

**THE MINUTES OF THE ARCHITECTURAL COMMITTEE
OF THE
PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION**

David Hollenberg, Chairman

29 November 1990

Present

David Hollenberg, Architect, Chairman
Tony Atkin, Architect
Penelope H. Batcheler, Historical Architect,
Independence National Historical Park
William Cornell, J.S. Cornell & Sons, Inc.
David DeLong, Historic Preservation Program,
University of Pennsylvania
Herbert W. Levy, American Institute of Architects
Donald Stevenson, Architect

Maria Petrillo, Assistant City Solicitor
Richard Tyler, Historic Preservation Officer
Randal Baron, Preservation Planner
Sara Jane Elk, Historical Research Technician
Frederick Richards, Preservation Consultant
Daniel W. Simcox, Executive Secretary

Also

University of Pennsylvania: Michael Aiken, Provost
Arthur Gravina, Vice-President, Facilities Management
Barry S. Cooperman, Vice-Provost for Research
Robert Venturi, Principal, Venturi, Scott-Brown and Associates
David Marohn, Associate, Venturi, Scott-Brown and Associates
James Collins, Jr., Payette Associates

Other Testimony:

Dr. Robert Kohler, Professor of History and Sociology of Science
Julie Johnson, Frederic Quivik, and Amy Slaton,
Ph.D candidates, Dept. of History and Sociology of Science
Joseph Nasr, MA candidate, Regional and Urban Planning
James Colgate, MA candidate, Architecture, Historic Preservation
Dr. Michael J. Lewis, Dept. of Architecture, Bryn Mawr College
Michael Hardy, University City Historical Society
Howard Kittell, Preservation Coalition of Greater Philadelphia

Dr. Anderson, M. Arbor, E. Becker, E.A. Bolt, M. Brush, R.P.
Canava, C. Chapman, Ralph Cipriano, J. Denenberg, D. Fields, D.
Franklin, S. Garfinkel, S. Glassman, J. Ginsberg, K. Greene, B.
Grossman, J. Gunn, T. Hewryk, Thomas Hine, A. Hughes, T. Hughes,
E. Hunt, M. Lal, E. Lew, J. McGaw, G. Michaels, K. Pang, G.
Palladino R. Patel, N. Prije, M. Polgar, E.K. Rau, H.
Ravadowski, M. Rigas, J. Slowalton, A. Smith, L. Snyder, A.
Soojung, N. Stevens, E. Toon, S. Tracy, B. Vincent, K. Wailou, B.
Williams, J. Wolf, Wood, D. Zachro and others.

H. Silverman, 147 North 3rd Street
Roger T. Prichard and Richard W. Thom, Old City Civic Association
Douglas Buchanan, Gibson and Associates
Jack Snyder, Brickstone Properties

Smith Hall: 215 South 34th Street

The University of Pennsylvania submitted a demolition permit application for Smith Hall in order to construct a new building which will accommodate facilities for the Institute for Advanced Science and Technology. The University conceives the Institute as a spatially unified complex of interactive facilities drawing scholars from diverse fields. To prepare a feasibility study for this development, the University retained Venturi, Scott Brown and Associates and others. The development scheme proposed entails new construction on the Smith site, rehabilitation of the Music and Morgan Buildings with an addition behind them, and interior renovations to Hayden Hall. Because of their affiliation with the University of Pennsylvania, Messrs. Atkin, DeLong and Hollenberg abstained from the discussion and vote. Mr. Levy assumed the chair.

Arthur Gravina, Vice-President of Facilities Management for the University of Pennsylvania, explained the purpose of the Institute, its benefit to the public, its spatial requirements, its impact on surrounding historic resources and the importance of the timing of this request. The Institute will promote collaborative research in bioengineering, chemical science, cognitive science, and computer and information technologies. Presently, these programs are compromised by a lack of space and special facilities. While peer institutions recently constructed new buildings for these pursuits, Penn last built facilities for these programs in 1973. To remain at the vanguard of scientific inquiry, Penn has committed to the development of this Institute. In planning for the Institute, the University tailored the program to parallel the strengths of the Philadelphia region. Through a center for technology transfer and corporate research partnerships, the Institute will spur economic development for the chemical, pharmaceutical, petrochemical, aerospace and telecommunication firms of the Delaware Valley; it clearly will promote the public good.

The University seeks a site close to existing Chemistry and Engineering facilities, which represent the largest capital investment within the Central Science Precinct. Surrounding historic buildings could accommodate support spaces, but they cannot provide the laboratory space required for the Institute. Through considerable study, the University determined that the program will require 100,000 net square feet of new research laboratory space: 50,000 NSF for chemistry-related wet-lab research facilities and 50,000 NSF for dry-lab engineering and computer related research facilities.

Though the recommended development scheme entails the demolition of Smith Hall, the University appreciates the importance of preserving its historic resources. Recently, Penn has demonstrated a commitment to historic preservation, evident in its restoration of the Furness Building, Hayden Hall, the

Veterinary Hospital, the Evans Building, the Quadrangle and Franklin Field. The restoration of College Hall commenced this year and work will begin next year on Logan Hall. The University also recently completed a "An Advisory Report on Historic Resources" with the assistance of Dr. Brownlee and Dr. DeLong. This document, which may be released next year, has been used in campus planning and in the preparation of a five-year deferred maintenance plan. Penn owns many buildings and possesses only limited funds to maintain, much less restore, them. The recommended development scheme is consistent with the principles and inventory of the "Advisory Report." The feasibility study also has been approved by the Board of Trustees, the President, the Provost and the University Design Review Committee. Mr. Gravina added that he also reviewed site and re-use alternatives with Richard Tyler of the Commission staff and Brenda Barrett of the Pennsylvania Bureau for Historic Preservation (BHP).

Obtaining a demolition permit for Smith Hall is a critical step in the development plan. Until the University secures this permit, it will withhold an application to the federal government for a \$10 million grant for such a scientific program. This grant application would be weakened significantly without a definite site, a permit and schematic drawings. Further, the State Assembly has earmarked \$15 million for the Institute in its capital budget. Its allocation awaits the governor's signature, and efforts to secure these funds have been deferred until a permit is issued. Award of these funds will entail review and approval under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. That review, however, will not commence until requested by the funding agency, which in turn, awaits the submittal of a formal grant application. Plans for the Institute, therefore, hinge on the expeditious approval of this permit application.

Robert Venturi, principal in Venturi, Scott-Brown and Associates presented an historical context for this plan of expansion through urban infill. Although most American growth has transpired through the development of adjacent open land, European cities possess rich traditions of expansion through urban infill. Many significant European buildings rise from sites where smaller buildings once stood. Similarly, several older American cities have grown through infill. Given the relative density of the Penn campus and the scarcity of open space, urban infill is an appropriate focus for expansion. This general planning propensity is strengthened by the importance of linking the Institute to existing science facilities.

David Marohn, an associate for Venturi Scott Brown Associates, explained the feasibility study and its recommendations. First, he listed the criteria for evaluating alternative development schemes:

- accommodation of the Institute's program (including expansion for the next 20 years) and proximity to existing facilities;

- appropriateness of existing buildings to proposed uses and of these uses within the overall Campus Plan;
- the preservation and sympathetic reuse of the most significant buildings in the precinct;
- the strength of the symbolic image of Institute facilities;
- the effect of the new buildings' size and massing within the Central Science Precinct and the Historic District;
- the effect of phasing on continuing research, academic programs, existing equipment installations and facilities; and
- the economic implications of various alternatives, including expansion considerations beyond current program needs.

The study dismissed remote site expansion because it would not allow new and existing facilities to share equipment, building systems and waste removal systems. The resulting duplication would significantly increase capital and operating costs. The dispersal of Institute facilities also would impair the significant benefits of contiguity. The study rejected several infill expansion alternatives for one of two reasons: either the proposed facilities were too small and failed to meet the Institute's spatial requirements or they were too large and overwhelmed the adjacent historic buildings. Employing a model of the campus, Mr. Marohn presented a more specific review and evaluation of the infill alternatives:

- # 1: Adapt Smith Hall: This option would not provide sufficient wet laboratory space.
- # 2: Adapt Smith Hall and construct infill addition: This yields only 75% of the required space for wet lab facilities.
- # 3: Adapt Smith Hall & replace 1899 addition: This scheme provides only 40,700 NSF wet lab space and creates inefficient floor alignments between Smith and Chemistry.
- # 4: Construct two new buildings on sites of Music, Morgan and Smith Buildings: The study rejected this option because it requires the demolition of three historic buildings.
- # 5: Construct one large building on Smith site; renovate Music & Morgan: The new construction would overwhelm the surrounding historic buildings. It also divides the dry-lab facilities.
- # 6: Construct one building on Smith Site, renovate Music and Morgan, and build an addition to their rear: This option provides the desired space.
- # 7: Construct one building on Smith Site, renovate Music and Morgan, build an addition to their rear and re-align Smith Walk: This option provides the desired space. By reducing the building setback from Thirty-Fourth Street and deflecting Smith Walk toward the stairs to Locust Walk on

the other side of Thirty-Fourth Street, this scheme also offers preferred design characteristics.

The Committee offered comment on the study and design of the proposed facilities. Mr. Stevenson noted that the spatial requirements of modern scientific research facilities often resulted in rather generic rectilinear buildings. He expressed concern that this development will supplant an historic building, link two others to a disturbing form and adversely effect the entire historic landscape. Mrs. Batcheler expressed qualms regarding the juxtaposition of the hipped roofs of the Music and Morgan Buildings with the flat roof proposed for their addition. Mr. Venturi suggested that the new building will provide a background which highlights the sculptural qualities of the free-standing historic buildings. Further, the final design of the proposed construction will attain architectural value through repetition, slight modulation and variation. In particular, the facades fronting Smith Walk could be softened.

Mr. Cornell asked if the University would demolish Smith Hall before securing all necessary funding for the Institute, effectively replacing an historic building with a hole in the ground. Michael Aiken, Provost of the University, stated that construction of the wet-laboratory building could proceed with private funds alone. The University will not demolish Smith Hall until construction plans are certain.

The Committee inquired into plans for expansion of the Institute. James Collins of Payette Associates, the laboratory consultants, discussed development trends common to scientific research centers across the country. Many universities have accommodated the technologies of the recent past in small additions to their primary facility. Over time, all are adapted for newer technologies. Eventually, their use exceeds their capacity and institutions must consider building even larger facilities equipped with the most advanced available technology.

The Committee inquired into plans for expansion beyond twenty years, presumably when even more sophisticated technologies may be available and the capacity of the proposed facilities may be exceeded. Barry Cooperman, Vice Provost for Research, indicated that such development will focus on Walnut Street. The University dismissed that site for the Institute because of the significant value of linking scientific research facilities. While the economies of sharing labor, equipment, systems and service bays are evident, the intangible value of heightened interaction and collaboration among scientists is highly significant. Mr. Gravina, having noted that such distant projections were difficult, suggested that the Chemistry and Cret Buildings may offer limited space for future expansion. This room will become available after Phase III of the Institute Development Plan, when some occupants of the former have been moved to Hayden Hall.

Mr. Levy expressed appreciation for the University's presentation, then invited comment from the other persons in attendance.

Dr. Robert Kohler, professor of the History and Sociology of Science at the University of Pennsylvania, testified not to challenge University priorities, but rather to emphasize the historic significance of Smith Hall. To reinforce this point, he added that his department will move from Smith Hall regardless of the building's fate. Concerned that the preceding testimony and discussion did not acknowledge the significance of Smith Hall, he stressed that the faculty and students in attendance wanted to preserve this historical and architectural landmark.

Smith Hall, once the Laboratory of Hygiene, stands as a landmark to a dual academic revolution which occurred in the 1890s. The first dramatic change was that American universities started to build facilities specifically for scientific research. The second was a change in the focus of scientific pedagogy from demonstrations to hands-on experimentation. This revolution occurred earlier in Germany, but developed more fully in the democratic United States. Here, students unravelled the mysteries of science through democratic modes of research and learned to face the health problems of industrial development. Smith Hall was one of the birthplaces of this revolution.

The University of Pennsylvania often fails to receive deserved attention for its role in this revolution because it has shown so little interest in its own history. Its archives pale in comparison to those of other universities and its demolition of historic structures evince further disregard for its own history. Smith Hall may be plain compared to the unrestrained splendor of the Furness Building. Its architects may not have been so prominent that the building warrants preservation solely for that reason. Yet, in spite of these purported shortcomings, Smith Hall stands distinctly democratic and American, a symbol of the history of scientific education. Given the importance of Smith Hall in the history of scientific research, it warrants preservation at the heart of the Institute. Though supportive of endeavors to invigorate Penn's scientific research, Dr. Kohler questioned the costs of the proposed development scheme. He urged the Committee to deny the demolition request, to reject the professed urgency of the University's timetable and to obtain an independent assessment which fully weighed the historic value of Smith Hall.

Julie Johnson, PhD candidate in the History and Sociology of Science, introduced a five-part presentation opposing demolition. First, however, she stressed that the students first learned of this application when notice was posted on the door of Smith Hall the day before Thanksgiving break. Consequently, the students prepared their testimony under significant time constraints. Nonetheless, the students opposed the demolition of Smith Hall on

architectural, historical, planning and policy grounds.

Amy Slaton, a PhD candidate in the History of Technology, provided a summary of the architectural significance of Smith Hall. The building stands as a frank expression of the rational scientific work which transpired inside. Its form expresses its function, and accordingly, Smith Hall possesses the roots of functional modern architecture. Walking around or inside the building offers the experience of a late 19th century setting. Finally, Smith Hall stands as an essential part of the only landscape on campus without a visible modern intrusion.

Joseph Nasr, PhD candidate in the Department of Regional and Urban Planning, criticized campus planning at the University. He suggested that the notice given to students was negligible and that the planning process had been secretive. While there had been ample hearsay regarding demolition plans, the University did not declare them until posting notice. Disturbed by these planning practices, he asked if Penn could build the Institute without razing Smith Hall. Dr. Cooperman responded that the University was uncertain if it could proceed without that site.

James Colgate, MA candidate in Architecture and Historic Preservation who worked for the New York City Planning Commission, also criticized the limited public circulation of the study and the limited notice of the plan to demolish Smith Hall. Mr. Colgate denounced the feasibility study as flawed in its dismissal of remote site alternatives. The reasons offered for their rejection, money and convenience, do not outweigh the historic value of Smith Hall. These reasons also fail to meet the requirements of the Philadelphia Code, which prohibits the issuance of a demolition permit for an historic building unless the Commission finds that issuance of a permit is necessary in the public interest or that the building cannot be used for any purpose for which it may be reasonably adapted. Mr. Colgate asked if either criteria had been met. Ms. Petrillo insisted that the University applied under the latter provision. She added that, despite claims of inadequate notice, the University complied with the provisions of both the Philadelphia Code and the Rules and Regulations of the Historical Commission. Further, the final decision rested with the Commission itself which would not meet until the following month. The Committee served in an advisory role and would forward only a recommendation, not a final determination, to the Commission. She stressed that these two public bodies, the Committee and Commission, would provide an impartial assessment of this application and that retention of an independent consultant would be inappropriate. Though Ms. Johnson insinuated otherwise, Ms. Petrillo rebutted her allegation, noting that the entire Commission had not even been apprised of this matter. She stressed that any allegation that the review process had been circumvented was patently incorrect.

Fred Quivik, a graduate student in the Department of History and Sociology of Science with an MA in historic preservation from Columbia University and fourteen years experience in that field, presented a design which would preserve Smith Hall. His scheme would rehabilitate the Music, Morgan and Smith Buildings and construct infill additions behind each of them. This design not only met the Institute requirements, but also cost less than the proposed scheme. Objections arose that Mr. Quivik's design encroached upon Hayden Hall and actually fell short of the spatial requirements. Mr. Stevenson, however, suggested that this design possessed merit for significantly preserving Smith Hall, a building which seemed to warrant a higher classification in the University's Advisory Report on Historic Resources. Given its historical significance, he asked if the classification system had been based solely on architectural value. Mr. Stevenson concluded that such hierarchies often were created to sound the death knell for buildings in the lowest category.

Julie Johnson closed this testimony by questioning the credibility of the Penn's historical consultant. Although the "Advisory Report" placed Smith Hall in the lowest category of historical significance, the CLIO Group, prior to its retention by the University, listed Smith Hall as a contributing building in a nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. [Note: Clio did not prepare the University of Pennsylvania National Register Historic District nomination]. Ms. Johnson indicated that the students opposed not the development of the Institute, but rather the proposal to demolish Smith Hall which emerged from a flawed planning process by the University. Although the Administration's proposal may seem airtight, Penn spent over two years and thousands of dollars for that appearance. Ms. Johnson requested that the Committee question the assumption that no other site is convenient, that the Committee retain an independent consultant to assess this request or, at least, allow further time for the study of alternatives.

Michael Hardy, Vice-President of the University City Historical Society, conveyed the unconditional opposition of his organization to the demolition of Smith Hall.

Dr. Michael Lewis, professor of Architecture at Bryn Mawr College who earned his degree at the University of Pennsylvania, stressed the architectural significance of Smith Hall. A scholar of German American architecture, Dr. Lewis stressed that Smith Hall provided unique insight into the influence of German architects on American architecture. Though Collins and Autenrieth adopted a more classical American style for Lit Brothers, they were both German born and trained. Smith Hall is distinctly German in character, with references to institutional buildings still extant in Berlin. Collins and Autenrieth employed a Germanic style to reflect the influence of German scientific methods on the activity within this building. Though preceding testimony diminished the architectural significance of

Smith Hall, it is distinct for providing insight into the development of significant architects and for its contribution to the 19th-century character of this campus landscape.

Richard Tyler stressed that the significance of Smith Hall had been established, and that the Commission acknowledged it by designating it as historic in 1989. The present question is whether there is a feasible and prudent alternative to demolition and whether adequate mitigation has been proposed. Mr. Levy inquired into the order of City review and Section 106 review by the Bureau for Historic Preservation. Mr. Gravina indicated that discussion of Section 106 review is premature at present, as the University wanted to obtain a demolition permit before initiating that review. Dr. Cooperman added that the University may proceed with Phase I without public funds, and hence, without Section 106 review. Penn, however, will apply for these grants to increase the leverage of its private investment. Dr. Cooperman suggested that the crux of the matter was not the funding, but whether the Committee thought that the interest to preserve Smith Hall was sufficiently strong to impair the development of the Institute.

A fine arts student opposed to demolition stressed the aesthetic value of Smith Hall. She indicated that the value of the building far exceeded preceding descriptions. In her words, "the building is beautiful, and everyday when I walk past it, it brings joy to my soul...I expect that it brings joy to the souls of many. It is well proportioned, of a beautiful color and compared to the concrete monstrosity which may replace it, Smith Hall is a paragon of loveliness." Another student stressed that new construction possessed a fixed cost regardless of its site. As such, the Committee should weigh the added financial costs of another location and the intangible value of a unified facility against the historic value of Smith Hall. Thomas Hughes of the Department of the History and Sociology of Science suggested that the University of Pennsylvania encompasses more than the administration. Numerous faculty, students and alumni want to preserve Smith Hall. Provost Aiken acknowledged the point, but noted that the Trustees are the legal owners of the building.

Howard Kittell, Executive Director of the Preservation Coalition, stated that by virtue of its designation as historic, Smith Hall possessed an intrinsic value which has not been given sufficient weight. He suggested that issuing a demolition permit before initiating Section 106 review may undermine the latter.

Mr. Levy expressed appreciation for all of the preceding testimony. Through ensuing discussion, several Committee members expressed reservations with the demolition request. Ms. Petrillo suggested exercising one of three options: vote on the proposal, recommend the retention of an independent consultant, or defer the hearing and convene a special meeting. Mr. Tyler stressed that the significance of Smith Hall had been established, and that the present question is whether Penn demonstrated that there

is no feasible and prudent alternative to demolition and that mitigation has been afforded. He suggested that the feasibility study provided the former. The preservation of other buildings offered mitigation which could be augmented by the recordation of Smith Hall. He added that the distinguished architectural history of the University could be enhanced by the work of a renowned twentieth century architect, Robert Venturi. Finally, Mr. Tyler questioned the request to retain a consultant. The Commission previously retained consultants only to assess economic assumptions and market conditions.

Mr. Stevenson cautioned against approval of a permit without a guarantee that construction was certain. Further, he disagreed that the Committee was bound by Federal criteria in its deliberations. Mr. Cornell suggested further design exploration, and encouraged the preservation of Smith Hall. Mr. Levy recommended a deferral to allow further inquiry and deliberation. The Committee deferred this matter until 10a.m., 10 December 1990, in the conference room of the Historical Commission.

Mr. Gravina expressed disappointment that all Committee members had not read the entire study, and that the Committee did not approve the request. Mr. Levy noted that the time allowed to examine the report fell far short of that invested in its preparation. He also stressed that statements made during the meeting, which were not addressed in the report, warranted further consideration of this application.

Subsequent to this meeting, the Committee re-scheduled the hearing for 18 December 1990 at 9am in Room 110 of the Annenberg School of the University, at 3620 Walnut Street.

Having deferred this request, the Committee forged ahead with its agenda with Mr. Hollenberg as the chairman.

APPROVAL

Lit Brothers Building, 701-735 Market Street: Jack Snyder, Burt Hill Kosar Rittlemann & Associates. In response to violations issued for odors emanating from a restaurant in the northwest corner of this restored landmark, Mr. Snyder proposed to install a large exterior exhaust duct for a grill. Its square, shiny metal duct will extend eighty feet along the ground floor from the restaurant to the east. There, it will rise six stories to the roof.

The Committee discussed this vexing proposal at length. Having noted that any alterations to this Tax Act project also will require approval by the National Park Service, the Committee recommended approval of this proposal, contingent upon the fabrication of the ductwork with a baked enamel coating.

DISAPPROVAL

147 North 3rd Street: The applicant removed original 6/6 wooden sash and installed white aluminum on the visible facades of this building. The applicant undertook this work without a permit and subsequently received a violation and Stop Work Order. He then installed the new windows on the inside of the old sash of the front facade. On the side, however, he installed one over one aluminum sash.

Roger Prichard of the Old City Civic Association encouraged the Committee to take a firm stand on this application. In support of this request, he provided a list of twenty nearby owners who had installed proper replacement windows.

The Committee noted that the side facade is highly visible and recommended disapproval of this application. The Committee recommended the installation of six over six true-muntin sash on the side.

260 South 15th Street: Robert C. Gibson & Associates, Attorneys at Law. The applicant proposed to install a semi-circular sign projecting from within the arch of this building. The sign would have a brushed-brass finish with individual white plastic letters. The Committee suggested a sign more sensitive to the grand entrance of this building. The Committee recommended disapproval and suggested the installation of small brass plaques on both sides of the entrance.

The Committee adjourned at 6:40 p.m.

Minutes Approved: 9 January 1991

Daniel W. Simcox
Executive Secretary