



FREDERICK COUNTY GOVERNMENT

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FREDERICK COUNTY HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

STAFF REPORT

December 6, 2023

Address: 9084 Albaugh Rd., New Windsor

Meeting Date: December 6, 2023

Applicant: Amanda and David Halla

Report Date: November 6, 2023

Case No.: COA 23-07

Staff: Beau Lockard

Request: Rebuild staircase to first floor stacked porch on the south elevation.

PROPERTY BACKGROUND

The Stevens House was designated to the County Register of Historic Properties (CR # 23-02) on October 3, 2023. The property includes the historic house and springhouse. The property was built 1859.

Previous applications for Certificates of Appropriateness (COA) filed for this property include:

Case Number	Date	Owner	Decision
A-COA #23-12	10/06/2023	David and Amanda Halla	Approved
Repairing the window glass, in-kind replacement of rotten wood on the porches and window sills, and repair of storm windows and doors			

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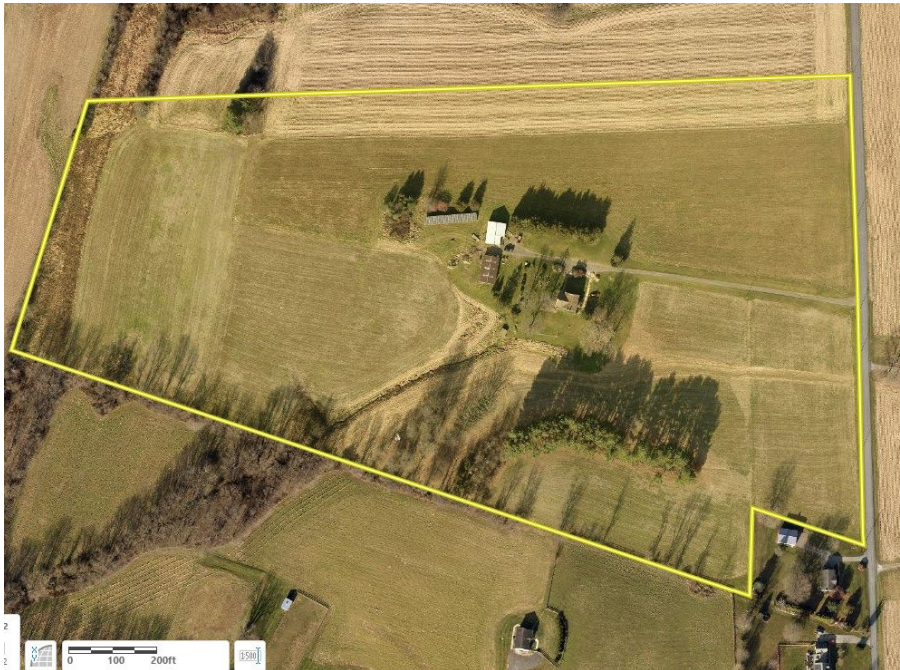


Image 1: Subject Property Aerial View

REQUEST

A Certificate of Appropriateness is requested to rebuild a staircase and railing to the first-floor stacked porch on the south elevation.



Image 2: Stevens House East and South Elevations. The historic stairs are visible in the bottom left. Part of 1977 National Register of Historic Places nomination.

APPLICABLE GUIDELINES

When reviewing alterations to a designated County Register property several documents are to be utilized as guidelines to assist the Commission in developing their decision. These documents include the *Frederick County Historic Preservation Code: Chapter 1-23*, the *Frederick County Register of Historic Places Design Guidelines (Guidelines)*, and the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation (Standards)*. The pertinent information in these documents is outlined below.

Frederick County Code: Chapter 1-23-7B

- (1) In reviewing applications, the Commission shall give consideration to the historic, archeological, or architectural significance of the landmark, site, or structure and its relationship to the historic, archeological, or architectural significance of the surrounding area; the relationship of the exterior architectural features of a landmark or structure to the remainder of the landmark or structure and to the surrounding area; the general compatibility of proposed exterior design, scale, proportion, arrangement, texture, and materials to the landmark, site, or structure and to the surrounding area; and any other factors including aesthetic factors which the Commission deems to be pertinent.
- (2) The Commission shall consider only exterior features of a landmark or structure and shall not consider any interior arrangements.
- (3) The Commission shall not disapprove an application except with respect to the several factors specified in paragraph (1) above.
- (4) The Commission shall be strict in its judgment of plans for sites or structures determined by research to be of historic, archeological, or architectural significance. The Commission shall be lenient in its judgment of plans for sites or structures of little historic, archeological, or architectural significance, or of plans involving new construction, unless in the Commission's judgment such plans would seriously impair the historic, archeological, or architectural significance of surrounding sites or structures. The Commission is not required to limit construction, reconstruction, or alteration to the architectural style of any one (1) period.

Frederick County Register of Historic Places Design Guidelines

The *Guidelines* contain a Building Exteriors Chapter (Chapter 4) that should be referred to when reviewing this COA application, particularly Section F on Porches. Further analysis of how this request meets the *Guidelines* is provided in the Evaluation section below.

Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation

The *Standards* define rehabilitation as "the act or process of making possible a compatible use for a property through repair, alterations, and additions while preserving those portions

or features, which convey its historical, cultural, or architectural values.” The *Standards* that are most applicable to the application before the Commission are as follows:

2. The historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The removal of distinctive materials or alteration of features, spaces, and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.
6. Deteriorated historic features 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. Replacement of missing features will be substantiated by documentary and physical evidence.
9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.



Image 3: Proposed location of staircase rebuild. Drawings and measurements are approximate.

STAFF EVALUATION

Currently, the stacked porch on the south elevation of the Stevens House cannot be accessed from the exterior, but the images from the 1977 National Register of Historic Places (Image 2) show that there was a staircase to the first floor of the stacked porch. The previous staircase was made of fieldstones and concrete and was removed when it became unstable. The new staircase would be made of wood and have a simple railing to match the stacked porch's simple railing design. The stairs will extend just under 4' past the adjacent west-facing wall (Image 3). The image from 1977 shows that the stairs extended past the wall then. The slope requirements for a staircase would not allow for it to be completely behind the wall.

Staff analysis of this project against the *Guidelines* is as follows:

Guideline	Met?	Comments
4F1: Porches: Overview of Porches	Yes	The <i>Guidelines</i> states that stairs and railings are important components to historic porches. The stairs on the Stevens house were removed at some point after 1977 and are an important part of the historic fabric of the house.
4F3: Porches: Steps and Railings	Yes	The <i>Guidelines</i> state, "Historic documentation or physical evidence should be used to replicate missing steps and railings." The proposed staircase location is based on the image from the National Register of Historic Places and the oral history of the owner from that time. It is also visible in Image 3 where the historic railing ends and the recent railing addition is located.
4F3: Porches: Steps and Railings	Yes	The <i>Guidelines</i> state, "Steps for accessing a porch or building entrance historically were made of wood, stone, or brick and they can be important character-defining features of an historic building." The proposed stairs and railings will be made from wood, which is a historic material for this component. The material in the 1977-era stairs was field stone and concrete; however, it is unclear how old those stairs were. The <i>Guidelines</i> advise against using concrete as an appropriate material.

4F3: Porches: Steps and Railings	Yes	The <i>Guidelines</i> state, "If railings are required to meet current building codes or personal needs and they did not originally exist, new railings should be designed simply and in keeping with the historic character of the building." It is not clear if there was a railing in the 1977 image, but for personal safety and code reasons a railing is being added. The new wooden stair railing will be designed to match the existing porch railing's simple design.
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STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends the Commission **approve** COA #23-07 as this project will not substantially alter the exterior features of the historic resource; is compatible in character to the remainder of the structure and to the surrounding area; does not seriously impair the historic, archeological, or architectural significance of surrounding sites or structures; and is compatible in character to the property and consistent with the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation #2, #6, and #9*.