



FREDERICK COUNTY GOVERNMENT

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FREDERICK COUNTY HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

STAFF REPORT

August 20, 2024

Address: 1606 Gapland Road, Jefferson

Meeting Date: September 4, 2024

Applicant: Burkittsville Preservation Association

Report Date: August 20, 2024

Case No.: COA 24-07

Staff: Beau Lockard

Request: Change of material on the front porch from iron railings and columns to wooden columns with decorative brackets without railing

PROPERTY BACKGROUND

The Hamilton Willard Shafer farm was designated to the County Register of Historic Properties (CR # 21-07) on July 5, 2022. The property includes the entire parcel which includes the historic house, bank barn, smoke house, workshop, well, and wagon shed. The property was built between 1820 and 1830 with an addition added to the house circa 1910.

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

Case Number	Date	Owner	Decision
A-COA #22-07	09/14/2022	Burkittsville Preservation Association	Approved
In-kind replacement of rotten studs and sills on the summer kitchen			
COA #22-11	10/18/2022	Burkittsville Preservation Association	Approved
Repair and/or replacement of the windows and shutters of the farmhouse			
COA #23-01	01/13/2023	Burkittsville Preservation Association	Approved
Remove the non-contributing wall on the east elevation 1910 addition			
A-COA #23-03	03/06/2023	Burkittsville Preservation Association	Approved

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In-kind replacement of rotten back porch decking and joists			
A-COA #23-07	05/24/2023	Burkittsville Preservation Association	Approved
In-kind replacement of rotten front porch decking, ceiling, and joists			



Fig. 1: Subject property.

REQUEST

A Certificate of Appropriateness is requested to replace the iron railings and columns with wooden columns and no railings, based on a historic 1890s photograph of the façade of the farmhouse.

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 chapter on Building Exteriors (Chapter 4), particularly Section F on Porches, that should be referred to when reviewing this COA application. 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.
4. Changes to a property that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved.
5. Distinctive materials, features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property will be preserved.
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.

STAFF EVALUATION

The applicant, Burkittsville Preservation Association (BPA), is proposing to replace the iron railings and columns with wooden columns and decorative brackets based on historic documentation. BPA is rehabilitating the front porch through in-kind replacement of the wooden decking, joists, and ceiling. As part of this project, the applicant is requesting to replace the relatively modern (1960s) iron columns and railings with more historically appropriate wooden columns and decorative brackets.

This project is consistent with the BPA mission to restore the Hamilton Shafer Farm to the property's period of significance (1820s to 1910). The photograph provided is from the 1890s. The photograph captures a middle point of the house transitioning from the simpler original form, likely a Georgian Colonial-style, to incorporate more trendy Folk Victorian elements. This transition includes the front porch with all the decorative column brackets and porch trims, centered gable with trim, and two-over-two windows.

While the iron railing and columns have acquired historic significance by the 50-year national standard, these elements are out of step with the rest of the historic structure and the period of significance for the property. As such, they can be considered non-contributing features to the façade of the historic farmhouse.



Image 1: South Elevation (Facade) showing the Front Porch with Iron Railings



Image 2: 1890s Photograph of Hamilton Shafer Façade



Image 3: Front porch with wooden columns and iron elements removed

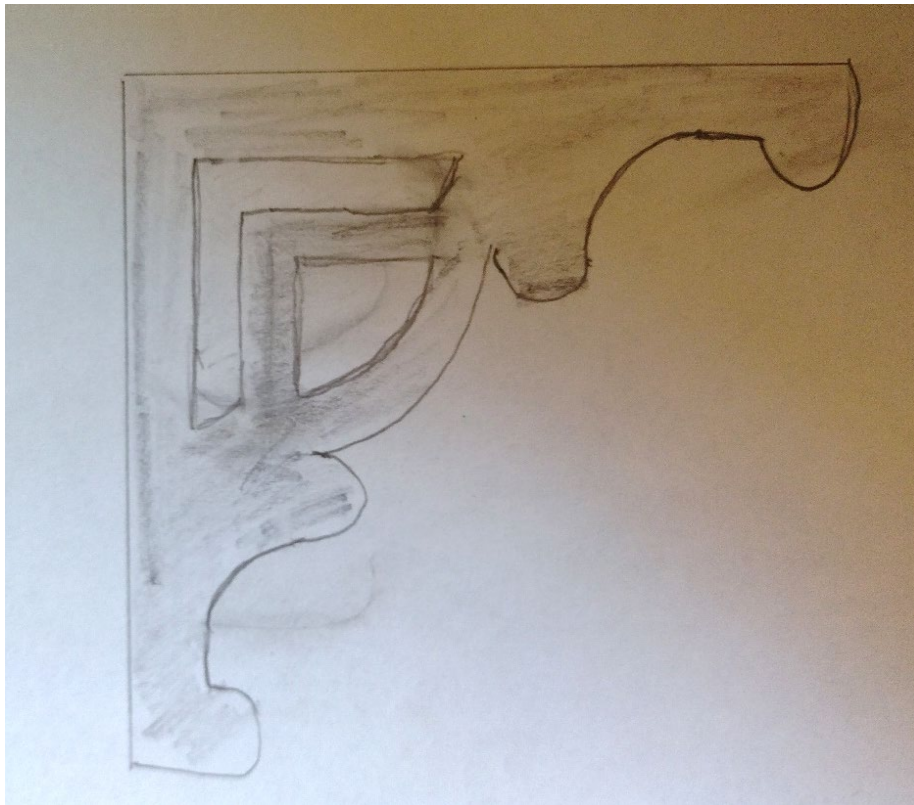


Image 4: Copy of the sketch provided to the carpenter creating the wooden brackets



Image 5: Close-up of iron railing and columns

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

Guideline	Met?	Comments
1G3: Introduction: Standards for Review: Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation	Yes	The <i>Guidelines</i> include the Secretary of the Interior's Standards. The standard that needs to be analyzed is, "4. Changes to a property that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved." It is believed by the applicant that the iron elements were added to the porch in the 1960s. They provided a historic photograph of the property that shows wooden columns with folk Victorian decorative elements that were present on the front porch without a railing during the period of significance.
4F2: Porch: Porch Elements	Yes	The <i>Guidelines</i> state that, "Historic documentation or physical evidence should be used when replicating a missing porch feature and new porch elements should be in-kind replacements that match the material, size, texture, and finish of the original element." The applicant has provided historic photographic documentation showing a squared wooden column with Folk Victorian-style jigsaw cut porch detailing on the column bracket. The applicant has matched both the location and design of the columns and the bracketing.

4F2: Porch: Porch Elements	Somewhat	As noted above, the applicant is using historic documentation to re-establish the historic character of the front porch. However, the photograph also shows porch trim and two columns flush with the exterior brick wall. Neither were proposed in this application. The guidelines do not require that applicants re-establish all elements, just that the proposed recreations have historical documentation.
4F4: Porch: Alterations	Yes	The <i>Guidelines</i> state that, "The Commission will review all proposed porch alterations on a case-by-case basis." Alterations for porches must be considered on an individual basis and the Commission should not use previous COA decisions in their decision-making process.
10H1: Demolition: The Degree of Importance Influence Demolition Decision: Non-Contributing Resources	Yes	The <i>Guidelines</i> state that, "If the resource is non-contributing, demolition may be approved if one of the following pertains: the integrity of the landscape will not be compromised; and the integrity of any surrounding historic properties will not be compromised." The porch is historic and removing the non-contributing iron porch elements will begin to restore the facade. The porch is visible from the public right-of-way.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends the Commission **approve** COA #24-07 under the criteria for Application Review in Chapter 1-23-7(B) (1). It can be found that the proposal: 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 with the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation* #2, #4, #5, and #6.