

PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION

COMMITTEE ON HISTORIC DESIGNATION

The thirty-sixth meeting of the Committee on Historic Designation began at 10:30 a.m. on Friday, 2 February 1990, in Room 791 City Hall.

Present: David Brownlee, Chairman of the Committee on Historic Designation
David Baldinger, Deputy Director, Philadelphia City Planning Commission
Caroline Golab
Janet Klein
Hyman Myers
Sandra Tatman

Richard Tyler, Historic Preservation Officer
Patricia Siemiontkowski, Assistant Historic Preservation Officer
Randal Baron, Preservation Planner
Ira Kauderer, Preservation Consultant

NEW BUSINESS

The Committee reviewed a nomination for

Kensington Branch YWCA	174 W. Allegheny Avenue
Hewitt, Granger and Paist, Architects	1911-15

The YWCA building at 174 W. Allegheny Avenue possesses significance for its social history as one of the most important agencies for social reform and education in the mill districts of Northeast Philadelphia as well as for its architects Hewitt, Granger, and Paist. The YM AND YWCA movement founded in England to assist industrial workers with lodging, food and other needed services, soon spread to the United States. Kensington which developed as an industrial center of ship building and textile mills attracted immigrants from many parts of Europe who came to find work in Philadelphia. The YWCA assisted the women of Kensington and the lower Northeast with day care, meals, lodging, cultural and athletic facilities, while serving as an instrument of Protestant middleclass socialization. The architectural firm of Hewitt, Granger and Paist which designed this Colonial Revival building designed many of the region's most important buildings including the Bourse, the Bellevue Stratford Hotel and, in Kensington, the Episcopal Hospital.

The Committee voted unanimously (6-0) in favor of recommending this building for designation.

The Committee reviewed a nomination for a group of buildings at 1214-1232 Arch Street and asked that the form be rewritten and broken up into individual nominations for three of the buildings. The A.J. Holman building in the middle of the row was already previously designated by the Commission and therefore need not be reconsidered.

Mershon Building
Milligan and Webber

1214 Arch Street
1907

The Mershon building possesses significance as a fine example of a loft structure, as an example of Beaux Arts Classicism, as the work of the architects of Milligan and Webber and as part of a streetscape of related buildings. This type of building is unusual in combining reinforced concrete floors for industrial production with a ground floor showroom and decorative facade. The loft buildings of Arch Street were built to serve the requirements of light industrial concerns that needed close proximity to the Central Business District. Tall in height because of the high cost of land in the area and decorative because of its Downtown location and sales function this building is a fine example of a type that has become increasingly rare with the demolition for the Convention and Criminal Justice Centers and the Gallery. This building, a handsome Venetian Renaissance interpretation of Beaux Arts Classicism was designed by the important Philadelphia architectural firm of Milligan and Webber. These architects have designed such other Philadelphia landmarks as the Belgravia Hotel and the Torraine Apartments. The building has added significance as part of a streetscape of buildings on the 1200 block of Arch Street.

The Committee voted unanimously (6 - 0) in favor of recommending this building for designation.

Young, Smith Field Company

1216-1220 Arch Street
1902

The Young Smith Field building possesses significance as a fine example of a loft structure, as an example of simplified Beaux Arts Classicism, as the work of the architects Field and Medary and as part of a streetscape of related buildings. This type of building is unusual in combining reinforced concrete floors for industrial production with a ground floor showroom and decorative facades. The loft buildings of Arch Street were built to serve the requirements of light industrial concerns that needed close proximity to the Central Business District. Tall in height because of the high cost of land in this area, and decorative because of its downtown location and sales function, this building is a fine example of a type that has become increasingly rare with the demolition for the Convention and Criminal Justice Centers as well as the Gallery. The Architects Field and Medary designed this building using a classical vocabulary

to decorate a handsome and straight-forward expression of the internal piers and floors. The building achieves added significance as part of a streetscape of loft buildings.

The Committee voted unanimously (6 - 0) in favor of recommending this building for designation.

Breintnall Building
Charles W. Bolton, Architect

1228-1232 Arch Street
1909

The Breintnall building possesses significance as a fine example of a loft structure, as an example of Beaux Arts Classicism, as the work of architect Charles W. Bolton and as part of a streetscape of related buildings. This type of building is unusual in combining reinforced concrete floors for industrial production with a ground floor showroom and decorative facades. The loft buildings of Arch Street were built to serve the requirements of light industrial concerns that needed close proximity to the Central Business District. Tall in height because of the high cost of land in this area and decorative because of its downtown location and sales function this building is a fine example of a type that has become increasingly rare with the demolition for the Convention and Criminal Justice Centers and the Gallery. This building, a handsome brick and terra cotta clad interpretation of Beaux Arts Renaissance Revival was designed by the prolific Philadelphia architect Charles W. Bolton. Mr. Bolton designed the entire company town of Pocohantas Virginia and over 500 ecclesiastical buildings as well as a selection of commercial buildings. Finally the Breintnall building has added significance as part of a streetscape of loft buildings in the 1200 block of Arch Street.

The Committee voted unanimously (6 - 0) in favor of recommending this building for designation.

Integrity Trust Bank
Paul Phillipe Cret

715-717 Chestnut Street
1923

The Integrity Trust building possesses significance as a fine example of the work of important Philadelphia architect Paul Cret and as an early example of Cret's "Greek modernism." Paul Cret who studied at the Ecole des Beaux Arts and emigrated to the United States, taught at the University of Pennsylvania and had a major impact on design in Philadelphia and in the country. He designed such important projects as the Pan American Union and Federal Reserve Building in Washington, the University of Texas in Austin, and the Federal Reserve building, the Rodin Museum and the Benjamin Franklin Bridge piers in Philadelphia. His expertise in planning is reflected in his designs for Rittenhouse Square and the Benjamin Franklin Parkway. The Integrity Trust building exemplifies Paul Cret's "translations of the structural forces of the steel frame into the language of

Classicism." He came to believe that the volume of a building should be the focus of design. With a firm training in Classical architecture, Cret looked back to the Temples of Greece, in this case the Choragic Monument of Thrasyllos, and reinterpreted them for modern use. This building with its vaulted banking room still intact is an excellent example of Cret's work and of the style he refined.

The Committee voted unanimously (6 - 0) in favor of recommending this building for designation.

Watkins Building
Albert W. Dilks, Architect

1031-1033 Chestnut Street
1894

The Watkins building possesses significance as a rare and early extant example of a Renaissance Revival/Chicago style midrise, as an illustration of major retailing trends on the City's pre-eminent shopping street and as the work of 19th century Philadelphia architect, Albert Dilks. The Watkins building combines relatively conservative Renaissance design elements popular on the east coast such as columns, capitols, balustrades and arched windows with the three sided bay and continuous vertical registers of Chicago style skyscrapers. The building is one of the earliest and most intact examples of a tall commercial building in Philadelphia. The building housed a succession of piano manufacturers and sales showrooms in a period when pianos were the main source of home entertainment. The Wurlitzer Company which used the building for many years consolidated piano manufacturing and sales and became "the largest purveyor of music and musical instruments in the world." The Watkins building is a fine example of the work of Albert Dilks, a Philadelphia architect who worked with T. P. Chandler and designed a series of mansions and distinctive commercial structures in the late Victorian period.

The Committee voted unanimously (6 - 0) in favor of recommending this building for designation.

Rowland House

4501 Fisher's Lane
c. 1793/c. 1840

The Rowland House possesses significance as a rare 18th century house in Northeast Philadelphia, part of an 18th century settlement which remains preserved along the Tacony Creek, and as the home of Harvey Rowland who ran a mill and later an important saw works. It remains as the grandest house in the remnants of a small village typical of the earliest settlements of Oxford township. Although Northeast Philadelphia lost its rural character through extensive development, this small settlement remains largely intact. The village probably owes its existence to a mill on Tacony Creek. The Rowlands bought the mill and expanded it into a saw works which provided "a large proportion of the larger size mill and cross cut saws in use."

The Committee voted unanimously (6 - 0) in favor of recommending the house for historic designation.

E. W. Clark & Company	1531-1535 Locust Street
Zantzinger, Borie, & Medary, Architects	1928

The E. W. Clark and Company bank building possesses significance as a fine example of the work of Philadelphia architects Zantzinger, Borie and Medary, as an example of "Stripped Classicism" and as one of only four private banking facilities built in Philadelphia. Zantzinger Borie and Medary are well known for their important collaborative work on the Benjamin Franklin Parkway and the Philadelphia Museum of Art but alone they designed such buildings as the Fidelity Mutual Life Insurance Building and the Protestant Episcopal Divinity School at 42nd and Spruce Streets. This building is a fine example of "Stripped Classicism", which can be seen in the melding of modernistic elements such as the vertical registers, steel casements and decorated parapet wall with Classical elements such as the stylized pilasters and pictorial friezes of Greek coins. The private banking institution of E. W. Clark was founded as a private bank in 1837 by the Clark family that also owned many public utilities and street cars as well as the Midvale steel Company. This is one of the very few buildings in the city constructed for the specific purpose of private banking.

The Committee voted unanimously (6 - 0) to recommend the building for historic designation. The Historical Commission staff looked into the designation of this building at the request of the Planning Commission.

Tacony Music Hall 4815-4819 Longshore Avenue
1885

The Tacony Music Hall possesses significance because of its role as the cultural, social and recreational center of Tacony and for its exuberant Victorian brick architecture. Tacony Music Hall was founded in 1872 by Henry Disston who bought 390 acres of farmland for his factory, the nation's first machine made saw works. Disston ran his community in a paternalistic manner, helping to fund housing, churches and this Music Hall. The building itself was built in 1883 as a speculative venture by Frank Jordon and features commercial space, an assembly hall for lectures and music, and a library. The library in particular was funded by the Disston family. The Hall, a striking building of red brick is decorated with corbelled brickwork, pressed tin and stained glass. Once prominently featured on the mast head of the Tacony town newspaper, the building remains one of the major landmarks of the Tacony neighborhood.

The Committee voted unanimously (6 - 0) in favor of the designation of this building.

Fifth District Station House
Charles D. Supplee & Son

215 S. 15th Street
1870/1898

The Fifth District Police Station house possesses significance as the earliest extant Philadelphia Police Station house, as a landmark in the development of the Philadelphia Police Department, as a fine example of the Second Empire style, and as the work of an important architect/builder associated with 19th century Philadelphia public buildings, Charles Supplee and Son. In the mid-19th century Philadelphia made the transition from a volunteer to a professional police force. Early police stations had the role of housing not just the police and criminals but also many homeless people. This grand building on 15th Street was hailed as a major improvement for the important downtown 5th district during a period of reorganization and strengthening of the police force. It remains as the oldest standing police station in the city. The building was designed by Charles D. Supplee and Son who also designed the Ridge Avenue Farmers Market as well as several other Police Stations and Public bath houses. The free standing building with its mansard, projecting central pavillion and limestone quoins serves as one of the finest examples of the Second Empire style in the City of Philadelphia.

The Committee voted unanimously (6 - 0) to recommend the building for designation.

Hotel Vendig
J. Franklin Stuckert

1201 Market Street
1891-1893

The Hotel Vendig possesses significance as a rare example of a Victorian terminal hotel, for its Victorian Eclectic style and as an example of the work of J. Franklin Stuckert. Built between 1891-1893 the Hotel Vendig was created to take advantage of the business brought to 12th and Market by the New Reading Terminal. A now rare ~~example of the type~~ of economical hotel designed to serve the train traveller, this building is also one of the very few surviving hotels of a ~~type~~ built in the Victorian period in Philadelphia. This building was designed by J. Franklin Stuckert, most famous for his ecclesiastical designs and work for the Horn and Hardart Company. With its curved corner echoing the train station across the street, this building carries a profusion of fanciful iron and terra cotta ornament typical of the eclectic architecture of the late Victorian period.

The Committee discussed the appropriateness of considering a building for designation that has long been slated for demolition, particularly for a major public project, in this case the Convention Center hotel. The Committee decided to fulfill its technical role of

advising the Commission on the building's significance. The Committee found that the building possesses the significance to be placed on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places by a vote of 3 - 2. The Committee voted 4 - 0, however, to recommend against the designation of the building because of the established public policy decision to demolish the building. In both cases Hyman Myers abstained from voting because of his role in the Convention Center project.

The staff has since learned that a demolition permit was obtained for the building prior to the meeting.

The staff presented the Committee with a list of buildings and a slide show to help them pick out a number of buildings for possible future designation. This process was meant to help guide the staff in choosing buildings in the Central Business District for our consultant Mr. Kauderer to nominate under the terms of our Certified Local Government grant. The Committee members ranked each building taking into account both significance and threats to the buildings. The staff will tabulate the results and prioritize the buildings accordingly.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:30 p.m.



Randal Baron
Preservation Planner

RB:sj