

MINUTES OF THE 273rd STATED MEETING OF THE PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION

4 August 1983

F. Otto Haas, Chairman

Present: F. Otto Haas, Chairman
John Taxin
Paul Deegan, Deputy Commissioner, Department of Public Property
Val C. Mogensen, Executive Assistant Director of Finance
Herbert W. Levy, A.I.A., Architectural Advisor to the Commission
Kenneth Cooper, Deputy City Solicitor, Law Department
Richard Tyler, Historian
Patricia Siemiontkowski, Architectural Historian

Also: Various persons concerned with the preservation of the McCrea houses at 108-110 Sansom Street. (See attached attendance sheet.)

Unless otherwise noted, all actions taken herein are the results of motions correctly made, seconded and carried

THE MINUTES of the 272nd Stated Meeting of the Philadelphia Historical Commission, 7 July 1983, were reviewed, approved and directed to be filed.

THE REPORT of the Architectural Committee for 20 July 1983, Herbert W. Levy, A.I.A., Chairman, Architectural Advisor to the Commission. The Report for 20 July 1983 was reviewed and approved except for the entries regarding 108-110 Sansom Street, 229 Delancey Street and St. Paul's Church at 225 South 3rd Street. It was agreed that these three items would be discussed separately and voted upon individually.

The Historian reviewed for the Commission members and visitors present the recent history of the properties 108-110 Sansom Street. Although Mr. Taxin, owner of 108 and 110 Sansom Street, submitted his demolition permit application for the Sansom Street buildings to the Commission staff on 11 August 1983, no action could be taken until the issue of property ownership was resolved. At the time of the application, the Philadelphia Authority for Industrial Development (PAID), as a matter of record, held bare legal title to 108 and 110 Sansom Street. The Commission staff sought a legal opinion on this matter and the issue was subsequently resolved. Following the resolution of this particular point, another appeared. It was discovered that Mr. Taxin in purchasing the Sansom Street properties agreed to certain conditions. These included the

following three items:

1. There be no demolition of historic structures which exist on the property;
2. The plans for use of the properties be subject to review of the Planning Commission staff;
3. Interim use for parking be limited to a maximum of five years duration.

Again, no action was taken on the demolition permit applications owing to the PAID/PIDC restrictions. Early in July, however, in an effort to expedite the development of the A-4 parcel across from Bookbinders Restaurant on Walnut Street, the Philadelphia Industrial Development Corporation (PIDC) reached an agreement with Mr. Taxin which removed the conditions imposed on the Sansom Street properties. With the resolution of the issues of ownership and PAID/PIDC restrictions, the Commission staff proceeded to process the applications in the usual manner.

On 20 July 1983, the Historical Commission's Architectural Committee reviewed Mr. Taxin's request for permission to demolish 108 and 110 Sansom Street. The Committee, at that time, voted unanimously to recommend to the Historical Commission the imposition of its six-month statutory delay on the demolition of the McCrea houses to allow time for an exploration of alternatives to their demolition.

Mr. Tyler reported that the Historical Commission staff, over the past two months, received thirty letters from private individuals and institutions, including the Old City Civic Association, the Elfreth's Alley Association, the Preservation Coalition of Greater Philadelphia and the Society Hill Civic Association, in support of the preservation and re-use of the Sansom Street houses. In addition, at least thirty persons appeared before the Commission to express their support for the preservation of the McCrea houses. (A list of those in attendance at the 4 August meeting is attached.)

Subsequent to the 20 July meeting of the Architectural Committee, the Commission's Chairman received from Mr. Taxin an alternative proposal to the demolition of the McCrea houses. Mr. Taxin offered to donate the Sansom Street buildings to the City of Philadelphia provided the City removed the houses from their present site, relocated them and restored them. In his letter of 3 August, Mr. Taxin informed the Commission that Councilman James Tayoun offered to introduce a resolution into City Council to fund such an undertaking.

Mr. Tyler urged the Commission to accept Mr. Taxin's offer as a point of departure for the consultation process and to impose its six-month delay on demolition as recommended by its Architectural Committee.

Following Mr. Tyler's presentation of the issue, some discussion ensued.

Gersil Kay, Rhoda Richards, Charles E. Peterson, Constance Moore and Janet Terry, among others, spoke in favor of the preservation of the McCrea houses. Mrs. Kay noted that the site, in this instance, was as important as the architecture of the houses and that they should not be moved to another location.

Following some discussion of the condition of the buildings, their significance, Mr. Taxin's need for parking and other related matters, the Historical Commission voted to accept the recommendation of its Architectural Committee and its staff to impose its six-month statutory delay on the demolition of 108 and 110 Sansom Street.

Mr. Taxin, at this time, apologized for any embarrassment he may have caused the Commission over the McCrea houses issue and presented to the Chairman his resignation from the Commission. Both the Chairman and the Historian offered their thanks and appreciation to Mr. Taxin for his dedicated service to the Commission over the past twenty-one years and expressed their regret over the circumstances surrounding his resignation.

The Commission next considered the rehabilitation of St. Paul's Church at 225 South 3rd Street.

At its meeting of 20 July 1983, the Commission's Architectural Committee reviewed the proposal of the Episcopal Community Services to restore the church to its 1830's-40's appearance as recommended by the architectural office of John Milner Associates in a report prepared for the church in 1980. This would require the repair or replacement of window sash and doors as they exist and the stuccoing and scoring of all exterior walls. Presently the front facade of the church consists of exposed brick which was hacked in the 1830's-40's to hold the stucco and which now suffers from spawling.

It was the opinion of the Committee that if the front wall of the church is stuccoed, the window in the center bay, over

the entrance door, should be removed and the opening filled and stuccoed as it would have appeared in the nineteenth century. If the brick on the front wall remains exposed, the window should stay. Both Mrs. Batcheler and Mr. Bartley agreed to review John Milner's report on the church and to report their recommendations for treatment of the building to the staff. In the meanwhile, the Building Committee of Episcopal Community Services would consider both options and report their preference to the Commission.

Subsequent to the 20 July meeting, members of the Architectural Committee and the Commission staff visited the site. It was the opinion of Mrs. Batcheler that the front brick facade (west) of the church and the brick piers of the fence should remain exposed and be repaired. Mr. Bartley and Mr. Levy, on the other hand, agreed with the recommendation made in the Milner report which calls for the restoration of the church and fence to their appearance in the 1830's-40's. This would include the plastering of the west wall and the removal of the second floor window above the entrance.

A letter from John Milner of John Milner Associates, dated 3 August 1983, confirmed his earlier recommendation regarding the exterior rehabilitation of St. Paul's to its 1830's-40's appearance - a recommendation which met with the approval of the Building Committee of the Episcopal Community Services.

Following some discussion, the Historical Commission voted to approve the Milner rehabilitation proposal for St. Paul's Church including the removal of the second floor window on the west elevation above the entrance door. In addition, the Commission directed that Mrs. Batcheler's recommendations regarding the treatment of the handicapped ramp entrance walk and interior chapel renovations be forwarded to the Episcopal Community Services Building Committee and to Bill Cornell, General Contractor, for implementation.

Finally, the Commission considered the recommendation of its Architectural Committee concerning a plaque for 229 Delancey Street and the applicant's appeal of that recommendation. It was the opinion of the Architectural Committee, expressed at its meeting of 20 July, that the house at 229 Delancey Street did not merit a plaque. The Committee members found the rear one-story, twentieth-century, brick addition to be incompatible with the original character of the house.

The applicant, in his appeal of the Committee's recommendation, noted that the one-story, brick addition had stood for at least fifty years and that, in his opinion, it was not an obtrusive element. The Commission staff agreed with the applicant and supported his appeal.

Following some discussion, Mr. Taxin made a motion to award a plaque to 229 Delancey Street. This motion received no second. An alternate motion accepting the recommendation of the Architectural Committee not to award a plaque to 229 Delancey Street was made, seconded and carried.

REPORT on Philadelphia Historical Commission Staff Activities for July, 1983, Richard Tyler, Historian. The Historian's Report was reviewed, approved and directed to be filed with the official copy of the Minutes.

NEW BUSINESS

Introduction of Barbara Kaplan, Acting Executive Director, Philadelphia City Planning Commission.

The Commission members congratulated Ms. Kaplan on her appointment as Acting Executive Director to the Philadelphia City Planning Commission and welcomed her to the Commission meeting. Ms. Kaplan pledged her support of historic preservation to the Commission and offered the assistance of her staff in the continuance of the Commission's work.

National Trust for Historic Preservation Annual Meeting, October 26-29, 1983, San Antonio, Texas. The Commission approved the expenditure of \$800.00 from the Harry A. Batten Memorial Fund to send Ms. Siemiontkowski to the National Trust meeting as the Commission's representative. The Chairman generously offered to cover the cost of Mr. Tyler's attendance at that meeting as well.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia Siemiontkowski
Architectural Historian