

**THE MINUTES OF THE 394th STATED MEETING OF THE
PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION
10 May 1995**

**Wayne Spilove, Chairperson
City Council Caucus Chamber, Room 401 City Hall**

Present

Wayne Spilove, Chairperson
David Brownlee
Barbara Kaplan, City Planning Commission
Bennett Levin, Department of Licenses and Inspections
Arlene Matzkin
Susan Rabinovitch
Peter VanderHeide, Department of Public Property
Scott Wilds, Office of Housing and Community Development

Jeffrey First, City Solicitor's Office
Richard Tyler, Historic Preservation Officer
Randal Baron, Assistant Historic Preservation Officer
Lori Plavin Salganicoff, Historic Preservation Specialist
Jeffrey Barr, Historical Research Technician

Also

Barry Bressler, Esq., Attorney for Michael Cutone (1509 Walnut Street)
Ron Barber, Getz & Barber Associates, City Commerce Department Consultant
Bill Brookover, Independence National Historical Park
Peter L. Svanda, Friends of Philadelphia Parks
Larry L. Snyder, Fairmount Park Historic Preservation Trust
Amy Freitag, Fairmount Park Historic Preservation Trust
Jennifer Goodman, Preservation Coalition
Martin Jay Rosenblum R.A., Martin Jay Rosenblum R.A. & Associates
Suzanna Barucco, Martin Jay Rosenblum R.A. & Associates
Michael Sklaroff, Ballard, Spahr, Andrews & Ingersoll
Bobbie Burke, Center City Residents Association
Brenda Barrett, Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission
Audrey Thornton, Belmont Mansion
Ted Beitchman, Mayor's Office

The 394th Stated Meeting of the Philadelphia Historical Commission was called to order at 10:10am by Wayne Spilove, Chairperson, who recognized that a quorum of Commission members was present.

THE MINUTES of the 393rd Stated Meeting of the Philadelphia Historical Commission held on 12 April 1995, Wayne Spilove, Chairperson, were approved by unanimous vote and adopted upon a motion made by Dr. Brownlee and seconded by Mr. Wilds.

REPORT OF THE ARCHITECTURAL COMMITTEE of 25 April 1995, Arlene Matzkin, ChairpersonINDEPENDENCE SQUARE GROUP OF BUILDINGS

Doris Fanelli, Independence National Historical Park

PROPOSAL: Accessibility Ramps

Architectural Committee Recommendation: At their 25 April 1995 meeting, the Architectural Committee voted to recommend that the Applicant continue to examine the benefits of metal ramps over masonry and to develop the non-slip ramp surface, the pickets, and the railings' configuration and surface coating. The Committee requested that the Applicant return with appropriate graphic representation of their options, including section drawings. Finally, the Committee voted to recommend approval of the proposal to clad deteriorating wood portions of Independence Hall Tower with lead-coated copper.

This proposal calls for the construction of access ramps at the southern entrance to Independence Hall, on the east side of Congress Hall, and the west side of Old City Hall. Ramps were approved in concept at the Historical Commission's previous meeting, and returned to the Architectural Committee's 25 April meeting for a discussion of design. At this meeting Committee members expressed a preference for metal ramps since they would look more temporary than masonry and would require few or no footings and therefore no archaeological investigation.

Ms. Matzkin reported that after the 25 April meeting, the Park Service stated that they had understood that the Architectural Committee's 28 March recommendation for conceptual approval had been for masonry ramps and had spent some of the project funding developing that further. They also objected to metal as difficult to maintain and as a temporary-looking measure that might nevertheless become permanent. In order to resolve the situation, Ms. Matzkin and Ms. Batchelor of the Architectural Committee met with Mr. Tyler, representatives of the National Park Service and the City's Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) coordinator. Ms. Batchelor had been the originator of the request to examine metal ramps. Ms. Matzkin brought that group's recommendation to approve masonry ramps to the Commission with the following modifications. In order to eliminate any obstructions to the view of the frontispiece of Independence Hall's southern entrance, the westernmost railing will be eliminated and the landing widened. Additionally, a heat tape will be placed under all masonry walking surfaces of ramps. The ramps' footings would be shallow but for the foundations of the newel posts. Another feature is a 4" picket rail painted a compatible color.

Dr. Brownlee moved to accept the recommendations for masonry accessibility ramps. The motion was seconded by Mr. Wilds and approved by unanimous vote.

Mr. VanderHeide asked whether the Historical Commission will be able to review the specific design of the ramps. Mr. Tyler responded that the proposal is in an advanced design development phase and that the final design will be coming back to the Commission for approval.

Mr. Spilove interrupted the report of the Architectural Committee to allow for a special request from a member of the audience. Mr. Bressler, attorney for the owner of 1509 Walnut Street, requested that the Commission grant a 30 day continuance on consideration of the designation of that property. He stated that he anticipated no opposition to the designation at that time. ***Dr. Brownlee made a motion to allow for the requested 30 day continuance which was seconded by Mr. Wilds and approved by unanimous vote.***

Continuation of the **REPORT OF THE ARCHITECTURAL COMMITTEE of 25 April 1995, Arlene Matzkin, Chairperson**

BELMONT MANSION, FAIRMOUNT PARK

Martin Rosenblum R.A., Architect

PROPOSAL: Conceptual Approval, Alteration to Back Building

Architectural Committee Recommendation: The Committee voted to recommend approval of the proposal in concept, with the suggestion that the Applicant consider a half-hipped roof in place of the half-gable proposed for the glazed porch.

This proposal calls for altering the cottage and kitchen wing buildings of the Belmont Mansion complex for facilities for the American Women's Heritage Society, Inc. The mansion is not part of the proposal. In addition to interior alterations, the kitchen wing would be enlarged and the 1950s addition that connects the cottage to the kitchen wing would be replaced with glazed porch. This addition currently hides, and the glazed porch will better reveal, a wall of the oldest section of the building. Commission members expressed support for the recommendation to cover the porch with a hipped roof.

Dr. Brownlee made a motion that was seconded by Mr. Wilds to accept the recommendation of the Architectural Committee and approve the proposal in concept. The motion passed by unanimous vote.

BOELSEN COTTAGE

Peter Svanda, Applicant

PROPOSAL: Air Conditioning System

Architectural Committee Recommendation: The proposal did not receive formal consideration, as a bomb threat to 1401 Arch Street adjourned the Architectural Committee meeting to another location before the Applicant arrived.

The Applicant proposed to install an air-conditioner fan unit on a visible side wall of the second floor of this extremely old Fairmount Park house. To allow for the refrigerant line between the interior and exterior units, a 3-1/2" diameter hole would have to be cut through the masonry. The unit would be painted to match the masonry. The site experiences too much vandalism to put the unit on the ground. Offices in the second floor have only one window for natural light, which makes placing a unit in that window undesirable. All sides of the building are highly visible.

Ms. Matzkin recommended that Commission staff and members of the Architectural Committee work together with Mr. Svanda to resolve this proposal. Commission members expressed support for this suggestion. Mr. Svanda, who was in attendance at this Commission meeting, enthusiastically agreed to resolve the issue at staff/Architectural Committee level.

**REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON HISTORIC DESIGNATION meeting of 27 January 1995,
Dr. David Brownlee, Chairperson**

As reported at the 393rd Stated Commission Meeting of 12 April 1995, the Committee on Historic Designation recommended that the following nominated buildings be approved for designation by the Commission:

1. 1728 Chestnut Street, Alexander T. Martin Building
2. Kelly Drive, East Park Canoe House
3. 1334-1336 Walnut Street, The Hotel Hamilton
4. 1509 Walnut Street, Dr. James C. Wilson House
5. 135-145 South 13th Street, The Albemarle

Dr. Brownlee explained that the discussion of these nominations was deferred one month by Commission vote. Although the Rules and Regulations of the Commission dictate that owners of individual buildings being considered for nomination be given one month notice, Mr. Levin suggested and Dr. Brownlee recommended adopting a policy to notify owners and provide relevant nomination information two months prior to meetings. Additionally, Commission members, who previously received nomination information along with regular materials sent one week before meetings, will now be sent nomination information one month prior to meetings.

Mr. Baron of the Commission staff presented the nominations alphabetically by street address. He described that all five were built near the year 1900, a uniquely complicated time in American architectural history. At the end of the nineteenth century, architects had an unusual number and variety of architectural styles available and would often combine elements from different styles to create new forms. Large, late-19th century national expositions set the tone for a return to classicism, and buildings built at this time would often be amalgamations of elements from American, French and English classical styles.

Mr. Baron continued, describing the significance of each of the buildings.

1728 Chestnut Street

Historically named the Alexander Martin Building, 1728 Chestnut Street is a four story commercial and residential building built in 1914 by Frank Kiesker. It is primarily significant for its architectural style. The building represents a mode of design that incorporates Venetian Gothic elements, Arts and Crafts and English Classicism -- an academic form of architecture that came from the University of Pennsylvania and the "T-Square" club of Philadelphia architects. The combination of elements was not random, but quite specific to this group of architects.

Venetian Gothic elements include the mezzanine-level arcade, the open porch at the top of the building, and the Moorish horseshoe-shaped second and third floor window arches. The large amount of decorative ironwork and the quality of the carved stonework derive from the Arts and Crafts style. The Classical aspects can be seen in the modillioned cornice, the quoins, and the use of stone at the base with a change in material above.

At a secondary level of significance, the building is interesting for its contribution to the history of the area. With the commencement of the building of City Hall on Center Square in the 1870s the "downtown" of Philadelphia moved further west. The construction of the Pennsylvania Railroad Station and its elevated tracks created a wall, the "Chinese Wall," that encouraged center city commercial development southward. With this the second major phase of development of Chestnut Street began.

Originally a residential street with speculative rowhouses, Chestnut Street in the late 19th century began to become commercially developed. Rowhouses were often completely refaced with highly stylized facades and mixed residential/commercial use. In this tradition, Dr. Morris, an optometrist relocating from Germantown to center city, had the architect redesign the building to house his offices on the first floor and mezzanine and his residence on the top three floors in 1914.

Mr. Levin asked why this building is being designated individually rather than as part of a district. Mr. Baron responded that the Designation Committee chose several buildings in the area that meet the one or more criteria for designation and that have retained a high degree of architectural integrity. He noted that this block is part of the Center City West National Register Historic District. Mr. Levin asked what effect the designation of 1728 Chestnut Street would have on its neighboring buildings. Mr. Tyler responded that despite the National Register listing, building permit applications for buildings not designated by the Historical Commission will not be reviewed by the Commission. The only review that these National Register listed properties would receive by the Historical Commission would be when federal funds are being expended or if the owner decided to utilize the federal tax credits.

Mr. Levin expressed concern that the locally undesignated buildings are unprotected against demolition. He stated that, although not all have maintained their ground level integrity, Ms. Kaplan noted that present zoning for the area is designed to maintain a pedestrian scale by retaining the rowhouse rhythm and avoiding the domination of blocks by one or two large buildings.

Ms. Kaplan declared that, despite the success of the block in general, this property has been vacant for several years. Mr. Baron stated that the owners are currently seeking financing and requested a letter from the Historical Commission to bolster their efforts with banks. Ms. Kaplan added that owners of designated buildings in this area may gain by selling their development rights (TDRs), an incentive designed by the Planning Commission to encourage investment in historic buildings.

Dr. Brownlee indicated his intention to make a motion in the "New Business" portion of the meeting to form a Committee to look at designation policies.

A motion made by Mr. Wilds to accept the recommendation of the Committee on Historic Designation and add 1728 Chestnut to the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places was seconded by Ms. Matzkin and approved by unanimous vote.

East Park Canoe House

Located on Kelly Drive in East Fairmount Park, this City-owned building was designed by Walter T. Smedley in 1913 and built in 1914. The building is a rare and excellent example of the Mission Revival style, a style usually found in the southwest United States which copies the 17th and 18th century Spanish missions in Mexico. In the revival of this type of building, concrete and stucco replaced the traditional adobe and the scale and uses of the revival buildings were somewhat altered. Elements typical of the style include the long low massing of the building, the red Spanish barrel-tile roof, the arcaded main facade, and the use of stucco to resemble adobe. This style may have been chosen for this Park building because of its informality and large open setting, and because it accommodated the need for storage of long canoes. Other examples of this style in Philadelphia include the Overbrook School and the Church of Christian Science in West Philadelphia.

The building also derives significance for having been designed by Walter Smedley. Among the architect's other notable Philadelphia buildings are the Northern National Bank on lower Germantown

Avenue, the Women's Hospital in Philadelphia, and a number of Abbot's Dairies. He achieved most of his significance, however, from being the manager of the Wynnefield Improvement Company where he designed a number of residential structures.

The third area of the building's significance is as a part of the City's official public recreation efforts. It was built because Plaisted Hall was in a very crowded area close to the other houses and was close to the falls, and so was not seen as a very good area from which to be canoeing. The building was later lengthened further to accommodate shells.

Mr. Wilds made a motion to accept the recommendation of the Committee on Historic Designation and nominate the East Park Canoe House to the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. Ms. Matzkin seconded the motion which was passed by unanimous vote.

1334-1336 Walnut Street

Evolving into its current form in 1887-88 with a design by Addison Hutton, this building is the oldest surviving hotel building in the City. Following a tradition that in Philadelphia can be traced back to 1826, the building was converted from residence to hotel and both Mr. Steel, the owner/developer, and Addison Hutton lived here. It represents a time when wealthy owners felt comfortable living in hotels.

The building is also significant as an example of its style, Queen Anne Revival. Elements of the Queen Anne Revival on this building include the swan's neck pedimented gable end, the decorative brickwork and metalwork, and the projecting bay and balcony above the second and third floors, respectively.

As a fine example of the work of Addison Hutton, a regionally important architect, 1334-36 Walnut Street draws further significance. Hutton designed buildings for Lehigh University and Bryn Mawr College, as well as a great deal of residential architecture. In fact, the architect designed a Germantown residence for Mr. Steel which unfortunately no longer stands. His most famous works in Philadelphia include the PSFS building at 7th and Walnut, the Ridgeway Library, and the Historical Society of Pennsylvania at 13th and Locust Streets. Addison Hutton was a master of many styles in an era when eclecticism was prized.

Finally, the building is important as an example of urban design. First a three story residence, the building was increased to seven by Hutton for the hotel rather than demolished and replaced. Whether whole facades were modified or large additions built, "new" buildings were commonly created from existing ones in this era. Within the context of urban design, 1334-36 Walnut Street also demonstrates the dense residential development of the area that resulted from the corridor of office buildings that sprung up along Broad Street at the end of the 19th century.

The building is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and several years ago benefited from the Historic Tax Credits.

Mr. Sklaroff, attorney for the owner of 1334-1336 Walnut Street, explained that the principal owner of the property acquired it as a result of a failed project. He noted that in his opinion the building is not at risk as the owner does not currently plan to demolish or alter it, adding that the building should be allowed to live out its "natural and useful life," should be allowed to be demolished if the market dictates, and that the designation would create a cloud on the title.

Ms. Kaplan stated that if the Commission votes to designate this building, it does not mean that a decision

has been made to never permit demolition or alteration.

Mr. Sklaroff objected to the proposed designation on procedural grounds. He explained that the designation began with a nomination written by a consultant to the Commission. He stated that the owner did not know of the building's consideration by the Committee for Historic Designation, and therefore could not offer opinions about the building's significance. Dr. Brownlee noted that according to the Commission's Rules and Regulations, the Designation Committee provides an advisory and technical review service to the Commission and that their meetings, although open to the public, do not constitute public hearings. Mr. Sklaroff declared, incorrectly, that the Commission has never voted contrary to the Designation Committee's recommendations. Several Commission members disputed this claim. Dr. Brownlee noted that the procedures followed are completely in keeping with those recommended and reviewed by the Law Department and the Administration.

Mr. Sklaroff also voiced the owner's skepticism about the building's significance, adding that in his opinion the building does not meet any of the criteria for designation. He distributed copies of his resume to Commission members, which shows that he serves on the advisory board of the Preservation Coalition, to demonstrate his expertise with historic buildings. The first floor, he noted, was renovated in the 1980s, making the building a combination of three building campaigns. He stated that the fact that the building was altered from a three-story Federal style residence to a seven-story Queen Anne Revival hotel is "interesting but not significant in the context of historic Philadelphia," and wondered whether the Commission would have allowed the alteration if it had been operating in 1888.

Mr. Sklaroff remarked that calling the building a "fine example" of the work of Addison Hutton is an overstatement and joked that if the Commission was really concerned about the architect's memory it would ask to demolish this building. He read negative contemporary reviews of the architect's work and described him as an "ok architect." He noted that a book about the architect did not mention this building.

Mr. Sklaroff questioned the description of the building's style as Queen Anne Revival, calling it variously Colonial Revival, eclectic, as well as other words meaning unplanned combination. He reminded the Commission that this property is zoned C-5, the most intense development allowed by the Planning Commission. Taking up comments by Ms. Kaplan, he noted that any new construction here would already be subject to the Planning Commission's reviews.

Noting that several thousand buildings are currently listed on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places, Mr. Sklaroff offered that it is not by accident that this building was not already listed. Ms. Kaplan defended as yet undesignated historic buildings in Philadelphia, stating that the question of what is valued in architecture has naturally evolved in the forty years since Philadelphia's historic preservation ordinance was passed. Dr. Brownlee noted that administrative matters are slowed by the small amount of Commission staff, and that one therefore cannot assume that all historic buildings have been designated as such.

Ms. Kaplan found it ironic that the owners saw the building as historic enough to utilize the historic preservation tax credits, but not historic enough to merit listing on the Philadelphia Register. She reiterated that the building is distinctive not just for its style and its association with Addison Hutton, but also for being the earliest surviving hotel in the City.

Mr. Levin stated that the present owner of the building did not benefit from the tax credits and suggested that this issue be removed from the deliberation. He compared this building to 1728 Chestnut Street, noting that it has lost more of its original integrity and is therefore more difficult to designate. He recommended that the Commission either vote against designating the building or table it until Dr.

Brownlee has re-examined the designation process.

Mr. Levin made a motion to table the discussion of designation of 1334-1336 Walnut Street until the designation process has been re-examined. No second was offered and vote was taken on this motion at this time.

Mr. Levin asked whether consideration by the Designation Committee changes certain property rights. Dr. Brownlee responded that a property is temporarily flagged as an historic building when an owner is notified that their property is on the Commission agenda in order to protect it in the interim. Nothing changes, however, if a property nomination is being reviewed by the Designation Committee.

Mr. Sklaroff stated that Designation Committee recommendations are lent authority out of respect by Commission members, and wished he had been present at Committee meetings so that he might have swayed them against recommending designation. He repeatedly stated that designation nominations are based solely on subjective decisions. Dr. Brownlee described that nominations are considered solely on the basis of the degree to which a building meets the criteria described in the Historic Preservation Ordinance. He reiterated that many layers of significance may be found in this building, and that in fact several layers of history are actually visible on its facade. He found it significant that the changes in use and scale are evident and demonstrate the invention of an architectural form. Responding to Mr. Sklaroff's comments about the style of the building, Dr. Brownlee stated that the inexact nature of architectural style nomenclature notwithstanding, the building is from a period of ingenious eclecticism which is in itself important.

Mr. Sklaroff declared that unless a building is truly significant, such as Independence Hall, it should be allowed to be demolished without any consideration other than economic. He likened designation to spot zoning. He reiterated that designation is solely a matter of aesthetics and that there are no objective standards. Mr. Tyler disagreed with this characterization. He pointed to the lesson learned when certain now venerated historic buildings were threatened with demolition several decades ago because people thought them ugly. He stated that decisions based on aesthetics are now assiduously avoided. Considerations of significance are instead based on an understanding of historic context. Ms. Kaplan added that the Historic Preservation Ordinance provides standards for evaluating whether the building should be designated.

Mr. Spilove declared that before these designations come to the Commission there should be more discussion between an executive committee and the Designation Committee to give building owners the opportunity to discuss this before a vote is pending. He added that this is important as the Commission will be voting to stop buildings in time. Dr. Brownlee stated that while he supports the creation of a committee to discuss the issues, the presentation of this particular building was sufficient in his opinion to prove that it meets the criteria for designation.

The motion made earlier by Mr. Levin to table discussion of the designation was seconded by Ms. Rabinovitch but did not pass owing to the opposing votes of Ms. Matzkin, Dr. Brownlee, and Mr. Vance, and the abstention of Mr. VanderHeide.

Mr. Levin noted as he left the meeting at this point that a quorum would no longer be present. Mr. Sklaroff questioned the legality of further proceedings, and Mr. First responded that neither the Commission's Rules and Regulations nor its Ordinance clearly define the issues of quorum. Mr. Wilds suggested that the meeting simply stop at this point given that votes without quorum may not be legal.

Dr. Brownlee recommended that the Chairman act to establish a Committee consisting of himself, the representative of the Department of Licenses and Inspections, and the Chairs of the Architectural and Designation Committees to talk about and establish guidelines for the designation process. Mr. Spilove accepted the recommendation.

REPORT of the Activities of the Historical Commission Staff, April 1995, Richard Tyler, Historic Preservation Officer. Commission members had no questions about the Report.

The meeting adjourned at 12:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lori Plavin Salganicoff