

**Historical Architectural Review Board
COA Final Review Sheet**

HDC-2023-00012

Address: 325 N. 9th Street

District: Old Allentown Historic District

Applicant: Sixto Sibri, owner

Proposal: Replace garage doors

Building Description:

This 3-story brick end of row house, ca 1885, is Eastlake style. The mansard roof has dormers on the front and side façades, bracketed dentilated cornice under the 3rd floor windows, asphalt shingles, and a single chimney. The windows are 1/1 sash with colored glass (a variation of Queen Anne design) in small boxes around the upper sash with incised drape Eastlake lintels. The main entry is a double door with colored glass transom. The 1st floor rear has a frame porch with a shingle roof. There is an iron fence from the back porch to the three-car garage. [Fence had been replaced pre-2008.] The front stoop is concrete with wrought iron railing. There are two basement window grilles visible.

Project Description:

This application proposes to replace the three wood garage doors fronting Pine Street at the rear of the property at 325 N. 9th Street. The garage was constructed between 1911 and 1932 and post-dates the construction of the main building. The garage is constructed of brick with a flat roof and three large bays with two-leaf garage doors. The doors likely date to the garage's construction and feature six-pane glazing at the top with vertically paneled wood below. Pine Street functions as a secondary street, and the garage has some visibility from N. 9th Street. The application proposes to install three steel overhead garage doors and would feature a wainscoting design.

Note: Other work listed on the application form, including painting of stucco, fencing, and trim, and refinishing the main door, are considered general maintenance and are not part of the HARB review.



Rear garage of 325 N. 9th Street, 2019.
(Google StreetView)

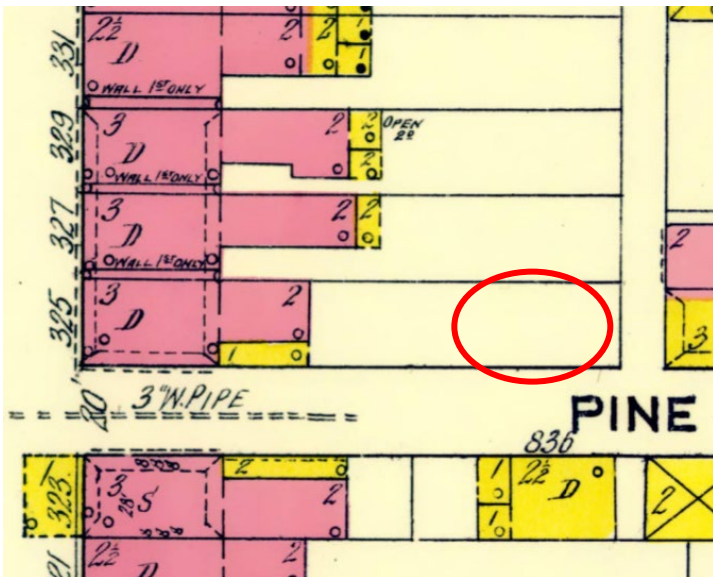
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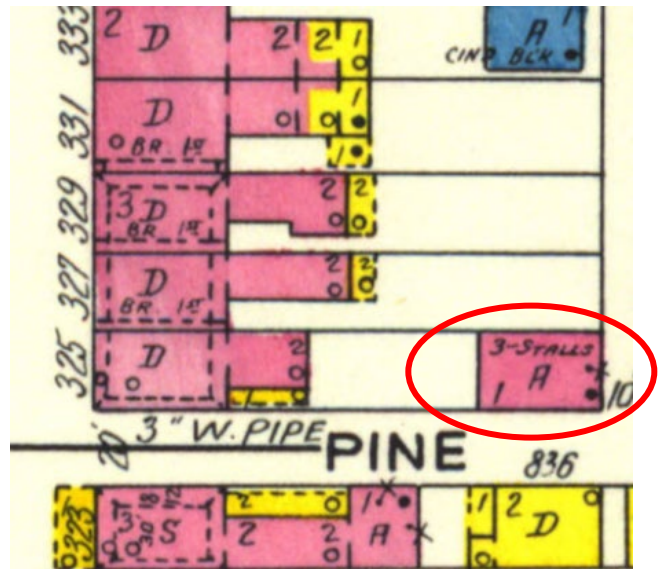
Front and side façades of 325 N. 9th Street, 2019.
(Google StreetView)



Image of proposed garage door.
(Applicant)



1911 Sanborn map.
(Penn State University Libraries)



1932 Sanborn map.
(Penn State University Libraries)

Applicable Guidelines:

Chapter 3.6 – Doors

3.6.5 Repair and restore historic doors whenever possible rather than replace them. Historic doors include front doors, rear doors, and grocer's alley doors. Original materials should not be discarded. If repair and reuse is not possible, salvage may be an option and the existing feature used as a template for replication.

3.6.6 Repair, restore, and reuse existing door frames, jambs, threshold, fixed transoms, and similar components. Existing components are usually historic wood. Replace in-kind if existing materials are severely deteriorated. Replicate the profile and width of door frames, jambs, and transoms in order to preserve the solid-to-void ratio of the entrance.

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3.6.9 Replace with durable alternate materials if in-kind replacement is not feasible. Composite wood doors and fiberglass doors are acceptable replacements if new doors match the original in size, style, configuration, detail, and appearance. However, these products are not recommended from a sustainability perspective. They have shorter lifespan and deteriorate when exposed to moisture, weathering, and temperature variation. For replacement doors, avoid metal doors (including metal doors that imitate paneled wood), as they do not have the same appearance and texture of historic wood. Avoid pre-hung doors (doors that are purchased already installed in a frame) when replacing a door, because these require the removal of historic fabric and can change the size of the opening.

3.6.10 Preserve the size of the existing door opening. New doors should be custom sized if necessary. Avoid enlarging or filling in original door openings to fit new stock sizes. This alteration will impact the historic character of the building. This action will also require a Building Permit because it changes the amount of enclosed space on a façade.

Observations & Comments:

In 2004, the HARB reviewed and recommended approval of an application to replace the three garage doors. A Certificate of Appropriateness was issued for the “replacement of three wooden garage doors with raised panel steel doors to match other garage doors used in the block” (Resolution No. 27906). The applicant subsequently modified the application and received additional approval to remove a brick pier between two door openings and install a larger overhead door. Neither plan was implemented.

While the design guidelines provide recommendations for door replacement, they do not specifically address door replacement at accessory structures. Staff notes that the garage is somewhat visible from a primary street and fronts a secondary street and recommends following the guidelines with some flexibility. Staff also notes that the doors have been in poor condition since at least 2004. No glazing remains, and all doors show visible signs of deterioration.

The installation of overhead garage doors will require the removal of the existing jambs, though the doors have simple jambs with no thresholds or transoms. Staff recommends adding glazing in the top third or half of the doors to maintain the solid-to-void ratio and comply with Guideline 3.6.6. Staff contends that alternative materials are acceptable at an accessory structure and asks that the applicant consider a more appropriate composite door system with vertical panels and glazing to comply with Guideline 3.6.9. However, staff recommends that the HARB take the previously approved paneled metal door into consideration.

Staff Recommendation:

Denial of the application as presented, but approval of a vertically paneled metal or composite door with glazing, with the staff to review details, pursuant to Chapter 3, Section 3.6 Doors.

HARB Discussion:

Mr. Jordan asked whether the proposal is for three separate doors in three existing spaces or if it would be for one large door. Mr. Sibri responded that it would be three separate doors. He explained that the doors cannot be opened, because the structure is unstable and that the roof had collapsed while he was working on the building. He added that he requested a door with some design element that respects the original doors, though he noted that he needs to work within a budget.

Mr. Jordan opined that the scale, massing, and structure were more important than whether the doors contained glazing. Mr. Lichtenwalner contended that it would be difficult to match the proportions of the glazing in the garage door and that the windows would not pay respect to the historic value of the existing doors. He then questioned whether the door would maintain similar proportions to the example shown, noting that the sample shows a much wider door. He asked whether the smaller opening would significantly change the design. Mr. Sibri responded that the door company explained that the door would be custom made to fit the opening.

Mr. Jordan read Guideline 3.11.8, noting that it is not appropriate to alter an accessory structure to match the main building if it did not historically match. He concluded that the garage should not match the main building in this case, but

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that symmetry would be an important feature of any new doors. He suggested that the doors be custom cut to be symmetric.

Action:

Mr. Encelewski moved to approve with conditions the application presented on 3/6/2023 for the installation of three garage doors at 325 N. 9th Street, as agreed to by the applicant and with the staff to review details, pursuant to Chapter 3, Section 3.6 Doors, provided the garage door openings are preserved and that the doors are cut symmetrically in design, noting that the brick piers present a unique circumstance. Mr. Hart seconded the motion, which carried with unanimous support.