

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON HISTORIC DESIGNATION PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION

**David Baldinger, Acting Chair
Commission Conference Room, One Parkway, 1515 Arch Street, 18th Floor
19 May 2000**

Present

David Baldinger, Acting Chair, Philadelphia City Planning Commission
Janet Klein, Chair, Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission
Bruce Lavery, The Athenaeum of Philadelphia
Hyman Myers, The Vitetta Group

Randal Baron, Assistant Historic Preservation Officer
Diane M. Hughes, Executive Secretary
Laura M. Spina, Historic Preservation Planner
Richard Tyler, Historic Preservation Officer

Also

Harold G. Byer, Northwood Civic Association
Louise Wilson, Northwood Civic Association
Gloria Boyd
Bernice Hamel, Society Hill Civic Association
Danielle Bursk, Mid-City Camera/1316 Walnut Street
Peter Kelsen, Esq.
James Howarth, Northwood resident
Claudia M. Becker, Esq. K of P Greenwood Cemetery Company
Gwen DeLong, K of P Greenwood Cemetery Company
H. Lewis
Nan R. Gutterman, Vitetta Group
Joseph Devlin, Girard College
Dave Lamontague, Granary Association
Richard Koelle, Vitetta Group
Ronald Hancock, Willow Ridge, LTD.
Carol Hancock, Willow Ridge, LTD.
Athenus Ahen
Ashlee Huffman
Christopher Scalone, CSA
Joyce Halley, Northwood Civic Association
John Buffington, Northwood Civic Association
Fran Hanssens, Northwood Civic Association
Joseph Zuliski, Councilman Richard Mariano's Office
J.W. O'Rourke
John Lee, Girard College

Mr. Baldinger, Acting Chair, recognized the presence of a quorum and called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. Mr. Baldinger welcomed Mr. Lavery, the Committee's newest member.

930 Adams Avenue, Greenwood Cemetery

Greenwood Knights of Pythias Cemetery Company, Owner

Ms. Spina made an oral presentation with slides of the nomination. The Greenwood Cemetery occupies 40 acres of land that once formed a part of an estate owned by Benjamin Rush. It contains an 18th century trinity house that now forms the rear of an early-19th century Federal style dwelling, a partially subterranean receiving vault, a cement block structure known as the barn, a frame garage, and a post-World War II house. A stonewall with an ornate iron gates surrounds the property. Ms. Spina noted that the barn, garage and relatively recent house do not contribute to the historic character of the cemetery. The grounds are in large part wooded and poorly maintained. The Solly family established a cemetery here in the 1830s which became incorporated in 1869 as the Knights of Pythias Greenwood Cemetery. The nomination of this property states that it meets criteria a, e, h and j of the Historic Preservation Ordinance at Section 14-2007(5) of the Philadelphia Code. The Historical Commission has received over fifty letters and two petitions with a number of signatures in support of the nomination.

Questions were posed about the designer of the cemetery, Thomas Levy, and whether Benjamin Rush actually lived on the property. Ms. Claudia Becker, attorney for the present owner, did research and found no documentation of Rush's having lived on the property. Hyman Myers questioned the relationship of the property to the Knights of Pythias. In response, it was stated that Wilbur Myers, president of the company in the 1870s, also served as the Supreme Chancellor of the Knights of Pythias and that the Knights of Pythias chartered the Cemetery.

Owing to the pending sale of the property and community concerns about its future, questions arose concerning the nature and extent of the Commission's jurisdiction, Mr. Tyler proposed appending a memorandum of understanding to the nomination regarding the Commission's jurisdiction. He suggested that the circumstances of this property warranted the Committee's recommending such a memorandum to the Commission. He thought that it could include the following:

- 1) that the Commission would treat the older house, the receiving vault, and the wall and gate in a manner analogous to contributing buildings in an historic district and the barn, garage and newer dwelling as non-contributing;
- 2) that the Commission should not regulate the opening of graves, the installing of new monuments, resetting and repair of existing monuments, and routine maintenance of the grounds, and
- 3) that the Commission will apply *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards* in its review of any proposed improvements to the property.

Mr. Joseph Zuleski read into record a letter from Councilman Richard Mariano in which the Councilman stated that zoning affords a better mechanism for the preservation of the cemetery than the historic designation of the entire parcel at this time.

Peter Kelsen, attorney for the potential buyer, stressed the importance of addressing the issue of the erection of new construction in the cemetery.

Claudia Becker, counsel for the seller, believes that the Commission's having review rights over the cemetery grounds and its monuments would tie up management of the cemetery.

Community members expressed their concerns. These included, *inter alia*, the clear definition of the Commission's jurisdiction, the explicit inclusion of the landscape in the nomination,

apprehension over the possible subdivision of the property, the absence of a plan for the cemetery, and the proposal to provide additional parking on the site.

Mr. Myers stated that the description in the nomination reveals a classic example of a rural cemetery and questioned why the nomination does not explicate that.

Mr. Baldinger expressed the need for clarification of the following: what can be done to a monument without review, what can be done to the landscape without review, the extent of unused land, and whether the property can be developed differently. Mr. Baldinger asked Mr. Kelsen, counsel for the potential buyer, to explain what the new owner proposes to do with the cemetery.

Mr. Kelsen began by saying that the minutes should reflect the fact that in order to operate a cemetery in today's environment, the cemetery must be viewed in its totality. Part of a totality in this economy is to have non-traditional burials; including cremations. The purpose of a cemetery should be understood before it is fully designated to allow for the recovery of some of the cemetery's glory and for it to be better maintained. It should be recognized that there would be new uses housed in new structures. If the Zoning Board approves this use, the Committee and staff should understand that the barn area would be demolished, a new structure consistent with the house or mansion erected, and a parking area created to make its use more viable. The entire 40 acres could be designated, but without a viable use it cannot be restored.

Claudia Becker stated that there are State statutes that govern how and where cemetery grounds can be used. Ms. Becker presented a letter to the Committee which appears as an addendum to this report.

Mr. Tyler suggested meeting with counsel for the seller and buyer and the community to discuss and clarify the issues.

Mr. Myers made a motion to recommend including the landscape and sculpture in the designation. Ms. Klein seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

Ms. Klein made a motion to designate as historic Greenwood Cemetery with the staff to prepare a memorandum of understanding defining the Commission's jurisdiction. Mr. Myers seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

1322 Chancellor Street, a.k.a. 205-07 South Juniper Street, Mellor & Meigs Atelier

Juniper-Chancellor LP, Owner

The Mellor and Meigs Atelier possesses significance as a fine and rare example of the Arts and Crafts style by important Philadelphia architects Mellor and Meigs, and as their studio and offices from 1912 to 1946.

Ms. Spina noted that this building meets criteria d and e. In November 1990, the Designation Committee unanimously voted to recommend the designation of this property, but owing to *United Artists I*, it never went to Commission. She also noted that the building has not changed since 1990.

Mr. Laverty made a motion to recommend designation. Ms. Klein seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

2101 South College Avenue, Girard College

Girard College, Owner

Mr. Laverty and Mr. Myers recused themselves from participating in the discussion and vote on this item. Mr. Tyler noted that these recusals left the Committee without a quorum and asked if anyone objected to proceeding without a quorum. No one objected.

The submission of diverse permit applications for Girard College necessitates the clarification of the extent of the Commission's designation of the College's buildings, i.e., what buildings appear on the Philadelphia Register. Mr. Tyler framed the issue in terms of the Commission's intention at the time of designation, 1956. Ms. Spina distributed a plan of the College that illustrates its historical development.

Girard College appears on the initial 1956 list of buildings "RECOMMENDED FOR PRESERVATION BY THE ADVISORY COMMISSION ON HISTORIC BUILDINGS," the original name of the Philadelphia Historical Commission. An entry on that list reads "Girard College, Corinthian and Girard Avenues, 1833-1847." If the Commission meant to list only the College as it stood in the period 1833 to 1847, the designation would include Founder's Hall, Bordeaux Hall, Allen Hall, Merchant Hall, Mariner Hall, the perimeter wall, and gates.

Mr. Tyler consulted with Dr. Margaret B. Tinkcom, his predecessor at the Commission from 1956 to 1974, concerning the intention of the Commission in 1956. According to Dr. Tinkcom, the Commission then focused on landmarks and regarded the historic Girard College as those buildings erected in the founding years of the College, i.e., 1833-1847.

Mr. Tyler concluded that it seems reasonable to believe that in 1956 the Commission intended to list only the five original buildings and the perimeter wall and gates. Should the Commission determine that all of Girard College should appear on the Philadelphia Register, it should request the nomination of the entire campus.

Mr. Baldinger believes that the Committee should give consideration to the staff's recommendation of undertaking research on a Girard College historic district.

Ms. Klein noted that at this meeting, the committee is merely ratifying the 1956 designation which seems to have included only the buildings built between 1833 to 1847, the wall and gate. Since the practice and theory of historic preservation has changed so markedly since 1956, the Commission may want to consider the preparation of a nomination for the entire property within the wall as an historic district.

John Lee, of Girard College, expressed his opposition to having the entire campus designated.

Mr. Baldinger made a motion to ratify the 1956 designation of Girard College as the five buildings erected between 1833 and 1847, the perimeter the wall and gate. Ms. Klein seconded the motion which carried with 2 votes. Mr. Laverty and Mr. Myers recused themselves.

1316 Walnut Street, University Club

Mid-City Camera Exchange, Owner

The University Club, built in 1887, possesses significance for the history of Philadelphia in three areas: as a rare surviving example of the early work of the nationally distinguished architect Wilson Eyre, Jr.; as a fine example of his interpretation of Venetian Gothic Revival architecture, and as the first clubhouse for the newly formed University Club, composed largely of Philadelphia's social and professional elite. This building meets criteria a, d and e of the Preservation Ordinance and was recommended for designation by the Committee in June 1991. Photographs of the original building were presented.

The Committee discussed the integrity of the building at length.

Ms. Klein asked if there have been any alterations since 1991. Minor changes have occurred to the first and second floors since 1991; however, no historic fabric has been changed.

Ms. Danielle Bursk spoke on behalf of owners and expressed their opposition to the designation of the building. She noted that no historic fabric survived inside, and that the third floor serves as office space and the fourth floor as storage.

Mr. Myers recommended tabling the vote pending a site visit by members of the Committee.

Mr. Myers made a motion to table the vote pending a site visit. Mr. Laverty seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

Founder's Memorial Bell, PNB Tower, 1 South Broad Street

Corestates Bank, Owner

The John Wanamaker memorial Founder's Bell, a Philadelphia landmark atop the CoresStates/Philadelphia National Bank building, was commissioned in 1926 by Rodman Wanamaker, son of John Wanamaker. The Designation Committee voted unanimously on 13 June 1991 to recommend designation of the bell and the clapper as an object. The Bell meets criteria a and f of the Ordinance.

Mr. Myers made a motion to recommend designation. Mr. Laverty seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

1601-39 John F. Kennedy Boulevard, Suburban Station

Richard I. Rubin, Inc., Owner

The Suburban Station Building possesses significance in four areas of the history and architecture of Philadelphia. It possesses significance as the last surviving station in Center City built by the Pennsylvania Railroad Company; its association with the Pennsylvania Railroad, the Philadelphia based company that became America's largest corporation and leading railroad from the late 19th century well into the 20th century; as an outstanding example of Art Deco design applied to a skyscraper, and as one of the few buildings in Philadelphia designed by the noted Chicago firm of Graham, Anderson, Probst and White.

The Station meets criteria a, d, e and j of the Ordinance. The nomination includes the building only, not the subterranean track area.

Mr. Myers made a motion to recommend designation. Mr. Lavery seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

328 and 330 Delancey Street

Joseph Ottaviano, Jr., Owner

Reclassification from Contributing to Non-Contributing

The Commission referred the reconsideration of the classification of 328 and 330 Delancey Street to the Committee in response to an application for a review in concept for the demolition of the two houses and the construction of a new dwelling on the site. The Commission also asked that the staff conduct an on-site inspection of the properties to determine if any historic fabric survived their remodeling in 1950.

The site-visit revealed that 328 Delancey Street, built between 1897 and 1916 as a two-story house with garage, was rehabilitated and refacaded in 1950, and that only in the somewhat piebald east brick wall does any original fabric remain. Indeed, even the joists date from the 1950 remodeling. The present owner of 330 Delancey Street recalls the razing of the earlier three and one-half story house at this address and the construction of the present dwelling in 1950. All of the visible interior and exterior features of this house confirm that date. This 1950 work did not occur as a part of the redevelopment of Society Hill under the aegis of the Redevelopment Authority.

Mr. Tyler noted that within the context of the statement of significance for the Society Hill Historic District, these properties do not contribute to that district. He also suggested that the Committee recommend to the Commission the reclassification these buildings as non-contributing.

Mr. Myers asked about the open lot to the east of 328 Delancey Street which forms a part of 329 Pine Street. Christopher Scalone, the architect for the project, stated the entire parcel will be developed and that the 1950s addition to 329 Pine Street will be demolished. The historic portion of 329 Pine Street will undergo restoration and rehabilitation.

Bernice Hamel, Co-chair of the Society Hill Civic Association's Zoning and Preservation Committee, spoke on behalf of the community in support of the new development.

Mr. Lavery made a motion to recommend changing 328 and 330 Delancey Street from contributing to non-contributing buildings in the Society Hill Historic District. Mr. Myers seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 12:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Diane M. Hughes
Executive Secretary