

**REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON HISTORIC DESIGNATION
PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION
16 December 2005**

**Room 578 City Hall
Thomas Sugrue, Ph.D., Chair**

Present

Thomas Sugrue, Ph.D., Chair
Warren Huff, City Planning Commission
Janet Klein, Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission
Bruce Lavery, Athenaeum of Philadelphia
Hyman Myers, AIA
Harris Steinberg, AIA

Jonathan E. Farnham, Acting Historic Preservation Officer
Jorge Danta, Historic Preservation Planner

Also Present

Thomas Whittle, 9647-9649 Pine Road
John Gallery, Preservation Alliance
Liz Blazeovich, Preservation Alliance
Richard Tucker, 211-213 Vine Street
Richard Thom, AIA
Aileen Bannon, Richard Thom, AIA
Lois Frischling, West Mt. Airy

CALL TO ORDER

Harris Steinberg, Acting Chair, called the meeting to order at 2:05 p.m.

Mr. Steinberg explained to the audience that the Committee serves in an advisory capacity to the Historical Commission. The Committee and staff members introduced themselves to the applicants and public.

9647-9649 PINE ROAD

OWNER: Thomas and Anna Whittle

PROPOSAL: Rescind the individual designation of 9647-9649 Pine Road

OVERVIEW: This application proposes the rescission of the individual designation of 9647-9649 Pine Road. The single-family residential building is a late eighteenth-century farmhouse with nineteenth and twentieth-century additions and alterations. The current owners request the rescission to facilitate the demolition of the building and the construction of two new residences. The Commission designated the property on 24 June 1969.

In June 1969, owner Martin Leventon requested that the Historical Commission designate his property at 9647 Pine Road as historic. On 24 June 1969, the Commission reviewed the nomination and "agreed that the request from the owner of 9647 Pine Road be held in abeyance, pending further study." The "further study" was a condition of the designation and the

designation was finalized when the study was completed. On 11 November 1969, Mrs. Charles J. Maurer of the Commission's staff inspected the property, photographed it, and wrote a one-page report describing the building. On 12 November 1969, she requested that the owner undertake some title research. The owner undertook the title research at some point after 22 March 1970, when he notified the Commission that they would conduct the research that spring. An undated page of title research from the owner as well as an undated chain of title prepared by the staff resides in the Commission's file on the property, completing the "further study." The address, 9647 Pine Road, is listed in the Commission's original Register, a group of three loose-leaf notebooks that was maintained from the establishment of the Commission until the adoption of the new ordinance. Likewise, the Commission's card index of designated properties includes 9647 Pine Road with a certification date of 24 June 1969.

Section 5.5.c.1 of the Commission's Rules & Regulations enumerates three bases for rescinding an entry on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. They are:

- 1) the resource has ceased to meet the criteria for listing on the Register because the qualities that caused its original entry have been lost or destroyed,
- 2) additional information shows that the resource does not meet the criteria for the Register, or
- 3) error in professional judgment as to whether the resource meets the criteria for listing.

This application proffers none of the three bases as justification for the rescission. In fact, none of the three bases are applicable. The exterior condition of the house and lot are virtually identical to their conditions at the time of designation in 1969; nothing has been lost or destroyed. No additional pertinent information has been presented. And no error in professional judgment has been alleged or was made.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Denial of the rescission of the individual designation of 9647-9649 Pine Road.

COMMITTEE MINUTE: Mr. Farnham presented the application to the Committee. Thomas Whittle, the owner, represented the application.

Mr. Myers asked about the non-historic façade. Mr. Farnham explained that the original façade survived beneath the cementitious facing seen in the photographs. He noted that the stucco stone-facing was added in the mid twentieth century and was extant at the time of designation.

Mr. Steinberg inquired into the reasons for the rescission application. Mr. Whittle stated that he would like to sell the property to a developer who would build two new dwellings on it. He explained that there was no room for expansion on the lot with the existing house standing. Mr. Huff noted that the lot was over 10,000 square feet. He also noted that zoning controls for the site (R2, single-family detached) required 50 feet of street frontage. The historic house would prevent the subdivision of the lot into two.

Mr. Baron asked if the house could be divided into a two-family dwelling to achieve the applicant's goals of great saleability. Mr. Huff answered that zoning did not allow multi-family houses in this neighborhood.

Mr. Sugrue arrived. Mr. Steinberg relinquished the chair to Mr. Sugrue.

Mr. Whittle stated that a family room had been added to the rear of the property and a chimney had been rebuilt. He claimed that these detracted from the historic nature of the house. The

staff noted that these were not recent changes, but were changes made before designation. Mr. Huff commented that the Register includes numerous altered buildings that are not in pristine condition. He noted that if restored or original condition was the sole criterion for designation only a handful of properties in the City would be eligible.

Ms. Klein asked Mr. Whittle if he planned to sell the property regardless of the Commission's decision on the rescission application. Mr. Whittle answered that he would sell it regardless of the decision because he is retiring in Florida.

Mr. Gallery of the Preservation Alliance stated that the criteria for rescission are very clear and that this application did not satisfy any of them. The property has not changed since designation; no new information has been presented; and no error in judgment was made.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: Mr. Huff moved to adopt the staff recommendation and recommend denial of the rescission of the individual designation of 9647-9649 Pine Road. Ms. Klein seconded the motion, which passed by a vote of 5 to 0. Mr. Sugrue abstained because he had missed the first portion of the discussion.

211-213½ VINE STREET

OWNER: Richard Tucker, Hamam Enterprises, Ltd.

PROPOSAL: Rescind the individual designations of 211 and 213 Vine Street

OVERVIEW: This application proposes the rescissions of the individual designations of the buildings at 211-213½ Vine Street in the Old City Historic District. The building at 211 Vine Street dates to c. 1800; at 213 Vine Street to c. 1820; and at 213½ Vine Street, a.k.a. 303-305 N. American Street, to c. 1800.

The buildings were apparently individually designated at some point prior to the adoption of the new preservation ordinance in 1984. The staff has been unable to document their designations in the minutes of the Commission or Committee on Historic Values, but the two addresses are listed in the original Register, a group of notebooks that was maintained from the establishment of the Commission until the adoption of the new ordinance. The current ordinance [§14-2007(2)(j)] defines an *Historic Building* as:

A building or complex of buildings and site which is designated pursuant to this section or listed by the Commission under the prior historic buildings ordinance approved December 7, 1955, as amended (emphasis added).

Therefore, these buildings, which were listed by the Commission under the prior historic buildings ordinance, must be considered *Historic Buildings* and individually designated.

The buildings stand within the Old City Historic District and were classified as non-contributing when the district was created in 2003 despite their individual designations. The buildings were listed as non-contributing because they have very low integrity. Roofs, party walls, and entire floors have been demolished; windows and doors reconfigured, infilled, and moved; interiors gutted; adjacent buildings consolidated; party walls removed; sections of facades replaced; cornices, lintels, sills, and other features removed; and additions constructed. At 211 and 213 Vine Street, the first-floor front facades, roofs, and rear ells have been lost. On N. American Street, nothing remains of the two small historic buildings above the first floors; the second and third floors were demolished in 1968. The third small historic building, which stood at the corner of American and Vine, was demolished in the mid 1960s.

The applicant requests the rescissions pursuant to Section 5.5.c.1 of the Commission's Rules & Regulations. That section stipulates that an entry may be rescinded from the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places if "the resource has ceased to meet the criteria for listing on the Register because the qualities that caused its original entry have been lost or destroyed." Because the designation date is indeterminate, it is impossible to establish the condition of the buildings at the time of designation and therefore impossible to establish whether the qualities that prompted their designation have been lost or destroyed. Also, because there are no records of the designation other than the citations on the original register, it is impossible to determine what, if any, significance these buildings may have held for the Commission at the time of designation.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: The staff asserts that these buildings could not be restored; they could only be reconstructed. The Secretary of the Interior's Standards dictates that reconstruction only be undertaken when the "re-creation is essential to the public understanding" of the historic resource. In this case, the historic resource is best defined as the Old City Historic District. The argument that the reconstruction of these buildings is essential to the public understanding of Old City is untenable. Therefore, owing to the significant loss of integrity, the staff recommends approval of the rescissions of the individual designations of 211

and 213 Vine Street, provided the designation of 211-213½ Vine Street as a non-contributing site in the Old City Historic District is maintained. The staff suggests that the Committee on Historic Designation disregard the contemplated new construction, which is illustrated in the application package, during its deliberations on the proposed rescission. The proposed construction has no bearing on the historical significance or lack thereof of 211-213 Vine Street.

COMMITTEE MINUTE: Mr. Farnham presented the rescission application to the Committee. Richard Thomas, the architect, and Dick Tucker, the owner, represented the application.

Mr. Steinberg moved to adopt the recommendation of the staff and recommend approval of the rescissions of the individual designations of 211 and 213 Vine Street, provided the designations as non-contributing sites in the Old City Historic District are maintained.

Mr. Steinberg requested an explanation of the three binders mentioned in the overview. Mr. Farnham explained that the record of the original Register was kept in three blue binders from the 1950s to the mid 1980s when the new ordinance was approved.

Mr. Myers suggested that the Commission's photographs that date from 1965 to 1970 should be used as the designation photographs. Mr. Sugrue observed that the photos from the 1970s show that the buildings had lost significant integrity. Dick Tucker, the owner, showed a photograph of Vine Street in 1918. Mr. Sugrue noted the integrity loss between 1918 and 1970.

Mr. Baron requested to speak. He explained that the approval of the 1984 ordinance accepted all the buildings listed on the Register as designated and subject to the same standards, and that this has been confirmed by the Law Department. He said that these buildings are three pieces of early architecture; one probably dates to the eighteenth century and the others to the early nineteenth century. During the Designation Committee meetings for the Old City District, the Committee said that early buildings as well as those with cast iron facades should be given a higher status. Furthermore, he pointed out that the conversion of the buildings from residential to commercial use represents a typical development in this part of the city during the period of significance for the district. Finally, he discussed the importance of this early streetscape and how the facades of these buildings with their Flemish bond brickwork are an important part of this block. He asserted that the inventory should be changed to classify them as contributing. He explained that the ways in which these facades have been changed can easily be restored. He said that he met with Mr. Thom in the field to explain how these buildings could be restored and attached to a larger building behind them. He noted that many fragments of buildings have been reconstructed in Old City and Society Hill and that it is not a Disney-like architectural exercise because there is enough evidence to document the original buildings. He noted that in this particular case it would even be simpler since the second and third-floor front facades remain.

Mr. Steinberg noted that it might be possible to save these building fragments and expand upon them.

Mr. Thom agreed that the buildings could be reconstructed, but asserted that it would be cost prohibitive.

Mr. Myers inquired about the ages of the buildings, given that the 1859 map shows them as two buildings on two separate lots, but the 1919 map shows it as one building on one lot. Mr. Baron posited that the rear ells were rebuilt, infilling the side yard, but that the front portions of the buildings retained some of their late-eighteenth and early nineteenth-century features.

Mr. Gallery requested clarification on the application. Mr. Farnham answered that the application requested the rescissions of the individual designations of 211 and 213 Vine Street, but not the demolition of the buildings. Mr. Lavery remarked that the history of the buildings and their designation records were very unclear. He asserted that the vote of the Committee should be very clear and specific.

Mr. Thom noted that this very Committee had already deemed the buildings non-contributing to the district and that his client had presented a demolition application to the Commission based on the assumption that they are non-contributing. He contended that that the two designations, the individual and the non-contributing, were contradictory.

Mr. Sugrue called the question. Mr. Steinberg explained that although he had moved to rescind the designations at the beginning of the review, he had been convinced by Mr. Baron's impassioned appeal and would now vote against his own motion.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: Mr. Steinberg moved to adopt the recommendation of the staff and recommend approval of the rescissions of the individual designations of 211 and 213 Vine Street, provided the designation of 211-213½ Vine Street as a non-contributing site in the Old City Historic District is maintained. Ms. Klein seconded the motion, which passed four to one. Mr. Steinberg dissented.

7048 GERMANTOWN AVENUE

OWNER: Olga Prem at time of notice; now John Capoferri, Germantown Avenue Holdings, LP

PROPOSAL: Nomination of 7048 Germantown Avenue to the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places

OVERVIEW: This nomination proposes the designation of 7048 Germantown Avenue. An unusual house and a barn stand on the large parcel, which extends several hundred feet back from west side of Germantown Avenue between Sedgwick Street and Mt. Pleasant Avenue in the West Mt. Airy section of Philadelphia.

From an architectural perspective, the George H. Garrett House is highly significant. Stylistically, it is an Italian Villa style building, with overtones of the Greek Revival style. Rather than the more staid Italianate style, which is typified locally by the work of Samuel Sloan, the style exhibited by this building is more akin to that of A.J. Downing, the master of the picturesque. A rare example of an important movement in American architecture, this building is highly significant. Moreover, it may have another significant architectural connection. The building clearly represents at least two phases of construction, the first dating to the early nineteenth century and the second, the Italian Villa remodeling, to about 1850. The unusual northern portion of the building is earlier than the southern portion. Preliminary staff research indicates that this older unusual portion of the building may be attributed to architect Thomas Ustick Walter. His Account Book and Daybook both indicate that he designed a house for George H. Garrett in 1834 and 1835. Furthermore, an 1835 drawing executed by Walter and now in the collection of Girard College is titled "Mr. Garrett's Cottage." If the early portion of this building was designed in the Greek Revival style by Walter, the designer of the dome of the U.S. Capitol, it would add greatly to its significance. The possible connection to Walter should be fully investigated.

In addition to its architectural significance, the Garrett House holds a prominent place in the City's social and economic histories. George H. Garret, the builder, was a prominent businessman. Other Garrett family members who lived at the home were also distinguished.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: The staff recommends that the Philadelphia Historical Commission designate 7048 Germantown Avenue as historic and list it on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. It also recommends that the Committee direct the staff to research the potential Thomas U. Walter connection and revise the nomination if necessary.

COMMITTEE MINUTE: Mr. Farnham presented the nomination to the Committee. Lois Frischling, who authored the nomination, attended the meeting.

The Committee congratulated the staff for uncovering the potential Thomas U. Walter connection. Mr. Laverty distributed copies pages from Thomas U. Walter's date and account books showing entries for the design of a "country seat" for George H. Garrett in 1834, while he was working on both Powelton and Andalusia. Mr. Farnham noted that the 1837 City of Philadelphia directory only listed one George H. Garrett. Mr. Laverty also noted that Thomas U. Walter published a book on cottage designs in the 1840s, but that he had moved from Philadelphia to Washington, D.C. by 1850.

Mr. Myers asserted that the property was worthy of designation even without the Thomas U. Walter connection. He emphasized that it was a very early and interesting example of an Italian Villa style house.

Mr. Steinberg remarked that the barn should be specifically identified as historic as well and should be explicitly included in the designation. His fellow Committee members agreed. Mr. Gallery of the Preservation Alliance mentioned that designation encompasses the site and all of its components. Ms. Frischling noted that the 1876 map clearly shows the barn, which is mentioned in the nomination.

Mr. Myers requested that the staff research further the link to Thomas U. Walter and that the results be presented to the Historical Commission on 13 January 2006.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: Mr. Steinberg moved to adopt the recommendation of the staff and recommend the designation of 7048 Germantown Ave as historic and its listing on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. Ms. Klein seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

MOTION TO ADJOURN

Ms. Klein moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Myers seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 3:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jorge Danta, Historic Preservation Planner
Jon Farnham, Acting Historic Preservation Officer