
**HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD
STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION**

Landmark/District:	Capitol Hill Historic District	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agenda
Address:	700 A Street, NE	<input type="checkbox"/> Consent
		<input type="checkbox"/> Concept
Meeting Date:	March 22, 2012	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Alteration
Case Number:	12-263	<input type="checkbox"/> New Construction
Staff Reviewer:	Amanda Molson	<input type="checkbox"/> Demolition
		<input type="checkbox"/> Subdivision

Building owner World Mission Society Church of God requests permit approval for the replacement of stained glass windows with clear glass windows at 700 A Street, NE in the Capitol Hill Historic District.

Property Description

The church at 700 A Street, NE was constructed in 1895 by the Epworth Methodist Episcopal Church South. With the only Southern Methodist church in the city located in Northwest Washington at that time, a mission of East Washington Methodists desired a more convenient location and selected the site of a small frame building (used consecutively as a Presbyterian church, school, and oyster house) at the corner of 7th and A Street, NE.¹

With support and involvement from Reverend Samuel W. Haddaway of the Mount Vernon Square Church (the aforementioned church located in Northwest), the residents selected architect Edward Woltz to design a new building costing \$12,000. Preferring the Romanesque Revival style of architecture for most of his buildings, Woltz designed numerous two- and three-story brick dwellings in neighborhoods such as Trinidad, Columbia Heights, and Petworth. Notable projects include the subject church, a strong example of the Romanesque Revival style interpreted for the ecclesiastical building form, as well as the “Round House” in Brookland at 1001 Irving Place, NE.

When the church was dedicated on January 13, 1896, a *Washington Post* reporter in attendance paid little attention in print to Woltz’s distinguished design, noting of the building, “The principal feature of its interior is several memorial windows, than which there are none more beautiful in East Washington.”² By the late 1800s, stained glass windows were available by catalogue for residential and ecclesiastical use (often with some customization), making it unlikely that Woltz himself designed their motifs. However, the *Post* reporter was impressed by the church’s selection, noting, “...(T)he auditorium was rendered almost brilliant by the sun which poured in through its beautiful stained-glass windows, placed in memory of departed

¹ “Epworth M.E. Church: Grew from a Mission Stated Fifteen Years Ago,” *Washington Post*, October 19, 1901.

² “Set Aside as Sacred: Dedication of the New Epworth M.E. Church South,” *Washington Post*, January 13, 1896.

brothers and sisters once connected with the church.” The arched windows and large altar window predominantly feature floral motifs, rendered in stained and opalescent glass, along with less abstract images such as an anchor, grapes, and a cross. Two large rosette windows continue the floral design, windows in the corner tower introduce images of suns and sunflowers, and curved windows located in an alcove along 7th Street feature geometric patterns. The windows are indicative of the Aesthetic Movement’s predilection for nature and the tendency of Methodist churches to use rather simple designs in their stained glass windows.

The church building experienced few exterior changes in its earliest years (other than stairway alterations and new lead walks), as evidenced by permit data, a drawing published in the *Washington Post* in 1901, and a photograph taken in 1917.³ On the interior, however, the church undertook an extensive redecorating project in 1902, which included paint and upholstery.⁴ On December 13, 1919, a fire started over the furnace and spread to the wood joists and interior framing, causing \$21,000 in property damage to the church building.⁵ The congregation relocated to a new, larger structure at the corner of 13th Street and North Carolina Avenue, NE.

In 1921, the Church of the Nazarene purchased the former Epworth church and began renovations following a fundraising drive seeking \$35,000.⁶ After experiencing tremendous growth in the size of its congregation, the Church of the Nazarene relocated to Northwest Washington 30 years later, after which time the building was used by the Cole Baptist Church and subsequently by the Unity Church. Minor changes were made to the building in the mid-to-late twentieth century, including installation of protective Plexiglas coverings over the stained glass windows and replacement of exterior doors.

Permit data from the time of the c. 1921 post-fire rehabilitation could not be located at the Washingtoniana Room or at the National Archives. However, it is reasonable to assume that a fire causing such extensive damage may have damaged or destroyed some of the stained glass windows. In an effort to better date the existing windows, a preliminary and informal determination was made by Neal Vogel at the request of HPO.

Mr. Vogel is the co-author of National Park Service Preservation Brief #33 (*The Preservation and Repair of Historic Stained and Leaded Glass*) and serves as Principal of Restoric, LLC, a recognized stained glass restoration firm located in Evanston, Illinois. The NPS Brief states, “Glass is a highly versatile medium. In its molten state, it can be spun, blown, rolled, cast in any shape, and given any color. Once cooled, it can be polished, beveled, chipped, etched, engraved, or painted. Of all the decorative effects possible with glass, however, none is more impressive than ‘stained glass.’”

Mr. Vogel granted approval for his preliminary assessment to be included in this report (with the caveat that he has not personally visited the site and instead referred to photographs). He

³ J. H. Nelms, ed., *Where Washington Worships: A Handbook of the Churches of the District of Columbia* (1917), 73.

⁴ “Services at Epworth: Great Improvements Have Been Made to the Interior of the Church,” *Washington Post*, October 13, 1902.

⁵ “Recent Fires and Their Lessons,” *Safety Engineering* 40 (July 1920): 42.

⁶ “\$35,000 Drive for Church: Nazarene Would Buy and Remodel the Epworth South Edifice,” *Washington Post*, April 2, 1921.

observed that the color palette, designs, and ripple glass are very reminiscent of what one would expect to see used in 1895 stained glass windows, with visual evidence of some repairs and replacement pieces that could have been damaged by the fire. Mr. Vogel stated that the large rosette windows likely date to the post-fire renovations of c. 1921, finding that the art glass coloration is incongruous with the overall assemblage. However, he believes that their consistency with the designs used in lower-level windows shows they are copies of, or at least in the spirit of, the originals from 1895. Therefore, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, it is assumed that the existing stained glass windows date to no later than the renovation of c. 1921, with a number of the original, arched windows from 1895 likely still in-place.⁷

Proposal

The World Mission Society Church of God has submitted a permit application to remove the existing stained glass windows in their entirety, replacing them with wood windows with clear glass. The window specifications provided by the owner do not identify where each of the illustrated windows would be placed in the building.

HPO staff visited the church building in late January in order to photograph the stained glass windows and gather basic information on the congregation's request. At that time, several windows in the church had already been removed without the required permit (the two large rosette windows, the bottom sash of three curved windows facing 7th Street, and possibly the bottom sash of several double-hung windows in the corner tower).

Following that meeting, concerned neighbors provided HPO with interior photographs and video taken of the building while listed for sale, showing that these windows had been removed since the property's sale. Upon receiving this supporting documentation, HPO provided the congregation with a limited timeframe in which to reinstall the windows that had been removed without a permit, and it appears that most are back in-place (the bottom sash of some of the corner tower windows had not been installed as of late February).

Unfortunately, as further evidenced by comparing photos of the windows during the listing period to the state of the windows now, it is apparent that several panes of stained glass were broken either during the unpermitted removal or during the reinstallation. Most notably, this includes the ornate center medallion of the rosette window facing 7th Street, which appears to have been reinstalled without its wood frame. Shortly before the Board meeting, HPO asked the church to remove, carefully pack, and store onsite the panes that had been broken in order to prevent further deterioration.

During a follow-up meeting with HPO, the congregation stated that the proposed replacement of the existing stained glass windows stems from concerns related to freedom of religion, lead safety, and energy efficiency.⁸

⁷ The Capitol Hill Historic District includes a period of significance that extends through 1945.

⁸ It should be noted that numerous studies have refuted the suggestion that installing double-paned windows is the best solution for improving the energy efficiency of single-pane windows. Instead, utilizing storm windows (either interior or exterior) in partnership with minor repairs often yields the same results at a much lower cost.

Evaluation

The purview of the Historic Preservation Office and the Review Board is quite narrow in scope. Both bodies are entrusted with upholding the city's preservation law and regulations, and with applying these standards equally and fairly across all property owners. The Board's powers are those defined by statute and regulation. HPO has been advised by the Office of the Attorney General that the D.C. Court of Appeals has been "reluctant to read into a statute powers for a regulatory agency which are not fairly implied from the statutory language, since the agency is statutorily created." *Chesapeake & Potomac Tel. Co. v. Public Service Comm'n of District of Columbia*, 378 A.2d 1085, 1089 (D.C.1977).

- Section 4 (c)(1) of the Historic Landmark and Historic District Protection Act of 1978 (the "Act"), as codified at D.C. Official Code § 6-1103, provides that the Board shall, among other things "[a]dvice the Mayor on the compatibility with the purposes of this act of the applications referred to it by the Mayor pursuant to § 6-1104 through § 6-1108." Because this application for a building permit is for an alteration to a building in a historic district, it has been referred to the Board pursuant to D.C. Official Code § 6-1105.

The purposes that pertain to properties in historic district are set forth D.C. Official Code § 6-1101 (b)(1) as follows:

- Retaining and enhancing those properties which contribute to the character of the historic district and encouraging their adaptation for current use; and
- Assuring that alterations of existing structures are compatible with the character of the historic district.

Of these two purposes, it is "the retention of those properties which contribute to the character of the historic district" that is of greatest concern here.

- The historic preservation regulations (Section 2301.3) define a "special window" as one that, "creates a special architectural effect, or is a custom design, not typically found in a manufacturer's catalogue. These windows may or may not be repetitive, and usually involved one or more of the following attributes:
 - (a) Non-rectilinear frame or sash;
 - (b) Transom or side light configuration;
 - (c) Multi-pane configuration with twelve or more panes in a single sash;
 - (d) Curved glass
 - (e) Stained, leaded, or artistically crafted glazing;
 - (f) Decorated, carved, or embellished sash, frame, or surround; or
 - (g) Projecting bay or oriel."
- 700 A Street, NE is considered to be a "major building" in a historic district under the regulations (Section 2307), defined as a "contributing building that is individually distinguished by characteristics like symbolic value, visual prominence, substantial size, architectural elaboration, or historical association. These buildings often meet the criteria for historic landmark designation, and typically include public and institutional buildings, schools, mansions, and places of worship or public assembly." Window replacement

proposals for “major buildings” are generally treated, “according to the same standards applicable to historic landmarks.”

- The standards for window replacement in historic landmarks (Section 2306) state of principal facades, “If historic windows cannot reasonably be restored, replacement windows shall be approved if they match the historic windows in all respects – configuration, method of operation, profile, dimensions, material, finish, and any other salient character-defining features. A stricter standard of reasonableness shall be applied to special windows.”
- Even if the stained glass windows are of more recent vintage, which available evidence does not support, Section 2305.7 states, “Replacement of stained or specialty glass shall match the historic glass or be historically appropriate or compatible.”

The existing stained glass windows at 700 A Street, NE meet the definition of “historic windows” *and* “special windows” under the historic preservation regulations and are undeniably a character-defining feature of this century-old place of worship. The windows are evocative of prevalent architectural and artistic styles at the turn-of-the-century, and they continue to be a symbolic indication of this building’s ongoing use as a place of worship. The regulations state of “major buildings” that windows on principal facades should be reasonably restored as a first course of action and that a stricter standard of reasonableness should be applied to special windows in considering replacement.

Even if the existing windows were hypothetically proven to be of recent vintage, the standards require that replacement of stained or specialty glass shall match the *historic glass*, suggesting that an appropriate replacement for even modern stained glass windows would be new stained glass, as opposed to clear glass.

Recommendation

The staff recommends that the Board advise the Mayor’s Agent that the permit application for replacement of the existing stained glass windows with clear glass is not consistent with the purposes of the preservation law or with the window standards included in the preservation regulations.