

**HISTORIC ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD
CITY OF ALLENTOWN, PENNSYLVANIA
October 10, 2019
FINAL Review**

Item #1 - Case # HDC-2019-00054 – Proposal to continue alteration of cornice

Property located at: 339 N 8th Street
Agenda #1
Historic District: Old Allentown
Case # HDC-2019-000054
Meeting date: October 7, 2019

Property Owner: Thomas Gilman
Owners Address: 339 N 8th St., Allentown, PA 18102
Applicant: Same
Applicant's Address: Same

Building description, period, style defining features: This structure is a 3 bay, 3 story, attached red brick dwelling with Mansard roof, simple shed-roofed dormers, built-in gutter system with wood fascia and soffit (most likely altered in a façade renovation in 1997), corbeled brick cornice, 2 over 2 double-hung windows with arched headers, and entry with altered door surround (also likely 1997). The house dates from c. 1876 and is Second Empire in style.







Proposed alterations: It is proposed to continue alteration of cornice.

Staff Approvals: 1/17/2019 – Replace flat roof on detached garage. 6/18/2012.

Background: 1985-10 – Proposal to discuss the alterations to the door not approved by HARB. Door was changed at 341 N 8th Street (applicant owned both properties) the case is not applicable to 339 N 8th St.

1997-3 – Installation of carriage style light fixture near front door and multiple amendments to previous COAs. Copies of the case to be attached to HARB packet.

1998- Demolish brick rear addition and replace with frame addition covered in DryVit.

Recommended approval by HARB. Approved by City Council resolution 27397, March 2, 1998.

Violations: January 25, 1985 – Alteration to the front door. Door was changed at 341 N 8th Street (applicant owned both properties) the violation is not applicable to 339 N 8th St.

March 13, 2017 – Building in poor condition, not being maintained, bricks at cornice missing or falling out.

November 27, 2017 – (Second Notice) Building in poor condition, not being maintained, bricks at cornice missing or falling out.

December 18, 2018 – Violation Notice – Inappropriate alteration of the cornice. (The maintenance issue resolved.)

July 23, 2019 – Final Violation Notice - Inappropriate alteration of the cornice.

Guideline Citation: SIS 6 Deteriorated 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.

SIS 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 **Allentown Guidelines for Historic**

Districts: 5. Guidelines for Existing Buildings and Structures, 1. Repairs, Replacement and Alternative Materials, 4. Walls, Siding and Trim

Evaluation, effect on historic district, recommendations: From older photographs provided it appears that this building had been drastically altered a decade or more before 1885. A drawing provided showed plans for renovation that appear to have been carried out in 1997. The wood fascia and soffit dated that was replaced dated from that time. The replacement fascia and soffit proposed to be retained and approved differs from the non-original fascia and soffit in the size/scale of two items: the fascia is no longer stepped and larger (by 1") and the decorative molding below the soffit is smaller (1 3/4" instead of 3 1/2"). Given the non-original condition of the replaced fascia and soffit the HARB may want to consider permitting the latest replacement to be retained or to require, possibly, the replacement of the molding below the soffit which is likely the most visible aspect of the cornice from the viewpoint of the pedestrian.

The loss of the corbels under the front door pediment should be discussed. Although not original to the building, they were part of the 1997 renovation and added character to the ungainly cantilevered pediment over the door. Their reinstallation would lend visible support to the pediment.

From 8/29/19 meeting

Discussion: *Mr. Fillman explained some of the history of the building. He said it was an Old Allentown Preservation Association façade project in 1997. The entire outer layer of brick was replaced when the removal of brickwork caused extensive damage to the brick. He said he did not know what the original fascia and soffit detail looked like. Drawings from the 1997 renovation indicated the wood cornice and box gutter to be restored to match original but there were no details. The hand drawing appears to show a bit of a molding profile to the fascia, but it is not clear. Photos of the fascia and soffit before the latest replacement are also not clear but appeared to show a flat fascia with a step and crown molding under the soffit similar to the noted dimensions from the applicant.*

The applicant said he was planning to do future work on the Mansard windows, built-in gutters, and fascia/soffit and would add decorative features at that time. He said he was willing to add back corbels at the front door but did not think the corbels from the 1997 renovation were appropriately scaled. Mr. Fillman said he might have some salvaged corbels that would better fit the door surround. The applicant said he would come to the HARB for all future work.

Mr. Fillman said he was still not in support of approving the fascia/soffit as installed and thought the violation should be corrected.

Motion: *By means of an electronic vote HARB agreed to table the proposal for additional discussion. (7-0; motion carried; Huber, Fillman, Roberts, Jackson, Brobst, Sell, Olson)*

Discussion: The Historic Consultant briefly reviewed the facts of the case and directed the discussion to determining the characteristics and details of the cornice that was replaced by the applicant. Photos in the City's possession were studied and a new photo from the applicant circulated. The applicant's photo was clearest and showed a double fascia with no crown or cove, soffit, and molding below. The applicant asked the HARB members what they would like to see but continued on to say he would like to add a crown molding to the top of the flat fascia. The HARB responded favorably to this suggestion and there was a discussion of the size and acceptable materials of the molding. It was agreed that a composite type material might be appropriate in this location. The HARB also agreed that the size and scale of the applied

molding could be reviewed by staff or historic consultant. The time frame for completing the work was discussed and the HARB ultimately agreed that May 30th would be acceptable.

Motion: The HARB upon motion by Mr. Huber and seconded by Ms. Olson adopted the proposal that City Council issue a Certificate of Appropriateness for the proposed work described herein:

1. The proposal to continue alteration of cornice at 339 N 8th Street was represented by Tom Gilman.
2. The existing modification of the flat cornice will be modified by adding an appropriately scaled crown molding (about 4") at the top of the flat fascia.
3. Rot resistant species of wood or composite molding may be utilized.
4. The chosen molding must be reviewed by City staff or Historic Consultant for appropriate scale and detail.
5. The new molding must be installed by 30th May 2020.

The proposal to recommend a COA was unanimously approved. (7-0; motion carried; Brobst, Fillman, Huber, Jackson, Olson, Roberts, Sell)