the building be photographically documented on the interior and exterior. The black & white photos, along with the negatives, should be deposited in the Barrett Library.

STAFF:

Stephanie Sample, Planner III
Al Cox, FAIA, Historic Preservation Manager

IV. CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

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

Code Administration:

- C-1 Where a structure has been demolished or removed, the vacant lot shall be filled and maintained to the existing grade (USBC 3303.4).
- C-2 Service utility connections shall be discontinued and capped approved rules and (USBC 3303.6).
- C-3 Provisions shall be made to prevent the accumulation of water or damage to any foundation on the premises or adjoining property (USBC 3303.5).
- C-4 The applicant shall obtain a demolition permit for the proposed request.

Transportation and Environmental Services:

- R-1 The building permit must be approved and issued prior to the issuance of any permit for demolition. (T&ES)

Historic Alexandria:

No comments received.

Alexandria Archaeology:

- F-1 The lot at 217 N. Columbus Street has potential to yield significant archaeological resources with an ability to provide insight into domestic, industrial, and military activities. The property is on the city block that contains the Lloyd House, built around 1798 by John Wise at the corner of Queen and Washington Streets. This house was leased to Charles Lee (Attorney General under the administrations of Washington and Adams), James Marshall (brother of Chief Justice John Marshall), and Nicholas Fitzhugh (a circuit court judge) during the late 18th and early 19th centuries, and the current development lot could contain artifacts associated with these early residents. In 1810, Wise sold the property to Jacob Hoffman, a merchant and former mayor of Alexandria. Hoffman built a sugar refinery and warehouse on the block that fronted on N. Washington Street. The current development lot would have been located in the rear yard of the sugar refinery structures. By 1832, Benjamin Hallowell, a Quaker educator, had adapted the structures for use as the Alexandria Boarding School, which served as a hospital during the Civil War. A Civil War Quartermaster's map shows a dead house and other structures in the vicinity of the development lot. In January 2010, Alexandria Archaeology recorded the presence of a brick shaft in the garage on this lot; it was partially disturbed by the replacement of a broken sewer line at that time.
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- *R-3. The applicant/developer shall not allow any metal detection or artifact collection to be conducted on the property, unless authorized by Alexandria Archaeology.
- R-4. 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.

V. IMAGES

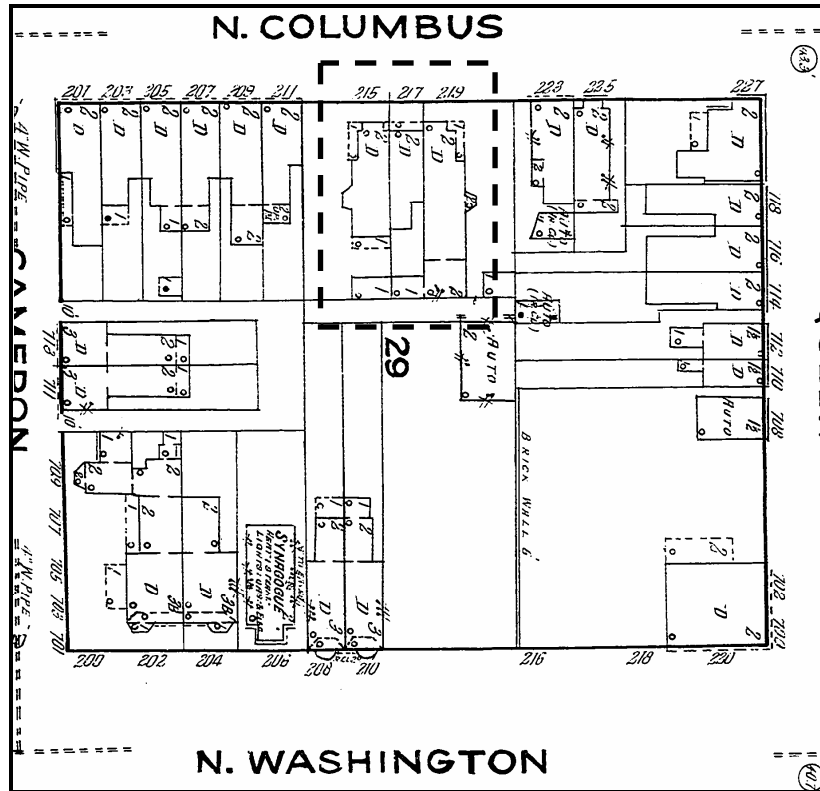


Figure 1: 1921 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map

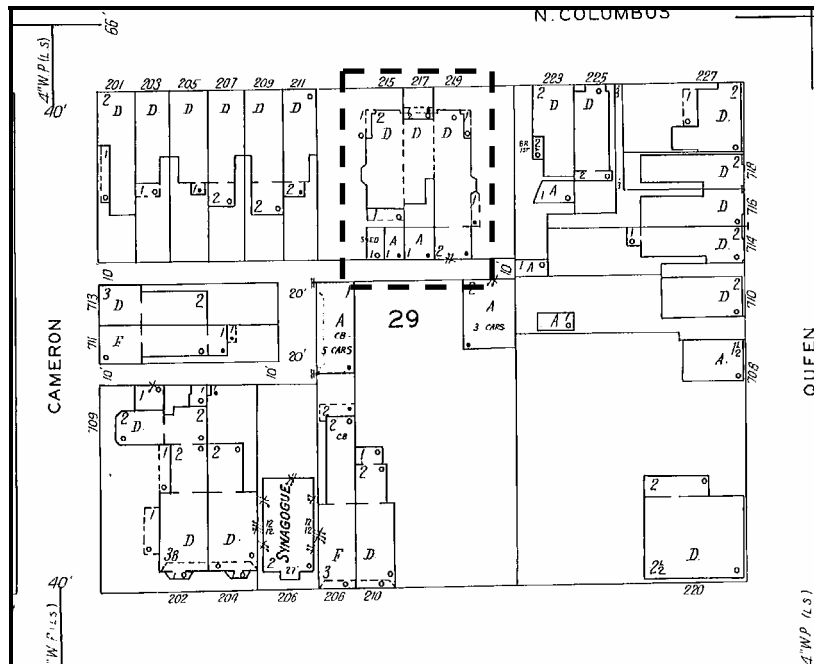


Figure 2: 1941 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map



Figure 3: Garage behind 217 N. Columbus St.