

Opinion 2015 - 3

21 July 2015

Mr. Jose Hidalgo
126 Stockton Street
Hightstown, NJ 08520

Dear Mr. Hidalgo,



Historic Preservation
Commission

The building that you own at 126 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, the construction official was notified. The alterations made were removal of the box window at the front of the house, installation of two smaller vinyl windows & plywood infill, the front door was replaced, the transom above the door was removed and replaced with plywood.

You attended the February meeting to discuss this and possible alternatives to rebuilding the box window exactly as it was prior to your removal. We are required to adhere to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards as 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. By all indications this started out as a single family home. You purchased it after it had been converted to a two family apartment house. (See attached sketch)
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 historic features as described above, however through our research at the Hightstown – East Windsor Historical Society, it appears that the box window was not original to the house, however it was part of the house when the historic district was defined. At the February meeting we discussed aspects of the house to reconstruct in line with it's very original features rather than the features which you removed since they were not original.

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 whomever added the box window and roof above the window in the first place. Therefore, by agreeing to adjust the façade to as close as possible to the original this guideline has been met.
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. The only feature that we are aware of is the lower part of the roof above the door. This should be preserved and the added peaked roof removed. It is also likely that there were once brackets. The HPC will assist with a period design.
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.
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 the new windows and entry roof.
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 have agreed to bring back what can be, without significant physical changes to the interior of the house. Considering that removal of the window is a significant negative change, but that it wasn't original to the house, you have agreed to the following as a compromise:

1. Considering that the door opening has been made smaller by a former owner to fit a standard 3' door, we will not be addressing the width at this time. However, with your replacement door, the transom above was removed. This should be replaced or rebuilt to a similar condition as the original.
2. The roof above the door has a peaked roof portion which should be removed. The base of this roof shall remain intact including the bead board ceiling. A slight pitch

should be created to shed water and new flashing added. The siding would need to be infilled to prevent water from entering the house.

3. Add brackets and possibly a decorative skirt similar to the side door of the house on the corner of Stockton and Church Streets.
4. Remove the remainder of roof where the box window had been.
5. Remove the two added windows and install taller & narrower windows aligned with upper middle and upper right windows.
6. Address the location of the upper left window that was moved sometime in the past to accommodate a shower. **Solution: to be determined.**
7. Replace siding on the front of the house after all of the above is completed.
8. Paint/repaint all trim. The HPC does not require any particular type of paint or colors, but we would be happy to assist you with selection of a palette beyond white.

The above eight items are a reasonable 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.*"

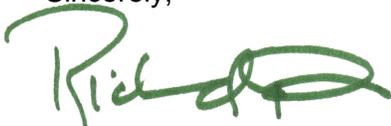
As you indicated it is not economically feasible for you to do all of the above fixes at one time, and you would like 2-3 years to complete with a \$4,000 cap per year. We have not budgeted the tasks, but we see the work in three phases as follows:

- I. Phase I: Lines 1, 2, 3 & 4 above. (August 1, 2015 – July 31, 2016) **
- II. Phase II: Lines 5 & 6 above. (August 1, 2016 – July 31, 2017) **
- III. Phase III: Lines 7 & 8 above. (August 1, 2017 – July 31, 2018) **

** We will advise the Borough Attorney of the above to draft documentation of these phases and appropriate violations if not adhered to. Additionally, the Construction Department and Housing Inspector are copied on this correspondence for oversight and issuance of permits.

This directive was discussed at our July 16, 2015 meeting with the following commissioners: Cardoso, Honsel, Pratt, Teller, Von Riegen, and Egan. Our opinion is that this work is necessary to adhere with the Secretary of the Interior Standards for Rehabilitation and to protect this building as the first house of the historic district entering from downtown, a house that could be brought back to its original form and development of a working relationship with the HPC. It's important that it not be negatively altered and with the above described work the alterations will positively enhance the house.

Sincerely,



Richard Harlan Pratt, AIA
Chairman and Secretary - HPC

cc:

HPC Commissioners and File
George Chin – Hightstown Building Department
Dave Bell – Hightstown Housing Inspector

Original View





Altered View

Proposed Final View

