

STAFF REPORT: SEPTEMBER 10, 2025 MEETING

APPLICATION NUMBER: HDC2025-00530

ADDRESS: 913 CHICAGO

HISTORIC DISTRICT: BOSTON-EDISON

APPLICANT/PROPERTY OWNER: LAUREN THIEL

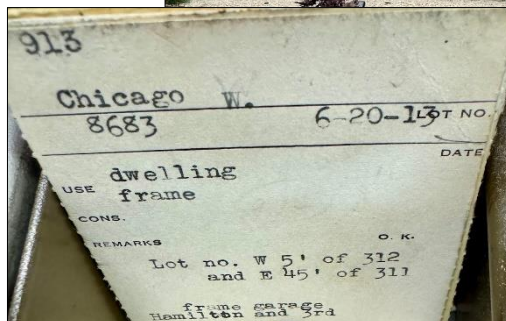
DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION: AUGUST 18, 2025

DATE OF STAFF SITE VISIT: AUGUST 26, 2025

SCOPE: REPLACE SLATE ROOF WITH DIMENSIONAL ASPHALT SHINGLES, REPLACE FRONT PORCH AND COLUMNS, INSTALL FENCE (WORK COMPLETED WITHOUT APPROVAL)

EXISTING CONDITIONS

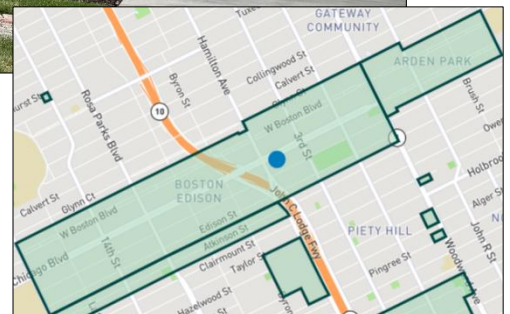
Erected in 1913, the 2-1/2 story house at 913 Chicago is located on the south side of the street, just east of Hamilton Avenue. The side-gable roof is covered with asphalt shingles, the exterior walls and foundation are covered with roughly textured stucco, and the dormer walls retain slate tiles. The wood double-hung windows on the house have differing window patterns depending on the size of the window and location on the house. The symmetrical design of the façade is punctuated by a centrally placed raised front porch. The porch is accessed by concrete steps enclosed with low masonry wing walls. Fluted columns support the almost-flat porch roof. The garage is accessed from Chicago; the driveway is at the far right/west of the property. The garage has a matching side-gable roof that retains the historic slate shingles.



Above: Façade. HDC staff photo, August 26, 2025.

Right: Boston Edison Historic District map; 913 Chicago is identified by the blue dot.

Left: Permit card, BSEED.



PROPOSAL

- Remove slate roof and install dimensional asphalt shingle roof; Landmark, color: colonial slate.
- Rebuild front porch; install new columns.
- Install 6'-0" height, wood privacy fence in rear yard; gate at alley, color: natural stain.
- Remove shutters.

STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH

- The Boston Edison Historic District was enacted on April 2, 1974.



Designation photo, 1974. HDAB. This photo shows the intact slate roof, shutters at second floor, and front porch.

- The slate roof was a distinctive character-defining feature of the house. Standard 5 states: *Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property shall be preserved* and Standard 6 states: *Deteriorated historic 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.*
- The roof was replaced without Commission approval in 2022. Bruttell Roofing was the contractor for the project and applied for the Commission's review at its August 2022 meeting. The 2022 application materials and staff report are posted on the website, within the September 2025 property page for 913 Chicago. The Commission denied the work. Listed within the Notice of Denial (on the next page), is the following statement "The application may be resubmitted for the Historic District Commission's review when suggested changes have been made that address the reasons for denial, if applicable."
- In preparing this report staff listened to the audio of the meeting. The Commission said they had some questions about the level of deterioration of the slate roof; specifically, the Commission questioned the conflicting reports in which one stated the roof couldn't be repaired and second report referenced a repair scope of work. The company representative present at the meeting was from the permits department who stated the repair quote was for a portion of the roof but couldn't offer additional feedback. Due to the lack of clarity over the roof's condition, the Commission denied the application, requiring the applicant to come back with further clarifications and information.

8/16/22

NOTICE OF DENIAL

Matt Smith
Bruttell Roofing Co. Inc.
10821 Capital St.
Oak Park, MI 48237

RE: Application Number 22-7947; 913 Chicago; Boston-Edison Historic District

Dear Applicant,

At the Regular Meeting that was held on August 10, 2022, the Detroit Historic District Commission ("DHDC") reviewed the above-referenced application. Pursuant to Section 5(1) and 9(1) of the Michigan Local Historic District Act, as amended, being MCL 399.205 (1), MCL 399.209 (9) and Sections 21-2-78 and 21-2-80 of the 2019 Detroit City Code, the DHDC hereby issues a Denial for the following work, effective on August 16, 2022, as it will be inappropriate according to the Secretary of Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and the district's Elements of Design:

- *The replacement of slate roofing with asphalt roofing*

The reasons for the denial are a failure to meet the following specific Standards or Elements:

- 2) *The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.*
- 5) *Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a historic property shall be preserved.*
- 6) *Deteriorated historic 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. Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.*
- 9) *New additions, exterior alterations or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new work will be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.*

The application may be resubmitted for the Historic District Commission's review when suggested changes have been made that address the cited reasons for denial, if applicable.

Please be advised that, in accordance with MCL 399.211 and Section 21-2-81 of the 2019 Detroit City Code, an applicant aggrieved by a decision of the DHDC may file an appeal with the State Historic Preservation Review Board. Within sixty (60) days of your receipt of this notice, an appeal may be filed with:

Jon Stuckey, Michigan Department of Attorney General
2nd Floor, G. Mennen Williams Building
525 West Ottawa Street
P.O. Box 30754
Lansing, MI 48909
Phone: 517-335-0665
E-mail: stuckeyj@michigan.gov

If you have any questions regarding the foregoing, please contact staff at 313-224-1762 or hdc@detroitmi.gov.
For the Commission:



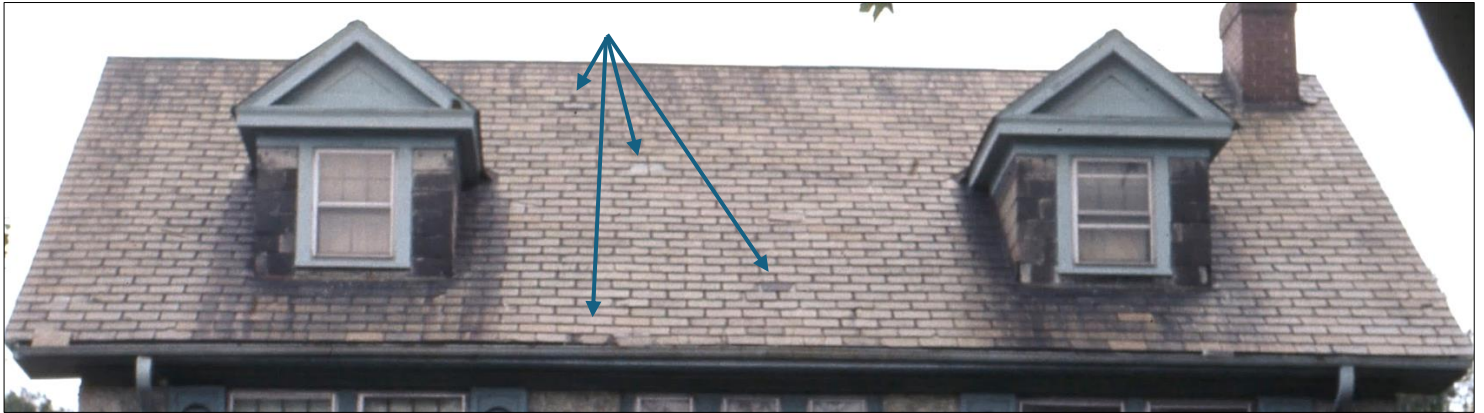
Daniel Rieden
Detroit Historic District Commission

HDC Notice of Denial, issued August 16, 2022.

- No interceding information was submitted by Bruttell or the owner. The request for approval of the asphalt shingle roof is again before the Commission; the applicant is now the property owner. Upon reviewing the initial 2025 application, staff recommended the applicant contact Bruttell and request additional information on their slate roof assessment completed in 2022. The correspondence, dated August 28, 2025, is posted under the Applicant Information section of the property page.
- The house was listed for sale in May; it remains on the market.

SLATE ROOF REPLACEMENT

- Concurrent to staff's request for additional information from Bruttell, staff conducted the following analysis:
 - Close-up of roof at time of designation (1974) shows at least one missing shingle, a broken shingle, as well as darker areas around other shingles, possibly denoting some type of repair/coverage of roof surface. This visible damage is minimal but as it was present in 1974, this offered opportunities for the exacerbation of deterioration over the following 40+ years.



1974, HDAB photo.

- By 1980, even with the high glare of this photo, an additional missing slate shingle is noticeable.



1980, HDAB photo.

- By 2018, a number of additional shingles are broken or missing. Many decades, dirt, mildew, grime (and possibly moss) collected on the surface of the slate tiles, further weathering the roof.



2018, Google street view.

- According to the National Park Service Preservation Brief #29, The Repair, Replacement, and Maintenance of Historic Slate Roofs:
 - *The durability of a slate roof depends primarily on four factors: the physical and mineralogical properties of the slate; the way in which it is fabricated; installation techniques employed; and regular and timely maintenance.*

- *Historically, three types of slate roofing-standard, textural, and graduated-were available according to the architectural effect desired. Standard grade slate roofs were most common. These are characterized by their uniform appearance, being composed of slates approximately 3/16" (0.5cm) thick, of consistent length and width, and having a smooth cleavage surface.*
- *The chemical and physical changes which accompany slate weathering cause an increase in absorption and a decrease in both strength and toughness. The tendency of old, weathered slates to absorb and hold moisture can lead to rot in underlying areas of wood sheathing.*
- *Time has shown that the Vermont and New York slates will last about 125 years; Buckingham Virginia slates 175 years or more; and Pennsylvania Soft-Vein slates in excess of 60 years.*
- Based on descriptions of slate listed on National Slate Association's website, it is likely the slate on this house is from Vermont, New York or Pennsylvania and can be one the following: Vermont -- Semi-weathering Gray-Green ("Sea Green"), Semi-weathering Gray, ("Vermont Gray"), or Pennsylvania -- Semi-weathering Black ("Pennsylvania Gray"). At the time of its removal, the slate on the house was 109 years old.
- Based on the photographic evidence of the house from 1974 - 2018, web research, and Bruttell's analysis, it is staff's opinion that the slate roof was close to the end of its life cycle.

COMPARISON OF SLATE AND ASPHALT SHINGLE ROOFS – MATERIAL, DIMENSIONALITY, PATTERN, COLOR

Historic Slate Roof

- The qualities of the slate roof created an overall flat surface (i.e. not thick slate tiles creating deep shadow lines, nor were slate tiles installed with graduated sizes) and a uniform gray color, culminating in a consistent rectilinear pattern.

Asphalt Shingles – Owens Corning, Duration

- Dimensional asphalt shingles offer only an illusion of depth, based on different patterns/perimeter shapes of the shingles and applied shading. The front view, due to irregular dimensional shapes of the shingles and sprayed on shadow lines, conveys a smaller scale mottled color and pattern, which is very different against the remaining slate tiles on the dormer walls.

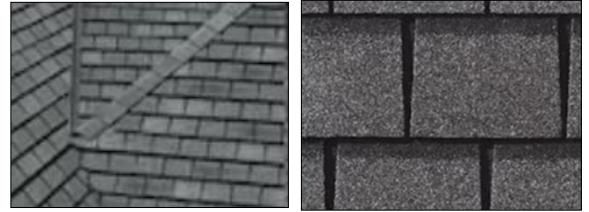


Staff photos, August 2025.



- Most asphalt shingle roofing companies offer designs similar to the installed CertainTeed shingles, which is to mimic a wood shake roof. When discussing appearance alone, three-tab shingles offer a better visual match to the former slate roof. However, some companies have developed dimensional asphalt roof products that better emulate slate tiles in pattern, and at times color (uniform or varying).

- GAF, Slateline - dimensional asphalt shingle. The almost square individual shingles have a straight bottom edge. This creates a uniformly strong horizontal pattern when looking from the side and front. The dark vertical shading at the sides of each square creates a secondary vertical pattern, similar to the slate tiles.



Photos from GAF's website.

- IKO – Crown Slate - dimensional asphalt shingle. The design includes square/vertically rectangular pieces, with varying colors in each color option. This might not be a compatible option for this particular house, due the wide variance of colors, which the former slate roof did not offer.



Photos from IKO's website.

COST

- As part of the 2022 application, Bruttell estimated the cost of a new slate roof (unfading gray/green or unfading gray) to be \$117,824. A DiVinci synthetic slate roof estimated cost was \$99,382. The asphalt shingle roof contract was for \$21,755. It is staff's opinion that the installation of a new slate or synthetic slate roof is economically unfeasible.

OVERALL COMMENTS –

- Asphalt shingles vary in dimensional qualities, design and color; no asphalt product can replicate the color, dimensionality, and surface qualities of slate, wood or tile (clay or concrete) roofs. However, asphalt shingles have become common replacement roofing material, having been available since the early 20th century.
- The Commission should determine, in the spirit of Standard 6, the features that are most important to match – *color, texture and other visual qualities and where possible, materials* – when considering a replacement product. Additional items to consider are the roof's massing and visibility (or lack thereof), as well as the economic feasibility of the proposed replacement products.
- The district's Elements of Design, #8 - Relationship of Textures states: *Tile, slate, or wood shingle roofs have particular textural values where they exist. Asphalt shingles generally have little textural interest, even in those types which purport to imitate some other variety.*

REBUILD OF FRONT PORCH & COLUMN REPLACEMENT

Historic Porch - 1974



- The designation photo shows:
 - brick wing walls extending from the porch;
 - concrete porch pad, stairs, and coping;
 - flat porch roof with over-hanging eaves
 - two wood fluted, tapered Doric columns.
- The top of the columns attached to the outer corner of the porch roof structure. The fascia board was detailed with a singular narrow trim piece that wrapped the three sides.
- The base of the columns were set upon a plinth (a flat, thin, square wooden block), which separates the column from the porch floor. The top of the column has a similar detail, which is commonly called an abacus.
- The front entry was comprised of a single wood door (not visible in the 1974 photo) with an eight light (glass) opening at the top. The lower portion of the door had two solid inset panels.

Current Porch - 2025



- Generally speaking, the replacement porch retains the general components of the historic porch, however the details don't often match the historic structure.
- Minor detail - The brick piers are slightly taller (one extra brick course) creating a space between the top stair and porch floor), possibly due to a regrading of the front yard. This alteration does not negatively impact the porch design, as it does not change the height of the porch floor or distance to the roof structure.
- More problematic, based on Google street view images - The upper roof structure had had overhanging eaves and appear to have been removed prior to 2011. This was the component on which the gutters were originally placed (as shown in the 1974 photo). The lower structure was retained but the fascia board was likely replaced and installed on the outer side of the roof structure obscuring the tops of the columns.
- The gutters are installed against the lower roof structure, as the upper portion was not rebuilt. The horizontal trim detail was not replicated on the fascia.
- The wide, tapered and fully fluted wood columns were replaced with new wood columns. The new columns have a differently designed Doric capital, The diameter of the new columns is not as wide as the original columns, they are not tapered, and the fluting does not extend the entire height of the column. Comparison of the old and new columns is further discussed on the next page.



1974 designation photo



Staff photo, August 2025

Historic column

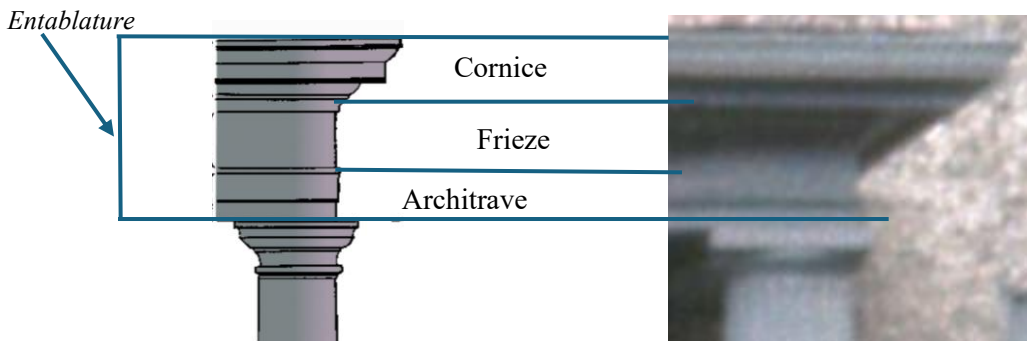
Fluting extended the full height of the shaft
Unadorned base and capital
Wide and tapered
Placed at the outer corner of roof
Plinth and abacus are present

New column

Fluting doesn't extend to base and stops many inches from capital
Capital has decorative rings, unlike the historic column
Narrow and consistent diameter
Placed at outer corner of roof but hidden by a new fascia board
Plinth and abacus are present, but they have a different profile

Comments:

- The placement of the historic capital offered a prominent view of the substantially sized columns. The columns were a dominant, character-defining feature of the property.
- The area above the original columns was the entablature, and has been removed, further destroying character-defining features of this property. The below drawing explains the many parts of a structure that makes up an entablature.



Architrave
Frieze
Cornice

The "chief beam", it rests immediately on the capital of a column, main horizontal support

Middle, often most decorative section, but it can also be plain

Uppermost, projecting part of the entablature, helps to keep water away while also being decorative.



- It is staff's opinion that the lower and upper roof structures, i.e., the entablature, are a distinctive character-defining feature.

- The district's Elements of Design, #10 – Relationship of architectural details states: *Architectural details generally relate to style. Neo-Georgian buildings display classic details, mostly in wood, and sometimes in stone; and #11 – Degree of complexity within the façade* states: *The degree of complexity has been determined by what is typical and appropriate for a given style. The buildings derived from Classical precedents usually have simple, rectangular façades with varying amounts of ornamentation.*
- The building's historic design was a study of contrasts: unadorned walls, rectangular double-hung windows and a uniform flat slate roof created a modest backdrop for the closed pediment dormers and highly detailed/ordered classical front porch supported by wide columns.
- The supporting components of the historic porch (i.e., columns, entablature/roof system) were distinctive character-defining features of the house. Their removal altered the features that characterize this property, contrary to Standard 5, and the new work does not meet Standard 6.

REMOVAL OF SHUTTERS

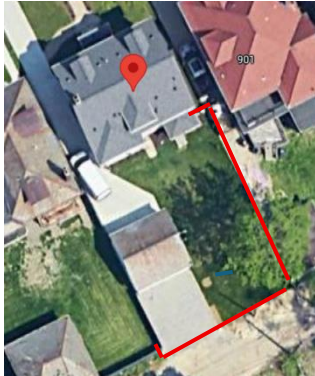


This June 2019 Google street view image is the last documentation of the shutters (three of the four) in place.

- The narrow shutters were likely wood and had a flat panel at the top with a narrow crescent moon cut out; the lower 2/3 of the shutter had ventilation strips.
- It appears that the shutters were removed between June 2019 and March 2022.
- The decorative design and placement of the shutters is a common feature within Boston Edison and can be found on many houses and is a character-defining feature of the property and district.

REAR YARD FENCE

- The applicant installed a vertical panel wood privacy fence enclosing the rear yard. It starts at the southeast rear corner of the house, extends to the side/east property line, runs along the east property line to the alley, where it extends across the width of the lot, and returns north a few feet at the west/side property line, adjoining the neighbor's existing privacy fence. A double-gate of same panel design opens to the alley.
- The specification is to apply a natural stain.



Above left: Google maps aerial view of property – red denotes location of fencing as shown in the applicant's photographs. In the photo below, the fence attaches to the neighbor's fence.



Applicant photos.

ISSUES

- The slate roof, front porch columns and entablature, and shutters were distinctive character-defining features of the property.
- These building components were removed without HDC approval, therefore, the scope of work that would meet the requirements of the historic ordinance (Section 21-2-59(e)), are the installation of new materials/features that match the historic features (i.e., in-kind restoration of the missing feature(s)).

Roof

- The installed asphalt shingle roof does not match the old in design, color, and texture.
 - The qualities of the slate roof created a uniform surface, consistent rectilinear pattern and gray color.
 - The irregular dimensional shapes of the installed shingles and sprayed shadow lines create a mottled surface and do not reproduce the clearly defined pattern and flat surface of the slate roof.

Front Porch

- The entablature was a distinctive, character-defining feature and was severely altered, removing a key component of the columns and altering the overall design of the porch.
- The installation of a fascia board in front of the columns obscures the view of the capitals and reduces their visual prominence.

- The historic columns were removed without documentation of their condition. Photos showed some water damage at the bases, but that is not unusual and appeared to be intact and likely repairable. The new columns do not match the old in design, width and profile.

Shutters

- The narrow shutters had a flat panel at the top with a narrow crescent moon cutout; the lower 2/3 of the shutter had ventilation strips. The decorative design and placement of the shutters is a common, character-defining feature within Boston Edison.

RECOMMENDATION

Section 21-2-78, Determinations of Historic District Commission

Recommendation 1 of 2, Denial

Staff recommends that the proposed work will be inappropriate according to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and the Boston Edison Historic District's Elements of Design, specifically Standards:

- Standard 2) The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.
- Standard 5) Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property shall be preserved.
- Standard 6) Deteriorated historic 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. Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.
- Standard 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.

And

Elements of Design # 8, 10 and 11.

For the following reasons;

- The slate roof, front porch columns and entablature, and shutters were distinctive character-defining features of the property.
- These building components were removed without HDC approval, therefore, the scope of work that would meet the requirements of the historic ordinance (Section 21-2-59(e)), are the installation of new materials/features that match the historic features (i.e., in-kind restoration of the missing feature(s)).

Roof

- The installed asphalt shingle roof does not match the old (i.e., slate roof) in design, color, and texture.
 - The qualities of the slate roof created a uniform surface, consistent rectilinear pattern and gray color.
 - The irregular dimensional shapes of the installed shingles and sprayed shadow lines create a mottled surface and do not reproduce the clearly defined pattern and flat surface of the slate roof.

Front Porch

- The entablature was a distinctive, character-defining feature; its severe alteration removed a key component of the columns and overall design of the porch.
- The installation of a fascia board in front of the columns obscures the view of the capitals and reduces their visual prominence.
- The historic columns were removed without documentation on their condition. Photos showed some water damage at the bases, but that is not unusual and appeared to be intact and likely repairable. The new columns do not match the old in design, width and profile.

Shutters

- The narrow shutters had a flat panel at the top with a narrow crescent moon cutout; the lower 2/3 of the shutter had ventilation strips. The decorative design and placement of the shutters is a common feature within Boston Edison.

Recommendation 2 of 2, COA

Staff recommends that the proposed wood fence will be appropriate according to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and the Boston Edison Historic District's Elements of Design, with the following condition:

- The fence will be painted with an opaque solid color stain or paint. The selected finish and color will be submitted to HDC staff for review.