

THE REPORT OF THE ARCHITECTURAL COMMITTEE OF THE
PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION

David Hollenberg, Chairman

Commission Conference Room

26 November 1991

Present

David Hollenberg, Chairman
William Cornell, J.S. Cornell & Sons, Inc.
Donald Stevenson, Architect

Randal Baron, Preservation Planner
Daniel W. Simcox, Executive Secretary

Also

Philip Ivory, Voith & MacTavish Architects
Vincent Maiello, Kelly/Maiello Architects
Eric Rahe, Bower Lewis Thrower / Architects
Larry Wilson, Mayor's Office of Transportation
David L. Cohen, Central Philadelphia Development Corporation
David A. Schultz, DAS Architects
Thom Jacobson, S.S. Fleisher Art Memorial
Joseph Nadau, owner, City Blue

College Hall at Temple University: Philip Ivory of Voith & MacTavish Architects presented plans to alter this landmark, which was the first building constructed for academic purposes at Temple University. Built in 1893 of a design by Thomas Lonsdale, it has been unoccupied for a number of years. The proposal entails little interior work, rather focusing on exterior repair, including construction of a new entry pavilion to the rear, window replacement, re-roofing and repointing. A new chiller system for air conditioning for much of the campus has been installed in the basement.

The proposed entry pavilion, with wheelchair access, will pierce a blank, stuccoed side wall which abutted a rowhouse. The existing fiberglass shingle roof will be replaced with asphalt shingles; because only a small part is visible from the street he wanted to use supra-dur or another slate substitute on the front slopes of the roof. The Committee recommended conceptual approval of these alterations.

The applicant also proposed replacement of existing wooden windows with aluminum frames and sash. Though suggesting wooden replacements on the Broad Street facade, the Committee acknowledged that it had approved aluminum replacements for other institutional buildings where the new profiles substantially matched those of the historic wooden windows. As yet, drawings had not been submitted. Therefore, the Committee took no action on the proposed window replacement because of insufficient information.

Approval

Reading Railroad Terminal, 1115-1141 Market Street - New Construction of a Pedestrian Bridge over Twelfth Street: In 1990, the Commission voted an approval in concept for a bridge spanning Twelfth Street from the link building of the Terminal to a proposed hotel. The Commission requested further study of the roof of this structure and particularly the structural and architectural character of the meeting with the Terminal. Since then, the Art Commission and the Redevelopment Authority's Advisory Board of Design have both approved a revised design.

The design, by Kelly/Maiello Architects, consists of a tube of grey-painted metal with green-tinted glass, supported by a green-painted bridge truss system. The area of the meeting with the Terminal will be cast stone of a color matching the terra cotta of the link. Its top will align with the meeting rail of the windows. However, the underside will extend below a granite line; Mr. Maiello pointed out that several intrusions already pierce this material and that it was not possible to hold the bridge entirely above this line because of the floor level of the link building. Finally, the roof retains an arch, because of its importance to the value of the structure's interior, but reduces its pitch so that it will not be as visible from the street.

Though Mr. Cornell acknowledged that the concept already had been approved, he expressed fundamental dissatisfaction with the concept of a bridge, preferring that people move between buildings on the street. The Committee expressed concern regarding the proposed point of attachment, suggesting that the appearance of a floating masonry structure was peculiar. However, members conveyed general satisfaction with the revised design and voted to recommend approval of this design.

Fleisher Art Memorial, 711-721 Catherine Street: Established in 1915, Fleisher is a renowned art institution consisting of galleries and a tuition-free school. In 1922, it converted the Church of the Evangelists, an 1886 design by Baker and Dallett. Over the years, Fleisher acquired several adjacent rowhouses. As part of a program to renovate these facilities, the applicants propose to install a new awning, sign and gates, to restore several windows and to remove several electrical fixtures.

The proposed sign and awning will establish a clear primary entrance. Cast in bronze, the sign will hang from the copper mesh awning which in turn will be hung from the inside of an existing masonry opening. The gates will fit into an existing doorway which will be reopened to its original height. This opening, secured from the street by a gate, leads to a modern entrance to the complex. The proposed entry treatment will not harm any historic fabric on the exterior of these buildings. The Committee recommended approval of this proposal.

Disapproval

Foot Comfort Shoe Store, 1106 Chestnut Street: Joseph Nadau, owner of this property and thirteen other City Blue stores in Philadelphia and New Jersey, expressed confusion regarding violations issued for alterations undertaken without a permit to the facade of this 1933 Art Deco store. In July 1988, he installed a sign that he considered similar to those extant on the block. [Note: This building remains the only one designated on this block]. He also claimed to have paid Atlas Sign Company to obtain a permit for the work. However, a violation issued one month later, indicates that no permit was obtained. Yet, Mr. Nadau maintains that the sign is attractive and necessary. This violation also included other facade alterations undertaken without a permit. A single large plate glass window was replaced by two plates divided by a vertical mullion. Dividing the window diminished replacement costs for glass broken by vandals.

Randal Baron noted that installation of the present plastic, internally-illuminated sign apparently entailed the removal of a sign installed in the 1940s. The applicant noted that neon letters in metal channels, were removed before he bought the building. However, the enameled metal panels of that sign remain. Mr. Baron noted that both the Art Commission and Historical Commission had sought a violation for this inappropriate sign and that the staffs would be happy to work with Mr. Nadau and his sign company to come up with a more appropriate design.

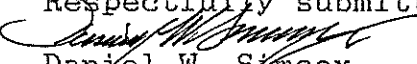
The Committee acknowledged that the owner was in an unfortunate position, having been promised a permit which was not obtained. However, the Committee stressed that it serves to review proposals on their architectural merit and that the present sign would have been disapproved. They also noted that it was the owner's responsibility to ensure that a permit has been secured, and that he has such a permit, before beginning any work.

Warren Huff of the Planning Commission staff added that this property is situated in the Center City Special Controls District. Therefore, proposed alterations require approval by the Planning Commission and signs require approval of the Art Commission. Neither was sought nor obtained. If the applicant had submitted plans, the proposal would have been denied and suggestions offered for more appropriate alterations.

Having acknowledged these remarks, the Committee recommended disapproval of this request.

Following each recommendation, Mr. Hollenberg informed the applicants that a final vote would be taken on these matters at the next meeting of the Historical Commission, scheduled for 11 December 1991 at 10:00 am in the City Council Caucus Room, Room 401 City Hall. Having completed its agenda, the Committee adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,


Daniel W. Simcox,
Executive Secretary