

REPORT OF THE ARCHITECTURAL COMMITTEE
PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Robert Thomas, Chair
Commission Conference Room
Suite 1301, 1401 Arch Street
27 January 1998

Present

Robert Thomas, Chair
Tony Atkin
J. William Cornell
Herbert Levy
Daniel McCoubrey
Suzanne Pentz

Randal Baron, Assistant Historic Preservation Officer
R. Scott Jacob, Historic Preservation Specialist
Richard Tyler, Historic Preservation Officer

Also

Alan Levy, Santos and Levy Architects
Richard Russell, University of Pennsylvania
Sean O'Leary
Douglas Grainge
Patricia Wilson Aden, Preservation Alliance
Peggy MacLaren, Center City Residents Association (CCRA)
Budd Ross
Samuel Reed
Andrew Terhune, Toll Brothers
Thomas Ferrick, Philadelphia Inquirer
Samuel Olshin, Atkin, Olshin, Lawson-Bell and Associates
Shawn Evans, Atkin, Olshin, Lawson-Bell and Associates
Robert Gittler, South of South Neighborhood Association
Henry Magaziner
Elliot J. Rothschild, AIA
Bennur Koksuz, City Planning Commission
Bobbie Burke, Preservation Alliance
David Amburn, Amburn and Jarosinski Architects
Steven Pinkston, Robert DeHaven Architect / Red Bell Brewery
Robert DeHaven, Robert DeHaven Architect
Lenore Millhollen, CCRA
Louis DiGregorio
William Schwartz, Esq.
Judeth Eden, CCRA
Richard Meinzer
Jeff Davidson
John Ciccone
Robert Behr

Mr. Tyler introduced Robert Thomas as the new Committee chair.

Mr. Thomas called the meeting to order at 2:00 P.M.

3905 Spruce Street, carriage house of Joseph Potts House

University of Pennsylvania, Owner

Richard Russell, University of Pennsylvania, Applicant

DATE: c. 1875

PROPOSAL: Stairtower addition

This proposal calls for adding an enclosed stairtower on the blank side wall of this former carriage house to accommodate a second means of egress. Plans show a two-story structure constructed of brick with a slate roof. Alan Levy, architect for the proposal, explained that the former carriage house now serves as a campus police station, and does not meet fire and safety codes. He showed Committee members revised drawings for the proposed stairtower, and stated that the design uses materials that match or complement existing features of the building.

Three of the four Committee members present at that time voted to recommend approval of the revised plans. Ms. Pentz recused herself from the discussion and the vote owing to her firm's association with the University of Pennsylvania.

645 North 22nd Street

Sean O'Leary, Owner

Douglas Grainge, Architect/Applicant

DATE: c. 1855

PROPOSAL: Roof deck, stairwell enclosure

This proposal entails constructing a roof top stair enclosure and deck on top of this row house. A parapet wall hides much of the work. The enclosure will also contain a small sun room. Douglas Grainge, architect for the project, stated that the parapet rises, on average, about five feet above the roofline. Mr. Atkin noted that the parapet would still serve to hide a larger enclosure, and recommended the applicant redesign it, using more glass, to lend the appearance of a cupola, which could complement the building better. The architect and Sean O'Leary, the owner of the property, agreed to consider using more glass in the design. Committee members asked that staff review and approve the details of siding and fenestration.

The Committee voted unanimously to recommend approval, with staff to review and approve details.

2300-2498 Grays Ferry Avenue, Naval Home

Toll Brothers, Inc., Owner

Andrew Terhune, Applicant

DATE: 1827-1840

PROPOSAL: Concept for zoning plan

This proposal asks for the Commission's conceptual approval of a site plan for the development of the Naval Home site. The plan includes new stacked town houses, low, mid- and high rise construction. The parade ground in front of the main buildings will include a parking area, possibly sheltered from the public view by an earthen berm or plantings. The Surgeon's and Governor's Houses as well as Biddle Hall will remain. Most of the new construction sits behind the existing buildings. New construction will partially wrap around the dependency buildings and will sit at the front corners of the lot along Grays Ferry Avenue. The plan shows the demolition of the rear portion of the Governor's House. The developer hopes to breach the brick portions of the wall to build along the property lines, but will retain the stone and iron portions of the wall along Grays Ferry Avenue as well as the gate houses.

Andrew Terhune, representing Toll Bothers, Inc., described the proposed zoning plan. He stated that the Pennsylvania State Historic Preservation Officer has reviewed and approved this conceptual plan. Mr. Terhune distributed sets of photographs to the Committee showing existing conditions outside the wall surrounding the property and of the brick and stone wall itself. This plan provides for up to 1,200 units with ancillary parking in a mix of housing types including low, mid-, and high rise structures. He explained that the proposed placement of parking lots or structures, and the location of the two high rise structures reflects the nature of the buildings and property surrounding the Naval Home. The developer plans to build the rear high rise opposite an abandoned factories and a school in order to minimize their impact on the surrounding community. The multi-family residences along Bainbridge Street, which will face existing row houses, will have doors on to Bainbridge Street.

Mr. Terhune stated that Toll Brothers, Inc. plans to convert the historic structures into residences. Mr. Baron acknowledged that a project like this progresses in phases, and asked if they knew which phase might see the rehabilitation of the historic buildings. Mr. Terhune described plans to preserve the exterior of the existing historic buildings right away, but could not specify when the developer intends to convert them to a residential use. Henry Magaziner, a preservation architect, thought that Toll Brothers, Inc. should submit detailed plans for the reuse of the historic structures to the Historical Commission. Committee members expressed concern over the placement of stacked town houses (four stories) in front of the Surgeon's and Governor's Houses. Mr. Levy recommended redesigning the footprint of these two front housing clusters to allow for greater site access to the dependency buildings from the street. Mr. Atkin recommended widening the view corridor to the dependency buildings from a 45 degree angle to a 60 degree angle. Sean O'Leary, a member of the community, suggested adding housing units to the rear high rise and eliminating the two clusters of stacked town houses at the front of the property. Mr. Terhune explained that the developer seeks to convey to residents a sense that the land along Grays Ferry Avenue serves

as their front lawn, and that placing all of the new housing units behind the historic structures may impair the sense of integration of the new housing units with the historic structures and spaces.

Mr. Baron presented comments sent in by Ms. Batcheler, who could not attend the meeting. Ms. Batcheler suggested that the Commission require good photographic documentation of the rear portion of the Governor's House prior to its demolition. She also recommended the developer eliminate the parking lot spanning the entire front of Biddle Hall in favor of two lots pushed to the sides.

Mr. Terhune explained that depressing the grade of the proposed front parking lot and building up a berm will obscure the cars parked there from Grays Ferry Avenue. The proposed lot will accommodate about 100 automobiles. Committee members objected to the proposed front parking lot, citing the importance of the parade grounds to the Naval Home's history and function in front of Biddle Hall. Mr. Atkin asked the applicant to conduct further studies regarding possible alternatives to installing the proposed parking lot, and resubmit a plan that reflects the Committee's recommendations. Mr. Thomas suggested ways of concealing the parking lot better, so that the front lawn appears uninterrupted. Committee members noted that conceptual approval of the parking lot does not require final approval if the final detailed plan fails to meet the concerns of the Committee and Commission. Robert Gittler, of the South of South Neighborhood Association, stated his organization's concerns over the parking lot and pedestrian entrances.

Patricia Wilson Aden, of the Preservation Alliance, stated that the Preservation Alliance examined and helped develop the current development concept. The Alliance has asked for the immediate stabilization and eventual restoration of the historic structures. Ms. Aden also confirmed the consistency of the Committee's concerns with those of the Preservation Alliance.

Mr. Atkin made a motion to recommend approval in concept of the submitted plan with further study of increasing the view corridors of the Governor's and Surgeon's Houses from Greys Ferry Avenue from 45 Degrees up to 60 degrees, and of design alternatives to assure mitigation of the visibility of the proposed parking lot in front of Biddle Hall.

2360 South Street, University Museum

University of Pennsylvania, Owner
Samuel Olshin, Architect/Applicant
DATE: 1896-1898
PROPOSAL: Storage wing addition

This proposal consists of an addition to the University Museum for storage and offices. The wing attaches to a recent addition and visually completes the east side of a courtyard. The structure takes design cues and massing from the historic building, but avoids becoming a copy. A forthcoming application will also include renovations and improvements to the courtyard, such as restoring the fountain basin, and plantings that follow an historic design.

Tony Atkin recused himself from the vote to enable him to present the proposal to the Committee. Mr. Atkin explained that the nature of the museum's significant collection requires special care and conditions such as a concrete frame and customized, sealed, high-density mobile storage units. The west portion, which faces the courtyard, has windows, while the eastern, windowless facade includes bronze spandrel panels over limestone.

Mr. Atkin showed the Committee a palette of the proposed exterior building materials, which he explained were chosen to respect and complement Wilson Eyre's original museum building. The new addition will incorporate jack arches and Mercer tiles. The brick color, white marble sills, and the roofing material will follow the historic structure. Committee members thought the addition design complemented the existing structure very well, while not creating a false sense of history.

The Committee voted unanimously to recommend approval.

268-270 South 2nd Street, Abercrombie House

Jon and Karen Sirlin, Owners

David Amburn, Architect/Applicant

DATE: 1758

PROPOSAL: Rear porch and rear alterations

This proposal calls for making some alterations to the barely visible rear wall of the house, and cutting into areas of replacement brick, as advised by the Architectural Committee. The architect redesigned the rear porch to follow the fenestration pattern of the rear windows.

David Amburn, architect for the project, showed the Committee photographs and drawings of the building from a circa 1959 Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS), which demonstrate that prior to rehabilitation a rear addition covered the first- and second-floor window openings at the south end of the rear. He noted that the revised proposal only requires removal of replacement brick. Committee members thanked Mr. Amburn for going through the trouble to locate the old HABS information.

Committee members expressed concern over the new porch design, which mixes the modern details of the garage with Chinese Chippendale design details of the Georgian period. The architect explained that he wants to tie the new garage and porch additions

together, while at the same time avoiding portraying them as historic fixtures and creating a false sense of history. Committee members thought a modern adaptation of Chinese Chippendale design would suit the building better, and Tony Atkin recommended the porch railing and support columns should correspond with the facia and fenestration. Mr. Atkin also asked the applicant to forgo using natural wood detail of the garage on the porch. Mr. Amburn stated that he would paint the whole porch ivory.

The Committee voted unanimously to recommend approval of the facade alterations, and a slightly revised porch design, painted all one color, with staff to review and approve details.

1115-1131 Market Street, Reading Terminal Headhouse

Reading Terminal Headhouse Association, L.P., Owner

Robert DeHaven, Architect/Applicant

DATE: 1893

PROPOSAL: Sign at 12th and Filbert Streets

This proposal revisits the issue of signage for this tenant. Robert DeHaven and Steven Pinkston, architects for the project, stated that Streets Department regulations forbid the installation of pole-mounted signage on a public sidewalk. The proposal no longer includes the bands of neon bars wrapping around the sign and over the facade, thus minimizing the amount of drilling required for support bolts. The new sign will attach to the belt of smooth-faced stone between the rusticated blocks. The plan also includes a small, neon SEPTA sign. Mr. Pinkston stated that SEPTA approved of the design proposal.

The Committee voted unanimously to recommend approval.

1829 (1827-31) Pine Street

1829 Pine Street, L.P., Owner

Louis DiGregorio, Architect/Applicant

DATE: c. 1850; altered c. 1950 for hospital

PROPOSAL: Facade rehabilitation

This proposal involves three rowhouses that were combined into a medical facility sometime in the 1950s or 1960s. The applicant proposes converting them into an apartment building, retaining the central entrance. The developer will restore the window openings, sash and shutters, and remove the stone veneer and paint. A developer built the entire block in the same style, so unaltered neighbors serve as guides for the rehabilitation. Committee members commended the applicant for undertaking the arduous task of stripping off the stone veneer and restoring or replacing the original bricks. Mr. Baron pointed out that the proposed water table does not match the historic examples on neighboring houses.

Committee members questioned the appropriateness of the large, arched entry near the center of the three buildings. Mr. Thomas suggested replacing the arch with a square opening. Mr. Levy recommended eliminating the side lights to scale down the massing of the main entry. John Caulk, architect for a neighboring building, thought the applicant could retain the arch design, but should scale it down.

The Committee voted unanimously to recommend approval of the window openings, sash and shutter, removing the stone veneer and paint, and repairing or replacing the facade materials to match the originals, with staff to review details. The Committee voted unanimously to recommend denial of the current door and water table proposals, but provided guidance for a re-submittal next month.

219-229 South 18th Street

Rittenhouse Regency Affiliated, Owner
Richard Meinzer, Architect/Applicant
DATE: 1929
PROPOSAL: Hotel canopy

This proposal shows an alternate wrap-around canopy for this hotel at the corner of the 18th and Locust Streets. The Committee and Commission voted to deny the concept of a wrap-around canopy at the last meeting. This plan retains the box-type canopy design existing at another entrance to the building, but joins the two canopies with a discrete glass and metal section that wraps around the corner.

Richard Meinzer, architect for the project, stated that the new design attempts to satisfy both the owner and the Historical Commission. He explained that the understated glass and metal link between the two canopies would serve the purpose of sheltering hotel guests at the corner, yet does not cut off or obscure the corner of the building. The plan also calls for the removal of the non-historic planter, which would create a sheltered walkway inside the existing corner. Mr. Thomas recommended installing two skylights on the roof of each canopy to bring in more light. Mr. Atkin and Mr. Levy suggested that the applicant retain the box design, but use glass for all three sections.

The Committee voted unanimously to recommend approval of the new canopy design in concept.

2010-2012 Sansom Street

John Ciccone, Owner/Architect/Applicant
DATE: c. 1850; remodelled c. 1925 in Spanish Colonial
PROPOSAL: Signage

This proposal revisits the signage for this building. The Committee and Commission voted that the signage should hold flush to the face of the existing balcony. Mr. Baron stated that placing the sign forward of the balcony hides it except from directly in front of the building. It obscures this significant detail and diminishes the Spanish Colonial appearance of this building. In this proposal the back of the sign sits several inches in front of the balcony.

John Ciccone, owner of the building and architect for the project, stated that holding the signage flush with the balcony would not adequately signify to future patrons that one of the two entrances leads to apartments. Mr. Ciccone wants to step the sign at least five inches out from the face of the balcony. Committee members agreed, on the condition that he pull the sign panels five inches away to either side of the balcony.

The Committee voted unanimously to recommend approval of the signage, conditional upon it stepping out no more than five inches forward of the balcony and five inches away to either side of the balcony.

1833 Pine Street

George Barnes, Owner

John R. Caulk, Architect/Applicant

DATE: c. 1850 - base remodeled c. 1880

PROPOSAL: Alterations to rear

This proposal calls for raising a rear brick wall and widening a single, first-floor window into a tripartite design. John Caulk, architect for the project, explained that the owners want to enlarge the window to bring more light into the recently expanded kitchen. Committee members thought raising the wall would only lessen the amount of light coming through the window, but did not object to the proposal.

The Committee voted unanimously to recommend approval.

2101 South College Avenue, Girard College - Founders Hall

Board of Directors, City Trust, Owner

Robert Behr, Applicant

DATE: 1848

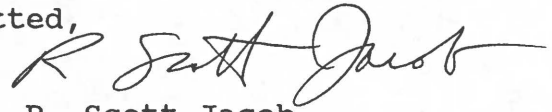
PROPOSAL: Banners

This proposal entails installing four banners to mark the 150th anniversary of Girard College. The banners, which will remain for a year, will attach to boards lag-bolted into the marble walls. The college plans to have the holes patched when they remove the banners. Robert Behr, representing Girard College, explained that the student-designed, 48' by 14' banners will hang on the front side of Founders Hall from March to December of this year. Installation plans involve a special drill that cores out marble plugs, which they can replace after

the banners come down. Committee members expressed concern over the patching method after removal of the bolts. The Committee asked that the applicant return at that time for approval of patching and repair methods.

Five of the six Committee members present voted to recommend approval of the application, on the condition that the applicant return for approval of patching and repair methods. Mr. Thomas recused himself from the discussion and the vote owing to his firm's association with Girard College.

Respectfully submitted,



R. Scott Jacob