



CITY OF NEWBURYPORT
HISTORICAL COMMISSION
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DRAFT DCOD Historical Report

Meeting Date	14 March, 2024
Property Address	311 Merrimac Street
Applicant	T. Swierzbins & A. Rada (by Atty. L. Mead)
Project description	Demolish over 25% of existing historical structure and build a small addition in rear of historic structure.
Plan(s) of Record:	Documents posted on the NHC Agenda for 14 March, 2024, on the City of Newburyport web site supporting the request for Historical Report

Significance of the historic building/structure

The structure was built in or around 1806 according to the Assessor's database, the Form B, and the District Data Sheets where it is listed as "contributing" to the Historic District.

The Form B states that the house was built by Stephen Coffin Dutton on a lot he purchased from Moses Moody in 1804, although it may have been built a few years later. The property passed to other owners in 1806 before returning to Dutton in 1820. owned the house until 1839 when it was sold to Samuel Noyes. Noyes, or his heirs, owned this house well into the nineteenth century.

It is a two story house with a hipped roof and symmetrical five bay facade, and is described in the Form B as "an excellent example of the Federal style as interpreted in the vernacular." In other words, the house reflects the general style and form of the Federal period, but is rather simple. It has few architectural details beyond a "nice cornice moulding and the front entrance," with classical pilasters on either side of the front door, supporting a classical entablature above – a common sight in Newburyport with houses of this era.

This simplicity of style should not be taken to imply that the structure has less historical value, but rather that the structure was probably built to serve the immediate local need, using locally available materials and relying on the design skills and traditions of local builders. Such "vernacular" structures reflect local traditions and cultural practices, and therefore are important representatives of local architectural history well deserving of preservation.

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

The property is situated in an area that has deep ties to Newburyport's ship building industry. The Jackman ship yard and the yard of Currier and Townsend, both large yards, were quite near along the Merrimack River. Sources list Mr. Dutton as a builder of ships as well, along this same section of the river.

Another early owner of the property was Captain Thomas Follansbee. He was a member of the Marine Society, the master of several ships, and an active privateer during the Revolutionary war period.

At some point, almost certainly in the latter 20th century, the house was converted for 2-family occupancy. The current owners (the applicants) have expressed the intent to restore the functionality of the house to single-family use, which could be a welcome restoration if properly executed.

The structure is an important contributing artifact, by its design, to Newburport's architectural history. And, by its many historical residents intimately connected to the local maritime industry, to the cultural and economic history of the immediate neighborhood.

Summary

The proposed changes to the rear of the structure, as illustrated in the plans submitted by the applicant, did NOT strike the commission as likely to have an adverse impact of the historical values described above.

Respectfully submitted,

Glenn Richards, Chair, Newburyport Historical Commission

March, 2024