

**Testimony of the Capitol Hill Restoration Society  
before the DC Preservation Review Board on February 22, 2018  
311 F Street, NE HPA 18-208**

My name is Beth Purcell and I am testifying on behalf of the Historic Preservation Committee of the Capitol Hill Restoration Society. We reviewed the concept plans for the project dated January 25 and February 9, 2018. This Queen Anne brick rowhouse was designed in 1893 by noted architect B. Stanley Simmons for owner Samuel L. Phillips, and built by C.J. Harback and Bro. It's one of three rowhouses on this block designed by Simmons, and is a contributing building.<sup>1</sup>

The applicant proposes to repair and restore the front elevation, which is commendable. We suggest that if the Board grants concept approval, that the Board specifically require staff sign off on these two elements of the project:

- The inappropriate brick stoop and front steps would be replaced by a new metal stoop and stairs. (It is unclear what is planned for the existing metal railing.) The cast iron stairs on Queen Anne houses are a character-defining feature.<sup>2</sup> Information on cast iron stairs can be found on [www.chrs.org](http://www.chrs.org), and we suggested that the applicant specify an appropriate metal stoop, railings, and stairs.<sup>3</sup> The applicant has not responded to this suggestion and we are concerned that the applicant will install generic metal stairs from a building supply company.
- A new gas lantern would also be installed. The applicant used Colonial Revival style gas lanterns in a recent new construction project (1620-1622 E Street, SE (2017)), and this type of lantern would be inappropriate for a Queen Anne house. We requested that the applicant specify a compatible gas lantern, or alternatively,

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<sup>1</sup> Building permit # 2175 (23 Apr. 1893).

B. Stanley Simmons (1872-1931) came to Washington as a child, and later studied architecture at M. I. T. He was one of the most prolific architects in Washington, and worked with every major developer, including Harry Wardman and Lester Barr. Simmons designed more than 60 apartment buildings between 1890 and 1926, including The Wyoming (1810 Wyoming Avenue, NW, considered by some to be his masterpiece), and the Embassy (1613 Harvard Street, NW) and the Highview (2505 13th Street, NW) for Herman R. Howenstein. He also designed the National Metropolitan Bank, 15th and G Streets, NW (1905), the Northeast Savings Bank, 800 H Street, NE (1921); the Barr Building at Farragut Square (1929); the Elks Club, 919 H Street, NW (1908, demolished); and the Fairfax Hotel, 21st and Massachusetts Avenue, NW (1921). Simmons designed and built houses in the 1890s, before he moved on to bigger commissions. Capitol Hill has several other examples of his early work: 601-607 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, NE, 300 F Street, NE (1894), 1345-1363 Constitution Avenue, NE (1892).

<sup>2</sup> See generally HPO, "Porches and Steps on Historic Buildings."

<sup>3</sup> [www.chrs.org](http://www.chrs.org) > History and Preservation > CHRS Historic District Guidelines > "Cast Iron: Firmness, Commodity, and Delight."

one of many available compatible electric lanterns. The applicant has not responded to this request.

We suggest that the utility meters be moved to the rear of the house.

In our letter to HPRB we cited the demolition plan shows a substantial amount of interior demolition, including, it appears, the interior stairs, in violation of 10 DCMR 305.1(b). The applicant has explained that approximately 40 years ago the house was renovated and at that time most of the interior fabric was removed; there is also a structural problem with the interior stairs.

The applicant plans a subordinate addition. The rear elevation has a large area of glazing relative to the area of brick. While the February 9 plans improve on the fenestration, we suggest that the applicant re-study the design, and consider replicating the existing fenestration, and that of nearby houses.

With the changes requested, we believe that the project is compatible with the Capitol Hill Historic District.

Thank you for considering our views.