

Historic District Review Committee

Staff Report
September 13, 2010

Action Items

CAPP 2010-0020 Tribby: Retroactive Approval for Removal of Wire Fence and Installation of Iron Fence in the Waterford Historic District. MCPI 303-16-5688.

Background

The subject property is a three-bay brick home located at 15511 Second Street in the village of Waterford. Historically known as “The Walker Phillips House,” the house was constructed in the late 18th or early 19th century. A Victorian style porch spanning the front and side elevations and a rear addition are later additions to the home. According to the applicant’s Statement of Justification (SOJ), the house has been in the current owner’s family since 1940. The house contributes to the Waterford National Historic Landmark District in addition to its inclusion in the County Historic and Cultural Conservation District.

This application is for retroactive approval for the removal of a double hoop style wire fence supported by round wood posts that was constructed circa 1960 according to the Applicant. The wire fence ran approximately 55 linear feet along Second Street to the south of the home enclosing the side (south) yard of the property. A gate suspended by metal posts allowed access to the yard area. Retroactive approval is also required for the newly installed iron fence that has replaced the old wire fence. The new fence also spans approximately 55 feet along Second Street and features a 42 inch wide iron gate at its northern terminus at the side of the house. Staff’s analysis of the application is based on the Loudoun County Historic District Guidelines for the Waterford Historic District (Guidelines: Guidelines for Site Elements – Fences and Walls, H., p. 45).

Based on correspondence from the Loudoun County Zoning Division dated September 1, 2010, there are no zoning issues with this application.

Analysis

Removal of Wire Fence and Gate

According to the Applicant’s SOJ, the double hoop style wire fence supported by rounded wood posts was erected along Second Street on the south side of the house approximately 40 years ago by the Applicant’s grandfather. The fence ran approximately 55 linear feet along the sidewalk enclosing the side yard of the property. A metal gate supported by metal posts provided access to the side yard where the fence met the corner front porch post. The Applicant has provided photographs of the fencing and wood posts which show that the posts were deteriorated and the fencing had rusted significantly.

This decorative wire fence design was used commonly in the early to mid 20th century for yard and garden enclosures and relates to the relative informality and simplicity of the historic architecture in the village in its rural setting. The Guidelines support retaining and repairing existing fences. When fence replacement is necessary, the Guidelines state that the fence material, height and detail should match the existing fence (Waterford Guidelines, Chapter 3, Guidelines for Site Elements- Fences and Walls, H2, 3 and 4, Page 45).

New Iron Fence

In place of the decorative wire fence, an ornamental iron fence with a gate has been installed in the same location. The iron fence is manufactured by Long Fence and is referred to as the “Washingtonian” design. The fence is three and one half feet high and meets zoning height restrictions for fences. The fence is approximately 55 linear feet and terminates at the corner porch post of the front porch with an arched 42 inch wide iron gate. The manufacturer’s specs state that the fence posts are 1 inch wide, the gate posts are 2 inches wide and the pickets are ½ inch wide. The iron fence includes a “C-Scroll” design between paired horizontal channels at the top and bottom of the fence



Photo 1: New Iron Fence at 15511 Second Street



Photo 2: Iron Gate Detail

The iron fence is a new feature on the property and one Guideline for Fences and Walls provides guidance for new elements. The Guideline states that the scale, materials, color and detail of any new fence or wall should be related to the scale, materials, and detail of the historic building and that simple designs are most appropriate to Waterford’s historic Quaker character (Guidelines: Guidelines for Site Elements – Fences and Walls, H.5., p. 45).

The Guidelines note that iron fences are found near the village core (next to the post office) and in several instances along Second Street. Therefore, iron is a characteristic fence type found in the Village of Waterford (Guidelines: Guidelines for Site Elements – Fences and Walls, Text, p. 45). However, iron fences did not become popular until the second half of the nineteenth century, with cast iron fences or decorative cast elements, such as finials, coming into use in the 1870s. Examples of iron fences in the village include two buildings located on Main and Second Streets that are proximal to the

subject property: the post office, constructed circa 1880, and the Loudoun Mutual Fire Insurance Building, located at the other end of the fence and built in 1872 (see Photo 3). In 1901, the Fire Insurance Company moved and constructed the building, and likely its iron fence, at 40170 Patrick Street (Photo 4). The Asbury Johnson House (1886) on Second Street also has an iron fence that dates to the same period as its construction date (Photo 5). As these examples reflect, decorative iron fencing is associated with late 19th and early 20th century architecture. However, there are some houses in the village dating to the first half of the nineteenth century with iron fences associated with them, such as the William Nettle House (1822) at 19453 Second Street (Photo 6).



Photo 1: Post office (c. 1880), right, and first Loudoun Mutual Fire Insurance building (1872), left, with iron fence between.



Photo 2: Iron fence at the second Loudoun Mutual Fire Insurance building (1901), 40170 Patrick Street, and proposed for replication.



Photo 3: Asbury Johnson House on Second Street with contemporary iron fence in front.



Photo 4: William Nettle House, 19453 Second Street, built in 1822 and an iron fence added later.

Although the materials, details, and design of the new iron fence do not relate to the detail or era of the historic house, staff notes that the fence is primarily functional in character since it serves to demarcate the property line and enclose the side yard of the property such that the back-drop of the fence is yard and then the field beyond. This allows for the fence to blend into the landscape of this open space along Second Street. The fence does not enclose or provide residential detail to the house itself. The iron

gate is located at the corner of the wrap-around porch, an architectural detail added to the original house that relates to the use of ornamental iron fencing. Therefore, the HDRC may consider the new iron fence to be an appropriate feature in this case.

Findings

- 1. The removal of the double hoop wire fence does not meet the Guidelines since the Guidelines call for the repair of existing fences. Further, the replacement of the wire fence with a new iron fence does not meet the intent of the Guidelines which support replacing an existing fence with a fence of the same material, height and detail.*
- 2. The iron fence and gate does not relate to the early 19th century date and style of the simple 3-bay brick house in materials, details, and design since the fence type dates to the second half of the nineteenth century. However, the fence and gate function as a side yard enclosure rather than an ornamental design element associated with the house.*
- 3. Ornamental iron fences are a common fence type in the Village and there are several examples on Second Street in proximity to the subject property. With some exceptions, the majority of these examples relate to architecture of the same time period; late 19th century*
- 4. Because there is no “bricks and mortar” back-drop for the iron fence, the fence blends into the yard landscape and is relatively unobtrusive.*
- 5. The new iron fence meets the zoning ordinance requirements for height.*

Recommendation

Staff recommends retroactive approval of the application to remove the decorative wire fence with gate and the installation of the new iron fence and gate based on the Findings above. However, staff recommends that the HDRC stress that the Guidelines call for replacement of older or historic fences in-kind.

Suggested Motions

- 1. I move that the Historic District Review Committee retroactively approve Certificate of Appropriateness 2010-0020 for the removal of the wire fence and gate and the installation of the new ornamental iron fence and gate, at 15511 Second Street in accordance with the Loudoun County Historic District Guidelines for the Waterford Historic and Cultural Conservation District based on the following findings...(see findings above).*
- 2. I move that the Historic District Review Committee approve the Certificate of Appropriateness 2010-0020 for the removal of the wire fence and gate and the installation of the new ornamental iron fence and gate, at 15511 Second Street **with the following conditions...and based on the following findings...**in accordance with the Loudoun County Historic District Guidelines for the Waterford Historic and Cultural Conservation District.*