

**REPORT OF THE HISTORIC DESIGNATION COMMITTEE
PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION
10 August 2004**

**Room 578 City Hall
Thomas Sugrue, Chair**

Present

Thomas Sugrue, Ph.D., Chair
Warren Huff
Janet Klein
Hyman Myers
Harris Steinberg

John Farnham, Historic Preservation Planner
Diane M. Hughes, Executive Secretary
Laura Spina, Historic Preservation Planner
Richard Tyler, Historic Preservation Officer

Also Present

Stephen Anderson, Neighbor
Joseph Lipscomb, Resident of Quince Street
Jim Foster, Neighbor
Neil Sklaroff, Esq., Representing owner of 101-121 West Johnson Street
John A. Teets, AIA
Andrea Renner, Preservation Alliance
Jonathan Lipner, owner, 101-121 West Johnson Street
Patricia Henning, Mt. Airy Historical Committee
Christine Tilles, West Mt. Airy Neighbors Resident
Steven Tilles, West Mt. Airy Neighbors Resident
Catharine K. Franklin, Penn-Knox Neighborhood Association
Rev. Ray A. Barnard, Impacting Your World Christian Center
Jerry Roller, AIA, J.K. Roller Architects
Dr. Karen R. S. Jerk
Fred Maurer
Richard DeMarco, Esq., Klehr Harrison Harvey Branzburg & Ellers LLP
Sherman Toppin, Esq., Representing Impacting Your World Christian Center
Leonard Williams
Joseph Menkevich
Della Blair, Impacting Your World Christian Center
Roslyn Morris, Blair Christian Academy
Deidre Anderson, Impacting Your World Christian Center
Tanya Reid, Impacting Your World Christian Center
Leonard Reuter, City of Philadelphia, Law Department
Carl Primavera, Klehr Harrison Harvey Branzburg & Ellers LLP
David Plante, West Central Germantown
Derek Green, East Mt. Airy Neighbors
Eric Griffin, West Central Germantown
John Gallery, Preservation Alliance

Mr. Sugrue called the meeting to order at 9:10. He gave a brief overview of the procedural processes of the Committee.

245 Quince Street

Joseph Lipscomb, Owner

Mr. Farnham gave an illustrated presentation. He said that the property is fraternal, not identical, twin to the south along with most of the buildings on the street designated in 1961. He offered his belief that the Commission had intended to designate this house, but that there was some confusion with the address. He noted that this Greek Revival row house on an historically significant block is an excellent example of a quintessentially Philadelphian row house which meets Criteria A, C, and J.

Joseph Lipscomb, the owner, informed the Committee that he has taken every opportunity to maintain the style and the original integrity of the property.

Mr. Myers inquired about the date of the house as well as the infilled masonry on the side wall of the property. Mr. Lipscomb responded that he is doing research to come up with a more accurate date of construction and that the infill on the side elevation is the result of the removal of air conditioners.

Catherine Franklin, Penn-Knox Neighborhood Association, said that she would welcome more trees around the property.

Mr. Huff made a motion to recommend the listing of 245 Quince Street on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. Mr. Steinberg seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

1900 Chestnut Street

1900 Equities, Owner

Mr. Farnham described this Robert Glenddenning Building at 1900 Chestnut Street, which was designed by architect Frank E. Hahn and erected in 1934. It is an excellent example of the Art Deco Moderne commercial buildings erected in the City in the 1930s. Its corner location makes the well-designed limestone especially prominent. Of note is its monumental entrance on 19th Street, which includes a grand arched window, fluted reveals, decorative panels, and original Deco lanterns. This building satisfies designation Criteria:

- (A) It has significant value as part of the commercial development of Philadelphia
- (B) It reflects the environment in an era characterized by a distinctive architectural style, Art Deco-Art Modern
- (C) It embodies distinguishing characteristics of the Art-Deco-Art Moderne style
- (D) It is the work of Frank E. Hahn, an architect whose work influenced architectural development in Philadelphia

Mr. Steinberg pointed out the relationship of this building to that of the Boyd Theater.

John Gallery, Preservation Alliance, emphasized the social and economic phenomenon of the influence of the Art-Deco period on commercial buildings. He commented on the unusual integrity of the original condition with respect to the architecture. He disclosed that the possible demolition of this building dictated the Alliance to submit a nomination for designation. Mr.

Gallery said that this building is a prime example of institutions related to Jewish industry which represents changing to commercial. He noted the architectural excellence of the cut corner.

Committee members concurred about the grand entrance on 19th Street. Mr. Myers remarked about this three-story structure masked as a two-story structure. The Committee concluded that this building is worthy of designation.

Mr. Steinberg made a motion to recommend that 1900 Chestnut Street be listed on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. Ms. Klein seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

101-21 W. Johnson Street

Biddle Properties, Inc., Owner

Mr. Farnham presented the nomination and projected slides of the property. Two buildings stand on the property, the large, H-shaped, Renaissance Revival structure known as the Presser Home for Retired Music Teachers and Theodore Presser's Tudor Revival carriage house. Architects Davis & Davis designed the Presser Home, which was constructed in 1913 and 1914. An anonymous architect designed the carriage house, which was built about 1895.

Theodore Presser came to Philadelphia in 1884 after building a reputation in the music world as a professor of piano and a publisher of *The Etude Music Magazine*. In Philadelphia, Presser's growing company published not only the magazine but also musical scores. The company became one of the largest in the world and still exists today. As Presser's wealth grew, he founded a foundation to promote musicians and music education. In 1906, he established the Presser Home for Retired Music Teachers, which was unique to the United States and based on an Italian musician's retirement home founded by Giuseppe Verdi, the great composer.

The Presser Home for Retired Music Teachers meets criteria a, c, d, h, and j of Section 14-2007 as delineated in the Philadelphia Code. It "has significant character, interest or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the City, Commonwealth or Nation" and "is associated with the life of a person significant in the past." To satisfy criteria c and d, the Home and carriage house both reflect "the environment in an era characterized by a distinctive architectural style" and embody "distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style." The Home meets criterion h as it "represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community or City." Finally, the property satisfies criterion j as it "exemplifies the cultural, political, social, or historical heritage of the community."

Mr. Steinberg asserted that Presser's story is remarkable and demonstrates the richness of Philadelphia's culture. Mr. Huff noted the strength of Philadelphia's music community in the late nineteenth century. The Committee members asked for further details about the role Paul Davis played in the formation of the T-Square Club.

Mr. Myers stated that the site and landscape should be described in the nomination because they are as important as the architecture of the buildings. The setback, landscaping, etc are characteristics that should be preserved.

Carl Primavera, the attorney for the equitable owner, the Impact Your World Ministries, claimed that the Committee and Commission would be acting irresponsibly if they designated the property without a plan on how they would reuse the buildings. The church has a plan that would use the

properties. He questioned the timing of the nomination, and accused the neighbors who supported the designation as doing so in retaliation against the church.

Mr. Sugrue reminded Mr. Primavera that the Committee simply evaluates nominations on the bases of the criteria and makes recommendations to the Commission. It is the Commission that evaluates the larger issues. Mr. Primavera said that he did not have any questions pertaining to the specifics of the nomination, but wanted to address the larger policy issues.

Rev. Ray Bernard of Impact Your World Ministries then spoke of the church's mission. He gave the history of the church and how it has outgrown its present location on Market Square. The church has recently joined with the Blair Academy to acquire this site.

John Teets, an architect, looked at this site for the Blair Academy and declared the buildings unfit for rehabilitation. The Presser Home has a concrete frame and an addition at the rear that is not code-compliant.

Neil Sklaroff, attorney for the present owner, asked for a continuance in order to hire an architectural historian to review the nomination. He also referenced the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act (RLUIPA), the federal statute signed in 2000. Lawrence Copeland of the City's Law Department countered that, since the Committee only makes a recommendation to the Commission, the Committee does not need to address RLUIPA.

In response to the Committee's question, Jonathan Whitmark, a representative of Westmont Properties, the current owner, noted that Westmont Properties merged with Biddle Properties, Inc.

John Gallery of the Preservation Alliance supported the nomination. He expressed that the site is extremely important not just for its architecture but also for its social significance and it clearly meets the five criteria outlined in the nomination.

Jim Foster, a neighbor, explained that this process started last winter when the Blair Academy approached the neighborhood with plans to expand the school. The school originally wanted to demolish the building and the neighborhood planned to show at the zoning hearing, but the zoning application was withdrawn. It is only in the last couple of weeks that the community has learned that the church has joined the school in acquiring these properties and desires not only to demolish this property but the whole block.

Derrick Green of the East Mount Airy Neighbors Association said that he and residents of the West Mount Airy Neighbors had just learned of the church's involvement with the site and proposes demolition for the whole block. They wish to know more about the proposed plans for the site and how historic preservation would work in the community.

Christine Tillis lives across the street from the Presser Home. She said that the neighborhood is a historic one and these buildings constitute the historic fabric of the neighborhood, like Wyck and Upsala. She noted that the neighborhood is showing signs of revival with younger people moving in and long-time residents investing in the houses, emphasizing the diversity of the area. She asked the Committee to proceed with the designation of the buildings based on their merit in order to protect them from demolition. She noted that the city has many vacant lots on which the church can build its facility and fulfill its mission.

Catherine Franklin of the Penn Knox community reiterated Ms. Tillis' comments and opined that the workmanship found on these buildings cannot be duplicated today. She said that many of the craftsmen who worked on these buildings lived in Germantown.

Ms. Klein made a motion to recommend listing 101-21 W. Johnson Street on the Philadelphia Register. Mr. Huff seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

Register-Maintenance Rescissions

Mr. Tyler reiterated to the Committee that the basis for the rescission of designation for the following properties is the absence of the resource. Ms. Klein asked for clarification about a vacant lot in a district's jurisdictional review. Mr. Tyler eluted to the 45-day review and comment. Committee discussed the loss of significant structures such as the Ile-Ife Museum, which was a major cultural institution connected to the revitalization of North Philadelphia. Mr. Sugrue thought that each property should be voted on separately for rescission.

1568-1570 Adams Avenue

Mr. Steinberg made a motion to recommend rescission. Ms. Klein seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

2300-2310 Germantown Avenue

Ms. Klein thought that since this property before its demolition had such cultural significance, it should be recognized with a National Register historic marker. Mr. Sugrue offered to relay the information to Amy Cohen, a teacher at Masterman School, who is instrumental in securing markers as a project with her students.

Mr. Myers made a motion to recommend rescission. Mr. Huff seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

5324-5328 Germantown Avenue

Mr. Steinberg made a motion to recommend rescission. Mr. Huff seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

5330 Germantown Avenue

Mr. Myers made a motion to recommend rescission. Ms. Klein seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

5331-5333 Germantown Avenue

Mr. Steinberg made a motion to recommend rescission. Mr. Myers seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

5439-5441 Germantown Avenue

Mr. Steinberg made a motion to recommend rescission. Mr. Huff seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

315 East Wildey Street

Mr. Steinberg made a motion to recommend rescission. Ms. Klein seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

734 South 2nd Street

Mr. Myers made a motion to recommend rescission. Ms. Klein seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

Other Rescissions

1034 Spruce Street

Mr. Tyler explained that the building was destroyed as the result of a fire.

John Gallery, Preservation Alliance, voiced his concern about consistency in the rescission of properties. He gave an example of the National Products building, which sustained a fire, and its rescission was denied. Mr. Gallery suggested that the Commission draft a policy for rescissions. Mr. Sugrue noted that there was an issue of a suspicious fire, at the National Products building; however, he did concede that there is not a clear policy in place. Mr. Tyler said that arson was attributed to the fire and that the owner rejected the administrative procedures. Committee discussed the issue of jurisdictional review of the site after the resource is gone. Mr. Tyler said that he believes that the designation should include the site as well as the building to retain control after the resource is gone.

Mr. Gallery did not agree with Mr. Tyler. He thought that the Commission's jurisdiction over new construction is beneficial and that the Commission should incorporate into its policy, the criteria needed for rescission to give guidance.

Mr. Huff voiced his belief that the procedures for rescission are being followed. Ms. Klein thought that time lines between rescission and new construction should be made clear.

Richard DeMarco, Esq., said that rescission of this property had been requested prior to the commencement of the new construction but owing time constraints and that the Designation Committee meets on an as-needed basis, it was compelling that the new construction proceed without the rescission.

Mr. Huff made a motion to recommend rescission. Mr. Myers seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

Before the conclusion of the meeting, Ms. Klein inquired if a contributing or significant property's designation is rescinded, does the inventory change.

Mr. Steinberg made a motion to adjourn. Ms. Klein seconded the motion which carried unanimously

800 Adams Avenue, aka 930 Adams Avenue, Greenwood Cemetery

The owner requested a continuance to the next Designation Committee meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 11:30 a.m.

Respectfully submitted

Diane M. Hughes, Executive Secretary
Laura Spina, Historic Preservation Planner