

PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION
COMMITTEE ON HISTORIC DESIGNATION

2 October 1987

David Brownlee, Chairman

The Twenty-ninth Meeting of the Committee on Historic Designation began at 10:00 a.m. on Friday, 2 October 1987, in the Offices of the Philadelphia Historical Commission, 1313 City Hall Annex.

Present: David Brownlee, Chairman of the Committee on Historic Designation
David Baldinger, Deputy Director, Philadelphia City Planning Commission
Caroline Golab
Janet Klein
Hymen Myers
Sandra Tatman

Richard Tyler, Historic Preservation Officer
Philadelphia Historical Commission
Patricia Siemiontkowski, Assistant Historic Preservation Officer, Philadelphia Historical Commission
Randal Baron, Preservation Planner, Philadelphia Historical Commission

Mary Lou McFarland, Executive Director, Preservation Coalition of Greater Philadelphia
Carol Benninson and Mark Bower of K.K.F.S. Architects
Donna Harris, PHPC

NEW BUSINESS

The Committee reviewed nominations of the following historical and architectural resources.

Center City West Commercial District

The nomination of this district to the National Register of Historic Places came to the Committee for comment under the provisions of the certified local government program.

Carol Bennenson of Killinger, Kise, Franks and Straw presented slides and a summary of the nomination to the Committee.

The Center City West Commercial Historic District possesses significance for its historical role as Philadelphia's upscale commercial core of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, one which predominantly catered to the carriage trade of residential Rittenhouse to

the south and supplemented the business corridor of Broad Street to the east. Formerly part of the fashionable Rittenhouse residential neighborhood, Walnut and Chestnut Streets west of Broad evolved into an area of retail, banking and the professions. This transformation changed the streetscape from one of townhouses, churches, libraries and schools to low-rise and high-rise retail and office buildings. Rich in commercial history, the proposed district conveys a distinct heritage and adds an important component to the broader understanding of Philadelphia's history. In conjunction with the district's commercial significance is its architecture that displays both individual landmarks and the city's most outstanding and densely concentrated ensemble of Art Deco and Art Moderne commercial architecture. Composed of commissions representing Philadelphia's well-established firms and a new generation of architects, as well as non-architect designed buildings, this assemblage continues to project the ongoing vitality and commercial history of this Center City district." 1

The Committee noted that the District appears to meet the criteria for listing on the National Register. The Committee added the following comments:

1. The district map should be redrawn using the most up-to-date Planning Commission base map.
2. The discussion of the westward movement of the business district should be clarified to explain that the general center of commercial activity, rather than specific stores, moved.
3. The discussion of the banking industry should be clarified to indicate that the largest banks chose to locate on Broad Street but the smaller private banking industry developed within this district
4. The use of the invented term "Philadelphia Art Deco" should be replaced with the established term, Stripped Classicism.

The Sellers Development Houses

3306-3320 Arch Street
c. 1885

The Sellers Development Houses possess significance as outstanding examples of Queen Anne style architecture. They incorporate almost every element of Queen Anne design, including an irregular form broken by gable ends, turrets and bays, a mix of multicolored and textured materials and

1 Taken from Center City West Commercial Historical District, Carol Benenson, Killinger Kise Franks and Straw 1987.

details such as ornate millwork, half timbering and lattice windows. The buildings also possess significance as a rare set of houses each one different, though sharing many forms and details. The developer of the houses, William Sellers, was one of nineteenth century Philadelphia's most important industrialists. Mr. Sellers rose to become president of Bancroft and Sellers, one of America's largest machine tool manufacturers, as well as Midvale Steel Company and The Franklin Institute. He also served as a director of the Philadelphia and Reading Railroad and the Philadelphia, Washington and Baltimore Railroad. Mr. Sellers was typical of the many nineteenth century industrialists who expanded into the real estate business. This development is one of several real estate ventures undertaken by Mr. Sellers in the Powelton area. The Committee voted unanimously to recommend the designation of these eight properties.

William Kimber House,
Edmund Beaman Gilchrist, Architect

999 East Haines Street
1914-1921

The William Kimber House possesses significance as a fine example of the Arts and Crafts Cotswold Cottage style and the work of Edmund Gilchrist, an important early twentieth century Philadelphia residential architect. The Arts and Crafts movement held that architecture should return to its medieval roots with building elements made by craftsmen rather than machines. The Cotswold Cottage served as a model for a particular variant of Arts and Crafts architecture. The Cotswold Cottage became popular in Philadelphia because architects looked for inspiration in a return to America's English roots and because the Wissahickon schist of the Philadelphia suburbs looks similar to the building material used in the Cotswolds. A measure of the importance of this style in Philadelphia in the first decades of the twentieth century can be judged from the fact that this house was one of only five projects submitted by Philadelphia architects to represent the best of American design at the 1926 International Architecture Exhibit in Berlin. Edmund Gilchrist specialized in suburban houses and particularly in the Arts and Crafts form. He designed the clustered houses of the Woodward Estate Housing Development in Germantown and served on President Hoover's Committee on Home Building and Home Ownership.

The Committee recommended that the grounds and garage be inserted into the description.

The Committee unanimously recommended the designation of the property at 999 East Haines Street.

Jane Estate Building,
John McArthur, Jr., Architect

2-16 Vine Street
1870-1871

The Jayne Estate Building possesses significance in four areas. First, the building survives as the sole remnant of the nineteenth century commercial development along the waterfront that occurred after the

building of Delaware Avenue. Secondly, the building is an important example of the work of the John McArthur, Jr., architect of City Hall. This building, one of his few surviving works stands as his only known warehouse structure. Thirdly, the building typifies an advanced form of warehouse design. The building, divided into eight separate units, has been unified behind a single grand facade instead of the more usual warehouse type which contains one large undivided space. Lastly, the building resulted from the Jayne Trust, the estate of the important Philadelphia patent medicine magnate, Dr. David Jayne.

The Committee unanimously recommended the designation of the property at 2-16 Vine Street.

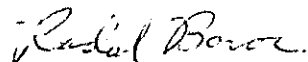
Binder's Hairdressers Building,

31-41 South 13th Street
1887

The Binder's Building possesses significance primarily as an outstanding and rare example of Second Empire style commercial architecture and also for its role in Philadelphia's business history as the home of one of the city's most important late nineteenth and twentieth century hairdressing establishments. The Binder's Building follows the architectural lead of nearby City Hall with its mansard roof, segmental arched pedimented dormers, bracketed cornice and decorative roof cresting. Although numerous Second Empire houses exist in the city, this building stands as one of the very few commercial buildings in Philadelphia in this style. In the 1860s Philadelphia experienced a revolution in the haircare industry. Before this time, hair was attended to largely in the privacy of the home. Mr. Binder became one of the earliest hairdressers in the city with a commercial establishment. He developed a unique chain of hairdressers at three locations by 1885. This building, commissioned by Mr. Binder, features a cast iron second floor with extensive windows to allow enough light for his trade and pressed metal signage advertising "hairdressing, singeing wig and toupe making." The building stands as a monument to the professionalization of an industry.

The Committee unanimously recommended the designation of the property at 31-41 South 13th Street.

Respectfully submitted,



Randal Baron, Preservation Planner

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