

STAFF REPORT: 11/13/2024 MEETING (REVISED 11/12/20224) PREPARED BY: J. ROSS
ADDRESS: 1118 SEYBURN
APPLICATION NO: HDC2024-00593
HISTORIC DISTRICT: WEST VILLAGE
APPLICANT/OWNER: JULIE PINCUS
DATE OF STAFF SITE VISIT: 10/16/2024
DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION:10/15/2024

SCOPE: INSTALL WOOD SIDING AT REAR ELEVATION AND REBUILD FRONT PORCH

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The building at 1118 Seyburn is a 2½-story, single-family Colonial Revival dwelling that was erected in 1913 and occupies a prominent corner lot at Agnes Street. A brown brick veneer is found at the building’s front and side walls. Much of the original brick has been removed/fallen off the rear wall and a large opening at the wall has been enclosed with plywood. The house features a side gabled roof with Classical eave returns which is framed by chimneys, each flanked by fan windows, with the north-facing chimney particularly prominent. Three front-gabled dormers with wood shingle-clad front and sidewalls top the roof at the front elevation, with a fourth at the rear elevation. Windows include paired 6/1 wood sash units, 6-light wooden casements, and arch top multi-light windows at the dormers. The entry door is flanked by windows and the porch features columns and an arched pediment. Many historic details are extant, though in considerably deteriorated condition.



Current condition, staff photo taken on 10/16/2024

PROPOSAL

With the current submission, the applicant is seeking the Commission’s approval to install lapped wood siding at the rear wall per the below elevation drawings:



Above elevation drawings, submitted by applicant showing proposed condition/proposed new lapped wood siding at rear wall (outlined in yellow)



Current condition at rear wall, staff photo taken on 10/16/2024. Area outlined in red indicates proposed location for lapped wood siding.

The application also includes the rebuilding of the front porch to include the repair and reinstallation of the original wood columns and the addition of a curved masonry deck.

STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH

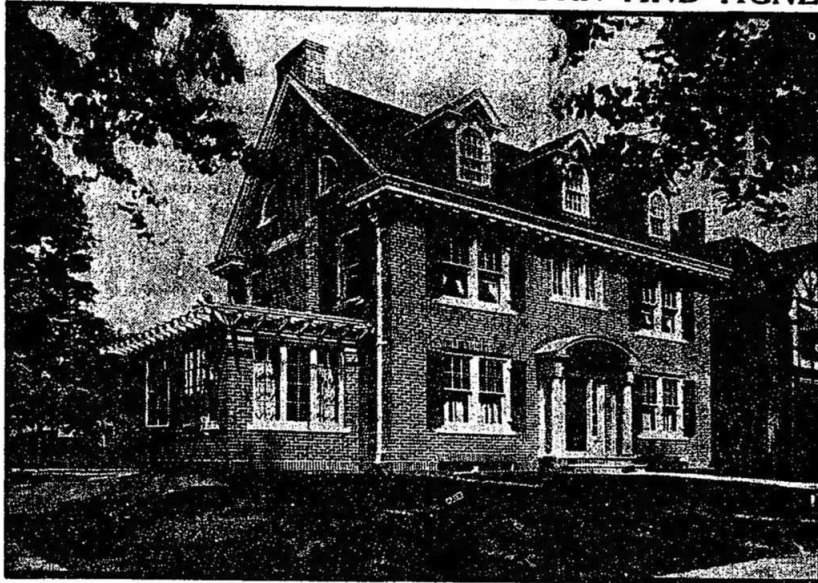
- The West Village Historic District was designated in 1983. Please see the below designation photo of the building, taken in 1983



Designation slide, photo taken by HDAB in 1983

- See the below historic photos and Sanborn Maps which indicate the building's original/historic appearance and plan/footprint:

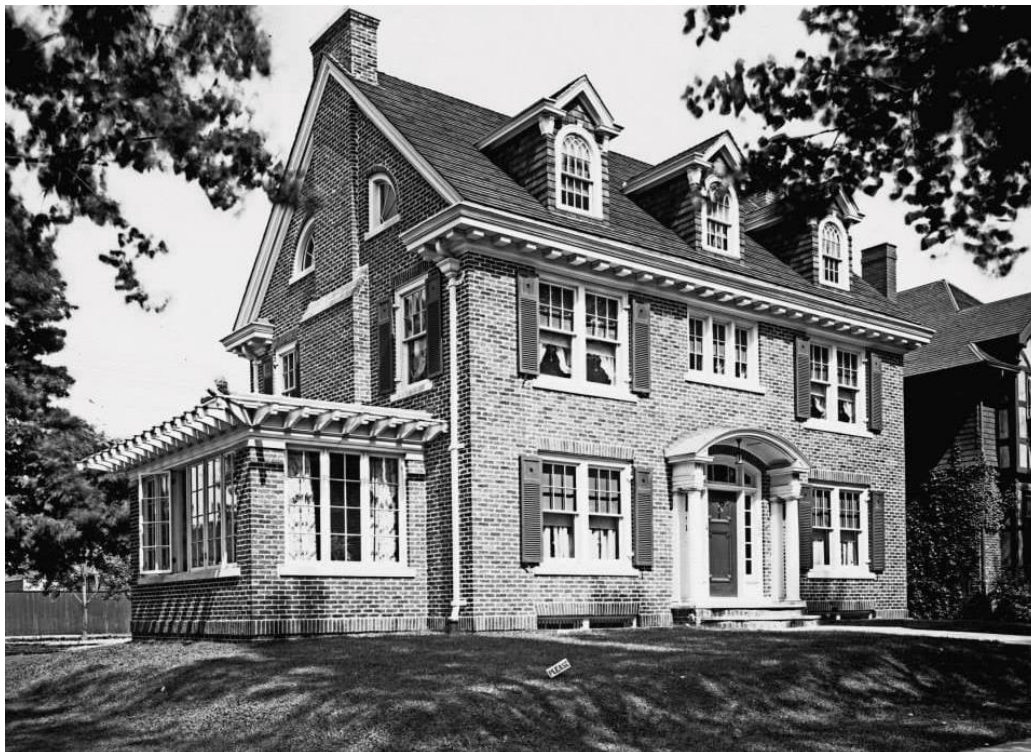
**ATTRACTIVE COLONIAL RESIDENCE
IS ERECTED ON SEYBURN AND AGNES**



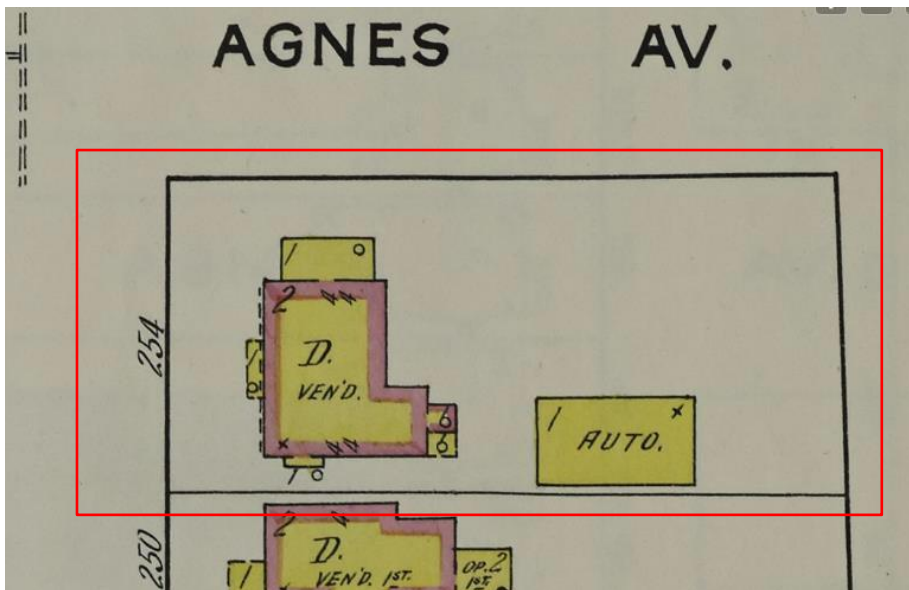
HOME FOR NORMAN H. F. M'LEOD.

Distinctively colonial design, a handsome residence is being completed for Norman H. F. McLeod on the southeast corner of Seyburn and Agnes avenues in the Indian Village district. Alvin E. Harley is the architect. Exterior of the house is of rough finish tapestry brick laid in wide bonds, with trimmings of cut stone. The roof, of shingle stained brown, and green window shutters adds variety to the color scheme. The house has central entrance hall with dining room at the right and large living room at the left in front, the latter opening into sun parlor. The living room and dining room are finished in fumed oak and the former contains a wide brick open fireplace, built up to the ceiling. On the second floor are four bedrooms, finished in white enamel. Two more bedrooms and a bath room for the maids are on the third floor. A feature of the owner's bedroom is the number of windows which give it the semblance of a sleeping porch. A pergola effect in the cornice of the sun parlor, lends to the airy aspect of the design. The house is heated by steam and is thoroughly modern throughout.

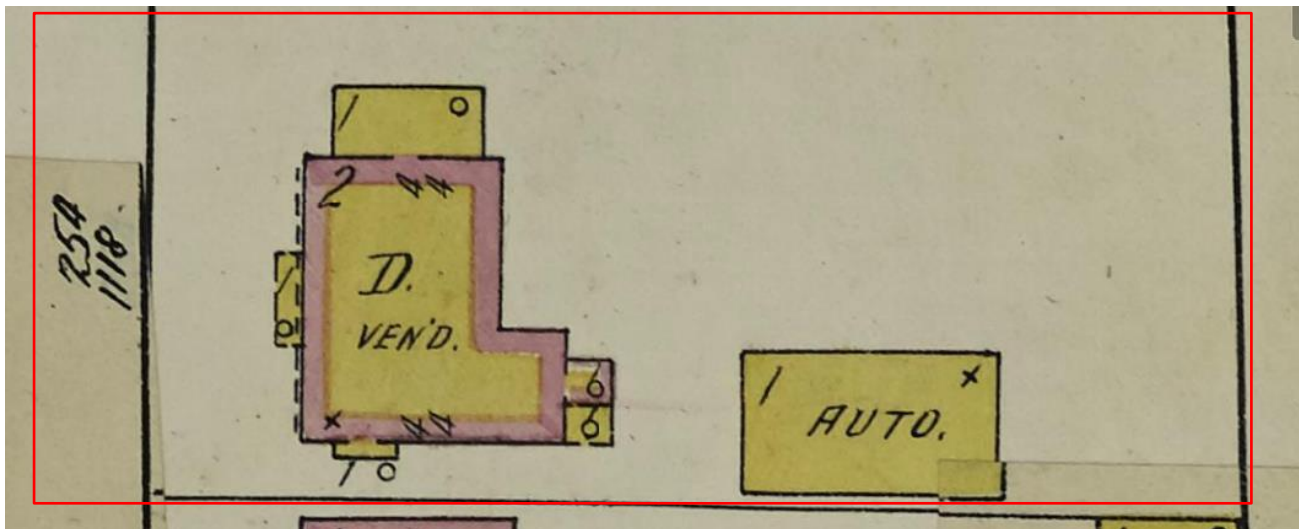
Appearance in 1914, Detroit Free Press



Appearance ca. 1914, Burton Collection



Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1915. Note that the property's address was 254 Seyburn in 1915. Also a masonry/brick veneer was found at all four sides of the house's main body.



Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1951.

- Records maintained by the Detroit HDC indicate that the property has sat in a state of advanced deterioration for years which resulted in the Commission undertaking the following actions in an effort to address the conditions:
 - In 2001, the Commission placed the building on its Demolition by Neglect list
 - At their 3/13/2002 regular meeting, the Commission passed a motion to request that the building department ticket the property “for exterior violations of the building code.”
 - In a letter dated 11/10/2004, HDC staff notified the Detroit Law Department that the Commission wished “...to pursue court action to make repairs...” to the dwelling. The letter further stated that an architect would be hired to review the property and provide repair estimates and concluded by noting that it was the Commission’s “...hope that we can get a judgement by February and start work immediately in order to expend the money by 6/30/2005.”
 - In a letter dated 2/6/2006, HDC staff notified the Detroit Law Department for a second time that the Commission wished “...to pursue court action to make repairs...” to the dwelling. The letter further noted that “...we need to expend the money by 6/30/2006.” The letter also included a condition assessment which was prepared by an architect that noted that \$48,400 in

repairs were needed to rehabilitate the property. The building department also placed the property on the Dangerous Building's list in 2006.

- ~~Sometime after 2006, the Detroit Land Bank Authority acquired ownership of the property.~~ The current applicant purchased the property ~~from the Detroit Land Bank Authority~~ in 2018. At that time a two-story rear addition had collapsed as a result of a previous owner's neglect, leaving the interior of the home open to the elements at this location. The below photo shows conditions at the property in 2019, after the rear, two-story addition had collapsed and exposed the interior plaster walls. Upon purchasing the property, the new owner undertook an effort to address the then deteriorated conditions at the house so that she might remove the property from the building department's dangerous building's list. Specific work items undertaken by the applicant in 2018-2019 include the following:
 - Add tarp to roof where required (11/15/18)
 - Remove debris and level yard (11/30/18)
 - Repair brick foundation below grade with new masonry (11/30/18)
 - Using new brick to match existing brick at an area 3 courses in height above grade (11/30/18)
 - Repair and reinstallation of the 4 existing arched wood windows at dormers (12/4/18)
 - Repair and reinstallation of the existing 4 wood fanlight windows at gable ends (12/4/18)
 - Complete tear-off of existing asphalt singles to be replaced with new asphalt shingles (4/23/19)
 - Redo flat roofs with membrane roofing and reflash chimneys, dormers, etc. (4/23/19)
 - Repair and replace rotten wood soffits and hidden gutters with same wood profile and architectural details, including dentils on underside of soffit (4/23/19)
 - Remove and replace rotten shake dormer siding with exact same pattern: stained medium gray cedar shake shingles. All trim to be repaired or replaced with exact replica wood. (4/23/19)
 - Flat roof to be replaced with membrane. Add skylight to rear roof. (4/23/19)
 - Tuckpoint areas of deteriorated mortar with new mortar where needed, same strength, color, finish as existing/to match existing (5/16/19)
- In June 2019, the Commission issued a COA to the current owner to undertake an extensive rehabilitation of the house, to include a rebuild/redesign of the rear (east) elevation of the house, to include:
 - Rebricking to match existing brick
 - Addition of stucco
 - Addition of new windows
 - Remove doors and replace with windows
 - Addition of a raised masonry patio

See the below photos of conditions in 2019 and the elevation drawing which depicts the treatment which the Commission approved for the rear wall.



Conditions in 2019. Photo taken by HDC staff. Note the presence of plaster at a small area of the rear wall (outlined in blue)



EXISTING CONDITIONS

- 1. Asphalt Shingle Roof is completely ruined and needs a complete tear off;
- 2. Dormer window, Dormer trim and Cedar Shake Siding are in terrible condition;
- 3. Shake Siding is rotten;
- 4. ALL Existing Double Hung Windows with the exception of third floor (Palladian (example #2), 1/4 circle and leaded glass window units) are to be replaced with new as they are beyond repair. The mentioned windows will be renovated by Amy at building hugger (Have COA already);
- 5. Soffits and decorative squares are rotten (Have COA already);
- 6. The sunporch soffits and roof is failing. (It no longer has the pergola-type adornment seen in the original photo).
- 7. Generally Tuck pointing is a must (Have COA already);
- 8. Roof is ruined and needs to be rebuilt. Note: on plans we would like to get rid of extension and door leading into kitchen.
- 9. Remove, relocate and replace window
- 10: Window needs complete renovation
- 11. Remove door
- 12. Remove door



EAST ELEVATION

PROPOSED ACTIONS

- 1. Roof to be completely replaced and installation of a skylight (COA already obtained for both);
- 2. Dormer window to be restored and reinstalled (COA obtained); Dormer trim to be replicated exactly and repaired or replaced if it is too rotten;
- 3. Shake siding to be replaced with same material in same pattern;
- 4. ALL Existing Windows unless indicated are to be replaced with same size and design insulated glass wood window (order specs prepared for review) with exterior metal cladding; wood trim to be replaced with exact replica wood trim (tool already made and sample included in presentation);
- 5. Soffits and decorative squares will be replaced with exact replica wood trim and elements
- 6. The sunporch soffits and roof is failing. The pergola-type adornment seen in the original photo on cover is to be replicated in the design shown in same amount seen on photo. Size and design is our best approximation of what existed based on photo.
- 7. Tuck pointing to be matching existing color and strength of mortar
- 8. We would like to get rid of roof extension and the door leading into kitchen as well as "lean to" wood porch floor. The removal aids in our kitchen design, and the door to the kitchen has been relocated.
- 9. Remove and replace window with a new window in a better location for the layout. This out building is in sad shape, so will need much brick work anyway
- 10: This will be completely restored as it's rotten
- 11. Remove door and replace with windows as per elevation
- 12. Remove door that leads to backyard as the door to the kitchen has been relocated as per plans
- 13. Stucco (top is existing). We propose that it continue to porch for design continuity.

Existing and proposed/approved condition in 2019. Note that the 2019 HDC approval (on the right) allowed for the addition of stucco to a portion of the rear wall (outlined in purple)

- As noted above, the applicant is seeking to revise the scope proposed for the building’s rear wall cladding which the Commission approved in 2019. Specifically, with the current proposal the applicant is seeking to install lapped wood siding at the rear wall instead of the previously approved brick and stucco. She has indicated that she wishes to revise this portion of the approved application due to cost.
- Staff supports the applicant’s efforts to continue her rehabilitation of this long-neglected significant property. However, it is staff’s opinion that the proposed wood siding is not appropriate for installation at the building’s rear elevation for the following reasons:
 - Per the above Sanborn Maps and the 1915 Detroit Free Press article, the building originally had brick at all four walls as it is *typical* that a house of this vintage would display a single cladding material at its main body, while a secondary material might be located at a subordinate side or rear wing, addition, gable end, chimney, or projecting bay. As such, brick of the same appearance as the existing brick at the front and side walls would be the *most appropriate* material for installation at the building’s rear wall.
 - Regarding wood siding which appears in combination with masonry siding within the district, staff notes the following observations:
 - Wood siding in combination with masonry siding is commonly found throughout the district. However, in these circumstances, staff observed that it is typical to find masonry at the first story and wood siding (either shake/shingles or lapped/clapboard) at the second story **at all four sides of the main body of the homes**. Note that the district’s Element of Design #7, entitled *Relationship of materials*, states as such as its notes that “masonry is used on the first story only on some houses and wood shingles exist on some second stories.”
 - Staff did not observe any examples of residential properties which originally displayed masonry cladding at the front and side walls and wood siding (either lapped/clapboard or shake/shingle) at the rear wall of its main body.
- As noted above, brick was originally located at 1118 Seyburn’s rear wall. A review of the below Google Streetview images from 2011 and the below staff photo indicates that plaster was visible at the building’s rear wall in 2019 as the result of the collapse of a two-story addition which resulted in the exposure of interior walls. As the brick at the rear wall was removed due to deterioration, the Standards would require that the new cladding be brick to match the historic. However, staff does note that the Commission’s 2019 approval did allow for stucco and brick to be added to the rear wall due to its the poor condition at that time. Also, staff has observed at least one example of this treatment, ie. brick at the front and sides and stucco at the rear, at one house of the same vintage and style in the neighboring Indian Village neighborhood. Therefore, it is staff’s opinion that true stucco which would be an acceptable alternate to brick for the cladding of the rear wall.



Google Streetview image of the rear dating from 2011. Note that the area outlined in yellow shows the rear two-story addition which had collapsed by 2019. Specifically see where the south wall of the addition is located in relation to the door and canopy at the rear.



Staff photo of the rear dating from 2019. Note that the two-story addition is no longer present/had collapsed ca. ca. 2018, leaving the plaster which covered former interior wall exposed (outlined in red).

ISSUES

- As noted above, it is staff's opinion that the lapped wood siding proposed for the building's rear elevation is not compatible with the building's historic character as this treatment was not observed within the district specifically and is not typical of early 20th century, single-family dwellings. Therefore, the work does not conform to the district's Elements of Design or meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.

RECOMMENDATION

Recommendation - Section 21-2-78. Determination of the Historic District Commission – Certificate of Appropriateness

It is HDC staff's opinion that the proposed front porch repair and addition of new siding at the rear elevation generally conforms to the district's Elements of Design and meets the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. Staff therefore recommends that the Commission issue a COA for the project with the following condition:

- The new cladding material installed at the building's the rear wall may align with the treatment approved by the Commission at the June 2019 regular meeting. Alternatively, the applicant may install a true stucco finish at the rear wall which is painted a color that complements the dwelling's existing brick cladding.