

**COMMISSION OF ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW
STAFF REPORT
March 24, 2015 Meeting**

9. **CAR No. 15-028** (C. Maxwell)

**507 N. Henry Street
Jackson Ward Old & Historic District**

Project Description: **Remove balustrade and install metal gate**

Staff Contact: **W. Palmquist**

The applicant requests approval for work performed on the property which consisted of the removal of an historic balustrade at the top of the front porch, as well as the addition of a metal gate on the second story to prevent access to the roof of the front porch. This application is the result of enforcement activity.

The work was performed in July 2012 and a Notice of Violation was issued in August 2012. The applicant states that they were unaware of the requirements surrounding properties in Old and Historic Districts at the time the work was performed. They state that the balustrade was severely deteriorated and parts had fallen to the ground below. The balustrade was therefore removed for safety considerations and a black metal barrier was installed on a second-floor door which leads to the roof of the front porch. Photos obtained from Google Streetview dated July 2011 (see attached) show the balustrade to be in overall poor condition with several balusters missing or visibly cracked and rotten. An identical front porch and balustrade can be seen on the adjoining structure, located at 509 N. Henry Street.

Staff recommends partial approval of the project. The *Richmond Old and Historic Districts Handbook and Design Review Guidelines* state to, "Retain original entrances and porches including doors, frames, fanlights, sidelights, steps, balustrades, pilasters, entablatures, columns and decorative features" (p. 55 #6), as well as "Do not remove or radically change entrances or porches in defining the building's overall historic character. Front and side porches are architecturally more ornate than utilitarian back porches" (p. 67 #4). The balustrade at the top of the front porch consisted of an important character-defining feature of the structure and its removal resulted in the significant loss of historic character. For this reason, staff cannot recommend the approval of this removed feature.

In regards to the installed black, metal gate, the *Guidelines* are generally supportive of simple black metal handrails, railing, and fences. Furthermore, the *Guidelines* provide for the administrative approval of the installation of black, metal handrails on properties lacking such features, so long as that material is compatible within the District. Therefore, staff recommends the approval of the installed second-floor gate as it is of a simple design that is compatible with other black metal and wrought iron features found throughout the Jackson Ward Old and Historic District.

It is the assessment of staff that the application is partially consistent with the Standards for Rehabilitation outlined in Section 114-930.7(b) of the City Code, and with the *Richmond Old and Historic Districts Handbook and Design Review Guidelines*, specifically the pages cited above, adopted by the Commission for review of Certificates of Appropriateness under the same section of the code.



Prior to work performed
(Google Streetview - July 2011)



Work being performed
(July 25, 2012)



Current condition
(January 5, 2015)



Existing balustrade at adjoining structure
509 N. Henry Street
(Google Streetview - August 2014)