

PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION

COMMITTEE ON HISTORIC DESIGNATION

2 AUGUST 1985

The twenty-first meeting of the Committee on Historic Designation began at 2:00 P.M. on Friday, 2 August 1985 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, Architectural Historian, Philadelphia Historical Commission
Randal Baron, Executive Secretary

Introduction to Designation

Randal Baron took the first twenty minutes of the meeting to orient the Committee to several aspects of designation. First the nuts and bolts of the designation process were discussed including how buildings are chosen for designation, how they are researched, filling out the form itself and the procedures of the Committee and the Commission in regards to designation. Secondly the specific role of the Designation Committee was discussed encompassing the advisory assistance the Committee gives to the Commission, reading the forms with an eye to correcting research and writing flaws, and judging the historic resource in terms of the criteria described in the ordinance. Next the Committee was given an overview of the history of designation in Philadelphia, specifically mentioning changes over time in the methods of designation and the location and types of historic resources being designated. Finally the committee discussed the future of designation under the new ordinance including district designation and co-ordinating designation with the Center City Plan.

New Business

The Committee discussed and voted on advising the designation of the following historical and architectural resources.

Bank of North Philadelphia: 3701 N. Broad Street
1926: William L. Lee, architect

The Bank of North Philadelphia also called the Beury Building possesses significance both as a developmental landmark, the only skyscraper commercial building in a sea of three-story rowhouses and as an accomplished example of the Art Deco style. Within North Philadelphia, an area that developed in the late nineteenth century with the rise of the industrial middle class, North Broad Street emerged first as the site of the most expensive homes and later as the commercial spine of the area. Particularly as the Broad Street subway was completed in 1924, North Broad Street developed into a regional business center with a distinct local identity. The fourteen story National Bank of North Philadelphia built in 1926 was the most spectacular new construction project in North Philadelphia in the early twentieth century. This bank, designed by architect William L. Lee rivaled the size and quality of the downtown banking buildings while towering over other buildings in the area. The design for the building represented one of the more sophisticated interpretations of the Art Deco style to appear in Philadelphia. During a period of relatively conservative architectural design in Philadelphia this building contains a number of the hallmarks of flamboyant Art Deco design including a strongly vertical building shaft, a series of zoning inspired setbacks and stylized gothic terra cotta decorative details. In summary the Bank of North Philadelphia represents not only a fine example of its style but also a building of unusual massing and quality of detail for North Philadelphia. The Committee recommended the designation of 3701 North Broad Street by a vote of 6 - 0.

The Heywood Chair Factory - 1010-1014 Race Street
1892: Willis Hale, architect

The building at 1010-1014 Race Street, the Heywood Chair Factory, possesses significance as a fine example of industrial architecture designed by the well-known architect Willis Hale, and for its historical function as the home of the Heywood Chair Company, manufacturer of bentwood furnishings. This factory built in 1892 exemplifies the more ornate type of industrial structures built to accomodate handwork industries which settled on relatively expensive center city real estate. The architect chosen to design the building, Willis Hale, is known for his florid and original Victorian designs and this is both a good example and one of his few remaining industrial commissions. His other well known buildings in the city include the Widner Mansion at Broad and Girard Streets and the Record Building both of which no longer exist. Although the building is significant of its own right it is also important as the production center for the Heywood Brothers chair plant. This company produced an American version of Michael Thonet's bentwood furniture. This furniture made by a process of

steaming and bending wood, produced an extremely strong and light piece of furniture which received acclaim at the 1876 Centennial Exhibition. The fashionable furniture was used on a large scale in a number of academic institutions and remained popular through World War II.

Because of its architectural and historical significance the Committee recommended the Heywood Chair Factory at 1010-1014 Race Street for historic designation by a vote of 6 - 0.

The Levin Funeral Home: 1512 North Broad Street
1933: Edwin Rothschild, architect

The Levin Funeral Home at 1512 North Broad Street possesses significance as a fine example of an Art Deco style commercial building and as a remainder of the Jewish Community which blossomed here around the turning of the present century. Designed by Edwin Rothschild, a favorite architect of the Philadelphia Jewish Community in the twentieth century, the structure was built in 1933 to house the Joseph Levin and Son Funeral Home. Mr. Rothschild, a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania School of Architecture designed residences, stores, synagogues and other institutions for his largely Jewish clientele. This building is one of the finest small scale Art Deco buildings in the City. The elements which exemplify its style include the pilasters, window registers and reeded parapet which give a strong vertical emphasis, the construction materials of cast stone for the facade and metal casement windows as well as the ornate Mayan inspired decoration. The Joseph Levin Funeral Home, one of the oldest Jewish funeral homes in the City (1885) relocated to North Broad Street in 1933 following a general migration of the Jewish Community to this section of North Philadelphia around 1900. This important community institution joined the more well known mainstays of the Jewish Community such as Rodeph Shalom Synagogue and Dropsie University.

Because of its architectural and socio-historical significance the Committee recommended 1512 North Broad Street for designation by a vote of 6 - 0.

Louis C. Bergdoll House: 929 North 29th Street
1885: Otto C. Wolf, architect

The Louis Bergdoll house built in 1885 in Brewerytown, North Philadelphia possesses historical significance as The Home of the Bergdolls, an important German-American family in Philadelphia, and architectural significance as a rare and outstanding brick gothic mansion house by architect Otto C. Wolf.

The Bergdolls achieved wealth and rekknown in nineteenth century Philadelphia and are historically significant both for their own achievements and in terms of the social history of the German Community in the City. Louis Bergdoll, a political refugee from Germany, founded the brewing firm of Bergdoll and Psotta in 1849 and later incorporated the Louis Bergdoll Brewing Company in 1882, one of the largest breweries in the City. The family later diversified their business interests, manufacturing their own line of motorcars, as well as marketing and racing them. Following a nineteenth century pattern of industrialists living and working along with their workers in close proximity to their factories, Louis C. Bergdoll built the family homestead on 29th Street near his large brewery. The family used the architect Otto C. Wolf to design close to a dozen buildings for them including the brewery building and their mansion house. Otto C. Wolf, the son of a brewer himself, became the country's foremost brewery designer, completing six large breweries in Philadelphia and many more across the U.S. and other countries. The Bergdoll house, using the brick gothic style characteristic of northern Germany was Wolf's first and grandest residential commission. Wolf created a large and imaginative house and carriage house complex that is a landmark in North Philadelphia.

The Committee recommended that the Department of Licences and Inspections should be asked to report on the condition of the carriage house and that the nomination boundary description should carefully include this structure. By a vote of 6 - 0 the Committee recommended the designation of this property.

Octavius V. Catto Residence
Circa 1815, vernacular

814 South Street is significant as the residence of Octavius V. Catto, one of the earliest leaders of the Black Civil Rights Movement in the United States. Mr. Catto worked effectively during his lifetime to better the lot of Blacks in Pennsylvania through educational and legal reforms and by formenting a sense of entitlement, identity and pride amongst urban Blacks during the Civil War and Reconstruction era. Mr. Catto born into a free-black family in Charleston South Carolina, was educated in Quaker Schools and became the fourth graduate of The Institute for Colored Youth, the first highschool for Blacks in Philadelphia. After graduating he went on to teach at the Institute through the end of his life. Octavius Catto first attracted public attention during the Civil War when he organized a company of Black soldiers to fight the Confederate Army. Denied entry into the army because of their color, Catto became involved in a political conflict which resulted in the recruitment of blacks into the Union Army. Later Catto worked successfully to desegregate the City's Franklin Institute and the streetcars throughout Pennsylvania. He

also was instrumental in establishing schools for Blacks in Washington D.C. After the 15th Amendment passed in 1870 Catto worked hard to rally the black vote. On election day October 10, 1871, in the midst of racial rioting in the city, Mr. Catto was assassinated on his way to the polling booth. Although at the time Catto's murder served as a warning to Blacks of the dangers of trying to change society's legal structure, his memory has proven to be an important symbol for northern urban blacks in their continued fight for racial equality.

The structure at 814 South Street was built circa 1815 as a two and one half story vernacular Federal period house. The house, approximately one block from The Institute for Colored Youth where he taught, was a boarding house. Catto is listed at this address in the 1870 census, during the height of his fame.

The Committee noted the fact that the building has been altered with a new facade and thus looks very different from the period in which Catto lived there. For this reason the committee recommended by a vote of 5 - 1 the designation of the site of the building as opposed to the building itself, thereby recognizing the significance of the place where Catto lived without restricting design changes to the building.

Pennsylvania Institute for the Deaf and Dumb: 7500 Germantown Avenue

1890-1900: Wilson Brothers/Cope and Stewardson/Mellor and Meigs

The Pennsylvania Institute for the Deaf and Dumb is historically significant as a major philanthropic institution, the third in the nation to provide education for the Deaf and architecturally significant as one of the best preserved complexes of Victorian buildings in the region and as excellent examples of the work of two nationally important architectural firms Wilson Brothers and Cope and Stewardson. The Pennsylvania School for the Deaf was founded by David Sexias in 1820 and became a public institution after an Act of the State legislature in 1821. The school which moved to 7500 Germantown Avenue in 1892 became a strong proponent of the oral system of instruction whereby Deaf students were taught to speak English in order to more fully integrate them into mainstream society. The school has been and continues to be a principal institution for the deaf in Pennsylvania and the United States and has sent many thousands of students onto college.

The Institute has always had some of the best architects in the City design its buildings. Wilson Brothers the architects of the three original buildings on the campus specialized in combining architectural design with major planning and engineering components. The Brothers are well known for designing the major buildings at the Centennial Exhibition as well as the old Broad Street Station and Reading Terminal. Additionally they had experience with institutional campuses, designing buildings for the University of Vermont,

The Industrial Home for Women and The Episcopal Divinity School in Philadelphia. For the Institute, the Brothers developed large, well lit residence halls based on the pavillion plan of contemporary hospitals, masterfully clothed in freely handled Victorian medieval designs. Cope and Stewardson who designed much of the campuses of Bryn Mawr College and University of Pennsylvania, creating a nationally recognized collegiate gothic style, were responsible for several of the later buildings at the Institute for the Deaf and Dumb.

Sandra Tatman asked that in the description portion of the designation for Gilpin Hall, the architect and date be corrected to Mellor and Meigs 1927.

Because of its outstanding historical and architectural significance the Committee recommended designating the buildings and grounds of the former Pennsylvania Institute for the Deaf and Dumb by a vote of 6 - 0.

William B. Stephens Memorial Library: 146-148 Krams Avenue
1909: Lawrence V. Boyd, Architect

The William B. Stephens Memorial Library is significant both for its Beaux Arts Renaissance Revival architecture, designed by Lawrence V. Boyd, and for its historical role as a specialized technical library and community resource in the Manayunk section of Philadelphia. The architect hired to design the building is known primarily for the many large houses he designed working for several real estate speculators in the development of Wayne and the Overbrook and Pelham sections of Philadelphia. Boyd used the principles of the Beaux Arts movement both in his houses and in this library. These principles are expressed here in the library's perfect symmetry, light coloration and grandeur as a modified rendition of a classical design. This building is a particularly appealing example of the Beaux Arts because the grand materials, design and details typical of the style are compacted in this building of residential scale. The library was built as a monument to William B. Stephens the owner of one of the largest textile mills in Manayunk. It specialized in textile and scientific literature and catered both to the community of Manayunk and the broader community of technical researchers. The Committee recommended the designation of this building by a vote of 6 - 0.

The Thompson Street Rowhouses 1819, 1821, 1823, 1825, 1827, 1829,
1831, 1833, 1837 Thompson Street
1883: Attributed to Willis Hale, Architect

The rowhouses at 1819, 1821, 1823, 1825, 1827, 1829, 1831, 1833 and 1837 Thompson Street in North Philadelphia are significant as fine

and unusual examples of speculative housing attributed to the noted Philadelphia architect Willis Hale, and built by businessman William Elkins to accommodate Philadelphia's rapidly growing middle class population in the late nineteenth century. These houses have been attributed to Willis Hale both because they exemplify the flamboyant rowhouse designs produced by him and also because he was often commissioned by the developer William Elkins to design rowhouses in North Philadelphia. Recognized as one of Philadelphia's most original Victorian architects, Hale is known for his exuberant style which borrowed elements from numerous architectural types even in a single building. These rowhouses which incorporate Queen Ann windows, Eastlake moldings, North German corbell work and brick banding as well as a vaguely Second Empire false mansard illustrate Hale's approach to design and make for very attractive and unusual housing. William Elkins who built these houses in 1883 was a self-made man who invested early in Pennsylvania oil and later branched out into transportation and real estate speculation. Capitalizing on Philadelphia's rapidly growing middle class due to industrial expansion in the late nineteenth century, Elkins became one of the wealthiest men in the country building rows of speculative housing in North Philadelphia. These Thompson Street houses represent some of the best speculative designs in North Philadelphia, an area characterized by brick rowhouses. The Committee recommended designation of these houses by a vote of 6 - 0.

The Designation Committee's recommended changes to the nomination forms involving spelling, punctuation, and facts not specifically related to the buildings proposed for designation, have been made in the nomination forms, and are not noted in these minutes.

Old Business

The following buildings: Tabernacle Presbyterian Church, The Overbrook train station and The Steel/Strawbridge Estate were amongst those certified at the Commission meeting on January 3, 1985. At that time, owners received notice of certification after the commission meeting and were asked to respond within thirty days. The owners of these three buildings objected in writing to their buildings' certification within the 30 day period. The procedure at that time asked for the certifications to be reassessed by the Certification Committee which would then refer them back to the Commission with a recommendation. Here again are the minutes containing a statement of significance for each building as well as the Designation Committee's reassessed recommendation for Commission action.

Overbrook Train Station: 6260 City Line Avenue
1858: Pennsylvania Railroad, builder

The Overbrook train station, built in 1858, possesses significance as the earliest surviving station on the Main Line of the Pennsylvania Railroad between Philadelphia and Harrisburg, and for its cottage gothic architecture, reflecting the residential nature of early train stations and the design vogue made popular by the writings of Andrew Jackson Downing.

The Overbrook train station is one of the oldest surviving stations of the Pennsylvania Railroad, which played an important role in the nineteenth century, transporting immigrants and travelers westward, expanding the industries of the City through transport of freight, and creating a string of Philadelphia suburban communities. The community of Overbrook Farms owes its development to the railroad station on City Line Avenue. When this suburb developed in the late nineteenth century, 94 percent of its heads of household commuted to offices in Center City Philadelphia.

The wooden cottage gothic architecture of the Overbrook station became popular in the 1850s due to the efforts of the writer Andrew Jackson Downing, who praised gothic architecture for its sympathy with pastoral surroundings. He also felt that the nature of the building material should dominate the choice of design. The Overbrook station follows closely this design philosophy, using vertical board and batten siding to mirror a tree's vertical growth and lacy millwork to emphasize wood's unique lightness and strength. The station, recently inspected by engineers, retains its structural and architectural integrity.

Amtrack, the owner of Overbrook station objected to the certification of their building indicating that they may need to demolish the building to avoid the expense of the building's maintenance. They indicated that they were in the midst of negotiations to sell the station to the Wawa market chain but that no plan for reuse had yet been agreed upon. In the interim the Overbrook Farms Community Club, members of which were involved in submitting the nomination form, has been working with Wawa. They have come out in support of Wawa's proposal to restore the station and build a sympathetic Wawa store next to it. Mr. Domico of the Community Club also brought these plans to the architectural review committee for complimentary non-binding comment and the committee was pleased with the design.

The Designation Committee unanimously recommended reaffirming the designation of 6260 City Line Avenue for the following reasons.

1. The building is of extraordinary historical and architectural significance.

2. The residents of Overbrook Farms stand firmly behind saving this building of outstanding historical value to their community.
3. A plan for financing the rehabilitation of the station is in the works.
4. The new ordinance contains hardship provisions within the permit process.

Tabernacle Presbyterian Church: 3700-3706 Chestnut Street
1884-1886: Theophilus P. Chandler, Architect

The Tabernacle Presbyterian Church possesses significance primarily for its Gothic Revival architecture, the work of well known architect Theophilus P. Chandler. The congregation of the Tabernacle Presbyterian Church resulted from the merger of the sixth and seventh Presbyterian churches of Philadelphia in 1873. When the newly merged congregation decided in 1884 to move to West Philadelphia to ensure the church's survival, T.P. Chandler was commissioned to design the new church. Mr. Chandler specialized in designing Gothic Revival stone churches and built numerous examples of such churches throughout Pennsylvania and beyond. His most famous works in Philadelphia include the Swedenborgian church of the New Jerusalem at 22nd and Chestnut, the Scott Wanamaker House and the Bear Pits at the Philadelphia Zoo. The Tabernacle Presbyterian Church is thought to be one of Chandlers most important ecclesiastical landmarks, because of its large size, elaborate design and intricate detail. Every element of this building from its Tiffany windows to its magnificently carved stone window screens and column capitals bespeaks quality design and craftsmanship. The building, in outstanding condition, retains its integrity of structure and design.

The council of the Tabernacle Presbyterian Church rejected the certification stating that they intended to make some alterations to the church and implied that they did not want the commission to review and possibly interfere with those changes. They explained that they would reconsider certification after the completion of the work. Because the building has been certified these last eight months awaiting a rehearing however, the church architect was obliged to come to the Commission for review. The staff quickly signed off on the permit, deeming the alterations to be interior work that had no significant effect on the historic character of the building. Because the Commission has already accommodated the change that the church feared would be rejected, and because of the building's extraordinary architectural significance, the committee recommended reaffirming the designation of 3700-3706 Chestnut Street by a vote of 6 - 0.

Woodside, Edward Steel Estate: 3001 Schoolhouse Lane
1875: Addison Hutton, Architect

Woodside, located at 3001 Schoolhouse Lane, possesses significance as a fine country house designed by the important Philadelphia architect Addison Hutton, as home to two prominent Philadelphians, Edward T. Steel and Francis R. Strawbridge, and finally as one of the few remaining large estates on Schoolhouse Lane in Germantown, a street which developed as a community for the very wealthy in the late nineteenth century.

Addison Hutton who was the architect for the numerous additions that transformed a small stone house into the spectacular mansion it is today, is well known as one of Philadelphia's finest architects of both public buildings and country estates. Hutton's most famous works include P.S.F.S. on Walnut Street, the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, and Arch Street Methodist Church. Hutton, being a Quaker himself was commissioned by many old Quaker families to design country house estates. Using an amalgam of popular styles of the late 19th century such as Gothic Revival, Queen Ann, Stick Style and Tudor, Hutton created his own unique interpretation of the country house. Woodside, designed in 1875 in the middle of Hutton's career, incorporates many of the design elements seen in his more famous later houses such as Ballytore for Isaac Clothier and Torworth for Justus Strawbridge.

Edward T. Steel who hired Hutton to create Woodside, was a Quaker and important Philadelphia citizen. Steel began a wholesale cloth business that became the largest of its kind in the City in the late 19th century. He also served as a member of the Centennial Board of Finance which planned the Centennial Exhibit of 1876, and reigned as president of the Board of Education between 1879 and 1892. Mr. Steel was one of the first of the wealthy residents of this section of Germantown, who built a string of estates along School House Lane.

Woodside remains as a handsome example of the work of Addison Hutton, as the residence of leading Philadelphian Edward T. Steel and as one of the few remaining estates in this section of Germantown.

David Thurston, lawyer for the overseers of the Penn Charter School sent a letter of objection to the certification of the Steel/Strawbridge estate. The letter stated that the overseers do not agree with the commission's assessment that the estate possesses historical and or architectural qualities which make it worthy of certification or preservation. At subsequent meetings with the commission, the representatives of the school have explained their desire to demolish the building to gain three regulation size playing fields. The commission recognizing the significance of the structure has imposed the six month stay of demolition on the

property in the hope that a compromise can be reached that would allow the school to have much of its needed space while providing for the preservation of the mansion house.

The designation committee recognizes the outstanding architectural and historical significance of the estate and unanimously recommended reaffirming the designation of 3001 School House Lane.

There being no further business, the committee adjourned at 5:15 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Randal Baron".

Randal Baron
Executive Secretary