

PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
COMMITTEE ON HISTORIC DESIGNATION

14 March 1986

Grace Gary, Chairman

*all  
affirmed by  
Hist Comm  
at mtg.  
April 30, 1986*

The twenty-third meeting of the Committee on Historic Designation began at 1:00 p.m. on Friday, 14 March, 1986 in Room 1313 City Hall Annex.

Present: Grace Gary, Chairman of The Committee on Historic Designation  
David Baldinger, Deputy Director, Philadelphia City  
Planning Commission  
Dr. Caroline Golab  
Janet Klein  
Hyman Myers  
Sandra Tatman

Richard Tyler, Historian, Philadelphia Historical Commission  
Patricia Siemiontkowski, Assistant Historic Preservation  
Officer, Philadelphia Historical Commission  
Randal Baron, Executive Secretary, Philadelphia Historical  
Commission

OLD BUSINESS

The Committee discussed ten items raised in Hyman Myers letter of 5 August 1985 concerning guidelines to be used by the Committee in considering properties for designation.

The first item asks that minutes of actual Commission meetings concerning designations be sent to each Committee member. This practice has been adopted.

The second item concerns the legal liability of the Committee members and has been resolved by the Law Department. The Committee members, as advisors to the Commission, do not bear a legal responsibility for actions taken by the Commission.

The third item asks whether or not a streetscape can be nominated. The Committee answered that streetscapes can be nominated so long as each piece of the streetscape is listed in a nomination or district inventory including sidewalks, curbs, street furniture and the like. Mr. Tyler explained that the staff has met with representatives of the Department of Streets and Licenses and Inspections to discuss the implementation of controls for non-building elements in a streetscape.

The fourth item requests that maps of historic districts be sent to City Agencies who perform or oversee construction work. This practice has already been adopted.

The fifth item is a request that historic district map be sent to each Committee member. The maps have already been sent out; second copies will be mailed.

The sixth item is a request that guidelines be established for visiting potential historic districts. The Committee recommended that a visit to a district should be arranged no later than two weeks before its consideration by the Committee. Additionally the Committee asks that a minimum of one Committee member and one Commission member visit the district.

The seventh item deals with photographic documentation of potential designations. The Committee agreed that for properties submitted to the Commission by the Commission staff or the public, both black and white print and color slide documentation would be required. Pictures are to show each public facade or aspect of the nominated property. The Committee recommended that color slides should be stored in sleeves that do not contain the destructive agent P.V.C.

The eighth item calls for addressing the issue of interior nominations. Mr. Tyler explained that the ordinance makes no distinction between interiors and exteriors and empowers the Commission to review all work that requires a building permit. It has been the Commission's practice to give the full scrutiny of the Architectural Committee and Commission to significant interiors in buildings of public assembly. It would be legally possible to designate just a portion of a building such as public interior space.

Item nine asks how we determine and note the extent of a particular designation. Mr. Tyler explained that in the past nominations included all property identified at a specified address. The Geographical Description (Item 5 on the nomination form) and any historic district maps are now used in addition to the address to delineate the extent of the resource.

Item ten asks how long after a nomination is rejected it can be reconsidered for designation. After discussion the Committee decided that no time limit should be placed on reconsideration if new information is submitted. There have been very few cases of inappropriate multiple resubmissions.

The Committee also discussed the question of the appropriate categorization of groups of buildings under the rubric of district or of complex. The ordinance does not include a definition of complex; however, it does refer to a "building or complex of buildings and site" (14-2007 (2) (j) and to a "structure, its site and appurtenances" (14-2007 (2) (b)). From this the Committee determined that "buildings" should be used to mean contiguous properties that during their period of significance were related through ownership and history. District is to be used for groups of properties that historically had various owners and contain major natural or man-made divisions of space.

#### NEW BUSINESS

The Committee reviewed nominations of the following historical and architectural resources for consideration by the Commission:

Adath Jeshurun Synagogue  
1886: J. Franklin Stuckert, Architect

1705 N. 7th Street

The Adath Jeshurun Synagogue, one of the oldest standing synagogue buildings in Philadelphia, possesses architectural significance as a fine and rare example of the Moorish Revival Style. It also has historical significance for its role in Philadelphia Jewish history and as a model of ethnic transition. The Congregation, one of only five Jewish Congregations formed in Philadelphia before the Civil War, organized in 1859 in response to the large immigration of German Jews following the aborted 1848 Revolution in Germany and Austria. The 7th Street building, constructed in 1886, resulted from the increase in North Philadelphia's Eastern European Jewish population at the turn of the century. In 1911 Adath Jeshurun moved and sold the 7th Street building to the Orthodox Jewish Congregation Ohel Jacob. Most recently, a Black Baptist Church occupied the structure. The building designed by the talented Philadelphia architect J. Franklin Stuckert serves as an outstanding and rare example of the Moorish Revival style in Philadelphia. The highly decorated building possesses Moorish arched windows and doors. Friezes of molded terra cotta and towers, one of which retains its original copper onion dome. Moorish revival was an often used style for synagogues because it emphasizes a Semitic non-Christian identity. The Committee, recognizing the property's architectural and historical significance, recommended designation of the building at 1705 N. 7th Street by a vote of 6 to 0.

The Committee requested that the staff attempt to gain entrance to the building to document the interior for the files. The Committee also requested that the pattern of the building's ethnic occupancy be discussed in the nomination.

Aldine Theater  
1921: William Steele and Sons, Architect

1826 Chestnut Street

The Aldine Theater possesses significance as the earlier of the two pre-Depression movie theaters whose exteriors remain largely intact in Philadelphia's central business district and as a fine and rare example of a Beaux Arts Renaissance Revival movie theater in Philadelphia. In the early twentieth century, before the advent of television or home video players, movie theaters played an important role in society by providing one of the few forms of mass entertainment. Movie theaters were designed to be as sumptuous as palaces and finished with gorgeous rugs, furniture and fixtures to give the public a sense of partaking in the same pleasures as the very wealthy. In the heyday of movie theaters, a picture opened at only one theater in a city in a "first run" house. The Aldine was one of only seven first run houses in Philadelphia, two of which remain. Such important pictures as Fantasia with the Philadelphia orchestra, The Three Musketeers and The Merry Widow premiered at the Aldine. Fitting the theme of a movie palace, the Aldine is based on a Renaissance Palazzo. Using light colored materials such as yellow tapestry brick, white marble and terra-cotta, the architect and builders, William Steele and Sons, created a surprisingly well detailed theater facade with decorative pilasters, cartouche panels,

casement windows and modillioned cornice.

The Committee members expressed concern over the fact that the building interior is almost completely new and that the original doorway has been altered. David Baldinger noted that designation would be consistent with Planning Commission goals in retaining theater usage as well as lower scale buildings on the south side of Chestnut Street. The Committee voted against recommending the designation of the Aldine Theater by a vote of 5 to 1 owing to the loss of its architectural integrity. Janet Klein cast the dissenting vote.

Boyd Theater 1908-1910 Chestnut Street  
1927: Hoffman and Henon, Architects

The Boyd Theater at 1908 Chestnut Street has architectural and historical significance as a magnificent and rare example of a fully intact Art Deco movie palace and as the finest remaining movie theater of Hoffman and Henon, the most important theater design firm in Philadelphia. The Boyd Theater which opened in 1927 is one of only two remaining first run movie palaces left in Philadelphia and the only one that is fully intact inside and out. The exteriors of the theater with its unusual curl gable and deeply recessed entryway encompassing flanking storefronts is a fine example of the Art Deco style. The interior of the Boyd through its fine detail and rarity is one of the most important public interiors left in the City. The lobbies contain magnificent etched, gilded and stained mirrors with stylized nudes and flowers, Art Deco niches and plaster elements. The auditorium retains its balcony, scalloped proscenium arch and stage, is profusely decorated and contains a mural honoring "The Modern Woman". The Boyd which had an organ and full time organist was the first theater where "Cinerama" was used in Philadelphia. The architects and engineers, Hoffman and Henon, who designed the Boyd built over 100 theaters in the Philadelphia area between 1921 and 1930 creating such theater masterpieces as The Erlanger, The Stanley and the enormous Mastbaum Theater. The Boyd, the only Art Deco theater by Hoffman and Henon serves as their finest remaining work in Philadelphia.

The Committee recommended the designation of the Boyd Theater by a vote 6 to 0.

Burk Brothers Leather Factory 913-957 N. Third Street  
1855-1913: William Steele and Sons, George Frederick  
John N. Gill Co.

The twelve connected brick factory buildings possess significance as part of the history of the Philadelphia leather industry. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Burk Brothers was one of Philadelphia's largest and most successful leather firms, second only to the largest kid leather processor in the world, Robert Foerderer of Frankford, in the production of glazed kid skins. Philadelphia's manufacturers led the nation in the production of morocco and other kid leathers throughout the nineteenth and well into the twentieth century, a period when leather processing and manufacture was the

fifth largest single category of American industry. Two secret processes associated with Henry Burk revolutionized the kid leather industry worldwide, reduced production time from months to days, and created an American product that equalled kid leather from France. A U.S. Congressman and President of the National Morrocco Manufacturers Association, Burk owned the complex from 1891 until his death in 1903. The site of leather processing since 1815, the buildings and grounds of the plant contain buildings dating from numerous periods of leather processing technology. Burk Brothers and Company remains the oldest and largest group of intact leather industry structures within the boundaries of Philadelphia's Old Leather District.

Caroline Golab and Janet Klein will make a visit to the factory site. The Committee voted unanimously to recommend the designation of the Burk Brothers plant subject to the site visit.

Doctor Scholls Foot Comfort Shoes  
Glass Facade 1933

1106 Chestnut Street  
Markham Asberry, Architect

The storefront at 1106 Chestnut Street possesses significance as an outstanding example of a glass commercial facade rendered in the Art Deco style. This storefront realizes the Art Deco ideal of the melding of machine-made materials with contemporary design. Of course, storefronts had long reflected technological advances in building materials, but Art Deco architects fully embraced the design potential of machine-made products. Art Deco utilized the smooth sleek qualities of terra-cotta and glass as well as the design possibilities inherent in shiny metals and geometrically stylized objects. Structural glass as it was called, was developed around the turn of the century for sanitary applications such as bathrooms and kitchens. During the second and third decades of the twentieth century, however it also began to replace tile and marble as a material for storefronts. By the 1930s manufacturers were marketing glass shopfront systems in rich colors such as Chinese red, jet black, forest green and milk white. Architects like Markham Ashberry employed glass in combination with gleaming metals and neon to produce the revolutionary new look of shopfront designs exemplified by 1106 Chestnut Street. The Doctor Scholls store serves as a rare surviving example of a full facade glass shopfront and as a fine representation of its materials and style.

The Committee recommended the designation of the building at 1106 Chestnut Street by a vote of 6 to 0.

Deborah Gay Mansion  
1889: Geissinger and Hales

2002 North Broad Street

The Deborah Gay Mansion possesses architectural significance as a rare and fine residential design by the firm of Geissinger and Hales and historical importance as the home of Deborah Gay, widowed wife of John Gay an important North Philadelphia industrialist. The house, one of the more elaborate brownstones in the city, is loosely based on Renaissance Revival design

with its rusticated base and polished granite columns. The creative vision of the architect extends far beyond what is typical of the style. The most important element of the design is the forid brownstone carvings of leaves and vines which decorate the window brackets, balcony and the decorative frieze between the second and third floors. The architects Geissinger and Hales specialized in mill design and may have even had a hand in designing John Gay's "Park Mills". Geissinger and Hales was the predecessor firm to the Ballinger Company presently the oldest and one of the most respected industrial design firms in the City. Geissinger and Hales received the Commission for a mansion for Mrs. Deborah Gay, the widowed wife of John Gay, owner of the Park Mills. These Mills were one of the very largest carpet mills in Philadelphia, the city that produced most of the country's carpets in the nineteenth century.

Stressing the architectural significance of the building the Committee recommended the designation of the house at 2002 North Broad Street by a vote of 6 to 0.

Horn and Hardart Automat  
1901, 1930: Ralph Bencker, Architect

818-820 Chestnut Street

The building at 818-820 Chestnut Street possesses historical significance as the first Horn and Hardart Automat, a Philadelphia institution that added a new dimension to eating out. The building has architectural significance for its excellent Art Deco storefront and as a fine example of the commercial work of important Philadelphia architect Ralph Bencker. In 1902, Joseph V. Horn and Frank Hardart opened their first Automat restaurant. Automats with their appealing walls of food waiting behind glass doors proved extremely popular. Their low cost and quick service presaged the fast food that was to become the ware of the future. The Horn and Hardart Automat chain spread throughout Philadelphia and the region. Ralph Bowden Bencker, the architect of the Art Deco shopfront at 818-820 Chestnut Street, designed a number of important buildings throughout the country, including Pennsylvania Station in Chicago, Indianapolis Union Station, the Campbells Soup Factory in Camden and the Pennsylvania State building at the Sesqui-centennial Exhibition of 1926. In Philadelphia Bencker designed such Art Deco landmarks as the N.W. Ayer Building, The Rittenhouse Plaza and numerous buildings for Horn and Hardart

The Committee recommended the designation of the building at 818-820 Chestnut Street by a vote of 6 to 0.

Jewish Foster Home and Orphanage  
- Buildings and Grounds

700 E. Church Lane

1890-1914: Willis Hale Stearns and Castor, Sauer and Hahn, Architects

The Jewish Foster Home and Orphanage, now the Mana Bible Institute, possesses historical significance as the first institutional home for Jewish Orphans in the United States, and as an important reflection of the accomplishments of the Philadelphia Jewish Community. The buildings of the home possess architectural significance as fine examples of the Moorish,

Renaissance and Colonial Revivals as well as the work of Willis Hale and several other respected Philadelphia architects. Rebeca Gratz and a group of women from Philadelphia's established German Jewish families founded the Jewish Foster Home in 1855 to provide relief for orphaned Jewish children. Gratz and her colleagues created this facility in particular response to the needs and conditions associated with the massive Jewish emigration from Eastern Europe beginning in the mid-nineteenth century. The success of the Jewish Foster Home led to its expansion and the acquisition of a new site at the Joseph Smith estate on Church Lane in Germantown in 1881. The trustees retained Willis Hale to add wings and a fourth floor to the Italianate Smith mansion in 1890. Hale responded with two fine examples of the Moorish Revival style as the living quarters and gymnasium for the occupants. The infirmary and library of 1906 and 1907 by Stearns and Castor in the Colonial Revival style as well as the synagogue and school of 1914 by Sauer and Hahn in the Renaissance Revival style serves as good examples of these genres of design and manifest the work of a range of twentieth-century Philadelphia Jewish architects. Included in the nomination are the wooded grounds, the 1870s Smith Carriage House, the decorative stone wall and the marble slab with the initials J.F.S. at the rear of the property.

Janet Klein and Grace Gary volunteered to visit the complex. The Committee recommended the designation of the Jewish Foster Home and Orphanage at 700 E. Church Lane by a vote of 6 - 0 pending the report from the site visit.

Our Lady of Mercy Roman Catholic Church  
and Rectory  
1890-1899: Edwin Forrest Durang

2135-2159 N. Broad Street

Our Lady of Mercy Roman Catholic Church, built between 1890 and 1899, possesses significance as an outstanding and rare example of the Romanesque Revival style as well as one of the finest works of Edwin Forrest Durang, an architect who specialized in works for the Catholic Church. This elaborate stone church remains as one of the few fine surviving expressions of the Romanesque Revival; although this style once enjoyed some popularity in Philadelphia, many of the better buildings in this style have disappeared from the streetscape. Romanesque Revival came into vogue in the 1840s as a variant to the Gothic Revival. The style received new vigor in the late 19th century, reinterpreted through the eyes of Henry Hobson Richardson. Our Lady of Mercy features such Richardsonian elements as heavy rockfaced stonework, a squat Syrian arched doorway and a lombard arcade. The building additionally features elaborate stone carving and an intact interior. The Rectory, originally a Second Empire townhouse, was enhanced in 1891 with French Renaissance details by E.F. Durang. Mr. Durang is well known for the well over one hundred churches and institutional buildings he designed for the Catholic Church. His best Philadelphia works include Our Lady of Mercy, Roman Catholic High School, St. James and St. Gabriels' Churches, Church of the Nativity at Allegheny Avenue and Belgrade Street and Church of the Jesu. In addition Durang did the Arch Street opera house later reknowned as the Troc.

The Committee, after asking that the interior of the church be photographed, voted to recommend the designation of the two buildings by a vote of 6 to 0.

Regent Rennoc Court

5100 Bock of Regent Street and  
1311-1327 S. 52nd Street

The Regent-Rennoc Court stands as an imposing group of flat houses built by the well known local developer, James Conner, and designed by Philadelphia's principal architect of mass produced housing, E.A. Wilson. Wilson prepared plans for in excess of 20,000 residential units in the City, principally in row groups of one hundred or more. He was largely responsible for the development of the normative twentieth century housing types of the Quaker City. This group represents one of his more innovative experiments, which attempted to provide the amenities of the individual rowhouse with the security and larger scale of the apartment. This form allowed Wilson to provide not only more air and light in each residence, but it also yielded a more exuberant decorative vocabulary. The buildings, grand in detail and repetition vaguely exemplify the Renaissance Revival style. Extensively decorated with terra-cotta, these apartments feature three level full width porches. Although presently vacant and somewhat deteriorated, the buildings have basically sound walls and are under renovation by a single developer, in conformity with the Secretary of the Interiors Standards for Rehabilitation.

The Committee recommended the designation of Regent Rennoc Court by a vote of 6 to 0.

Roman Catholic High School  
1886-1890: Edwin Forrest Durang

301-313 N. Broad Street

Roman Catholic High School possesses historical significance as the first diocesan Catholic High School in the country, the product of the generosity of Philadelphian Thomas E. Cahill. It possesses architectural significance as a fine example of the Gothic Revival style and the work of architect Edwin Forrest Durang. The school was established and endowed by the will of businessman Thomas E. Cahill. Cahill, a self-made man, climbed from a life of poverty to great wealth by hard work and sound investments in coal and ice. After years of struggle, in 1869 Mr. Cahill consolidated the largest ice concerns in the city under the name of the Knickerbacker Ice Company. In his will, Cahill fulfilled a life long ambition to provide for the creation of a school so that poor Catholic children could have the advantage of a high school education. The school, finished in 1890, serves as a fine example of the Gothic Revival style. The marble edifice with its many pointed arch windows, battlements and oriels was designed by Edwin Forrest Durang. Durang, primarily known for his work for the Catholic Church, prepared plans for over one hundred churches and institutions for the Catholic community. Durang's finest works include the Church of the Jesu, and the Church of the Nativity as well as St. Gabriels and St. James Churches in Philadelphia. In addition, Durang did the Arch Street Opera House in 1870; this institution later achieved fame as the Troc. The school has graduated over 16,200 students in its 95 years of existence and continues to provide Philadelphia children with an inexpensive quality education.

The Committee recommended the designation of Roman Catholic High School by a vote of 6 to 0.



John Stafford Mansion and Carriage House  
1895: Willis Hale, Architect

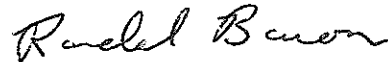
The Stafford Mansion and Carriage House possesses historical significance as the home of John Stafford, one of the most important developers of North Philadelphia. It possesses architectural significance as a fine Renaissance Revival mansion complex designed by the prolific and highly creative Victorian architect Willis G. Hale. Taking advantage of both a pent up demand for housing created by the lean building years of the Civil War and of the northward expansion of the City's streetcar system, Stafford grew wealthy building hundreds of rowhouses in North Philadelphia. In 1895, Stafford commissioned Willis Hale to design a mansion and carriage house for him at 2000 N. Broad Street. Hale, an architect often chosen by nouveau-riche Philadelphians to create their residences used a playful mix of Renaissance Revival and humorous mannered elements to adorn this magnificent brownstone mansion. The house features a corner oriel supported on a single column which slices across a first floor window, an oculus window ringed by mermaids, and on the carriage house, window muntins with terra-cotta horses heads. The Stafford mansion, designed by the architect of the now demolished Widner mansion, remains as one of the very finest residences on Broad Street.

The Committee recommended its designation by a vote of 6 to 0.

The Committee recommended several changes in wording and organization which have been incorporated directly into the designation reports.

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 5:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted



Randal Baron  
Executive Secretary

RB:sj