

Introduction

This application comes in response to an individual's complaint about repair work done in May 2020 and a change to fence facing. Based on neighborhood practice, which has been extremely informal about HRC review, I understood that HRC approval was only needed for substantive original material substitutions or structural changes. If I am in the wrong, please accept this application as corrective.

In the instant case, work substantively completed includes ordinary repair of rotten or missing wood, making no changes to the footprint or elevation, and consistent with the era while meeting current building requirements (eg, railing height). Below describes the work completed, with a request for retroactive approval for changes in color (stain) and added railing design, with forbearance for any procedural error.

More, I take this opportunity to have anticipated future work reviewed. I have included information on further steps planned, though not likely to be executed until much later this year or perhaps 2021.

Property Background

1225/1227 Hubbard Street is a classic wood-frame American Four Square, two-family structure common for its location, probably built in 1910. However, the home was a clear upgrade, featuring architectural hallmarks in its bridge era by incorporating design elements from both Queen Anne and Art & Crafts styles. All of my proposals take into context both the baseline structure and its modest embellishments.

Consistent with its primary Prairie Box style, the original exterior is lapboard with a masonry foundation. It has a pyramid hip roof with dormer windows on 3 sides, common to both Prairie and Craftsman homes.

The Craftsman aesthetic is carried into the porch, which is a large, deep, wood-frame porch running the entire front, with prominent posts and a second level which services the upper unit. (The Craftsman influence is clearer inside, with original woodwork and built-in storage.)

Victorian echoes are evidenced by asymmetry in the stacked bay windows and decorative cornice-line brackets on the front, which are more embellished than typical Craftsman brackets.

Work Description

Porch

Summary

- Ordinary wood repairs or wood replacement (as needed) to existing wood porch.
 - > **No** material or form (footprint and elevation) changes.
- Dark reddish brown stain (B:18) for background/major trim; cedar tint stain (E:2) for minor trim accent.
- Railing design additions for coherence among structure's mixed style.
- Trim lower half of square support posts.

The front porch required emergency repair intervention during the COVID-19 shut down. Property maintenance was deferred during protracted adjudication over title. Now resolved, attention is being focused on ensuring the integrity of the home. The porch had sustained considerable water and insect damage, leading to rotted decking and wood; insecure railings with most fallen off the upper deck; and a footer shift, which caused the northeast corner to sag. (See photos)

The ordinary repairs to the woodwork make no changes to the footprint and profile of the porch. It spans the front, with four posts and an 8' stairway leading to the entry doors. The second story remains as-is in form, with secure posts and railings. All materials used remain natural wood and are being fully stained as curing allows.

Approval for palette and minor design changes in the railings is sought. The porch parts were a hodgepodge of non-original paint where it remained, including white, grey-blue and black, and raw, weather-beaten wood. The scheme did not adhere to any guideline per se, and residual trim layers show the technicolor history of the structure. The use of a semi-transparent stain is in higher conformity with the period and Craftsman style of the porch: I have used a dark reddish brown (B:18) for the major trim, with a secondary cedar tint (E:2). These two tints are in the same color spectrum and are consistent with era-contemporary color wheels, although of course the wood varies in how it takes up the stain.

Two era-accurate design changes were made or planned. Because this house was built in the Transitional Period and already integrates several styles, I have added Prairie chevrons and Mission hatches to the square spindles on the upper railing. (See photos) These elements were added to bring greater *coherence* to the architectural "mash-up" of the house. The exterior door and entry arbor are Craftsman Mission style, as are the porch lighting fixtures. While these are wholly compatible with the historic appearance, the scale, wood type and production make it evident that these are not original and therefore avoid any replica error, per historic district standards.

Additionally, it was planned to trim the square post, consistent with the porch's Craftsman aesthetic and most posts in the neighborhood. Because the majority of posts in the area are masonry, they are square, but even the few wood posts tend to be square. Previously, there were neo-classical, round, ribbed, Doric-style columns. They could not be salvaged for structural re-use. While "Free Classic" round columns were sometimes used in the home's era, these were unlikely original; they were not properly sized for the beam and were jarringly out of sync in ornateness, compared to the structure's overall Prairie essentialism.

Fence

Summary

- Material changed: stained wood pickets replaced pre-existing chain link.
 - > Existing posts and frame used, retaining existing height to match the line of fencing on the block and provide necessary security for the area.
- Added wood arbor at entrance.
- Changed metal (chain link) gate to metal (wrought iron) decorative gate.

From my reading of the HRC's guidelines, I believed the fence was a non-issue since it was existing and the material was period consistent; but I did change the facing material, which may trigger a review. The pre-existing fence was chain link. (See photos) Although chain link is pervasive in the area, I would advocate that it is not aesthetically appealing nor has 1910 historical value. We used wood with the existing post-frame. The wood was then stained. All steps taken were in conformity with the fence guidelines, *given the existing frame* (ie, height was unchanged). (See photos)

The neighborhood has many types of front and street-facing fencing in the area, ranging from no fencing to covered chain link. Fences range from 4'-8' in height. Stockade privacy fences are common for yards which abut alleys and sometimes are also seen street-facing. Shadow-box or creative street-front wood fences are present, as are vinyl pickets and wrapped chain link, which sometimes completely obscure the house frontage. There is no defining or overall fencing characteristic in Hubbard Farms. (See photos)

This particular property has a set-back deep enough (approximately 40') that it is not obscured by the pre-existing fence height, and the use of wood versus chain link is more wholesome for the historic character. This house is in a line of fenced properties, and eliminating a fence altogether or significantly reducing its in-line height would be visually jarring and subject the property to considerable opportunistic trespassing, debris and security concerns. (See photos)

There is an arbor and gate at the entry. The Empire gate is admittedly not wholly era-consistent, but given that many people of every era use gates for decorative purposes, it is not a startling anachronism nor attempt at reproduction. The arbor came pre-stained in a redwood tint and I am happy to stain or paint this differently if the stain stands out inappropriately. The neighboring house has a new white plastic arbor attached to a chain link fence, so our bona fide wood, Mission arbor seemed reasonable as-is.

Additional Notes, Future Work

Considerable care is being taken and planned to *improve* the historic integrity of this structure for owner occupancy. The condition of the house had become quite degraded over time and was vacant for several years before we purchased it; there is little evidence that any consideration had been previously given to its historical character. Included in our future plans are the following steps.

Siding. The exterior cladding currently has two vinyl siding "patches" that will be removed, and the wood cladding or trim repaired as needed. No changes in original form or material are planned.

Summary

- Repair wood lapboard and trim.
 - > **No** design changes.

Upper Flat Door. Consistent with two-family flats in the area, an external door from the upper flat to the upper porch is part of the original structure. At some point – seemingly no earlier than 2009, and perhaps as late as 2014 – this doorway was simply covered with plywood and then the vinyl, but the interior frame with trim and exterior threshold remain visible. Once the vinyl is removed, the exterior door will be replaced.

Summary

- Replace missing exterior door for upper flat.
 - > **No** design changes.

Rear Fence. The fence along the back alley was a 7' raw wood stockade fence. It was in very poor condition, with insufficient support in its post spacing and condition; the large swinging gate panel kept bending the hinges and some panels were falling down. It was undoubtedly not original, since it was not even stained to weather-protect the wood and would not have been sufficiently durable.

This is planned to be replaced with a structurally sound shadow-box wood fence (4') on a gabion base (2'), using 4"x4" wood posts. The total height would stand 6', 30' in length, with 2 entrance gates. Again, the wood will be stained in our palette. The gabion base will allow proper water flow on the property, which slopes toward the alley and main sewer drain. This is only a re-set of the pre-existing fence, using comparable materials, and therefore is not a substantive change. Fences along the alley in Hubbard Farms run the gamut, often using 6'-8' wood stockade fences for fortressing. The immediate neighbor to the south has a solid metal wall. Since we are working toward a very nice fruit and herb garden in our rear yard, we would prefer a less imposing property line marker than is typical.

Summary

- Replace unstable, poor condition wood stockade fence abutting alley with stained wood pickets on a gabion base.

Completion of Side Fencing. Currently, the property has fencing on the north and south property lines, abutting neighboring properties. In the front, both sides are chain-link. In the rear, the north side is chain-link and the south side is a 6' or taller stockade wood fence, believed to have been erected by the adjacent property. Sections are missing, and we would like to complete it for continuity, reduced liability, safety and sanitation. I am willing to install chain-link to match the majority of existing material, or to use wood pickets and posts as an era-appropriate material, which I would prefer. The fence is not likely to be visible from either the front street or the back alley.

Summary

- Complete side fencing.

> Use material as directed: chain-link to match existing or substitute wood for era appropriateness.

Paint and Trim. We had planned to repaint the house within the next year. The structure is currently white with black window trim. This paint is clearly not original, obvious due to age and layers revealed with wear and scraping. (See photos) The paint is in horrible condition, with large chunks revealing bare wood underneath, and the current color is not period-consistent. The owner preference is to use a period-appropriate blue hue or sage (still deciding – see our swatch photo) consistent with historic paint color wheels. These colors/shades are found on multiple 1910s swatch boards, such as Aladdin, Montgomery Wards, and Seroco, and now found in the Sherwin-Williams' Preservation Palette. Within the Detroit guide, they are marked B:12 or E:4.

In conformity with the style guide and guidance, all major wood trim is expected to be a dark reddish brown semi-transparent stain with a cedar tint stain as an accent for minor trim where applicable. These correspond to B:18 and E:2. In cases when staining is not possible, a matching paint will be used. The transitional style of the house is not fully conforming with the simple/singular Prairie type and there are decorative wood elements with relief details. Both complementary wood tones would have been widely seen and used in the period and are wholly consistent with the autumnal spectrum in the Art & Crafts style. Sashes will be in the trim color and there are no shutters. The gutters, too, will be dark brown to camouflage against the trim; the initial gutter mounted on the underside of the porch roof is dark brown.

Summary

- Body of house to be a sage or blue hue, in conformity with 1910 paint wheels (B:12 or E:4).
- Major trim to be dark reddish brown stain or paint (where staining is not possible) (B:18).
- Cedar tint stain for minor trim (E:2).

Roofing. We expect to replace the asphalt shingle roof within a year. The current roof is not original, but low-end, 3-tab asphalt shingles. Architectural asphalt shingles were planned in a color consistent with the trim of the house. Depending on brand options, the color would be something similar to Owens Corning Sedona Canyon, Brownwood, Aged Cedar or Timber – a variegated brown that will unify the two stains and conform with the overall palette. The option will be in this band of color, but will depend on manufacturer, performance, and a physical swatch for a visual test. Please advise if I must have the specific choice approved once made, or if the spectrum described is sufficient.

Summary

- Architectural asphalt roofing consistent with trim colors.
- Dark brown gutters, for camouflage against fascia boards.

Conclusion and Background

No structural nor material changes are at issue for any element except the fence. The fence material has been changed from chain link to conforming natural wood, using the existing posts and frame. We request that you let it stand since it is not incompatible with the wide variation of fencing found in the district. We also request that the height remain as-is, since it is in the middle of a long line of fences at that same height and the area does have security, litter and encroachment concerns which necessitate the current height.

Color changes are requested, which will improve the home's historic character. All stains and paints cited comply with guidelines and a palette appropriate to both era and style.

Retroactive approval of minor railing design embellishments is requested to increase coherence among the architectural features of multiple styles in this Transitional Period structure.

Our sincere efforts are bringing the house more in alignment with its origin era than it has been for some decades. One of the owners has been involved with historic preservation and neighborhood boards in multiple states, including preparing structure inventories for designation applications. From 1800s adobe to mid-century residences, she has been an active advocate in maintaining historic inventory while navigating the value and necessity of current code and materials, especially on the sustainability and energy edge.

For all items which needed prior review, please accept this corrective application in good faith.

Thank you for your consideration.