

PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION
COMMITTEE ON HISTORIC DESIGNATION

January 27, 1995

David Brownlee, Chairman

The forty first meeting of the Committee on Historic Designation began at 12:30 p.m. on Friday, January 27, 1995 at the corner of 25th and Delancey Streets. Members examined several areas of the Rittenhouse Fidler district boundary and reconvened at 1:30 p.m. in Room 1301, 1401 Arch Street, Philadelphia Historical Commission Conference Room.

Present: David Brownlee, Chair of the Committee on Historic Designation
David Baldinger, Deputy Director, Philadelphia City Planning Commission
Janet Klein
Stephanie Wolf

Richard Tyler
Randal Baron

The Committee met to review certain boundary questions in regard to the Rittenhouse Fidler Residential district. In particular, the owner of 2411 A Delancey Street asked that the whole 2400 block of Delancey be removed from the district because of the large amount of newer construction on the block. The Committee looked at the four sides of the block and the 2411 courtyard. The Committee also drove to the other side of the district to look at the boundaries at 15th and Spruce where there are several rowhouses currently scheduled to be part of the new Orchestra Hall site.

The Committee deferred discussion until reconvening back at the Commission Offices at 1:30 p.m. The Committee members all expressed the opinion that:

1. There are several early houses on 25th Street that clearly contribute to the district.
2. That the newer row of Bauhaus modern style houses on Delancey Street and the houses in the 2411 courtyard both have some architectural value in terms of design and planning although they are listed as non-contributing. With age their contribution will only grow.
3. The buildings on 29th Street make up an edge to Fidler Square and have value in this regard as well.

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4. Twenty-fifth Street, given the contributing buildings on it and being the edge of a park make a very strong and reasonable boundary. The Committee unanimously voted to recommend retention of the current western boundary.

On the issue of the 15th and Spruce Street boundary the Committee was unclear as to which buildings might be slated for demolition - the ones on 15th or those on Spruce Street. Dick Tyler made some calls and found that the Avenue of the Arts organization would like to see both groups of buildings excluded. David Brownlee explained that he had promised in the last Commission meeting that he would vote for their demolition in the public interest if the Orchestra Hall was to be built on the site. The Avenue of the Arts group was not fully assured by that and wants the buildings excluded now from the district.

The Committee noted the age of the c.1840s rowhouses buildings on 15th Street and the Cope and Stewardson refacading of 1524 Spruce Street in a row of intact mid-19th century buildings in that block.

The Committee voted to recommend to the Commission that the buildings clearly contribute to the district in terms of their historic architecture.

The Committee also recognized that the Commission does not act in a planning vacuum. David Baldinger explained that at first the Planning Commission had advocated that the 15th Street buildings be left standing. The plan called for building a parking lot at the 15th Street end of the site with new commercial structures on 15th Street itself. They thought that these buildings might screen the parking lot and make a transition to the neighborhood. The architects, however, rejected this plan as unfeasible and so the plans now calls for demolition. David Baldinger also explained how their inclusion into the district could muddy the long term planning for the Orchestra Hall.

The Committee voted unanimously to recognize that a higher public good would be served by the construction of the Orchestra Hall than the preservation of these buildings.

NEW BUSINESS

The Committee considered the following buildings as individual landmarks.

The Philadelphia Inquirer	400 N. Broad Street
Elverson Building	1923
Rankin, Kellogg & Crane	

The Elverson Building possesses significance as a fine example of its style, as an example of the work of an important architectural firm and as the embodiment of the history of this locally and nationally important newspaper. The Elverson Building, a visual landmark of the Philadelphia skyline demonstrates the characteristics of Modern Classicism in the 1920s. Its tall setback shape incorporates steel frame technology and classical terra-cotta details. Its siting on and use of the railroad tracks below gives it significance in engineering. The firm of Rankin, Kellogg and Crane was one of Philadelphia's most important in the early twentieth century producing a number of Beaux-Arts governmental buildings around the country. In Philadelphia they designed the Marine Club building at Broad Street & Washington Avenue and the Provident Trust Company at 17th and Chestnut Streets. The building also possess significance as the home of the Philadelphia Inquirer, America's third oldest surviving newspaper and a major cultural institution in the City of Philadelphia and the region. The Committee noted that they had voted in favor of the designation of the whole complex before, but in recognition of the Inquirer's concern about additions to the adjacent Rotogravure building, that portion of the building had been removed from the nomination.

The Committee voted unanimously in favor of recommending the Elverson building on its own for historic designation.

Kirschbaum Factory 1001-1029 S. Broad Street
Joseph M. Huston, Architect 1900-1901
William Steele and Sons, builders

The A.B. Kirschbaum Building represents four areas of significance for the architecture and history of Philadelphia. First, as one of the largest men's clothing factories in the nation when opened in 1902, the Kirschbaum Building stands as a remarkable reminder of the primary role that textiles played in Philadelphia's industrial history. Originally planned as a factory for the expanding Wanamakers Department Stores it was transferred to the Kirschbaum concern which had won a major U.S. government contract as well as being a major supplier to Wanamakers. Second, as the design work of Joseph Huston, architect of the Pennsylvania State Capitol, the factory possesses significance. As the construction work of William Steele & Sons, one of Philadelphia major builders, that significance is further enhanced. Third, as an enormous, intact example of "slow-burning mill construction" -- a traditional industrial building method combining masonry load-bearing walls with thick wooden framing -- the building possesses engineering significance. Finally, as an excellent example of the Beaux-Arts Renaissance Revival style applied to a large factory, the building possesses architectural significance. The Committee recognized that this building has had most of its windows removed

at the request of Licenses and Inspections, but many of its original windows remain intact on the north wall and the building is sealed. The building is a major component within the Washington Avenue National Register Historic District. The Committee unanimously recommended designation of the property.

Alexander Martin Building
Frank Keisker, Architect

1728 Chestnut Street
1914

The Alexander Martin Building, at 1728 Chestnut Street in Center City, represents two areas of significance to the architecture and history of Philadelphia. First, it possesses architectural significance as a fine example of a mode of design made fashionable in Philadelphia in the 1880s and 1890s by the Wilson Eyre, Jr., Frank Miles Day, and the other architects of the T-Square Club. This eclectic style includes aspects of the Venetian Gothic, English Renaissance Revival, Beaux Arts Classicism, and Arts and Crafts styles. Secondly, the building has commercial significance to Center City as a superb example of an exclusive professional office and residence for a successful optometrist who catered to wealthy patrons from Rittenhouse Square. As such, it represents a class of commercial building that succeeded the original rowhouses along Chestnut Street at the turn of the century yet retained the scale and character of a Rittenhouse Square townhouse.

The Committee voted unanimously in favor of recommending this building for historic designation.

East Park Canoe House
Walter T. Smedley

East Park
1913-14

The East Park Canoe House possesses significance as an excellent example of the Mission Revival style in Philadelphia. This style, derived from the Spanish Missions of the Southwest can be seen in the long low stuccoed form of the building, the arcaded porch and barrel tile hipped roof. The architect Walter T. Smedley, a founder of the T-Square Club, gives the building added significance. The canoe house possesses local significance as well for it represents an expansion of the services of Fairmount Park and the goals of municipal planning.

The Committee unanimously recommended the designation of the structure.

University Club
Wilson Eyre Jr.

1316 Walnut Street
1887

The University Club in Center City Philadelphia possesses significance in several areas of architectural and social history. The building serves as a rare surviving example of the influential early work of the nationally distinguished architect Wilson Eyre Jr. It is also a fine example of a mode of architecture blending Venetian Gothic Revival, English Classicism and Arts and Crafts fashion that Eyre was so influential in creating in the late 19th century. The building also served as the first clubhouse for the University Club, a newly formed mens club composed largely of Philadelphia's social and professional elite.

Although the committee members regretted the alterations that have occurred on the building at the two lower floors, they agreed that the building is such an important example of the work of Eyre and that enough original fabric remains to recommend the designation of the building by a vote of 4 to 0.

Hotel Hamilton
Addison Hutton, Architect

1334-36 Walnut Street
1887-88

The former Hotel Hamilton building possesses four areas of significance for the architecture and history of Philadelphia. As perhaps the oldest surviving hotel building in Center City and as an early example of a residential hotel, a turn-of-the-century housing form that evolved into the modern high-rise apartment, the building possesses social and cultural significance. As a rare surviving example in Center City of Queen Ann architecture applied to a commercial building, the building possesses architectural significance. As an unusual example of a three-story rowhouse converted into a seven-story hotel, it possesses significance for the history of Center City's urban development. And as the design of Addison Hutton, a well-known late 19th century architect associated with Philadelphia's Quaker community, it possesses significance as the work of a prominent architect. That significance is reinforced by the building's association with Edward T. Steel, a prominent Quaker businessman and public figure, who developed the property in 1887-88.

The Committee unanimously voted in favor of the designation of this building.

1509 Walnut Street
erected 1902

The Dr. James C. Wilson House, at 1509 Walnut Street possesses four areas of significance for the architecture and history of Philadelphia. First, the building is stylistically significant as an excellent and rare example of the Jacobean Revival style applied to a Philadelphia rowhouse. Second, the building has significance as the work of Newman, Woodman & Harris, a firm that designed such prominent Center City buildings as the Rittenhouse Club (1901) and the Corn Exchange National Bank (1901). Third, the building possesses cultural significance for Center City's historical development as an excellent example of a single-family townhouse originally designed for a residential street in the Rittenhouse Square neighborhood. As such, it stands as an excellent example of a prestigious home built for a prominent Philadelphian before 20th century development transformed West Walnut Street into the affluent retail and commercial address it remains today. Finally, the building is socially significant as the home built for Dr. James C. Wilson, a leading figure in American medicine at the turn of the century, whose family lived at the address for nearly half a century.

The Committee unanimously voted in favor of the designation of the building.

120 S. 10th Street
1903-07

The Jefferson Medical College Hospital, otherwise known as "Old Main," represents four areas of significance for the architecture and history of Philadelphia. First, it possesses stylistic significance as an outstanding example of the Beaux-Arts Renaissance Revival mode, the most popular architectural style for American governmental, commercial and institutional buildings at the turn of the century. Second, it has architectural significance as an excellent example of the design work of James H. Windrim's office, one of Philadelphia's leading design firms at the turn of the century. Third, it is an excellent example of the "skyscraper" hospital type, a new form of hospital design in early 20th century that evolved out of American innovation in steel-frame, high-rise construction in the 1890s. Finally, the building possesses institutional significance as "Old Main," the oldest existing building belonging to Jefferson Medical University, the second oldest medical school in Philadelphia and one of the most distinguished schools of medicine in the nation.

The Committee discussed the changes to the ground floor front of the building to make a porte cochere entrance for cars. All

agreed that the most important features of the ground floor were retained, the changes make up a relatively small proportion of the total building fabric, and the new entrance helps the building remain viable into the future.

The Committee unanimously voted in favor of designation of the property.

Albemarle hotel	1231-1233 Walnut Street
Carl Berger, Architect	135-141 S. 13th Street
	1900

The Albemarle possesses significance as a fine example of the Beaux Arts Renaissance Revival Style with its three part, base, shaft and cornice form and its classical flemish bond brickwork and terra cotta columns, pediments, modillions and swags. It has significance for its history as one of the early surviving mixed use apartment hotels, a new building type in Center City in the late 1890s. It is also significant as an example of the work of Carl Berger a German American architect associated with the German community in Philadelphia.

The Committee recommended designation of this building by a vote of 4 to 0.

There being no further business, the Committee adjourned at 3:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Randal Baron
Assistant Historic Preservation Officer

RB:sj