

Docket Item #3
BAR CASE #2003-0253

BAR Meeting
November 12, 2003

ISSUE: After-the-fact demolition and capsulation

APPLICANT: Amy Maddox

LOCATION: 403 North West Street

ZONE: RB/Residential

****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 the Code Enforcement Bureau (including signs). The applicant is responsible for obtaining all necessary construction permits after receiving Board of Architectural Review approval. Contact Code Enforcement, Room 4200, City Hall, 703-838-4360 for further information.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends approval of the Permit to Demolish/Capsulate as submitted.

NOTE:

This docket item requires a roll call vote.

DISCUSSION:

Applicant s Description of the Undertaking:

Demolish bathroom (14.0 x 5.0 structure) addition built prior to applicant s ownership. Current structure is rotting away; the addition was built directly on dirt, unlike the main structure, which has a brick foundation.

Issue:

The applicant is requesting a Permit to Demolish/Capsulate to remove a small one story frame addition on the north side of the two story frame house and to capsulate the entire length of the north wall of the rear ell on the first story. In addition, a small portion of the rear (east) wall of the main block on the first story will be capsulated. This will entail removing and infilling an existing window in that location.

Staff recently learned that the demolition of the addition had been completed several months ago. The work was done without a building permit or BAR approval. BAR staff first became aware of this project on August 26, 2003 when the contractor, Pat Eggleston of Eggleston LLC applied for a building permit to remove old bath room and install new larger size room (BLD 2003-01924). On August 27, 2003, BAR Staff informed Mr. Eggleston that BAR review would be required before the building permit could be approved and that the next filing deadline was September 22, 2003. For reasons unknown to Staff, the application was not filed until October 8, 2003. The application did not make clear that the addition had been removed, though the photographs suggested that could be the case. On October 28, 2003 Staff visited the site preparatory to writing this report and discovered that the addition had already been removed. On October 31, 2003, Staff notified the applicant that the unauthorized demolition of the addition violated of Section 10-203(B) of the Alexandria zoning ordinance, which requires BAR review of any demolition/capsulation of 25 square feet or more, and issued a citation for a class one civil violation, carrying a fine of \$1,500.

The area of demolition/capsulation has limited visibility from both the front and back of the property. The alley at the rear is a public alley.

History and Analysis:

The house at 403 North West Street is a pair with 401 North West Street. It is one of three pairs on North West Street (401 - 411 North West Street) and a pair around the corner on Princess Street (1315-1317 Princess Street) that appear to have constructed from the same plans and at the same time. The two story, three bay wide, frame houses feature front mansards and Italianate cornices and door surrounds. The building permit for 401-403 North West Street appears to have been lost, but the permits for the three other pairs were issued to W. H. Peck on September 1,

1909. The permit lists W. Leon Clark as the architect. In the first decade of the 20th century, Peck developed numerous similar houses in the immediate neighborhood and built and operated the frame grocery store on the southeast corner of Queen and Payne and the two story brick warehouse at 1210 Queen Street. Clark was a prolific Alexandria architect at the turn-of-the century and designed many other buildings for Peck.

Staff was unable to locate a building permit for the one story, north side addition at 403 North West Street. The addition does not appear on any Sanborn map through 1996, but is shown on a 1998 survey plat. Therefore, the presumed date of construction for the now demolished addition is circa 1997.

There is no record of any Board review for 403 North West Street. However, Staff has administratively approved permits for in-kind replacement of wood, German lap siding and for replacing vinyl windows with wood windows at 403 North West Street (BLD#95-00753, 5/1/1995 and BLD#96-00304, 3/15/1996). In 2002, the Board approved alterations, including the installation of fiber cement siding, on portions of 407 North West Street, located just two houses to the north (BAR Case #2002-0062, 4/24/2002).

In considering a Permit to Demolish or Capsulate, the Board must consider the following criteria set forth in the Zoning Ordinance, Sec. 10-205(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 and protect an historic place or area of historic interest in the city?
- (5) 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?
- (6) Would retention of the building or structure help maintain the scale and character of the neighborhood?

Staff does not believe the one story addition was significant. It certainly was not original to the house and may have been constructed as recently as 1997. The proposed new construction will eliminate the L-shaped footprint of the house by capsulating and filling in the dogleg on the north side at the first floor. Staff generally has concerns about additions which obscure or significantly alter the footprint of the original house and the *Design Guidelines* do recommend that the existing form of a residential building should be retained in the expression of the addition (Residential Additions - Page 6). However, in this case, the previous north side addition already altered the original footprint. Furthermore, due to its siting on the narrow lot, the L-shaped form

of this house is not readily apparent to the public. To conclude, Staff does not believe any of the above criteria are met and therefore, is not opposed to the proposed demolition/capsulation.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

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

Code Enforcement:

C-1 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 be taken to prevent the spread of rodents from the construction site to the surrounding community and sewers.

Office of Historic Alexandria:

I am concerned about the use of cementitious siding on the front of a building, and the removal of pine siding. Staff to BAR will need to review the condition of the current siding.

Alexandria Archeology:

There is a low potential for this project to disturb significant archaeological resources. No archaeological action is required.