



CITY OF NEWBURYPORT
HISTORICAL COMMISSION
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DRAFT DOD Historical Report

Meeting Date 24 February, 2022; Submitted: 2022

Property Address 24 Center Street

Applicant Ariston Custom Homes Inc. c/o Mead Talerman & Costa LLC

Project description Remove later added wooden addition to structure, construct new addition in its place, and perform restoration work on entire structure.

Plan(s) of Record: Application and documents submitted to [record HAR-22-1](#); MHC "Form B" for this structure (NWB.118).

Significance of the historic building/structure

The history of this property is documented (as 23 Middle Street) in a Massachusetts Historical Commission "Form B," which describes it as the the "Enoch Huse House" dating from the early 19th century. Records indicate that in 1851 it was occupied by Huse, a tobacconist with a shop at 41 Water Street, and a trustee of the First Methodist Episcopal Church in Newburyport. By 1872 the house had been sold to G. Plummer, a wholesale fish dealer with a business at 24 Liberty Street.

Originally a residence, it was adapted to commercial use, at least on the ground floor, at some point in the 20th century. The first floor windows on the Middle Street side where changed to large, commercial style windows for this purpose – an inappropriate change to the character of the original historic structure. At the time it was documented on the Form B, the first floor was an antique shop. More recently, it housed legal offices.

This building has significant architectural interest because it appears to be transitional from the Federal to the Greek Revival styles, incorporating stylistic aspects of both styles. The overall proportions are typical of a gambrel roofed Federal period house. However, while the doorway is Federal in style, a keystone in the arch over a semi-elliptical fanlight and the window lintels are 'Greek-inspired' in design and are made rather prominent by being painted white which contrasts sharply with the brick facade.

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

The unusual architecture features described above amplify the importance of this building to the local neighborhood and the downtown district as a whole. Additionally, it is a reasonably well-preserved example of an early 19th century dwelling in an area of downtown that is now largely commercial, especially on the ground floors. The wood-framed addition is in very poor condition, not architecturally interesting, and does not contribute any historic interest (although it was briefly the office of the Newburyport Clamshell Alliance, a group opposed to the proposed nuclear plant in Seabrook, NH).

Recommendations to the SPGA (Planning Board):

The Newburyport Historical Commission finds that:

- The removal of the wood-framed addition to the Northeast side of the structure would NOT have an adverse impact on the original, brick historic structure.
- The proposed addition to be built is subordinate to the historic structure and is of a design that the board finds compatible with the historic structure.
- The historic windows, especially on the Middle St. and Center St. elevations, should be preserved rather than replaced with “insulated clad windows” as proposed (see note).

The current windows, with the possible exception of the ‘attic’ window on the Middle St. facade, are probably not original, but replacements dating to sometime in the latter half of the 19th century, are historic. They appear to be in reasonably good condition and at least some of them, such as on the Middle St. facade, second floor, still contain original old glass. Some restoration may be required to ensure proper function and efficiency, and additional energy efficiency may be achieved with exterior storm windows. An example of this approach may be seen nearby at 10 Center St.

To replace all the existing windows with completely new insulated window systems is contrary to the standards and the DOD ordinance. Even if the 2/1 pattern is maintained, the new materials and design will significantly alter the appearance and character of the historical fenestration. The standards 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.”* Also, 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...”*

Glenn Richards, Chair, Newburyport Historical Commission

Note: The proposal to replace ALL the windows in the historic brick section of the structure with new “insulated clad windows” is called out only on one drawing, is not mentioned in the applicant’s cover memo, and was not mentioned in their oral presentation. When specifically asked about this, however, the architect stated to the NHC that this is, in fact, their proposal.