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THE THIRTY-FIFTH MEETING OF THE PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION

October 27, 1959, postponed to November 2nd

Present were: Mrs. Richardson Dilworth
Mr. R. Norris Williams, II.
Mr. Harry A. Batten
Mr. Charles E. Peterson, Secretary

Mr. Grant M. Simon, Chairman

Also present: Mr. Harry G. McDowell, representing Mr. McConnell
Mr. Philip Carroll, representing Commissioner Gennetti
Dr. Margaret B. Tinkcom, Historian
Mrs. Charles J. Maurer, Executive Secretary

Unless otherwise stated, all actions reported herein
were taken after motions properly presented, seconded
and carried. -

THE MINUTES for June 20, 1959, were approved as corrected.

DR. TINKCOM'S REPORT:

The Historical files of the Philadelphia Historical Commission have been
augmented as follows:

Photographs: Some 550 new (1959) photographs and about
200 old ones (1912-1920), and about 150 colored slides (to illustrate
talks on the Commission's work) have been acquired.

Insurance Surveys: Mrs. Kirkbride has finished her
examination of the files of the Fire Association (in the possession
of the Reliance Assurance Co.) and is continuing the survey of the
unsorted policies of the Contributionship.

Wills and Inventories: Arrangements have been made with
the Department of Archives to secure photocopies of old wills and
inventories of persons owning property in Washington Square East,
where such legal instruments form integral parts of the Chains of
Title to the properties.

THE REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY:

Since the Redevelopment Authority began to demolish the buildings in the
Dock Street area, the staff of the Commission has inspected those reported
cleared and read for demolition and has photographed important interior architectural
details in about a dozen. Among the most important of these were the little
houses on St. James Street, and the underground vaults under Granite Street, at
Chancellor and South American Streets (The Morris Brewery, 1790) and at 200-204
S. Front Street.

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The Commission has been acting as clearing house for information regarding these buildings and the materials to be salvaged from them for almost four months and has had disappointingly few inquiries regarding the interior details (window frames, flooring, matnles, doors, hardware, &c) available for the use of anyone restoring another old building. No important finds nor any significant artifacts have been uncovered to date, in any of the Dock Street buildings.

BANNAKER SCHOOL:

The owners of this building (Martin Candy Co.) have been notified by the Department of Licenses and Inspections that in its present condition, it is in violation of the City's building Code. No order for its demolition has been issued however. The South West Philadelphia Community Council is anxious to save the school and has been notified of this condition.

FORT MIFFLIN:

-The Commission's plan to write to Senators Clark and Scott, urging them to try to get the Federal Government to add this Fort to the National Parks was deferred in view of the almost certain proposal of the Greater Philadelphia Movement that the City take over the Fort. A report by G. Edwin Brumbaugh on the cost of restoring it has been submitted to the Greater Philadelphia Movement and will be ready for distribution in November.

THE HEAD HOUSE:

Mr. David Wallace of the Independence National Historic Park has offered the 19th century fire fighting equipment, formerly displayed in Old City Hall, to the Philadelphia Historical Commission for exhibition in the restored Head House. The Historian was directed to thank Dr. Wallace for his offer and to ask him to send a list of the available material. After the Commission has had the opportunity of studying this inventory, it will be in a better position to accept or refuse the available items than it presently is.

THE BUDGET FOR 1960:

The figure is the same as it was for 1959, except that sufficient has been added to allow for a clerk-stenographer, Class II., and the equipment she will need. Therefore the total budget is \$21,893 as compared to the present total of \$17,816.

As of this date the Commission has in the 400 Class, a balance of \$32.00. This amount was originally designed to be used for desk lamps. Because of the very good lighting in Room 634, this item is not necessary and therefore we ask the Commission's permission to order another chair instead, in the amount of \$29.50. Permission was granted.

In the 300 Class, a balance remains of \$586. To use this to advantage, we have decided to ask for the approval of the following items:

1. More old prints reproduced from the Historical Society of Penna.
in the amount of \$100.00
2. We owe the Photographic Division for work already done 100.00
3. We owe the Department of Records for photostats about 100.00
4. We hope to reimburse the Archives for reproductions
of wills and inventories after they are laminated 100.00

Approval was granted for these four expenditures.

In Class 200, Professional Services, there is a balance of \$305.00. The Commission would like to use \$250 of this to retain the services of Mr. George A. Robbins so that he may start preparing drawings which would show doors, and doorways, dormers, cornices and similar details of the period 1750 to 1850, as suggested in the Minutes of June 30, 1959. Approval was given for this, if it includes the phrase "Compile and draw" in the contract.

Dr. Tinkcom's Report was Approved.

OLD BUSINESS

Demolition By Neglect

Mr. McDowell reported that he had studied the New Orleans Ordinances to control demolition by neglect and an earlier ordinance on which its effective powers were based. He was requested to write to Mr. DeLessays Moore, Mayor of the City of New Orleans and to inquire as to the effectiveness of the penalties imposed by these ordinances. If Mr. McDowell is satisfied that the New Orleans Ordinance is effective, he will have a similar instrument drafted for the consideration of this Commission.

Inclusion of the Philadelphia Historical Commission into the City Charter

Mr. McDowell discussed this possibility with Mr. McConnell, Director of Finance and with the City Solicitor's office. The consensus is that, since the Commission can be brought within the limits of the Charter by popular referendum, it will not be practical to take any action in this direction until other amendments to the Charter are placed on the ballot.

Plaques for Historic Buildings

Mr. Batten reported that the pattern of the plaque has been made and added that he had spoken to Judge Edwin C. Lewis and Mr. M. O. Anderson regarding the desirability of assigning the first twenty plaques to buildings in the Independence National Historical Park. Mr. Batten further proposed that plaque No. 1 be affixed to the State House and that a ceremony at which the Mayor would present this plaque in the Commission's name be arranged.

Schuylkill Arsenal

Mr. Carroll reported that the price asked for the Arsenal by the United States Government, together with the cost to the City of demolishing the unusable buildings, was so high that in all probability, the City would not be able to buy the Arsenal for use as a Detention Center. Mr. Peterson noted that the Federal Government has occasionally given away government property of this sort to an agency planning to preserve its historic buildings and inquired whether the City had explored this possibility. The Commission requested that Mr. Peterson and Mr. Carroll jointly, look further into the matter and report their findings at the next meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

St. George's Methodist Church Library & Museum

It was proposed and approved that the Library and Museum building of Old St. George's Methodist Church be certified as being historically significant.

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Hamilton House, Cobb's Creek Parkway at 61st Street.

The Commission agreed to add this house to its certified list and the Chairman was requested to write a letter to the Philadelphia School Board, notifying them of the buildings historic worth and requesting the Board of Education to reconsider its intention of demolishing this house when a new school is to be built in this area.

278-270, 272-274 South Second St. and 217 Spruce - Abercrombie, Neave & Davis houses

Mr. Peterson brought before the Commission the resolutions of the Society for the Preservation of Landmarks, advocating the preservation and restoration of these houses. All of these houses have been certified, and in consultation with the Redevelopment Authority, they are marked for rehabilitation.

Washington Square West

Dr. Tinkcom was directed to send the photographs and list of buildings recommended for certification in Washington Square West to the Commission members in order that the list may be acted upon at the November 24th meeting.

Lombard Street to Bainbridge

Because of the probability that the expressway will be south of Lombard Street, photographs of this area are to be secured immediately and a list of buildings suitable for preservation drawn up for the Commission's consideration.

SUBMISSIONS:

The Busti Mansion

The Chairman was requested to write to Harbeson, Hough, Livingston & Larson, reporting that, in general, the Commission approved the plans for preserving the Busti Mansion, but that it would request that the exterior detail be studied more carefully and that the facade be restored more completely to its original state. If, for example, the widow's walk was an integral part of the old house, it should be replaced.

244 Delancey Street

A permit requesting permission to change the roof line so that it will be identical with that of 248 Delancey Street; adding an identical cornice to that on 248 and to restore the windows to their original state, was approved. The owners were requested to submit a full size drawing of the proposed pentave before permission to reconstruct this will be granted.

332, 334 South Fourth Street

Dr. Godwin's submission for the restoration of 332 South Fourth and the demolition of 334, which is to be replaced by a walled garden, was considered. Dr. Godwin will be asked to have his plan for the facade of 332 revised to make it conform to the original style of the house (c 1881), including the restoration of the old bulk window on the street floor. The Commission agreed to the demolition of 334 inasmuch as it has been gutted, Mr. Peterson dissenting.

225, 227 Delancey Street

Mr. Peterson was requested in restudy the owner's proposal with him. The Commission was agreed that all existing contemporary structural details, doors, &c, should be left intact, and that the detail of the cornice should be drawn to conform exactly to that on 229-231 Delancey. The proposed picture window on the west wall was not approved.

The meeting was adjourned at five-thirty.

Respectfully submitted

Charles E. Peterson, Secretary