

Brookline Preservation Commission

Local Historic District Report

Local Historic District: Pill Hill

Applicant: Douglas Plante

Address: 103 Walnut Street



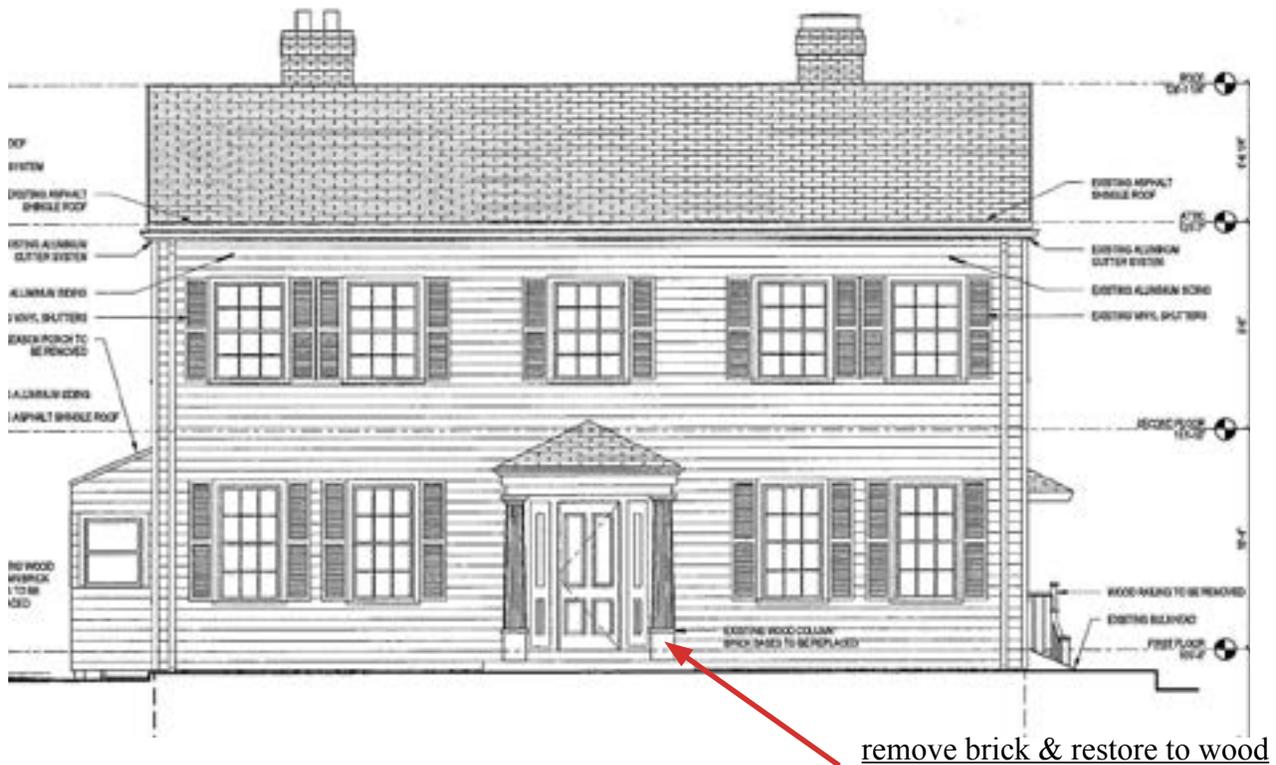
Statement of Significance: This house is the oldest in the Pill Hill Historic District and one of only a few that survive from the 18th century. According to research by Nina Fletcher Little it was constructed in about 1798 by Eliphalet Spurr before Boylston Street was constructed and when Walnut Street was the main east west thoroughfare through town. Spurr established a line of coaches to carry people between the Punch Bowl Tavern in Brookline and Boston. After Spurr died in 1817 this became the home of Eliza Aspinwall and her invalid brother Thomas until their deaths in 1842 and 1843. During the 1850s it was owned by the Leeds family with the house occupied by Benjamin Leeds. The 1871 town map records the house being used as an “Infant Asylum.” The house is very significant as a locally rare example of Federal Period architecture. The original house appears to have been the two story front section one room deep. Over the front entrance is a Doric portico that dates from the 1830s or 1840s (based on stylistic considerations). It may have been added around 1843 when the house was sold by the Aspinwall family. The present two story rear wing is probably a replacement of the original kitchen/wood shed wing that probably was only one story high. Early maps show a carriage barn on the property. Based upon file photographs, the interior is largely intact in terms of Federal Period woodwork. There are three formal mantelpieces, one in the Greek Revival style and two dating from the 1850s or 1860s.

Proposed Alterations: Application for Certificate of Appropriateness to remove window, relocate door and add new deck and stairs on east façade; remove porch and stairs and install two windows on west façade; remove 4 windows on first floor, install new pair of French doors with small hood above, install new windows, and new wood deck with railings and stairs on north façade. New wood bases replace brick piers on front entrance columns on south façade.

Applicable Guidelines: Existing windows should be repaired, not replaced... New and replacement windows should not be clad in non-historic materials. Vinyl or vinyl-clad and metal framed sash, and replacement windows incorporating external storm panels that are integrated in to the sash, should not be used... Doors... should not be made of metal or plastic. Replacement doors should not incorporate leaded or stained glass except when replicating a lost feature original to the house... There should be no new openings on principal facades, except to restore original or pre-existing openings... Traditional building materials should be used for existing buildings.”

Preliminary Findings: The east elevation is using the same elements in a slightly different location. The deck will be slightly reduced in size and the stairs re-oriented. A non-historic porch and stairs will be removed on the west elevation and replaced with two new 6/6 windows on the first floor. On the north elevation, 4 windows will be replaced by two sets of 6/6 windows, French doors with a small hood, and a new deck (with stairs and rails) running along the entire façade. (An earlier deck was removed for foundation work last year). However, the triple windows configuration is not consistent with the original fenestration. They should be two windows instead of three to match that existing. The majority of the work on this property will be on a non-primary façade. This elevation faces Route 9. It is partially obscured by a fence and foliage and has minimal impact on the streetscape. The main façade, on the south elevation, will have minor repairs to the base of the columns which will restore the front columns to their original state.

Front elevation





rear facade