



CITY OF NEWBURYPORT  
HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
60 PLEASANT STREET • P.O. BOX 550  
NEWBURYPORT, MA 01950  
(978) 465-4400  
WWW.CITYOFNEWBURYPORT.COM

## DOD Advisory/Historical Report

**Meeting Date** 22 September, 2022  
**Property Address** 6 Washington Street  
**Applicant** Beth and Christopher Calitri c/o Lisa Mead, MTC, LLC  
**Project description** Demolish existing canopy at side entrance; replace with new 1-story mudroom in similar location, reusing some existing historic details.  
**Plan(s) of Record:** Application and documents posted under **PBSP-22-8** on the City of Newburyport web site.

### Significance of the historic building/structure and the locale

The subject structure is believed to have been constructed in 1857 or 1858 by Robert Couch, who was a prominent citizen, serving as Mayor of Newburyport in 1870 and 1881 and as a Representative in General Court. It remained in the Couch family until 1912.

The house is listed as “Contributing” in the District Data Sheets and described there as “Italianate” in style. The Form B for this structure calls it out as being of special interest because it *“has features of several 19<sup>th</sup> century Italianate styles. The overall design seems to be derived from the Renaissance Revival in the Romano Tuscan Mode. Features of this style include the massive bracketed cornice, the rusticated quoins and wall surface, and the trabeated windows. The bowed front is unusual, as is the cupola...”* (although cupolas are not unusual in high-style homes of varied architectural styles here in Newburyport). When it was built, the neighborhood was more residential than it is now. A similarly-styled residence was formerly across the street; it is now the campus of the Immaculate Conception School.

This example is exceptionally rich in architectural detail, which make it stand out among the many houses built during this period: most have only token gestures indicative of the Italianate style, such as brackets. But in this case the builders gave expression to the full scope of the many stylistic elements characteristic of the period, as mentioned in the Form B. The commissioners all felt that this is an exceptional structure that therefore requires careful consideration of any proposed alterations.

Although we applaud the desire of the owners to capture and re-use historically important features, the proposed design is not in harmony with the main historic structure in important ways.

The commissioners were very concerned by the size and location of the proposed addition, which would be on the East side and readily visible from the street. We are

concerned that the elegant symmetry of the front and East-facing façades will be significantly injured by the addition of this mass. On the East façade, the proposed design overlaps the characteristic historical quoining on the northeast corner of the historical structure. Additionally, the clapboard siding is proposed to begin almost at grade, which is unsympathetic to the clearly stated elevational hierarchy of granite base, middle and projecting top. A more appropriate treatment would extend the base element of the house in any visible addition (although not necessarily in granite), to minimize the appearance of being a temporary or purely functional weather vestibule, and to better integrate with the historical architecture.

The photos below help illustrate these concerns. The side view also shows how the two-story addition which added during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century has little impact of the overall impression made by the house, because of its location in the rear of the structure. The board suggests that the applicant reconsider the location of the addition to determine if their needs could be met while using a more 'discreet' location, such as set further to the back or behind the rear corner of the structure.



*Figure 1: Front (Washington St.) and side views*

## **Conclusion**

There was general agreement among the commissioners that the proposed alterations would have an adverse impact on the historic character and value of the subject structure.

Glenn Richards, Chair, Newburyport Historical Commission