

**REPORT OF THE HISTORIC DESIGNATION COMMITTEE
PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION
24 September 2003**

**Historical Commission Offices, 578 City Hall
Thomas Sugrue, Ph.D., Chair**

Present

Thomas Sugrue, Ph.D., Chair
Warren Huff, City Planning Commission
Bruce Lavery
Hyman Myers
Harris Steinberg, AIA

Randal Baron, Assistant Historic Preservation Officer
Jonathan Farnham, Historic Preservation Planner
Laura Spina, Historic Preservation Planner

Also Present

Rob Kettell, Elfreths Alley
John Gallery, Preservation Alliance
Lisa Bass, Kaiserman Company
Richard Thom, Old City Civic Association
Dan Griffith, Wachovia Bank
Amy Slater, Wachovia Bank
Jeff Glassberg, Old City Civic Association
Chip Dunahugh, Old City and Rivers Edge Civic Associations
James Quilligan, Rivers Edge Community Association
Christina Shea, Old City resident
Alan Krigman, KRF Corporation
Jim Lilly, Spruce Hill Civic Association

Mr. Sugrue called the meeting to order at 9:10 a.m. He explained the advisory nature of the Committee. The Committee began the discussion of the district boundaries. Ms. Spina presented a map with various options shown.

The Committee members asked about the inclusion of the bridge and Mr. Farnham explained that the Law Department is still considering the issue. Richard Thom of the Old City Civic Association explained that in dealing with the Delaware River Port Authority (DRPA) on the issue of parking under the bridge, DRPA claimed that the City and its departments have no regulatory authority regarding the bridge or the land under it. Committee members again agreed to designate as much of the bridge and its entrance plaza that falls within the boundaries of the City of Philadelphia, subject to the advice of counsel. Mr. Myers questioned the jurisdiction of the Commission over the trolley station underground.

The Committee considered the issue of the Indian statue on Market Street and the ramps leading to the Market Street bridge. Committee members reached agreement that the ramps and the Indian statue should be included.

Mr. Sugrue said that he visited the 300 block of North Front Street and thought that it was an important part of the story. James Quilligan of that block asked if Pier 19, the location of Dave and Buster's restaurant, should be included for its important history as the immigration pier, along with the one at Washington Avenue. Noting that that pier had been left out of the submitted nomination and the notification process, Committee members said that it should not be included now. Rather, they suggested it be included either as a later amendment or nominated individually with the remains of the pier at Washington Avenue, recognizing their role in immigration history. Mr. Sugrue suggested applying for a State Historical Marker for the pier as well.

Mr. Thom spoke in favor of including the rest of the piers in the district. He thought that a thematic district for all of the piers was unlikely to happen in the future. He submitted a photograph to show the visible, physical connection of the piers to the district. Mr. Steinberg said that the piers and the Old City neighborhood were inextricably linked by history. Mr. Myers agreed that the district should include the piers. Mr. Sugrue said he was convinced as well.

Mr. Myers thought that, although Interstate 95 should be excluded, Delaware Avenue between the Market Street bridge and Callowhill Street should be in the district because of its link to Stephen Girard. Other members agreed. They also agreed to include all of the Ionic Street, Chestnut Street, and Wood Street cartways.

The agreed boundaries were traced from the corner of 6th and Wood Streets, south to Race Street, then east to 4th Street, then south to approximately half way between Arch and Market Streets to cut out the non-contributing buildings on the east side of 4th Street, then west on Ludlow to Fifth to include the Bourse and Bankers Row, then east on Chestnut to 2nd Street, then south on 2nd to Ionic Street. The boundary continues east on Ionic to the east side of Front, then north on Front to the south side of Race Street, then east on Race, including the pumping station, on the east side of Delaware Avenue, then south to include all the piers north of the Market Street bridge, then east to the pier head line and then north, up to Vine Street. At Vine Street the boundary cuts west to the eastern side of Delaware Avenue and then north along Delaware Avenue to Callowhill Street, then west on Callowhill to the east edge of the Interstate 95 entrance ramp, then south along that ramp to Vine Street, then West on Vine Street to 2nd Street, then north on 2nd to Wood Street, then west on Wood Street to the point of origin at 6th Street. Committee members agreed to include the bridge approach unless the Law Department rules that it cannot be included.

Mr. Steinberg made a motion to recommend approval of these boundaries. Mr. Huff seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Ms. Spina and Mr. Farnham then presented slides to explain the classifications found in the inventory. They explained that “significant” buildings are ones that are eligible for individual designation by the Commission. Examples included Christ Church, Elfreth’s Alley, and a horse trough. Committee members agreed with this classification.

“Contributing” properties do not warrant individual designation, but help form the context for the historic district. These properties contribute to the district’s overall significance. Some examples of contributing buildings include the Trenton Pottery building at 2nd and Arch Streets, buildings along York Avenue, the Wilbur Chocolate Factory and a building with a cast-iron storefront. “Non-contributing” buildings are classified as such because they were constructed after the period of significance or have lost historical integrity through major alterations. Some non-contributing structures include the Septa enclosures for the Frankford-Market El at 2nd Street, and the Garment Workers Union building on South 4th Street.

The Committee members discussed different aspects of the inventory and established several general rules for classification. The Committee believed that all 18th-century buildings should be listed as significant because of their rarity, not just in Philadelphia but in the country as a whole. Also, since cast-iron was a significant innovation and façades made of that material characterize the neighborhood, the Committee thought all buildings that had entire cast-iron façades should be listed as significant. Any buildings with cast-iron storefronts should be listed as contributing, even if the upper floors have been compromised. The Committee also discussed individual elements found throughout the district. Committee members recognized the importance of the historic paving materials, including granite curbs and granite and bluestone sidewalks, especially those that have carved gutters. They agreed that these items as well as fire escapes add to the industrial character of the district.

Staff then asked the Committee to clarify the classification for several structures. Although the Committee agreed that the Septa structures are non-contributing, they thought the tile map below ground should be considered contributing. They asked for the Law Department to address the legality of designating the map as a contributing object, even though it is part of the interior of the station.

A general question asked by the staff concentrated on 18th-century buildings that have been compromised through partial demolition. Staff showed slides of 259 and 300 Market Street as examples. Committee members thought that the remainder of the 18th-century fabric warranted classification of contributing rather than non-contributing.

The Committee next took up the issue of the reconstruction of the market shambles along the 100 block of Market Street. All agreed that the site, which includes the structure, is significant; however, the reconstruction is not historically accurate. All the Committee members thought that the structure itself contributed because it recalled the historic shambles that gave Market Street its name, but agreed that the structure could be replaced with a more accurate reconstruction if that was ever proposed. John Gallery of the Preservation Alliance questioned designating Market Street as significant since the market ran a number of blocks and the headhouse actually stood at 2nd Street, not Front

Street. Committee members asked the staff to research the historic location of the shambles.

Staff noted that some properties, although built after the period of significance, have importance in their own right, such as the National Products Building. They asked the Committee if some other properties also met those criteria, including the Painted Bride with murals by Isaiah Zagar. The Committee agreed that the building should be listed as significant. Alan Krigman questioned whether the Commission was being inconsistent by designating the Painted Bride as significant for its recent history and yet stopping continuing changes that reflect contemporary design through the creation of the district. For example, he said that if this mural were proposed today, the Commission would not allow it. Committee members explained that designation does not mean that changes are not allowed on buildings within a district. Murals that do not damage or obscure historic fabric have been approved in the past. Staff also noted that the district has many vacant lots that offer the opportunity for contemporary design.

Next, the Committee evaluated the Pincus Building at the corner of 5th and Race Streets. Mr. Gallery noted that the building may be threatened because of changes to the parking facilities around Independence Mall. Committee members thought that the building, although outside the period of significance, related to the textile history of the area and was a reasonably good example of its Moderne Style; however, they did not think the building could be classified as significant. Ms. Spina contended that buildings constructed after the period of significance could only be non-contributing or significant. Mr. Baron countered that for the Rittenhouse-Fitler historic district, buildings that fit into the overall context of scale and materials were classified as contributing even if built after the period of significance. The Committee members thought the Pincus Building should be listed as contributing.

Staff noted that the inventory would be available for public inspection at the Commission meetings and in the Commission office. Committee members discussed the possibility of getting the nomination on the Commission's website.

Mr. Steinberg made a motion to accept the nomination's statement of significance and inventory as amended, and to recommend the designation of the Old City Historic District. Mr. Huff seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 12:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Randal Baron
Assistant Historic Preservation Officer