



CITY OF NEWBURYPORT
HISTORICAL COMMISSION
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DOD Draft Historical Report

Meeting Date 13 January, 2022; Submitted 2022
Property Address 79 State Street
Applicant Institution For Savings c/o L. Mead, Mead Talerman & Costa LLC
Project description Extensive window replacement and other renovations.
Plan(s) of Record: Application and documents submitted to [record HAR-21-3](#); also reference was made to the MHC “Form B” for this structure.

Significance of the historic building/structure

The history of this property is documented in a Massachusetts Historical Commission “Form B,” which describes it as the the “Dole-Blumpey House,” “a 2-1/2-story, vernacular Greek Revival-style dwelling displaying a pediment front. . .” It goes on to state that “*although the building retains various Greek Revival features including its pediment, wide recessed panel pilasters, prominent frieze and fluted Ionic columns, numerous alterations have taken place.*” The historical photographs provided by the applicant document some of the changes made to this structure over time, many of which are neither historically appropriate nor flattering. This was originally a domicile, but has been used commercially for many years now, not surprising given its location on State Street, noted in the Form B as “[*marking*] the transition from the central business district to the residential area to the south.”

While Dole was (apparently) the first owner, by 1860 Philip H. Blumpey had acquired it. Blumpey was a grocer who, after several years working for other merchants in town, opened a store at 77 State Street and remained in business there for forty-four years. He was also the part owner of several ships built by John J. Currier, Jr. of Newburyport, he served as director and later president of the Merchants' Bank, a trustee of the Five Cents Savings Bank, and a director of the city railroad for many years. Apparently, his financial success enabled him to make several ‘improvements’ to the premises, most visibly the round turret-like room at the SE corner of the first floor. In 1933, the property was acquired by another Newburyport merchant, Charles W. Goodwin, who had a dry goods store at 57 State Street. By the early 1960s the property was vacant, and was soon converted to commercial use, as for example the present-day law offices. The additions made around 1977 and 1985 certainly appear to have been designed to accommodate commercial offices, and are not complimentary to the original historic structure. We view the changes made prior to 1900 as “historic” in their own right, but NOT the additions made in the 70s and later.

The Form B provides some documentation of the earlier (pre-1900) appearance and configuration of the structure, which the applicant has used to guide parts of what may be referred to as “restoration.” The Secretary’s standards warn against “conjectural” restoration – that is, trying to return a modified structure to what amounts to a guess as to its original configuration. However, given the documentary evidence (photos) that the windows in the historical structure were 2/1, it is not inappropriate to return them to that configuration. That said, it would be more appropriate to use wooden sash of the style and dimensions that would better match similar historic windows. The “Sterling Double Hungs” that are proposed present a different appearance, especially the framing around the actual sash.

The proposed window changes to the newer (non-historic) additions are probably an improvement, in that the proposed replacements are not so jarringly inconsistent with the historic house as the existing windows – even if they require larger openings. Other proposed changes that may also be considered “restoration” work include removing the vinyl siding and repairs to the wooden trim and windows in the ‘round room.’

Some commissioners felt that since the applicant was prepared to undertake all these improvements, perhaps it would have been better to remove the later (non-historic) additions altogether, and build a new addition that could be both more practical and more appropriate in design.

The relative importance of the historic structure to its setting within the District:

While there are many other houses that represent the Greek Revival form in Newburyport, this house is notable both for its unusual location, and the status of its early inhabitants.

When it was built, State Street was already established as a commercial street, but most of the commercial activity was ‘down’ State Street, as it still largely is today. Up State Street, to the Southeast, were a church and other residences; the historical Institution For Savings building was yet to be erected some years later. Therefore, it represents a kind of historical reminder of the history and evolution of the “downtown.”

While Dole, Blumpey and Goodwin may not be familiar names to us today, they were significant personages in the City’s history who, in this structure, left behind the evidence of their industry and prosperity. The surnames “Dole” and “Goodwin” appear in Newburyport’s history, including among signers of the petition to separate the land that was to become Newburyport from the town of Newbury.

Recommendations to the SPGA (Planning Board):

The Newburyport Historical Commission finds that:

- The alterations proposed to the non-historical portions of the structure (those dating from the 1970s and later) would NOT have an adverse impact on the original, historical structure – that is, the original Greek Revival structure and the alterations made in the early 20th century.
- The proposed renovations of a “restoration” nature, such as the removal of vinyl siding and replacement with wood clapboards and repair and repainting of wood

trim are appropriate alterations that are consistent with *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring & Reconstructing Historic Buildings (1995)*.

- The proposal to replace the existing 6/6 pattern windows with 2/1 pattern windows is not, in itself, contrary to the standards, but the use of new materials with new and different mechanical design will alter the appearance and character of these historical windows. This is contrary to the guidelines, which state that *“deteriorated features from the restoration period will be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature will match the old in design, color, texture and, where possible, materials.”* Therefore, since section XXVII-F3 d of the DOD ordinance states that *“The Secretary's Standards and related guidelines shall be applied to all work involving historic properties of all types, materials, construction, sizes, and use located within the DOD...”* the Historical Commission recommends replacement using “in kind” materials rather than the specified windows.

Glenn Richards, Chair, Newburyport Historical Commission