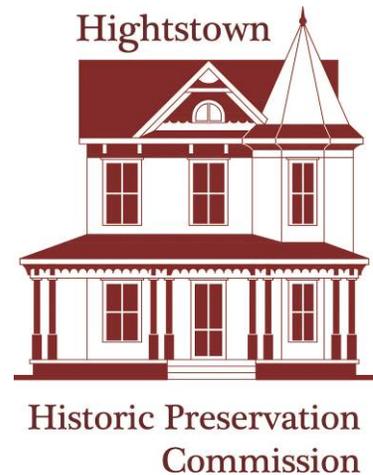


Opinion 2015 - 4

28 July 2015

Mr. Jose Hidalgo
182 Grant Avenue
Hightstown, NJ

Re: 126 Stockton Street
Hightstown, NJ 08520



Dear Mr. Hidalgo,

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...

We found recently, after knowing that HPC approval was required for any exterior work (See HPC Minutes 2/19/15; http://www.hightstownborough.com/minutes_hpc/2015/HHPC-Minutes-2015-02-19.pdf), that you permanently and adversely altered the front steps. The brick steps and stoop were "skinned" with 1" of concrete on all faces. You had been instructed by the Housing Officer to repair the steps. There is no conceivable way to translate "repair" as a full skinning. In addition, based on the removal of the front box window (See 2/19/15 minutes referenced above and Opinion 2015-3; http://www.hightstownborough.com/opinions_hpc/2015/Opinion2015-3-126Stockton-072115.pdf), you were well aware of the requirement in owning a structure in the Stockton Street Historic District.

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.*
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 skinned over what may not have been the historic steps, but were nonetheless existing to the house at the time of its listing on the National Register.
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. You skinned over an element that records its place in time.
4. *Most properties change over time; those changes that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved.*
 - a. Such as the brick steps.
5. *Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property shall be preserved.*
 - a. Such as the brick steps.
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. The Housing Officer directed you to **repair** the steps "...the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities..."
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 possible salvaged guard.
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:

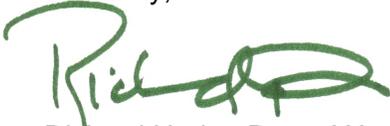
1. The 1" concrete "skinning" shall be removed fully and the steps returned to their original design, color and texture.
2. Since you have altered the steps, the building code requires that they meet the current building code.
 - a. The vertical rise of one step to the other shall be the same within 3/16". Right now you have an 8" step and a 9" step. The brain recognizes the rhythm of steps unconsciously. Differing steps create a tripping hazard and a liability. This shall be corrected.
 - b. Due to the height of the stoop, a 42" high fall prevention guard is required. There are salvage yards in New Jersey and Pennsylvania that have fences or

guards that can be repurposed for this situation, and which relate somewhat to the age of the house. The guard should be painted. Please consult with the HPC on the color.

- c. There must be a railing. You added a pressure treated wood railing which is unacceptable. This railing must be removed and replaced with something that fits the age of the house. If a salvaged guard is used as per 1b above the HPC will accept a simple "modern" pipe handrail which does not connect to the house or the guard in any way.

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