

HDC-2022-00071

Address: 346 N. 8th Street

District: Old Allentown Historic District

Applicant: Andrew Ardizzoia

Proposal: Reconfigure and replace front steps

Building Description:

This 2-story painted brick row house ca. 1890 is of plain style. The 1st floor is fixed like a shop and was used for that purpose. There is a dentilated cornice over the front door. The 2nd floor windows are 1/1 sash with three small panes on top. The 1st floor windows are large store front flat windows, with a awning over the 1st floor. There is brickote and white shingles covering the rear. Wood German siding is on the side walls of the front building. There is a fake top, gabled parapet roof on front. The main door is a ¾-glazed door with a dentilated cornice over it. There is a curved brick stoop of three steps in front and a porch in the rear.

The front building and back building look like two separate units. During the 1860s the shop was moved to its present site, the front yard of 346 N 8th Street. The rear building was used as the living quarters for the baker and the front shop used as the bakery with Victorian Commercial façade. The front building may have been used as a speakeasy during the 1930s; based on the number and variety of bottles found during the restoration.

Project Description:

This application proposes to demolish the existing circular brick steps at the front of the building and replace them with rectangular bluestone slab steps. The current frame building was relocated from elsewhere in the city and has been altered over the years. The date of the steps remains unknown, but they are not an original feature of the property. The drawing provided in the application notes that railings will be located along the steps, but the railing are not included in this application. The applicant will submit the railings separately at a later date.



Front façade of 346 N. 8th Street, 2022.
(Applicant)



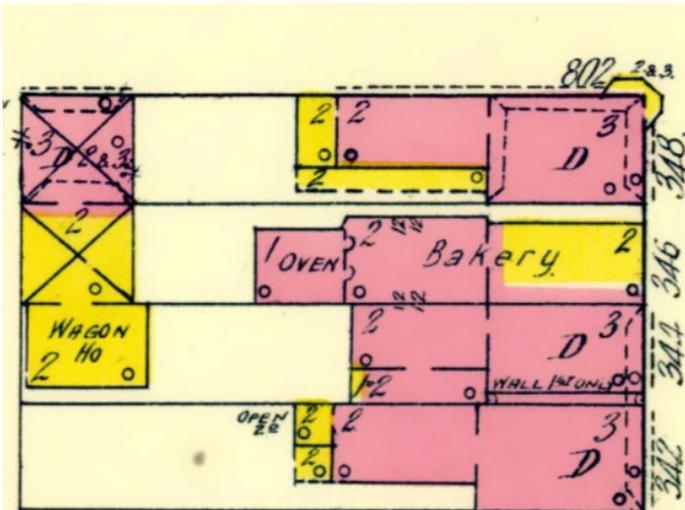
Existing steps at 346 N. 8th Street.
(Applicant)



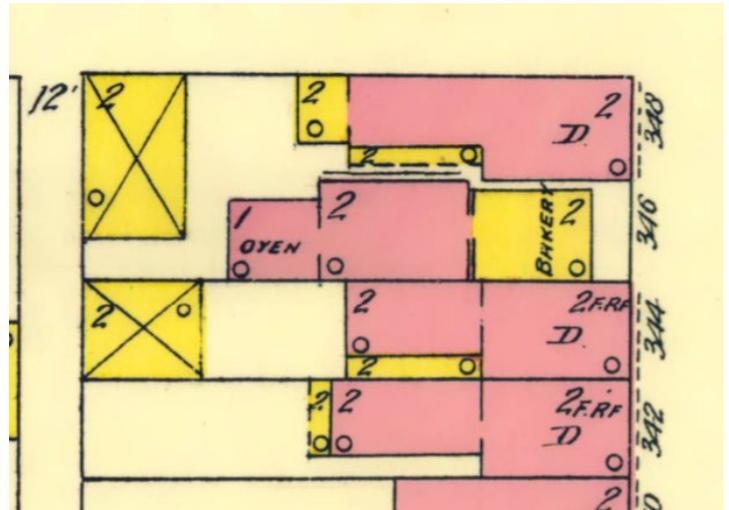
Proposed stone steps at 346 N. 8th Street.
(Applicant)



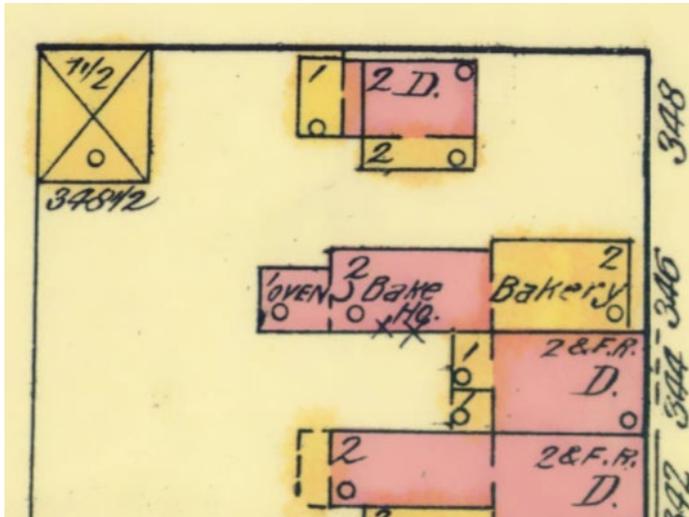
Circular brick steps at 346 N. 8th Street, 1995.
(Planning & Zoning files)



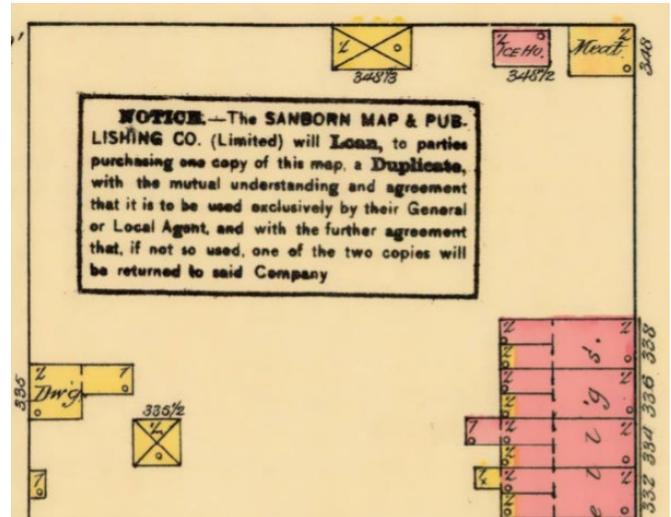
1911 Sanborn map.
(Penn State University Libraries)



1897 Sanborn map.
(Penn State University Libraries)



1891 Sanborn map.
(Penn State University Libraries)



1885 Sanborn map, suggesting that the site had not been developed.
(Penn State University Libraries)

Applicable Guidelines:

Chapter 3.7 – Porches & Steps

3.7.4 Replace individual deteriorated components in-kind with new materials matching the original in material composition, size, shape, profile, dimension, appearance, and finish. Custom fabrication is encouraged and may be necessary to provide an exact match. Where an exact match of the historic element cannot be found or fabricated, the new element should match the original as closely as possible.

Observations & Comments:

From 8th Street, the building appears as a two-story detached or semi-detached frame structure with a parapet and former commercial storefront and differs from the block's two- and three-story brick rowhouses. Sanborn maps show that the rear portion of the building is brick. According to a 1982 clipping in the Planning & Zoning property files, the brick portion of the building was constructed in the 1860s, and the wood structure was moved to the site from elsewhere in the city and placed in front of the brick building to function as a bakery. The 1891 and 1897 Sanborn maps show that the building was originally set back from 8th Street, and by 1911 it had been expanded to align with the fronts of the adjacent buildings. Because of the building's move and expansion, it is likely that the steps were rebuilt several times. The difference in the brick of the building's foundation and the circular steps suggests that the brick steps are a later addition, constructed after the c. 1911 expansion. Staff finds that the circular brick steps are not in character with the wood structure and have not acquired significance in their own right.

Since no documentation exists of the historic steps, staff supports the proposed configuration, which is typical of many historic rowhouses and most of the buildings on this block of 8th Street. The proposed configuration is consistent with Guideline 3.7.4 as a replacement that is historically appropriate in material and design in the absence of historic documentation. Staff suggests that a veneer on the cheek walls be avoided and recommends laying slab steps over curbing, such as in the image below. The steps should overhang the cheek walls by one or two inches. If the application is revised to include the suggested detailing, the application will comply with Guideline 3.7.4.



Partial construction of stone steps showing construction method.
(<https://clsupplies.com/product/granite-fillers/>)



Image showing detailing with steps overhanging cheeks.
(Google StreetView)

Staff Recommendation:

Approval, pursuant to Chapter 3, Section 3.7 Porches & Steps, provided that the steps and cheek walls consist of large natural stone or cast stone slabs, are appropriately detailed, and do not incorporate veneer. Staff notes that the property presents a unique circumstance, because it has been moved, expanded, and its historic steps replaced in the past. The recommendation is based on steps that are typical of and appropriate for historic buildings in the Old Allentown Historic District.

HARB Discussion:

Discussion amongst applicant and HARB members regarding stone masons and contacts for the masonry work. Vice Chair AJ Jordan asked about the handrails which the applicant and MK clarified would be presented as a separate application.

Chair DH stated the application as presented meets the guidelines.

Vice Chair AJ asked about the brick pavers, the applicant and MK confirmed that this was not part of the application.

GL supported the choice of bluestone for use on the stairs.

Action:

HARB Vice Chair AJ Jordan moved to approve with conditions the application presented on 12/5/2022 for the reconfiguration and replacement of the front steps at 346 N. 8th Street with the following conditions agreed to by the applicant: the steps and cheek walls are appropriately detailed, and do not incorporate veneer, and finds compliance with the following sections of the Guidelines for Historic Districts: Chapter 3, Section 3.7 Porches & Steps and finds that there are circumstances unique to the property: which include the fact that it has been moved, expanded and the historic steps replaced previously. HARB Chair Dave Huber seconded the motion, which passed unanimously