

Docket Item # 14  
BAR CASE #2010-0373

BAR Meeting  
January 5, 2011

**ISSUE:** Alterations—Roof Replacement

**APPLICANT:** Mark Stevenson and John Schmidt by Alexandria Roofing Co., Inc.

**LOCATION:** 917 Prince Street

**ZONE:** CL / Commercial

---

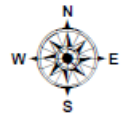
**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:** Staff recommends denial of the application in accordance with the BAR Roof Materials Policy (adopted 10/20/2010). However, if the Board finds that a substitute material is appropriate, that it be a shingle matching the form, color, design, texture and other visual qualities of the existing tile roof as closely as 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 final 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, windows, roofing and siding). 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 #2010-0373**



## **I. ISSUE**

The applicant is requesting approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for replacing the roof material on the top of the turret form bay window at 917 Prince Street with a different material. The existing roof, both the mansard portion and turret, are made of red clay tile. The mansard roof has barrel mission clay tiles and will remain. The turret roof is made of graduated sizes of tapered, curved tiles with a decorative knob, a number of which are broken or damaged. The applicant initially proposed a red slate replacement tile and now proposes to replace the existing clay tiles on the turret with tapered standing seam copper panels.

## **II. HISTORY**

The three-story Richardsonian Romanesque townhouse is one of two semi-detached townhouses constructed between 1891 and 1896, according to Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps. While the two townhouses have different architectural features, they are both in the same Richardsonian Romanesque vocabulary and share a common mansard roof clad in barrel mission style clay tiles.

The Richardsonian Romanesque is a late 19<sup>th</sup> century architectural style characterized by squat columns, semicircular arches and walls constructed of heavily rusticated and multicolored brick and stone. "Towers occur in about 75% of Richardsonian Romanesque houses." (*A Field Guide to American Houses*. McAlester, p. 301.) This architectural style was popularized in Alexandria by native son Glenn Brown, FAIA, who was clerk of the works on Richardson's Cheney Building in Hartford, CT, before returning to practice in Alexandria, though there is no evidence that Brown designed this specific dwelling.

Staff did not locate any previous BAR approvals.

## **III. ANALYSIS**

The proposed alterations are in compliance with Zoning Ordinance requirements.

The *Design Guidelines* state that "Roofs of historic buildings are one of the dominant visual elements in the historic districts" and "an informed and careful analysis of the existing condition should be made before any decision to replace historic materials is made." The *Roof Materials Policy* adopted by the Board in October 2010 states that "original roofing...should be preserved and repaired whenever possible," and that "When staff concurs that it is not possible to repair or salvage and reuse original historic roofing material, replacement materials should match the original in design, color, texture and other visual qualities...to the maximum extent possible."

In this case, the applicant proposed replacing the turret tile roof with a field tapered and custom fit red slate shingle, which staff initially discouraged, and then with a standing seam copper. Although these are high quality, durable and natural materials which were used on houses of this period, Staff advised the applicant that such a proposal would require Board approval and a convincing argument would have to be made for why the existing tiles could not be retained and why the existing tiles could not be matched for replacement of the missing pieces. Staff provided the owner with the National Park Service's Preservation Brief on *The Preservation and Repair of Historic Clay Tile Roofs* and recommendations of tile roof companies that salvage and/or match historic roof tile, including Ludowici, a company that has continuously manufactured similar tile roofs in the US since 1888. Following significant research, the applicant determined that historic salvaged tile were not available in the specialized sizes and shapes used on this turret.

The applicant then contacted Ludowici and was told that duplicate tiles (in the four different graduated sizes) could be fabricated but would not match the existing tiles exactly in color since these had been painted 3-5 times in the past. The cost to replace only the tile on the turret with Ludowici tiles (only matched in size and shape, not color) would be \$28,988 compared to \$12,988 for the standing seam copper. Staff reminds the Board that their purview in the Zoning Ordinance is limited to matters of architectural appropriateness and compatibility, not cost. Highly textured façade materials are a character-defining feature of the Richardsonian Romanesque style. As such, and because replacement tiles can be fabricated, Staff is unable to support replacement of the turret roof with a substitute material under the *Design Guidelines* and the *Roof Materials Policy*.

Should the Board find that replacement with an alternate roof material is appropriate, Staff advises that the replacement material be a shingle form, whether slate or metal, so that the visual appearance and texture is more closely approximated. As stated above, clay tiles, on various roof forms including turrets, are a key identifying feature of the Richardsonian Romanesque style that adds decoration and texture to this visually prominent architectural feature. In this instance, the use of barrel tiles on the mansard portion creates a vertical emphasis that contrasts with the heavily textured, horizontal focus of the tiles on the turret. The use of a standing seam metal would simplify the surface texture and result in the loss of this intentional contrast and depth on this curved form. However, a shingle in an alternate material, could more closely match the original “design...texture and other visual qualities and...utilize the same materials and installation method.” The *Roof Materials Policy* also recommends matching the color—therefore, a red slate shingle, painted to match the existing tiles, is preferred to a metal standing seam or a metal shingle.

One of the challenges in the historic district is finding suitable replacement materials. The Boards of Architectural Review, the Modern and Sustainable Ad Hoc Work Group, and BAR Staff have been working diligently over the past several months to review alternatives and to determine what materials are appropriate for replacement of roofs, windows, doors and the like. While the applicant has shown that replacing in-kind would be challenging, it is evident that an in-kind match could be made and, therefore, Staff cannot support a substitute material. However, if the Board finds that a replacement material is appropriate, Staff recommends that the replacement material match the original as closely as possible in “design, color, texture and other visual qualities” and believes that the field fabricated red slate is the best alternative to the custom fabricated red clay tile for this small area.

#### **STAFF**

Catherine Miliaras, Historic Preservation Planner, Planning & Zoning  
Al Cox, FAIA, Historic Preservation Manager, Planning & Zoning

**IV. CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS**

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

Code Enforcement:

C-1 A building permit is required to be issued prior to start of any work.

C-2 Roof drainage systems must be installed so as neither to impact upon, nor cause erosion/damage to adjacent property.

Zoning:

C-1 Proposed roof replacement complies with zoning.

V. IMAGES



Figure 1. Front elevation of 917 Prince Street (on left) with turret with existing clay tile roof.



Figure 2. Detail of existing roof material on turret and mansard.