

Spring Street

2020 Carolopolis Award - Architect's Narrative

Prepared by: Architect & Owner of Property

Introduction

When I first saw the house at 85 Spring Street, I could see that it was an ugly duckling. It was evident that there was once a 2-story front porch that faced Spring Street. However, at some point in time, an unfortunate renovation was completed that in-filled the porch at the 2nd level. This unfortunate renovation took what was originally beautiful and made it one of the least attractive houses on the street. I knew that if the porch could be brought back to life at both levels, it would be a jewel, or in this case, a swan.

Historic Research and Investigation

Upon review of the historic Sanborn Maps I was able to confirm that the house did in fact have a 2-story front porch; shown on both the 1944 and 1955 map. After a close investigation of the existing ground floor porch, it became evident that the ground floor porch was also not original. The porch floor was a 4" concrete slab, whereas tongue and groove wood planks are typical of historic Charleston porches. The columns had brick piers that were constructed of a wire-cut brick that was clearly newer than the brick utilized at the foundation of the home. In addition, the spacing of the columns was atypical. The house featured 3 columns and the spacing did not correspond to the exterior door openings. After review of other front porch precedents, it seemed much more likely that the front porch was originally 4 columns wide.

During the renovation process, a number of other helpful discoveries were made. When the interior sheet rock was demolished from the in-filled porch, the original wood siding and beadboard ceiling were discovered. These elements were completely intact with little to no damage. We also were able to uncover one original window opening, as well as half of the center door opening. From these discoveries I was able to deduce that the 2nd floor opening pattern was window – door - door, just like the ground floor.

The Design

Unfortunately, no photos could be found of the original house and porch. Therefore, we looked to local precedents for inspiration. A study was conducted of other 2-story porches in and around the Cannonborough-Elliottborough Neighborhood. Many of the porches had Victorian Era columns whereas others had Tuscan Columns. Because the house did not exhibit any Victorian details, we elected to go with the simpler Tuscan column design. The tongue and groove wood flooring as well as the new wood railings were all constructed to match other historic homes in the neighborhood.

The new 2nd floor window and 2 pairs of French doors, were constructed to replicated the existing doors and windows of the house. The porch ceilings received a fresh coat of haint blue paint, and the shutters Charleston Green.

The Scope:

The brick piers, wood columns and concrete slab at the ground floor porch were removed. It is not believed that these materials were historic as our guess is that this renovation was completed within the last 50 years. Fortunately, we were able to reuse many of the bricks as pavers for the driveway.

The 2-story front porch was completely rebuilt as described in the narrative. In some ways, the 2-story porch could be interpreted as a restoration, however since it had to be completely rebuilt, I believe it would technically be considered a reconstruction. All of the historic exterior elements were retained. The original siding at the 2nd floor porch and beadboard ceiling were restored. In addition, all of the wood siding on the house was patched, filled and repainted.

All of the historic windows were salvaged and made operable after being painted shut for years. In addition, the ground floor French doors were also made operable after being painted shut.

In addition to the porch reconstruction, the repair and repainting of all wood siding and trim, as well as landscape improvements have made a tremendous improvement. This house is now a beautiful house of which we are very proud.