



CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS STAFF REPORT

TO: HALRB

FROM: Rebecca Ballo, Historic Preservation Planner
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DATE: April 11, 2012

SUBJECT: 5711 4th Street South, Case 12-01(B), Carlin Community Hall Historic District

Background

This proposal is a request to remove and replace all the non-historic vertical and horizontal siding and adjacent trim, and perform other alterations and work necessary for structural rehabilitation of the Carlin Community Hall building. Carlin Hall was constructed in 1892 by the Carlin Springs Cooperative Association and is Arlington County's first such community building. It is a wood-frame, 1½-story, Victorian style building, with four gables and a central cupola. It has double-door entries on each side of a five-window bay facing the street. Arlington County acquired ownership of the property in 1961. The building became a local historic district in October 1978 and was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in August 1993. Arlington's Department of Environmental Services is the applicant representing the County. The proposed work is expected to commence in early June 2012 to coincide with the end of the County school calendar; all work must be completed over the summer months before school resumes in September.

When this proposal was first heard at the March 21st HALRB hearing, the Board approved the replacement of the windows and doors, but had questions about replacing the vertical and horizontal siding. The HALRB members questioned how staff would ascertain which pieces of siding were original vs. replacement, how such decisions would be made on site, and what the final disposition of the siding would be. A site visit on February 28th and subsequent on-site investigations uncovered potentially significant structural issues with the roof and sill. Staff stated at the HALRB meeting that further investigations would be necessary to determine if additional work would need to be done as part of the siding removal and restoration.

Discussion

Since the March meeting, DES staff discovered records from the Department of Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources files that detailed previous work that had been done on the siding in 1988. This information was not kept in the Historic Preservation Program's property files or in the DES property files. The architect's notes and records from 1988 indicated that all the siding was removed and assessed as part of a similar project. All the lead paint was removed and a few pieces of original wood siding were cleaned, repainted, and reinstalled on the building. New wood siding was milled (though the profile does not match exactly; see attached photo in submission packet), and the new siding was backprimed. However, the original siding was not backprimed. Given this new information, staff is supportive of the applicant's current request to remove the siding, replace all of the 1980s-era siding, repair the historic siding and trim as needed, and reinstall the new and repaired old siding as part of the project.

During the week of April 2nd, the project contractors and engineers removed portions of the horizontal and vertical siding to assess the building's condition from plate-to-plate. There were concerns about the structural integrity of the corner posts and the potential for wood rot and water damage to the sills. Members of the DRC and HALRB visited the site with staff and the project contractors on April 4th. Many areas of rot were observed. Portions of the corner posts and sill plates are missing. Some remediation efforts made as part of the 1988 repairs have kept the balloon frame intact; however, the current structural condition of the building, including work in the roof, and on the corner posts and sill plate, must be addressed immediately.

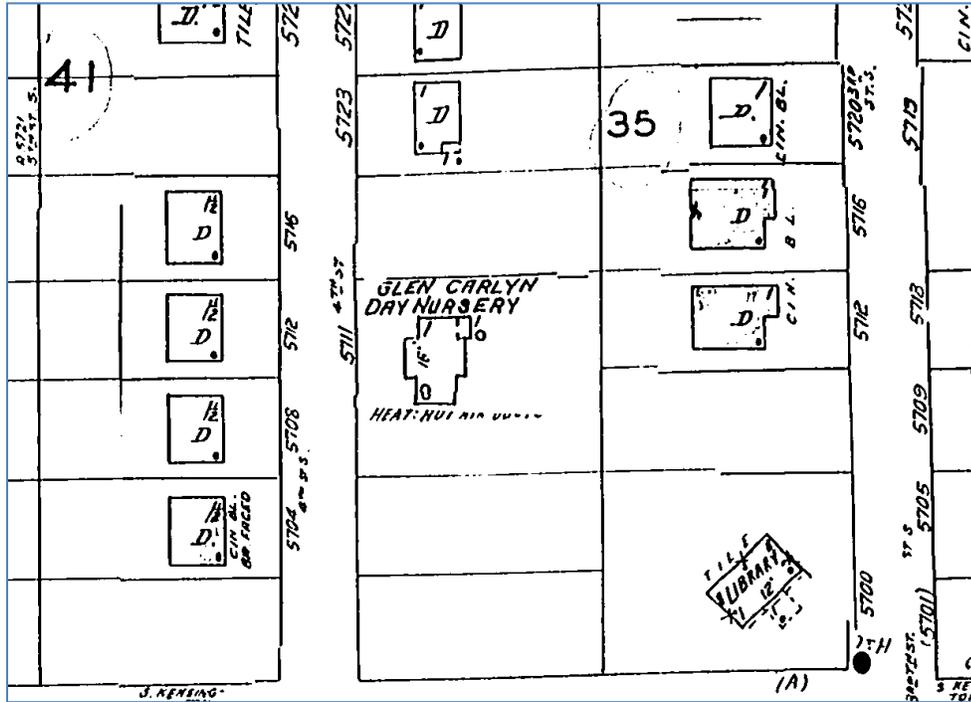
To that end, DES staff is proposing to remove the porches as part of the demolition phase in order to access and repair the wood framing of the building. However, it must be understood that the applicants are *not* seeking approval at this time for the actual design or reconstruction of the front porch; rather, they need general guidance from the HALRB as to what is the most appropriate approach. The HALRB needs to consider the rebuilding of each of the porches in terms of their historical significance and function as part of the programmatic needs of the community building. The period of significance for this building dates from its construction in 1892; however, Carlin Hall is not a museum piece. It functions as it was originally intended: as a venue for community events and as a small schoolhouse. Each existing porch should be evaluated separately with these points in mind.

1) Front (Southwest) Porch: The front porch, with its decorative woodwork, is a now-familiar feature of the building. Building permits and historic maps show that it was constructed after 1961, possibly when the County first acquired the building. The 1959 Sanborn Fire Insurance map and the 1961 Franklin Atlas of Arlington County do not show this porch (see the next page for images of the maps). Though useful, the porch has some anachronistic features including applied stone on the front steps and posts that obscure direct passage to and from the front door. Reverting to the original condition of the building, with no porch, is not desirable as there is no protection from the elements, nor is it warranted. A covered front porch is an amenity for this community building and staff agrees that it should be retained in some form.

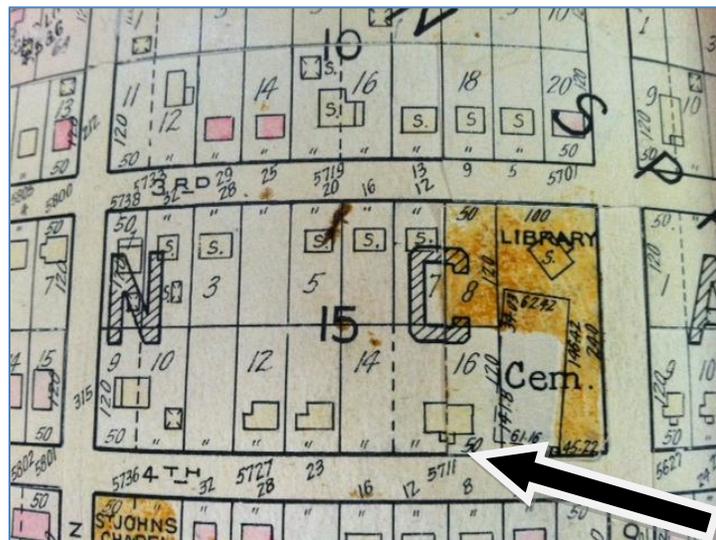
Suggested options for the front porch design are as follows:

- 1) Reconstruct the existing front porch as is with no design or material changes.
- 2) Construct a new porch that retains the decorative woodwork, but with more appropriate steps, landing, posts, and rails.
- 3) Construct a new, compatible, redesigned front porch without the decorative woodwork and stone appliqué, but with more historically appropriate chamfered wood columns and plain steps in more functional locations.
- 4) Construct only new front steps but without a porch.

The HALRB needs to discuss the above options for the front porch and agree on which option the applicants should pursue for the May or June HALRB meeting cycle. Staff recommends that the front porch be rebuilt, as it is useful for the building and provides some protection from the elements. While the decorative woodwork is familiar and compatible with the building, it is not historic. Staff prefers option #3 as stated above.



1959 Sanborn Map



1962 Franklin Map

2) East Porches: These concrete porches, steps, and handrails also likely date from the early-1960s. They are not historic, and staff has no objections to their removal. The grouping of windows on the northeast corner was once a door and was used to access the rear of the property. The Historic Preservation staff recommends that the County examine turning these windows back into door openings and designing a new rear porch with steps to accommodate this change. Staff understands that this change would need to be considered as part of the future analysis of the building's interior programmatic needs and overall project costs. However, given that new windows and doors have already been approved by the HALRB and will be installed as part of the current project, along with the work on the front porch, this seems an opportune time to consider if a new rear porch is a viable or desired option.

The final issue that the HALRB needs to address is whether to allow the application of an opaque white 'stain' to the new wood and historic wood versus regular paint. This item generated much discussion at the DRC, and the DRC members were very divided on the proposal. Some did not have an issue with the proposed 'stain' as the product has been used since the 1930s, and produces a durable finish that is nearly indistinguishable from paint. Other DRC members felt that paint was what was historically on the building, and therefore it should be repainted again. Some DRC members also were concerned that despite the best efforts of staff and/or contractors in the future, the stain could be painted over with a latex paint thereby causing maintenance issues for the siding. However, the applicants stated that given their detailed project and maintenance records, they are confident that such a mishap would be highly unlikely. The applicants also have used this product on other County facilities in recent years and have been pleased with its durability.

Recommendations

In conclusion, the DRC recommended approval of the application, but asked for an example of a building in Arlington where the Sykkens 'stain' has been used. The DRC asked that this case be placed on the discussion agenda for the April 18, 2012 meeting.

Staff recommends approval of the application, including the use of the Sykkens 'stain' and the proposed removal of the porches. Staff finds that the proposed work on the siding, trim, and porches is appropriate and that it meets the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation #2:

2. The historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The removal of distinctive materials or alteration of features, spaces, and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.

The HALRB is being asked to vote on:

- 1) The removal and replacement of all the non-historic vertical and horizontal siding and adjacent trim;
- 2) The removal of all the porches in order to access and repair the wood structural framing of the building; and
- 3) Which option the applicants should pursue for the design and rebuilding of the front porch.



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Lastly, although the HALRB does not regulate paint color, the proposed scope of work has presented an unusual opportunity to learn more about the evolution of this historic building. In preparation for the April 4th site visit to examine the condition of the existing siding, several original brackets in the cornice on the rear elevation were removed. Upon examination by staff, there are slight remnants of old paint colors visible. Historic photographs indicate that the siding and decorative trim elements had been painted in contrasting colors rather than the all white treatment that exists currently. Given this documentation, staff agrees it would be historically appropriate to both the architectural style and physical history of this building to have the decorative trim pieces be painted or ‘stained’ a contrasting color. Staff recommends that the applicant consider painting such trim pieces a contrasting color based on the paint evidence found in the original brackets (appears to be a dark brown or green).