

ADDRESS:	915-17 St. Ann Street	APPLICANT:	Choupique Holdings LLC
OWNER:	Victor F III Trahan	SQUARE:	86
ZONING:	VCR-1	LOT SIZE:	3673.5 sq. ft.
USE:	Vacant	OPEN SPACE:	
DENSITY:		REQUIRED:	1102 sq. ft.
ALLOWED:	4 units	EXISTING:	Unknown
EXISTING:	None	PROPOSED:	No change
PROPOSED:	Unknown		

ARCHITECTURAL/HISTORICAL DESCRIPTION OF PROPERTY:

Main building & detached service buildings: **Blue**, of major architectural and/or historic significance.

This very fine example of a Creole cottage was constructed in 1824 for Raymond Gaillard, Jr., one of the charter members of the Association of Colored Veterans. From the 1940s until his death in 1988, Boyd Cruse, painter and founding director of the Historic New Orleans Collection, made his home here. This cottage is especially prized because it is essentially intact.

Vieux Carré Commission Meeting of **11/15/2023**

DESCRIPTION OF APPLICATION: 11/15/2023
Permit #23-25097-VC GEN **Lead Staff: Erin Vogt**

Proposal to infill first and second floor door and window openings on the side elevations, and to install new “dormer” roof vents, per application & materials received 09/12/2023 & 10/20/2023, respectively.

STAFF ANALYSIS & RECOMMENDATION: 11/15/2023

In August 2022, staff issued initial permits for removal of stucco at the Blue rated main building and two small, detached kitchens. The applicant has stated that their overall philosophy for the work is to restore the building as closely as possible to its original 1824 appearance, and the proposal for work has adjusted depending on the physical evidence found. Staff has been given multiple opportunities to visit the site and document these conditions as they have been discovered. Exploratory demolition, particularly at the rear of the property, has led to the restoration of original openings at the cabinets and cellars, while non-historic openings in the side elevations of the detached kitchens were removed and bricked in. Following additional research and analysis, they are proposing to brick in all non-original openings, including the four first floor doors on the side elevations of the main building, as well as the four windows in the attic, before restuccoing the side and rear of the property. Full drawings for the overall restoration and renovation of the property will be submitted as the design continues to develop, and will likely require further review at the Committee and Commission levels due to the rating of the buildings.

The applicant has submitted a report analyzing the openings and providing supporting documentation, such as Sanborn maps and paint analysis, which identify which openings were added when. The report states that “the structural lintels fall into three categories: semi-circular arched masonry lintels, jack arch masonry lintels, and modern steel lintels. Openings with semi-circular arched masonry lintels have been identified as original openings.” The submitted plan indicates that the front openings, openings at the rear loggia, and cabinets are all original. The first-floor doors on the Dauphine elevation, as well as the second-floor window openings, are all second-generation masonry jack arches. The Sanborn maps indicate that the window openings were added on the Dauphine elevation between 1885 and 1896. The windows on the Burgundy elevation were added between 1896 and 1908. They were then bricked in again sometime before the 1950s, and restored in the same locations by 1964. The first-floor doors on the Burgundy elevation have modern steel lintels.

Based on analysis of other early Creole cottages, applicant’s hypothesis is that “although originally constructed without side openings in the 1830s, new openings were installed early on in the 1840s-50s.” Furthermore, paint analysis on the front and side shutters indicate that there were 15 distinct layers of paint on the front shutters, while the side openings only had 5 layers.

The VCC Design Guidelines state “at a property where modification has been made over time, those changes, particularly those made before the mid-20th century, may have become significant character-defining features of a property’s development. [...] When considering making any alteration to a historic property, identifying the building type and style is a critical first step in ensuring a successful result. Simply stated:

- The VCC encourages the removal of inappropriate, later changes as part of a façade restoration to make a building or property more historically appropriate to a specific date [Staff’s emphasis], with thorough documentation.
- The VCC discourages modern changes that compromise a building or property’s historic type, style, significance or integrity.” (VCC DG: 02-16)

Per the Design Guidelines, the Committee and Commission must determine if this property should be faithfully restored to its 1824 construction as proposed by the applicant, or if the side openings dating to the mid-19th century should be retained to show how the property evolved over time. When reviewed on 10/24/2023, Committee Chair Rick Fifield stated that the opportunity to faithfully restore a Blue rated building to its original 1824 appearance was a rare opportunity that the Commission should take advantage of.

Despite its barrel tile roof, extant roof framing indicates that dormers may have once been present on the front elevation. The applicant suspects that these openings may have been more of a roof vent than a dormer, and has presented two options for restoration of this feature. One has a 2:12 shed roof, while the other has a gable. A plate from Sebastian Serlio's *On Domestic Architecture* (ca. 1537-49), which the applicant states is referenced as a prototype for Creole cottages in New Orleans in *Louisiana Buildings 1720-1940*, shows simple shed roof dormers and a lack of side openings. Unfortunately, staff is not aware of any surviving comparable conditions. The applicant has stated that they intend to design the dormers so they can be used as a means of egress since the side windows are to be infilled.

Overall, the Committee appreciated the careful consideration of the work and moved to **approve** infill of the openings and the installation of the dormer-like roof vents, consistent with the plan to restore the 1824 appearance of the building.

VIEUX CARRÉ COMMISSION ACTION:

11/15/2023

Architecture Committee Meeting of**10/24/2023****DESCRIPTION OF APPLICATION:**

10/24/2023

Permit #23-25097-VCGEN**Lead Staff: Erin Vogt**

Proposal to infill first and second floor door and window openings on the side elevations, and to install new “dormer” roof vents, per application & materials received 09/12/2023 & 10/20/2023, respectively.

STAFF ANALYSIS & RECOMMENDATION:

10/24/2023

Staff notes that this application is in conjunction with the ongoing masonry and stucco repair and exploratory demolition conducted under permit number 22-23537-VCGEN. Staff has encouraged the applicant to submit a comprehensive proposal for the entire property, but the overall project is still under development as it is being informed by the current work. The applicant has stated that their overall philosophy for the work at 917 St. Ann is to restore the building as closely as possible to its original plan and fenestration. They are proposing to brick in all non-original openings, including the four doors on the side elevations of the main building, as well as the four windows in the attic.

The applicant has submitted a report analyzing the openings and providing supporting documentation, such as Sanborn maps and paint analysis, which identify which openings were added when. The report states that “the structural lintels fall into three categories: semi-circular arched masonry lintels, jack arch masonry lintels, and modern steel lintels. Openings with semi-circular arched masonry lintels have been identified as original openings.” The submitted plan indicates that the front openings, openings at the rear loggia, and cabinets are all original. The first-floor doors on the Dauphine elevation, as well as the second-floor window openings, are all second-generation masonry jack arches. The Sanborn maps indicate that the window openings were added on the Dauphine elevation between 1885 and 1896. The windows on the Burgundy elevation were added between 1896 and 1908. The first-floor doors on the Burgundy elevation are modern steel lintels.

Based on analysis of other early Creole cottages, applicant’s hypothesis is that “although originally constructed without side openings in the 1830s, new openings were installed early on in the 1840s-50s.” Furthermore, paint analysis on the front and side shutters indicate that there were 15 distinct layers of paint on the front shutters, while the side openings only had 5 layers.

The VCC Design Guidelines state “*at a property where modification has been made over time, those changes, particularly those made before the mid-20th century, may have become significant character-defining features of a property’s development. [...] When considering making any alteration to a historic property, identifying the building type and style is a critical first step in ensuring a successful result. Simply stated:*

- *The VCC encourages the removal of inappropriate, later changes as part of a façade restoration to make a building or property more historically appropriate to a specific date [Staff’s emphasis], with thorough documentation.*
- *The VCC discourages modern changes that compromise a building or property’s historic type, style, significance or integrity.” (VCC DG: 02-16)*

Most importantly, the Committee and Commission will need to decide if this property should be faithfully restored to its 1824 construction as proposed by the applicant, or if the side openings dating to the mid-19th century should be retained to show how the property evolved over time. Whatever philosophical approach is adopted will have significant impacts on the direction of the restoration.

Despite its barrel tile roof, extant roof framing indicates that dormers may have once been present on the front elevation. The applicant suspects that these openings may have been more of a roof vent than a dormer, and has presented two options for restoration of this feature. One has a 2:12 shed roof, while the other has a gable. Staff is unsure what guidance to provide for dormer-like penetrations in a barrel tile roof, particularly when it comes to cheek wall material, flashing, roof slope, etc. A plate from Sebastian Serlio’s *On Domestic Architecture* (ca. 1537-49), which the applicant states is referenced as a prototype for Creole cottages in New Orleans in *Louisiana Buildings 1720-1940*, shows simple shed roof dormers and a lack of side openings. Unfortunately, staff is not aware of any surviving comparable conditions.

Since the proposed dormer-like penetrations are shown as louvered vents rather than traditional windows, it is likely that removal of the side openings will not be allowed by building code, as it would leave the attic bedroom without windows.

Staff seeks the guidance of the Committee regarding whether or not a full 1824 restoration should be pursued, including the dormer-like attic vents, or if the c. 1840s-50s side openings should be retained due to the historic significance they have obtained.

ARCHITECTURAL COMMITTEE ACTION:

10/24/2023

Mr. Block read the report with Mr. Cangelosi present on behalf of the application. Mr. Cangelosi stated that the owner was attempting to restore the building to its original date of construction as authentically as possible, and that most of the millwork dated to a previous Barry Fox/Frank Masson renovation that was never completed. The only exception was the shutters, which they did paint analysis on to determine what was original. He stated that staff had visited the site and saw clear evidence in the roof framing that the dormers had existed, which was very atypical. Mr. Cangelosi added that they had found another Creole cottage that had something like this, but they had been removed. He explained that the work they had done so far was bringing them to the original construction date of 1824. He added that they were still unsure why the stucco on the front elevation had been allowed; Ms. Bourgogne stated that staff had located the original meeting recording where this was discussed, but the technology had changed and the file type could not be opened on staff's computers. Mr. Cangelosi stated that the brick matched the Doric column at the back loggia, which showed a very unusual federal influence on New Orleans architecture. He added that there was wood blocking that indicated there was a wood cornice across the entire façade which would help seal the barrel tile roof. He explained that none of this had been presented yet and that they were doing tests on how best to remove adhesive between the bricks and Styrofoam that was added. Ms. Bourgogne noted that the side openings and dormers were the only items under review today.

Mr. Cangelosi stated that he had tried designing the dormers with lites but that the proportions didn't quite work, but that they could meet the minimum requirements for a second means of egress, with operable louvers and glass behind. They had tried four different designs for the dormers but found the shed roof option the most successful, thus the full-size mockup. Mr. Fifield stated that the opportunity for a faithful restoration of a Blue rated building to its original construction date under the design and supervision of an experienced architect was a wonderful opportunity but that its success would all hang on the details. He stated that it seemed there was a rigorous design process based off of archaeological or physical evidence, while taking into account in-kind examples from the Quarter and plan books. Mr. Bergeron agreed. He asked when the barrel tile roof dated to; Mr. Cangelosi stated that they appeared to be original but that the roof had been covered with slate at various points. He noted that the rafters were very small but continuous from the ridge to the abat-vents.

Mr. Bergeron asked if the masonry arches would remain in the wall after the doors are filled in; Mr. Cangelosi responded yes, that they would all be left in the wall before continuous stucco would be applied, in case the wall was excavated further at a later date.

Mr. Bergeron stated that he appreciated the applicant's diligent work and moved to **approve** the infill of the side openings and the dormer roof vents. Mr. Fifield asked that Mr. Bergeron amend the motion to include "consistent with the plan to restore the 1824 appearance," which Mr. Bergeron did. Mr. Fifield seconded the motion, which passed unanimously. Mr. Cangelosi asked if the dormer details would need to return to the Committee; Mr. Block and Ms. Bourgogne responded yes, and that the entire proposal would require Commission review.