

# Opinion 2015 - 1

22 May 2015

Joe Mannino  
167-169 Stockton Street  
Hightstown, NJ 08520

Dear Mr. Mannino,



Hightstown  
Historic Preservation  
Commission

The building that you purchased at 167-169 Stockton Street is in the Stockton Street Historic District and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The Hightstown Historic Preservation Commission, (HPC) has the responsibility to protect the historic resources in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, throughout the district and the town. As such, when it was found that alterations were being made without first coming to discuss them with the HPC, you were directed to cease work. The alterations to date prior to the May 21, 2015 meeting were removal of cement parging from the stone foundation wall, repointing of mortar joints at the foundation wall, infill of at least one opening with brick in a brick wall, removal of at least four foundation windows, installation of 8" concrete block into the openings, parging of the concrete block flush with the existing stone which as you said was planned to get a thin stone added over these areas to blend in with the rest of the foundation. Blending in is the worst thing that could be done to an historic property.

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards are excerpted below:

*The Standards (Department of Interior regulations, 36 CFR 67) pertain to historic buildings of all materials, construction types, sizes, and occupancy and encompass the exterior and the interior, related landscape features and the building's site and environment as well as attached, adjacent, or related new construction. The Standards are to be applied to specific rehabilitation projects in a reasonable manner, taking into consideration economic and technical feasibility. (There are 10 distinct guidelines that we are governed to follow to the best of our ability):*

1. *A property shall be used for its historic purpose or be placed in a new use that requires minimal change to the defining characteristics of the building and its site and environment.*
  - a. You are maintaining the original use.
2. *The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.*
  - a. You have removed the historic windows which goes against these guidelines.
3. *Each property shall be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or architectural elements from other buildings, shall not be undertaken.*
  - a. This would apply to the tile installed in the foyer, however the HPC does not have jurisdiction of the interior of this building. This would also apply to adding doors, windows or addition of elements not in keeping with the original style of the building, which you are not doing at this time.

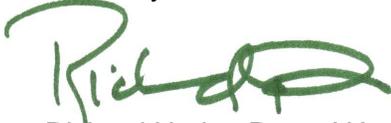
4. *Most properties change over time; those changes that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved.*
  - a. Not applicable
5. *Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property shall be preserved.*
  - a. You have reinforced this by removing the cement parging and repointing the mortar joints. This change is approved.
6. *Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.*
  - a. This would require replacement of the windows in the shape and style as the original windows. However, understanding your concerns of security and keeping in line with 9 and 10 below; for the two front windows, the HPC will accept removal of the 8" concrete block and parging, construction of 4" concrete block flush with the inside face of the wall, addition of two fake windows in front of the concrete block built in similar size, shape, style and characteristics as the window on the left side of the building.
7. *Chemical or physical treatments, such as sandblasting, that cause damage to historic materials shall not be used. The surface cleaning of structures, if appropriate, shall be undertaken using the gentlest means possible.*
  - a. Not applicable at this time.
8. *Significant archeological resources affected by a project shall be protected and preserved. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures shall be undertaken.*
  - a. Not applicable at this time.
9. *New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.*
  - a. This applies to treatment of the window openings. So as not to cause undue hardship, for the two right side windows, the HPC will accept removal of the 8" concrete block and parging, construction of 4" concrete block flush with the inside face of the wall, addition of one bluestone panel per opening filling the opening and set back from the outside face of the stone wall.
10. *New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.*
  - a. See 3 and 9 above for comments.

While the changes that you have made all may seem like improvements to you, they are not all improvements as far as the HPC and the Secretary of the Interior are concerned. We appreciate that you removed the parging and repointed the mortar joints, however removal of the windows is a significant negative change. We understand that they were rotted, but having not seen them prior to removal nor as you say some were filled in with glass block, we have to abide by what the structure shows us. On the left side of the building is an intact green painted foundation window. Without evidence otherwise, we have to conclude that all of the foundation windows looked like this one. Therefore, in the strictest sense we feel that the four openings should be returned to their original use as windows in all cases. However, as noted above under numbers 6 and 9, we are willing to compromise to keep in line with the last sentence from the first paragraph of the Secretary of the Interior's Standards, "*The Standards are to be applied to*

specific rehabilitation projects in a reasonable manner, taking into consideration economic and technical feasibility.”

This directive was discussed at our May 21, 2015 meeting with the following commissioners: Cardoso, Carney, Honsel, Pratt and Teller. Our opinion is that this work, although unfortunate, is necessary to adhere with the Secretary of the Interior Standards for Rehabilitation and to protect this building as the single example of its type and style in Hightstown. It's important that it not be negatively altered.

Sincerely,



Richard Harlan Pratt, AIA  
Chairman and Secretary - HPC

cc:

HPC  
George Chin – Hightstown Building Department

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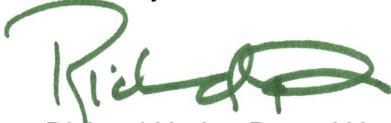
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