

PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION
COMMITTEE ON CERTIFICATION
MINUTES

16 December 1982

Present: Edward Pinkowski, Chairman of the Committee of Certification and
Member, Philadelphia Historical Commission
Janet S. Klein, Vice-Chairman, Philadelphia Historical Commission
David Baldinger, Chief, Area Planning Division, Philadelphia City
Planning Commission
Herbert W. Levy, A.I.A., Chairman, Architectural Committee, Philadelphia Historical Commission
James E. Mooney, Director, Historical Society of Pennsylvania

Richard Tyler, Historian
Jefferson M. Moak, Executive Assistant to the Chairman

The fourteenth meeting of the Committee on Certification met at 3:30 P.M. on Thursday, 16 December 1982 in Room 1313, City Hall Annex.

NEW BUSINESS

3600-3602 Hamilton Street

This twin structure standing at the southwest corner of 36th and Hamilton Streets was erected in 1866-1867 for Charles Smithers, a conveyancer and developer. Measuring three stories in height and designed in a style known as the Italianate, this building is characteristic of many found both in Powelton and in Spring Garden as well as other sections of the city. Building permit records reveal little alteration to either structure during the twentieth century.

The Committee agreed with the author of the form in his statement that the structure lacked "any particular distinction". However, the Committee members voted unanimously to table the nomination pending a review of the remaining structures in the 3600 block of Hamilton Street, one of which, 3620, has already been certified by the Commission.

1500-1504 Lombard Street: Wesley A.M.E. Zion Church

The Wesley A.M.E. Church was founded in 1820 after some of the members of Bethel A.M.E. Church became dissatisfied with Bethel and walked out in dissent. This occurred four years after Bethel had severed ties with the Methodist Church. In 1821 Wesley joined with the Zion congregation of New York City and four other churches to form the nucleus of a new church, the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church. The church has contributed greatly to the betterment of the black people of Philadelphia and elsewhere. They have helped the poor of all races. During the Depression, the church fed thousands of people, gave shoes and clothing to the needy, operated an apartment house and performed numerous other deeds to ease the plight of the poor and hungry.

During the middle years of the twentieth century, the church worked with other black churches throughout Philadelphia organizing boycotts to force carefully selected companies to hire blacks in positions "significantly higher in calibre than was the usual lot of black people." One of the major disputes, that with Sun Oil, was settled in the pastor's office at Wesley. The church also worked diligently during the 1960s setting up OIC, the Opportunities Industrialization Center.

The present church building housing Wesley A.M.E. Zion replaced an earlier structure in 1924-1926. Designed by George E. Savage, a noted church architect of the early twentieth century, the church stands as a landmark anchoring the black community in Southwest Center City.

The Committee chose to recognize the religious and social/humanitarian significance of Wesley A.M.E. Zion Church rather than its architectural merit and voted unanimously to recommend certification of 1500-1504 Lombard Street on these grounds.

2410 Pine Street: Joseph Horn Residence

This property includes a complex of buildings surrounding a multi-terraced garden. The front, or Pine Street, building is comprised of three floors and designed to complement earlier three story buildings adjacent to it. The rear, or Waverly Street, building stands two stories high complementing the two story structures along Waverly Street.

The property actually consists of 2406-2412 Pine Street and 2403-2409 Waverly Street. James P. Metheny designed this residence for Mr. Joseph Horn, founder of the Horn and Hardart restaurant chain. The design incorporates design elements from Mediterranean countries; the paired doors and carved panels at the front entrance are 15th century Italian.

Being a bachelor, Joseph Horn shared the house and property with the family of John Fritsche, developer of the "Automat", a precursor of the vending machine.

The Committee voted 4-0-1 to recommend certification of 2406-2412 Pine Street and 2403-2409 Waverly Street, the Joseph Horn Residence. Mr. Levy, preparer of the nomination form, abstained.

2428-2438 Poplar Street

Constructed in the mid-1890s, these three twin houses were erected by the Girard Estate for professorial staff at Girard College. No information regarding these houses was provided by the nominee nor did the building permit records reveal any twentieth century alterations by the Girard Estate. The Estate owned these properties from 1885 to 1976.

Owing to the lack of information, the Committee voted unanimously to table the nomination of 2428-2438 Poplar Street. They felt that the buildings would merit future consideration once more information has been provided for an adequate determination.

1837 Spruce Street

Erected c. 1875 as a twin with 1835 Spruce Street, this building measures $3\frac{1}{2}$ stories high and 2 bays wide. The fourth floor mansard was replaced in 1964 with a window unit. The remainder of the stone face has remained basically unaltered since its construction.

Nominated by the owner, the Committee tabled this nomination owing to a paucity of information given to them in the nomination form. In addition, the Committee agreed not to reconsider this building's merits until after the staff had completed a complete assessment of the Rittenhouse area as requested by the Commission.

1701 Walnut Street: The Allman Building

The Allman Building stands 8 stories high and measures 1 bay wide on Walnut Street and 10 bays wide on 17th Street. Constructed in 1910 by the architectural firm of Baker & Dallett, it stands as one of the few small scale examples of the Sullivanesque/Commercial style of architecture within the city of Philadelphia. It is also one of the first commercial structures to be erected along Walnut Street west of Broad Street and predates the conversion of Walnut Street in the 1920s from a strictly residential to a commercial corridor. Its scale fit in well with the harmony of the residential structures along Walnut Street. It was not until the 1920s with the construction of such towers as 1608, 1601, 1616 and several other Walnut Street buildings that the character of the street began to change.

The Committee voted unanimously to recommend certification of 1701 Walnut Street, the Allman Building, on account of its architectural merit as a rare example of the Commercial style of architecture, a style not usually accepted in Philadelphia.

1500-1524 N. 17th Street and 1701-1709 Jefferson Street

These 17 dwellings are part of a 29-dwelling development at the northwest corner of 17th and Jefferson commissioned by Peter A.B. Widener and William L. Elkins and designed by Willis G. Hale. They base their significance as relatively unaltered examples of North Philadelphia rowhouse architecture of the 1880s and 1890s; as excellent examples of the type of development sponsored by Widener and Elkins, who made their fortunes in the street transit industry; and as representative samples of the type of rowhouse architecture designed by one of Philadelphia's most eclectic architects, Willis G. Hale. Much of Hale's rowhouse commissions have either been demolished or altered in such a way as to lose their architectural integrity. These two rows of houses remain as excellent examples of the architectural forms which comprised much of the new construction in North Philadelphia during the 1880s and 1890s.

The Committee voted unanimously to recommend certification of the 17 houses located at 1500 - 1524 N. 17th Street and 1701-1709 Jefferson Street on their architectural merits.

230-250 N. 21st Street: The Board of Education Building

The Board of Education Building, dedicated in 1932, consists of a nine story rectangular main section running east and west, topped by a low two-tiered tower, with two three-story wings projecting on the north side flanking an enclosed courtyard. The interiors are relatively unaltered and represent many of the various styles popular in the 1920s. Although the majority of the spaces are simple, functional offices, the public and ceremonial areas are fine examples of art deco and eclectic styles. The overall design, drawn up by the School Board architect Irwin T. Catherine, stands as a fine example of the Neo-Classic style executed during the Art Deco period. The completion of the Board of Education Building in 1932 provided an important element in the overall planning of the Benjamin Franklin Parkway. The building's rhythm, scale, texture and color complement its PHC-certified neighbors, the Boy Scouts' headquarters, the Art Museum, Free Library, Rodin Museum and Franklin Institute.

The Committee voted unanimously to recommend certification of 230-250 N. 21st Street, the Board of Education Building.

9601 Milnor Street: Morelton Inn

This building was erected in the mid-1860s by Edwin Hopkins as a three story brownstone country residence. In the late 19th century, Hopkins converted his residence into an inn. It is located at the foot of Grant Avenue in Torresdale, one of the many Delaware River country houses erected during the 18th and 19th centuries and one of the few which remain today. The 2½ story west elevation features a large portico fronting the left three bays. The east, or river, elevation is fronted by a 2-story porch wrapping around onto the north elevation.

Country houses were an important expression of affluent taste during the 18th and 19th centuries. However, most of the important early houses, such as Chalkley Hall and Port Royal fell before the wrecker's ball by the end of World War II. Others, such as Glen Foerd, have been turned into institutional uses. This building remains among the last of the great country houses in Northeast Philadelphia along the Delaware.

Morelton Inn does contain major millwork and ornamental features of "China Hall" a landmark in Craydon demolished in the mid-1950s after having stood since 1804. The then-owner of Morelton, Virginia Knauer, was a councilwoman in Philadelphia and founder of the Knauer Foundation for Historic Preservation which bought and restored the "Man Full of Trouble Tavern" at 125-127 Spruce Street. Architectural historians of the period praised the Knauers for preserving the interior of China Hall and reusing it in Morelton thus giving the latter a unique character of its own.

The Committee voted unanimously to recommend certification of 9601 Milnor Street, the Morelton Inn, on its architectural merits and as a representative of the Delaware River country house.

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16 December 1982

There being no further business, the Committee adjourned at 4:30 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Jefferson M. Moak
Executive Assistant to the Chairman

MEMORANDUM

CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

TO : Members of the Certification Committee

DATE 13 Dec. 1982

FROM : Jefferson M. Moak

SUBJECT: Next meeting of the Committee on Certification

The 14th meeting of the Committee on Certification will be held on Thursday, 16 December 1982, at 3:30 P.M. in Room 1313 City Hall Annex. The following items will be on the agenda:

3600-3602 Hamilton Street → *Table S-O*

S-D 1500 Lombard Street, Wesley A.M.E. Zion Church *association of Zion Church*

4-O-1 2410 Pine Street

S-O 2428-2438 Poplar Street *table*

S-O 1837 Spruce Street *table*

S-O 1701 Walnut Street, the Allman Building

S-O 1500-1524 N. 17th Street

& 1701-1707 Jefferson Street

S-O 230-250 N. 21st Street, The Board of Education Headquarters

S-O 9601 Milnor St., Morriston

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3600-3602 Hamilton Street → *no*
1500 Lombard Street, Wesley A.M.E. Zion Church - *yes*
2410 Pine Street - *yes*
2428-2438 Poplar Street - *no, because of form*
1837 Spruce Street *no*
1701 Walnut Street, the Allman Building *yes*
1500-1524 N. 17th Street
 & 1701-1707 Jefferson Street *yes* *owner of property*
230-250 N. 21st Street, The Board of Education Headquarters
 - *used many buildings for comparison*
 Free Library of Phila.
 Franklin Institute