

## Certificate of Review (Preliminary Review)

### For 301 First Avenue

An application to **rebuild a front porch and construct a two story addition and rear porch** was submitted to the WG Town Office on **November 3, 2003** by **Emilia A. Styles** and reviewed by HPC at its **November 18, 2003** monthly meeting.

**General Description:** The plans calls for rebuilding and slightly increasing the area of the front porch, rebuilding a slightly expanded first floor area and adding a second story above this area with gabled roof, shed dormers and a 2' x 8' two story bay, centered on each side. A two story octagonal porch will be added behind the structure.

**Adequacy of the Documents Submitted:** Submitted were the county's **Application for Residential Building Permit**, (not fully completed); **preliminary elevations** of the cottage front, rear and sides, copies of the applicant's **plat survey** and those of the three properties beyond the applicant's (to document the average distance of their front porches to property lines; a **topographical survey** which shows the existing house and front porch, the property line, the set back from Center St. and 303 1<sup>st</sup> Ave. and the footprint of the proposed new construction; **informational sheets** showing lot coverage and setback analysis. **Current photos** of the residence would have been helpful for the review session.

**Visibility from public ways:** The proposed construction will be visible from Center Street, Grove and First Avenues, Grove Road and Chestnut Road. It will also be visible from Town Hall and three town parks (Chapel, Zoe Wadsworth and Howard).

**Contributing structure:** The residence is an early Carpenter Gothic Style cottage built in the 1880's. The cottage has not been substantially changed in scale or design since the late 1800's or early 1900's. The front entrance is apparently not original and an asphalt "brick" siding covers what is probably the original wood siding.

**Nearby contributing structures:** The cottage is within view of several contributing structures including 215 Grove Ave., 206 Grove Ave. and 303 First Ave. Additionally, most homes within two blocks, north and south of 301 First Ave., are contributing structures.

**Compatibility:** Because the cottage is centrally located near many historic structures and public parks, HPC's preliminary review and recommendations concerning all four elevations have a critical bearing in maintaining the character, in scale and style, and integrity of the neighborhood. The applicant demonstrated an equal appreciation of the HPC's concerns.

**Front Elevation:** The second floor gable end of the addition can be seen to the left of the cottage gable and, although compatible in style, it appeared to dominate in height. The applicant said there were already plans to lower this roof line. There was an annotation on the side elevation consistent with this planned change which HPC firmly supported. The structures and roof lines of the two side bays were not drawn on this elevation. These roofs would also dominate the original cottage. Although lowering them was not discussed in the review, HPC advises adjusting these heights downward to lessen their impact.

Shed dormers are also visible on the addition's gable roof and are compatible with early styling on the original gable roof of a nearby contributing structure (213 Grove Ave.). Although not pictured correctly on the side elevations, these dormers will stop at front and rear walls of the addition, short of the gable ends which will extend beyond the referenced walls.

The porch will expand by 1.25' toward the front of the lot and by 2.0' toward Center Street. The HPC advised the applicant that increasing the porch size beyond these points would make it even more useable, although this would require a variance because the plan as drawn maximizes allowable percentage use of the lot. The HPC encourages the use of porches in design as they were a central feature of daily life in Washington Grove. The Commission also advised the applicant to lower the point where the porch roof met the cottage (within the limits of necessary pitch) in order to expose the lower ends of the original gable as much as possible. The front

porch and the cottage are dominated by a very large old oak tree whose trunk is located within the porch deck and roof framing, a remnant of the tradition of early residents who built the original cottages while disturbing as few trees as possible. In respecting this tradition, the applicant plans to build around the tree. She also intends to reuse the original porch posts which is commendable.

**Side Elevations:** The Center Street side shows an old gabled 1 ½ story section built off of the original cottage. The first floor shows a stained glass window in place of the original double hung window and a double (side by side) unit with sashes rounded on top replacing the fan window above in the gable area. Similar units are shown in the new bay on this side and in the gable of the addition facing front.

The original fanlight, or one similar to it, is located in the gable of the bay on the Van Beek side. The impact of the stained glass window and the double gable window is to dominate this area. This reviewer recommends no change here or at minimum maintain the original scale and character with changes such as using the smallest of the double sash units in this old gable and placing the largest unit in the front gable of the addition. Altering trim could also reduce the units' scale. A cursory review of contributing structures suggests that stained glass is primarily used in the front cottage gable. (111 Grove Ave., 122 Grove Ave., 416 5<sup>th</sup> Ave.) The Maryland Historic Trust (MHT) may have some advice on this. These features were not discussed in the review session with the applicant. (See last section of this review for advice with regard to the MHT's policy on tax credits for the preservation of historic property.) Each side elevation shows 2' x 8' two story bays approximately centered on the side walls. The shed dormers adjoin each side of the bays and extend left and right to the front and back walls as the gable roof extends beyond these walls. The dormers are built out to the side walls and the gabled roof is built out below the dormers to overhang the side walls. Their scale and style appear to be compatible with the overall structure and with styling in the neighborhood. ( In order to lessen its impact, the double sash unit in the gable of the bay might also be adjusted downward to align its center with the centers of the window units in the dormers. This last feature was not covered in the review session.) The Van Beek side elevation shows an existing brick chimney which may have to be brought up to current code, requiring proper height above and distance from roof ridges. Rebuilding with natural materials is encouraged by HPC.

**Rear Elevation:** The dominate feature in the back is a two story porch which, as drawn, emphasizes unbroken vertical lines and screening. The second level may serve as a "sleeping porch." Set back regulations and percentage of lot use limits were factors in determining the shape (octagonal) and orientation to the addition (off center). The rear gable end of the addition is interrupted by the porch roof. The HPC recommended that the vertical features be muted by placing all screening behind posts and rails. The applicant was advised that using vertical beaded board instead of balusters would create a more pronounced horizontal feature. She was later advised to contact a homeowner (111 Grove Avenue) whose closed-in side porch, when gutted several years ago, was found to have its original rail and vertical tongue and groove boards intact. HPC advised that using an overhang on the second level would stress another horizontal line and provide additional space. HPC noted that overhangs can extend beyond set backs. The vertical board balustrade would provide an element of privacy on both levels. The rear gable issue was not fully resolved although HPC advised that a more steeply pitched porch roof might help to preserve the addition's gable feature.

**Maryland Historic Trust:** The owner was interested in applying to the MHT for a tax credit. She was advised to contact the MHT to discuss her drawings and get their input if possible. David Neumann noted that prior to any permits being issued, the applicant would need have complete plans approved by the MHT. After she got their approval, the HPC would most likely agree with all historical and design aspects of the plans as the MHT holds to very high standards.

The HPC further advised that using natural materials such as wood windows, doors, siding and trim would be encouraged and probably required by MHT. The type of siding (horizontal, vertical, etc.) would be a critical choice as would the using window and doors of compatible size and style. The applicant was encouraged to contact homeowners who had gone through the MHT process and to have her architect address MHT issues. An applicant can receive a tax credit as high as 20% of the applicable construction, design and appliance costs.

**HPC Process:** The HPC encouraged the applicant to come in again for advice on changes made or to be made to her plans. It also decided that the session would be considered a preliminary review because of the substantial areas of potential change and because the MHT process should come first if the Applicant chooses that course. Whether or not the MHT process is pursued, the HPC would like to review final changes before

Montgomery County permits are secured. This application illustrates deficiencies in the permit application and review process. If the HPC is to review plans on historic structures, it must review the final plans for the process to have meaning and effect. The HPC is encouraged that the applicant is proceeding with care regarding her historic property. HPC also appreciates that there are complicated issues in fulfilling the zoning, design, historic and personal requirements on her renovation.

Please note that the Historic Preservation Commission acts only in an advisory capacity to both applicants and the Planning Commission. The reviews undertaken are designed to assist homeowners in their projects, to provide input to deliberations of the Planning Commission and, more generally, to contribute to historic preservation in Washington Grove.

Further information regarding the scope, powers, duties, and structure of the Historic Preservation Commission may be found in Article XV of the Code of Ordinances of the Town of Washington Grove. Section 5 (a) of Article XV describes the powers and duties of the Historic Preservation Commission in the building permit process. This section reads as follows:

The Commission shall review all applications for building permits filed with the Town Planning Commission which would involve any change to a structure or site visible from any public way for historical accuracy, integrity, or compatibility with the neighborhood and improvements therein. The Commission may recommend to an applicant alternative historical designs, materials and sources for the same which may be more historically compatible, The Commission shall forward its recommendations regarding the same, if any, in an advisory capacity, to the Planning Commission for consideration by the Planning Commission within thirty (30) days from the Commission's receipt of the application from the Planning Commission.

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Edward J. Mroczka - Member  
of the Historic Preservation Commission

Dec. 2, 2003  
Date