

**REPORT OF THE ARCHITECTURAL COMMITTEE
PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION**

**Arlene Matzkin, Chairperson
Commission Conference Room
Suite 1301, 1401 Arch Street
25 July 1995**

Present

**Arlene Matzkin, Chairperson, Architectural Committee
J. William Cornell
Herbert W. Levy
Suzanne Pentz**

**Richard Tyler, Historic Preservation Officer
Randal Baron, Assistant Historic Preservation Officer
Lori Plavin Salganicoff, Historic Preservation Specialist
Jeffrey Barr, Historic Research Technician**

Also

**Robert Powers, Powers & Company, Inc.
J. Fink, The Kling Lindquist Partnership (TKLP)
M. Wilson, TKLP
Alexander Messinger, A. A. Messinger, AIA
H. Ozeroff
David Ozeroff
H. Voluck, 30 S. 7th St
A. Voluck, 30 S. 7th St
Cecil Baker, Cecil Baker & Associates
Ken Lukas, K. Lukas Architect
Bernard Neary, Center City Residents Association (CCRA), Historic District Committee
Jennifer Goodman, Preservation Coalition
Bobbie Burke, CCRA, Historic District Committee
Marion Rogel
Lanny Leibowitz, Architect
Van Strother, New Covenant Church
John Teets, Architect/New Covenant
Ernest Anderson, New Covenant Church
Marshall Freeman, New Covenant Church
Sabrina Soong, Soong Associates Inc.**

400 NORTH BROAD STREET, ELVERSON BUILDING

Robert Powers, Applicant

PROPOSAL: Conceptual Approval, Rehabilitation

This proposal calls for conceptual approval of the rehabilitation of the tower and printing plant of the Elverson Building, aka the Inquirer Building, home of the Philadelphia Inquirer since 1924. The owner, Philadelphia Newspapers Incorporated (PNI), plans to undertake a \$29.5 million dollar rehabilitation to adapt the production facilities into office space, thereby consolidating staff offices now scattered throughout several buildings and continuing the building's use as a headquarters. PNI seeks to utilize the 20% tax credit available through the federal Preservation Tax Incentives and will commission the preparation of a nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. Mr. Powers described that PNI understands that the building is under consideration by the Historical Commission for designation as historic, and seeks conceptual approval so as to better grasp how designation would affect the planned renovation.

The plan includes the replacement in kind of metal windows, demolition of a 1980s building connecting the tower to its northern neighbor, removal of vertical conveyors from the side of the building, and the glazing or dark panel infill of former loading bays. Two types of windows exist on the building – one over one windows on the tower, and six and nine light casement windows in the production facility. The vertical conveyors were added ten to fifteen years ago to move papers between floors. Masonry infilled windows will be opened and appropriately glazed and surfaces and openings damaged by the connector building and vertical conveyor will be restored. Painted surfaces, including the tower, are to be repainted. The Applicants propose to keep the mechanical penthouse on top of the building and to add air conditioning units behind it. Current air conditioning was installed solely for equipment use.

Mr. Tyler described the difference between the review triggered by the use of the Preservation Tax Credit and the Historical Commission's review. PNI's consultants indicated that the building's owner is well aware of these differences. Mr. Tyler also added that the demolition of the infill building would be outside of the jurisdiction of the Historical Commission.

Commission members voted to recommend conceptual approval of the proposal.

3609-25 CHESTNUT STREET, RALSTON HOUSE

Mike Scholnick, Scholnick Wheeling Associates

Cecil Baker, Architect

PROPOSAL: Conceptual Approval, New Building on Site

This proposal calls for conceptual approval for the construction of a 57-unit elderly housing project located to the west of the 19th Century Ralston House. It would not be connected to the historic building. The building would stand halfway on the property of the historic Ralston House and halfway on the site of a demolished non-designated building. It would come well forward – nearly to the sidewalk – thus making the Ralston House considerably less visible to passing traffic. A driveway with a small amount of parking to the west of the proposed building would lead to a parking

lot at its northwest corner on Ludlow Street. The project is funded by the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Mr. Baker described that the design of the new building has not been developed much beyond the basic plan and general massing owing to the phased fee structure of the HUD 202 projects. The building will likely be 7 stories high and would be entered from the courtyard to the east. Some general design ideas included acknowledging the two buildings currently on the site, one historic and one contemporary, through mimicking their horizontality and verticality, choosing red brick for exterior walls, and continuing the Ralston House water table and cornice line.

Mr. Tyler noted that as a federally funded project that would impact an historic resource, the proposal would also be reviewed through the Section 106 process.

The Architectural Committee voted to recommend conceptual approval of the project.

30 SOUTH 7TH STREET

Alexander Messinger, Architect

PROPOSAL: Restoration of Front Facade

The building was recently vacated owing to a severe fire. Interior work and upper floor window replacement has already been approved at staff level. Prior to the fire, the large single pane plate glass windows was replaced with advertising boards without a permit. The owners, who have stressed the importance of their ability to advertise at this facade, expressed willingness to partially restore the ground floor and add advertising cases that mimic the original ground floor casement windows.

Of the two sets of tall glazed double doors located adjacent to the shop windows at the right and left ends of the property, the Applicant proposes to restore the left most doors but fix them closed and replace the right most door with a shorter single door topped by a transom. Creating a single door would allow for greater accessibility to the interior, but might necessitate thicker wood elements. Committee members supported the single door, but expressed concern that it match the original double door as closely as possible in location and size of muntins. They added that the transom location should correspond to horizontal elements on the original door.

Prompted by a concern for maximizing interior square footage, the Applicant desires that the window cases be flush with the interior wall and nearly project to the outside plane of the ground floor facade's columns. Mr. Baron expressed concern that the new casement cabinet window should be in the same setback plane as the remaining historic doors on the left side of the storefront. The square footage lost by placing the cases in the same exterior plane as the original plate glass would amount to less than 1% of that floor's space. However, the owners explained that this would change the location of their interior display cases. The interior has not yet been reconstructed.

Committee members voted to support the scheme of the proposal as presented with some minor change to the entry door to be worked through at Commission staff level.

2127 ST. JAMES STREET
Marion Rogel, Applicant
PROPOSAL: Alterations and Demolition

This application involves extensive work to a 1923 house in English Village begun without benefit of a building permit. After a large air-conditioner opening was cut through a front wall, work was stopped by the Department of Licenses and Inspections. An agreement was reached that the air-conditioner would be removed, the wall restored, and a permit issued for interior work only. This proposal covers the balance of the planned exterior work.

The building has four major visible facades that are all receiving work. On the short south facade Ms. Rogel had a window taken out and French doors installed. Although this opening formerly held a door, the original door was taller and the area between the top of the new door frame and the original rowlock lintel has just now been infilled with mismatched brick. Ms. Rogel proposes to replace a pair of south facade contemporary stained glass windows on the longer south facade with casement windows. On the west facade the Applicant wishes to remove the windows and cut an opening down to the ground through original brickwork to install new French doors. At the projecting closed entry portico, the Applicant wishes to remove an aluminum window and move the door location to create an open portico. On the Van Pelt (east) facade, a modern two-story addition would be demolished down to a height of 6'. The north and south walls would be reused as a high fence around a garden. On the Van Pelt Street facade, the garden wall would be a 6' high wooden fence painted white. The Commission has received letters objecting to the demolition of the addition and other aspects of the project.

Ms. Rogel stated that her real estate agent had not told her of the building's historic status. She recommended that agents be made to reveal this information to prospective homebuyers under penalty of fine. She decried the fact that so much work had been performed before she learned of the need for Historical Commission review. A Commission staff member explained that a great deal of interior and some exterior work was started without a permit, and a stop work order was placed by the Department of Licenses and Inspections. He added that a person is notified of a building's historic status when applying for a building permit. Upon application a person is told of all necessary City reviews, including that of the Historical Commission.

Ms. Rogel apologized for not realizing this, explaining that she had never previously sought a permit for work performed on her former house in East Oak Lane. Several Committee members remarked that the work proposed is quite a bit more than minor repairs and would require a permit even without historic status. Ms. Rogel disputed this description, arguing that the work is indeed minor and that she feels harassed by the obligation to provide a proposal for review by City agencies.

Committee members declared that understanding this complex proposal was difficult as supporting documents were insufficient. Ms. Rogel was unable to submit several requested photographs including a photo showing the presence and visibility of the two story addition on Van Pelt Street. Furthermore, the drawings submitted were not drawn to scale and did not fully or accurately represent either existing conditions or proposed changes. Ms. Rogel argued that the drawings should be considered adequate since they had been drawn by a well regarded undergraduate student

recommended by a professor at the Drexel School of Architecture.

Ms. Rogel informed the Committee of her intention to install an air conditioner unit inside the house at the brick infill portion above the south facade french doors. She described the system as having no outside elements to draw in fresh air and exhaust hot air. After much discussion, Mr. Tyler was able to establish that the necessary outside portion of the air conditioner would be placed on an east facade third story roof connected to the interior portion through a small pipe. The drawings did not describe, however, where on the gable roof this would be placed or whether the pipe and unit would be externally visible from Van Pelt Street. Community members present in the audience described that in this area, this is the one house without access to a service alley, and that most of the other units are located on the ground. It was suggested that Ms. Rogel's air conditioner unit could also be placed on the ground in her yard if the demolition is approved, or on the roof of the two story addition if that piece is retained.

As described by Ms. Rogel, the two-story brick addition has no foundation but has a crawl space under the floor where rats live and have been poisoned. Her carpenter, a Germantown cabinetmaker and craftsman, looked underneath the addition and determined that no foundation exists. She added that the second story floor plan is unworkable. According to Commission research, the addition was built in 1927, although Ms. Rogel disputed that date. Ms. Pentz expressed surprise at the assertion that no foundation was located under the building. She was also concerned for the stability of the proposed 6' high, 20' long, 8" thick free standing walls without foundation or any sort of lateral support. Wind loads alone could topple such walls. Committee members discussed various methods of lateral support for the walls. Ms. Rogel invited them to come up with a design that they would favor. Committee members responded that although they are happy to make suggestions, a licensed architect should be hired to handle the entire project and make a formal proposal.

The french doors installed on the south facade with infill brick up to the original lintel were seen as too short for the opening. Ms. Rogel offered to install a large molding piece to cover the infill brick. Committee members expressed a preference for a full height door. Ms. Rogel argued that such doors would cost \$5,000 and Committee members advised her to try alternative manufacturers. She responded that she would not contact manufacturers other than the one to whom she had already spoken.

On the west facade, where Ms. Rogel seeks to replace an aluminum window with a set of french doors, where historically they never existed. While Committee members agreed that it would be preferable for the aluminum window to be replaced, cutting the masonry to make a door was viewed unfavorably; they suggested a wood casement replacement window. She explained that in the magazine Southern Living there were many french doors and that since the south is ahead of the north it was advisable for her to install french doors in this house. Committee members argued against destroying original fabric. She stated that rather than consider an alternative to french doors she would keep the aluminum window.

Ms. Rogel proposes to remove or replace the window from the projecting portico on the west facade. Although the glazing is not original, the framing most likely is. The framing probably historically held a six light casement window with a fanlight transom. Mr. Levy stated that some of the

objections outlined in the neighbors' letters described security problems with the type of open portico proposed.

Ms. Rogel also desires to move the main entrance door from the portico, likely its historic location. The portico, which functions as an entrance vestibule, has steps leading from the house but no landing. This causes difficulty as the door must be opened and closed while standing on steps. She reported that someone has tripped while closing the door and offered to demonstrate this problem on one of the Committee members. The Committee expressed no misgivings about replacing the door itself. A Commission staff member noted that properties across the street contain original doors that could be used as a prototype for replacement.

Committee members and Ms. Rogel agreed that a single-leaf wood casement window would be an appropriate replacement for the stained glass windows on the long south facade. The drawings, which presently show a two-leaf window, must be changed to reflect this. Ms. Rogel was asked to provide Commission staff with a shop drawing before ordering the window.

Ms. Rogel stated that she bought this property because she liked the quality of the streetscape, but that she had planned to redesign her building. Ms. Matzkin noted that the character of a streetscape is created by the quality of the openings and the materials used in the surrounding architecture.

Several times during the course of the meeting Committee members recommended that Ms. Rogel retain a licensed architect to provide the appropriate drawings and photographs for a proper proposal. Both the Department of Licenses and Inspections and the Rules and Regulations of the Historical Commission require adequate, scaled drawings for the purposes of a building permit. Ms. Rogel stated that she cannot afford an architect and that she has no intention of hiring one. Ms. Rogel invited Committee members to her house so that they might review the project on site.

Mr. Tyler recommended that Ms. Matzkin and members of the Commission staff visit the property to learn more about the existing conditions. No decisions would be made at this meeting. Ms. Rogel welcomed the visit but could not agree to a date. She offered to call Mr. Tyler to arrange it. Mr. Neary of the Center City Residents Association (CCRA) requested that, pursuant to the Sunshine Law, the results of the site visit be presented to the Committee at its August meeting for formal review at a public meeting.

Representatives from CCRA requested that Committee recommendations be held until the proposal is understood and properly documented. Ms. Rogel challenged the right of those who spoke to do so and demanded the names and addresses of the neighbors who submitted letters. Mr. Neary presented Ms. Rogel with copies of the letters, which are a matter of public record under the "Sunshine Law."

Acknowledging that the real estate broker gave Ms. Rogel no notice of the historic status of the property, Ms. Burke stated that she had sent Ms. Rogel a copy of the Rittenhouse Fidler Residential Historic District's statement of significance and a copy of the explanation of the benefits and responsibilities related to historic property ownership. She remarked that the Commission staff and Committee provides a unique service in offering professional architects' and preservationists' advice free of charge.

Owing to a lack of information, the Committee voted against making any recommendation to the Commission and to reopen the review at the 29 August Committee meeting. They requested that photographs of every facade where work is being performed and scaled and complete architectural drawings be provided by the Applicant at least ten days before this meeting. Prior to this public meeting, members of staff and the Committee will meet with Ms. Rogel at the house to observe existing conditions.

122-124 SOUTH 18TH STREET

Lanny Leibowitz, Architect

PROPOSAL: Conceptual Approval, Alterations

This proposal calls for restoring these two mansions to be used for commercial space. Some interior and minor exterior work has been approved at staff level. More significant exterior work was proposed for review by the Architectural Committee. Exterior ductwork and a fire escape are to be removed. The storefront, covered with a plywood treatment when a mezzanine was added to the building, would be revealed and a new storefront added to existing salvageable elements in the old masonry opening.

At the recommendation of Mr. Tyler, the Applicant removed plywood partially covering a large front facade transom window and its stone arch lintel. Salvageable stained glass was found. Mr. Leibowitz indicated an intention to replicate the stained glass where it is missing. He proposed to enlarge the existing transom bar in order to hide the housing of the interior roll down grate. Committee and staff recommended instead that the grate housing be hidden with interior drywall and that the transom bar should not be enlarged. Although the Committee was enthusiastically in favor the project in concept, they stressed the need for elevation and detail drawings that more fully describe the proposal.

Committee members voted to recommend approving the proposal in concept, and allowing the details to be worked out at staff level.

7500 GERMANTOWN AVENUE

John Teets, Architect

PROPOSAL: New Building

New Covenant Church plans to demolish a deteriorating modern building and reuse the foundations to build a new multi-use building. These uses would include a sanctuary as well as lecture rooms and offices. Although originally intended to serve 2,900 congregants, for the sake of time and money this number was decreased to 2,000. Increased capacity may be sought in a later building phase.

Committee members agreed that the rather steep roof of the new building dictates that roof materials must be chosen very carefully. They wondered whether the scale of the proposed slate-blue standing seam metal roof would be too large. There was also discussion of whether the color of the facade stucco was too light, whether "quoins" were necessary, and whether the color of the stone base

should better match that of the roof.

The Committee voted to recommend approval of the proposal and asked that the architect work with staff on these details.

940 SOUTH FRONT STREET

Sabrina Soong Architect

PROPOSAL: Demolition and New Addition

This proposal calls for demolishing the highly visible rear el of a mid-18th century house. The owner proposes to re-roof and restore the cornice of the front portion of the house and to build a large new addition at the rear. Aside from the cornice and the roof, no work on the front facade is planned at this time. The owner intends to eventually remove the permastone from the front facade.

Committee members discussed possibilities for the reroofing, taking into account the pitch of the gambrel roof and historic precedent. They stressed the need for a single material/system to cover the entire roof. Shingles, standing seam metal, Galvalum, and a new low cost system that imitates standing seam utilizing battens and rubber roofing were among the systems discussed. Galvalum looks like a standing seam and is less expensive, but lasts only twenty-five years. The batten and rubber roofing system was used at the Ralston School at the northeast corner of American and Bainbridge Streets and also looks like a standing seam metal roof.

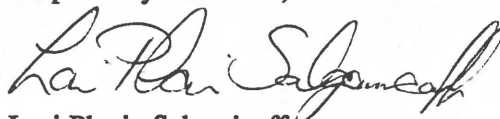
Guidance for the restoration of the front facade cornice, which is now covered with metal, may be drawn from the rear cornice and evidence hidden by the metal. During the roof replacement, the siding on the dormer will be removed and clues about the original treatment will be revealed. This in-situ research will aid in the dormer restoration. Ms. Soong expressed interest in having Mr. Baron on site to aid in the investigation.

The el addition, which is visible from Front Street, floods regularly and has structural problems. Ms. Soong argued that although it appears to belong to the earlier history of the house, the poor condition of the structure dictates its demolition and replacement.

Committee recommended approval of the project and that the final issues relating to reroofing and the restoration of the front facade cornice and dormer be handled at staff level.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Lori Plavin Salganicoff