

THE MINUTES OF THE 327th STATED MEETING

OF THE

PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION

14 DECEMBER 1988

EDWARD A. MONTGOMERY, JR., CHAIRMAN

Present: Edward A. Montgomery, Jr., Chairman

David Brownlee
Caroline Golab
David Hollenberg
William Thompson
Benjamin Ellis, Commissioner, Department of Public Property
William Hankowski, Director of Commerce
Barbara Kaplan, Executive Director, Philadelphia City
Planning Commission
Scott Wilds, Office of Housing and Community Development

Maria Petrillo, Esq., Law Department
Richard Tyler, Historic Preservation Officer
Patricia Siemiontkowski, Assistant Historic Preservation
Officer
Randal Baron, Preservation Planner
Sally Elk, Historic Research Technician

Also: Warren Huff, City Planning Commission

Christopher Cashman, Department of Commerce
Mary Kay Noyallis, City Planning Commission
Hyman Myers, Vitetta Group/Studio Four
Vincent Maiello, Kelly/Maiello Architects
Ted Garrison and Charles Nearun, Morse Diesel/Temple for
Philadelphia Convention Center Authority
Sandra Gross Bressler, Art Commission
Jack Plaxco, Kenneth J. Bryson and Thomas W. Ventulett, III
of Thompson, Ventulett, Stainback and Associates
Bill Bolger, National Park Service
Rebecca A. Shiffer, National Park Service
Stewart Schlosser, SRK Architects
Richard Trevlyn, The Trevlyn Co., Inc.
Kenneth Finkel
Lester Rosenwinkel, Livingston/Rosenwinkel
Michael S. Ramage, Esquire, Attorney for Lawrence G. Adams,
Owner of 412 Queen Street
David O'Neil, Reading Terminal Market Manager
And others.

THE MINUTES of the 326th Stated Meeting of the Philadelphia Historical
Commission held on 9 November 1988, Edward A. Montgomery, Jr., Chairman,
were reviewed and approved.

THE REPORT of the Architectural Committee of the Philadelphia Historical
Commission for 21 November 1988, Herbert W. Levy, Chairman. David
Hollenberg presented the November report to the Commission. Mr. Hollenberg
noted that the Committee recommended an approval in concept on four items.
The first of these involves the rehabilitation of 103-105 and 107-109 Walnut

Street and the construction of a new six-story structure at 140-42 S. Front Street. The remaining three projects include signage at 511 S. 2nd Street, facade rehabilitation at 412 Queen Street and an overall rehabilitation plan for Bartram's Garden. The Commission voted to accept the Committee's recommendation on these items and to grant them an approval in concept. Mr. Hollenberg explained that a fifth item, the Reading Terminal Trainshed, for which conceptual approval is recommended will be discussed and acted upon separately. At the suggestion of the Architectural Committee, the architects for the new Convention Center were asked to appear before the Commission to make a special presentation owing to the importance of the trainshed and market and the potential impact of the Convention Center upon that resource.

A final approval was recommended by the Committee for two items. These include renovations to the Union League and the Bellevue-Stratford Hotel. The Commission voted to accept the recommendation of its Committee and approve these two projects.

Mr. Hollenberg noted that the Committee recommended a rejection of the applicant's proposal to construct a third story addition atop an existing two story back building at the rear of 412 Queen Street. Ms. Siemiontkowski explained the Committee's concern for the alteration of the original two story back building and for the impact of that addition upon light and air needs of the adjoining property owner. Mr. Michael Ramage, Esq., representing Lawrence G. Adams, the owner of 412 Queen Street, advised the Commission of his client's intention to amend his application. He asked that the matter be tabled at this time. The Commission agreed to this request. Any amendment to the original application must be presented to the Architectural Committee for its reconsideration and a recommendation prior to returning to the Historical Commission.

Finally, Mr. Hollenberg reported that the applicant for 126 Chestnut Street had complied with the request of the Architectural Committee as indicated in the 21 November report. The Committee had asked the applicant to submit an architectural drawing showing the proposed installation of new window sash within the two westernmost masonry openings on the ground floor of 126 Chestnut Street.

Dr. Brownlee pointed out to the Commission members that the Committee was recommending the approval of an ahistoric treatment of the ground floor of 126 Chestnut Street when evidence of the original design existed in the form of an early insurance survey. According to Ms. Siemiontkowski, the Committee had agreed to recommend an approval of the new windows for two reasons. The Committee recognized the installation of the ahistoric windows as an improvement over the existing condition and, secondly, the applicant had already purchased the windows. Dr. Brownlee asked if the application was based upon financial hardship. Ms. Siemiontkowski noted that although financial hardship may have been an issue taken into consideration by the Committee, it was not one specifically pleaded by the applicant. Since no case for economic hardship was made by the applicant and since the approval of an ahistoric window treatment does not conform with the standards and guidelines used by the Commission in the evaluation of proposals for alteration, a majority of the Commission members voted to reject the applicant's proposal. Scott Wilds and William Hankowsky voted for approval.

Following Mr. Hollenberg's report, Mr. Tyler introduced to the Commission members the presentation of the Pennsylvania Convention Center project and the proposed reuse and rehabilitation of the Reading Terminal Trainshed - a locally designated structure and a National Historic Landmark. Mr. Tyler explained the importance of a conceptual review at this time. Owing to the scale and complexity of this project, there exists a need for clear direction from the Historical Commission early in the process so that design development may continue along the proper lines.

Thomas W. Ventulett, III of Thompson, Ventulett, Stainback and Associates

described for the Commission members the overall concept of the Pennsylvania Convention Center project. In particular, he focused upon the proposed treatment of the train shed, the link between the head house and the shed and the impact of the project upon the Reading Terminal Market.

The architects explained to the Commission their intention to undertake an historic rehabilitation of the trainshed structure. This will require structural reinforcement of the iron columns and restoration of the masonry walls on the exterior. Owing to a significant loss of the original structural capacity of the arches and the substantial cost of a complete restoration, only the central skylight and its two flanking clerestories will be restored. The interior of the shed will contain a series of meeting rooms on the main level and a 33,000 square foot ballroom at the second floor level. The structure housing the meeting rooms and ballroom will be positioned at the north end of the trainshed leaving the south end to function as a Grand Hall. Approximately four bays of the original trainshed will remain completely open on the interior. As recommended by the Architectural Committee, the Commission members agreed that the ceiling of the ballroom should be kept away from the trainshed arches to allow more visibility of the vault from the Grand Hall.

Approximately seven bays of arches will be visible from the south end of the shed if a horizontal, rather than a vertical, sound barrier is developed for the ballroom space. It was the opinion of the Commission members that the span of the shed should remain visible to the fullest extent possible.

The south wall of the shed will be reopened to its original appearance and all existing original fabric will be preserved. The north wall of the trainshed will remain glazed.

The link between the headhouse and train shed will be opened to allow for visual accessibility to the Grand Hall.

The Convention Center's impact upon the Reading Terminal Market also came under discussion. As proposed, the market will be expanded to the south side of Filbert Street. Within the existing market on the north side of Filbert Street, four fire stairs will intrude into the four corners of the market area as well as a service dock in the southeast corner. Tenants will be relocated across Filbert Street during construction and then returned to their original stalls or an alternate stall. The architects expressed their sincere desire to retain the special character of the market and not to redesign the old space. It was pointed out, however, that the existing iron columns require structural reinforcement and that some, if not all, would require fireproofing.

Various alternatives regarding the treatment and use of the trainshed and the restoration of all the original skylights were discussed. Dr. Brownlee asked specifically why the shed could not be used as an exhibition hall and learned that owing to construction peculiarities, the floor of the train shed could not handle the load required for accommodation of trucks. Moreover, use of the shed as an exhibition area would remove it from public accessibility. For these reasons, consideration of the shed for use as an exhibition hall was abandoned.

Following considerable discussion, the Chairman asked for comments from the audience. David O'Neal, General Manager of the Reading Terminal Market, addressed the Commission and expressed his concern regarding the Convention Center's impact on the Reading market. In particular, Mr. O'Neal cited the location of the fire stairs, problems of circulation and merchandizing, the visual impact upon the market, loss of space at the rear of the market, parking problems and the impact of construction on the market's operation. Kenneth Finkel commented upon the original design of the trainshed noting that the structure had once had a glass floor to allow light to filter down into the

market area. Mr. Finkel also suggested relocating the market into the shed area.

Following this discussion, the Historical Commission voted to approve in concept the following items:

1. the introduction of a ballroom, function rooms within the north end of the trainshed and access to the exhibition hall;
2. the establishment of a visual link between the headhouse and the trainshed;
3. the introduction of four fire stairs and a service area within the market area north of Filbert Street;
4. the reconstruction of the central skylight and clerestories with a maximization of the skylight area.
5. the rehabilitation of the exterior of the trainshed and the structural stabilization of deteriorated building fabric.

The Commission members voted to approve, in concept, each of the above items in order to allow design development to proceed along these lines. The submission of additional information and materials for further consideration by the Commission and its Architectural Committee will be required before any final approval is granted.

THE REPORT of the Committee on Historic Designation held on 10 November 1988, David Brownlee, Chairman. Mr. Tyler reported to the Commission members that continuances had been requested by the property owners for 920-22 Chestnut Street, 926 Chestnut Street, 930 Chestnut Street 201-05 South 34th Street and 215 S. 34th Street. As permitted by regulation adopted by the Commission, the staff granted the requested continuances. These properties will be presented to the Commission for designation consideration at a subsequent meeting.

THE REPORT on Philadelphia Historical Commission Staff Activities for November 1988, Richard Tyler, Historic Preservation Officer. The Commission voted unanimously to accept the November Activities Report.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 12:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia Siemiontkowski
Assistant Historic Preservation Officer