

THE REPORT OF THE ARCHITECTURAL COMMITTEE OF THE
PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION

David Hollenberg, Chairman

Commission Conference Room

29 August 1991

Present

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

Richard Tyler, Historic Preservation Officer
Randal Baron, Preservation Planner
Daniel W. Simcox, Executive Secretary

Also

Sandra Gross Bressler, Executive Director, Art Commission
Jim Caufield and Dan Deibler,
Pennsylvania Historic and Museum Commission
Hyman Myers, Nan Gutterman & Sy Langberg,
Vitetta Group/Studio Four
Thomas Ventulett, Andy McLean & Kenneth Bryson,
Thompson Ventulett Stainback
Lanny L. Leibowitz, architect
Janice Rimmeir
Lee Wapner, Weathertight Manufacturing, Inc.
Richard W. Thom, Old City Civic Association

Approval

Reading Railroad Terminal, 1115-1141 Market Street:
The Commission previously reviewed proposals to alter this
National Historic Landmark for use by the Pennsylvania Convention
Center. Prior reviews for this project occurred in December
1988, November 1989 and May 1991; each proposal received an
approval in concept. The current submittal focused on proposed
colors and treatments for the train shed.

To inform the Committee of the historic colors and treatments,
Hyman Myers and Nan Gutterman of Vitetta Group presented
photographs and the results of their study and analysis. In
general, they propose to restore the exterior of the shed and its
base.

- The yellow brick and cast-iron components, as well as the
coping and existing ornament, will be restored.

- The wooden sash and frames will be painted dark and light brown respectively.
- Missing finials, which rose above the cast-iron pilasters, will be replaced in fiberglass with a faux-copper finish, if money is available in the budget.
- The north wall of the shed, where trains once entered, will appear similar to the south wall. Though proposing copper if the budget permits, the alternate would be aluminum with a gray-brown, "weathered-copper" finish.

The Committee recommended approval of these proposals for the exterior colors and treatments.

Thomas Ventulett then led the discussion to the shed interior. Following a brief presentation of the marble proposed for the floor and terraces of the Grand Hall, he focused on the proposed colors for the vast trusses and wood planking of the shed itself.

- Nearly one-third of the wood planking has rotted and will be replaced. New pine planks will be stained so that they appear the same as the older ones.
- With historical photographs and anecdotes, Hy Myers suggested that the shed interior was black with soot through most of the structure's history. Though several different paint colors emerged through analysis of the truss, they originally were black. Though a light pine, the planking also blackened from train soot soon after construction. Mr. Ventulett noted that the photographs show that the trusses possess a lighter value than the planking.
- To preserve this slight value differentiation and to present a neutral backdrop for the planned artwork, Mr. Ventulett proposed using a semi-gloss beige for the truss. This color would appear just lighter than the wood planking; it would also reflect light more than the flat finish of the wood. Addressing the concern that lower levels of a light-color truss would show considerable grime after a short time, Ventulett remarked that the bases were out of the mainstream of the hall's activity and that a semi-gloss paint would clean easily.

Following considerable discussion, the Committee agreed that it preferred a dark color for the truss. Members stressed the value of using black on these vast structural spans. The Committee deferred a recommendation on this treatment and suggested the preparation of samples of the two alternatives, using black or a dark color on one truss and the proposed lighter color on another.

Approval

The Athenaeum of Philadelphia, 219 South Sixth Street

In May 1991, the Commission reviewed a proposal by the Athenaeum to alter its National Historic Landmark building, which was the first Italianate building in America modelled on a Renaissance Palazzo when constructed 1845-47. Seeking to transform significant structural problems into an opportunity, the Athenaeum proposed a series of alterations to present a more inviting, public image and to establish exhibit space. The Commission approved in concept the proposed interior alterations, but encouraged further study of the exterior glass doors.

The Athenaeum submitted an alternative door design with a metal frame and transom bar.

The Committee recommended approval of this submission, though suggested a simpler design for the transom bar. The Committee also suggested adding a frame and transom bar to the interior glass doors to make them more similar to the exterior glass door.

Mrs. Batcheler and Mr. Cornell abstained from this vote.

Deferral

248-250 Market Street: Owner Paul Rimmer seeks replacement of all windows above the first floor of this four-story mid-19th century brick building. Approximately ten years ago, before the adoption of the new ordinance and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, the Commission approved the installation of aluminum windows for this building. Lanny Leibowitz, architect for the present application, indicated that these aluminum windows are in poor condition. He has proposed to replace them with bronze or brown-colored vinyl windows with 3/4" muntins.

The Committee acknowledged that the proposed vinyl windows failed to meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards. Several members expressed disbelief that the aluminum windows, installed only a decade ago, required replacement. Mr. Leibowitz, responding to another inquiry, indicated that the vinyl windows would cost only half as much (\$12,500) as the least expensive bid received for wooden replacements (\$25,000). One Committee member stressed that the added investment was worthwhile, as wooden windows were clearly preferred.

Lee Wapner of Weathertight Manufacturing, a vinyl window manufacturing concern, asked if the preceding statement was based on the aesthetics or the thermal efficiency of the windows. He suggested that the high thermal efficiency of the vinyl windows would enhance the property value significantly. To the Committee

observation that wood possessed a better thermal rating than aluminum, Mr. Wapner stressed that "tests had shown" the superior value of his vinyl-clad product. The Committee added that wood windows, well maintained, could last for years -- a concern made particularly pertinent by the limited durability of the existing aluminum windows.

The Committee then focused on mitigating the impact of the proposed installation, if it were approved. First, members recommended use of applied muntins of some depth instead of the proposed sandwiched muntins. Second, the Committee recommended fabrication of a brick mold to reduce a visible gap between the proposed window, as designed, and the existing opening. The Committee asked the architect to prepare shop drawings of both the existing and proposed window profiles.

Richard Thom of the Old City Civic Association vehemently opposed the "further deterioration" of this building by lax application of the Secretary's Standards for Rehabilitation. He objected that approval of vinyl windows at such a highly visible location would significantly undermine endeavors of Historic East Market Street and others to promote historic preservation in Old City. Further, he suggested that allowing vinyl windows here, after requiring wooden replacements for many other buildings seemed unfair and inconsistent.

The Committee acknowledged these comments.

There being no other business, the Committee adjourned.



Daniel W. Simcox,
Executive Secretary

REPORT ADOPTED: 11 SEPTEMBER 1991