

PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION
COMMITTEE ON CERTIFICATION
MINUTES

11 July 1983

Present: Janet S. Klein, Vice-Chairman of the Philadelphia Historical Commission
Herbert W. Levy, A. I. A., Architectural Advisor, Philadelphia
Historical Commission
James Mooney, Director, Historical Society of Pennsylvania
Hyman Myers

Sara Jane Elk, Historical Research Technician
Jefferson M. Moak, Executive Secretary to the Chairman
Richard Tyler, Historian

The sixteenth meeting of the Committee on Certification met at 2:30 P.M. on Monday, 11 July 1983, in Room 1313, City Hall Annex

In the absence of Mr. Edward Pinkowski, the Committee elected Mrs. Klein as Chairman Pro Tem.

OLD BUSINESS

1006 Bainbridge Street: Francis Ellen Watkins Harper House

First brought before the Committee on Certification at its meeting on 17 May 1983, this house rests its significance solely on its association with Francis Ellen Watkins Harper, a noted black activist in the reform movements of the late 19th century concerned with women's rights, temperance, civil rights and anti-slavery. The present appearance of the house does not reflect its appearance at the time Harper resided here but exhibits a much-altered 20th century facade. The Committee had postponed making any formal recommendation owing to the absence of Mr. Mooney. Mr. Mooney wrestled with the same problems which had vexed the committee in May, recognizing the importance of Harper but finding it inconceivable that the Committee should recommend certification of a building so obviously disfigured and with no photo-documentation of its original appearance. The Committee asked the Historian's opinion on the matter. He maintained that the historical association alone should permit certification citing such examples as the Edgar Allen Poe House and the Thaddeus Kosciuszko House, both of which had disfigured facades when certified. Mr. Myers argued that standards change over the years and that the information given on the nomination form failed to prove that this particular building has the characteristics it exhibited at the time of its association with Harper. He suggested that the Commission staff contact the group currently researching black history and sites in Philadelphia to have them erect a commemorative plaque on the site. The Committee then voted 4 - 0 to recommend that the Commission not certify the Francis Ellen Watkins Harper House at 1006 Bainbridge Street.

615 Pine Street: The Morris Weinstein Residence

The Committee also reviewed the nomination for the building at 615 Pine Street at its 17 May 1983 meeting. The preparer of the form alleges that the firm of Magaziner & Potter designed the present facade of this structure in 1915. Mr. Myers expressed his skepticism at the earlier meeting, feeling that the facade was of a later date. He requested Mr. Moak to undertake additional research. Mr. Moak reported back to the Committee that the only permit taken out for facade alterations was granted in 1915 but that Magaziner & Potter's name failed to appear upon it. The attribution of Magaziner & Potter stems from the ledgers of Magaziner's presently housed at the Athenaeum of Philadelphia. The Athenaeum staff has not located any drawings. The Committee still felt that the building's appearance was of a later date and recommended by a 4-0 vote that the Commission not certify 615 Pine Street, the Morris Weinstein Residence.

NEW BUSINESS

319 W. Cheltenham Avenue: The Delmar Apartments

The Delmar Apartments rests its significance primarily as the first largescale apartment complex built outside Philadelphia's central core, thus pioneering the concept of the railroad-served, garden apartment complex in the city. Architecturally, the building exhibits a modified Georgian Revival facade, composed of brick and standing five stories high. The architect, Frederick Fox, a local Germantown architect, chose traditional forms and materials to help this building blend with the existing housing stock. This u-shaped building has a stone base and a large wooden porch stretching along the front and extending along the sides of the structure.

In Northwest Philadelphia, the intrusion of a large apartment project into the low scale of single family detached and semidetached houses proved not to be as traumatic as anticipated. The Delmar broke the ice in Germantown and opened that way for western Germantown to be engulfed with apartment house complexes throughout the twentieth century.

The Delmar was entered onto the National Register of Historic Places on 14 November 1982.

The Committee voted 4-0 to recommend that the Commission certify 319 W. Cheltenham Avenue, the Delmar Apartments, citing its architectural merits and its position as the first large scale apartment building in Northwest Philadelphia.

2129 Chestnut Street: Church of the New Jerusalem

Designed by Theophilus Parsons Chandler in 1881-1883, the buildings of the Church of the New Jerusalem are extremely fine examples of the English Gothic Revival. Located on the northeast corner of 22nd and Chestnut Streets, they stand next to the Furness-designed First Unitarian Church on Chestnut Street and Cope & Stewardson's library for the College of Physicians on 22nd Street. The 2½ story church and parish house occupy the north and east sides of the lot, allowing the remaining space to be occupied by a garden, giving the site a sense of a rural landscape in an urban setting.

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The Church of the New Jerusalem is a Swedenborgian Church dedicated to the teachings and writings of Emanuel Swedenborg, an 18th century philosopher and theologian whose doctrines emphasise the beliefs of life after death and one's entry into the next world. The Philadelphia Society began in 1827 and now occupies its third home.

Theophilus Parsons Chandler became one of the foremost architects in Philadelphia between 1870 and 1920. He designed many types of structures ranging from townhouses to churches. He also contributed to the field of architecture by participating in the Philadelphia Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, the T-Square Club and the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. He is best remembered as the main motivator and first director of University of Pennsylvania's School of Architecture.

The Committee recognized the architectural merits of the buildings and its architect by recommending 4-0 that the Commission certify 2129 Chestnut Street, the Church of the New Jerusalem.

1227 Locust Street: Schuylkill Hose, Hook & Ladder Company

The significance of 1227 Locust Street rests primarily on the fact that it was built for and housed the Schuylkill Hose, Hook and Ladder Company from 1857 to 1870. It also possesses importance as the first permanent clubhouse of the Catholic Philopatrian Literary Institute from 1870 to 1881, and serves as an example of the Renaissance Revival style, albeit altered on the ground floor.

As a firehouse, 1227 Locust Street stands as one of the few remaining monuments in the city to the history of volunteer fire protection. The volunteer fire companies originated with Benjamin Franklin's Union Fire Company in 1736. By the middle years of the 19th century, the city government decided to establish a Municipal Fire Department and abolish the volunteer companies.

The building's second use, a clubhouse for the Catholic Philopatrian Literary Institute from 1870 to 1881, filled a necessary need for this then 20-year old organization dedicated to providing "a fraternal setting in which young Catholic men would meet and freely discuss both religious and secular subjects". They had met in various temporary locations: the acquisition of 1227 Locust Street enabled them to expand rapidly and give an air of permanence to the organization, an air they still retain in their present location of 1923 Walnut Street.

In spite of the removal of certain architectural elements and the unsympathetic alteration to the ground floor, 1227 Locust Street serves as a good example of the Renaissance Revival Style introduced in America with John Notman's Athenaeum in 1845-1847. The building has been judged eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

Mr. Myers asked if any photographs existed of the building prior to the ground floor alterations. The staff assured him that a 1916 photograph existed in the City Archives. The Committee then voted 4-0 to recommend 1227 Locust Street, the Schuylkill Hose, Hook and Ladder Company, be certified on its architectural and historical merits as defined above.

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1229 Locust Street: Seybert Estate

The significance of 1229 Locust Street, a four story brick dwelling, rests upon three reasons: as a well preserved and representative work by T. P. Chandler, as a building associated with Henry Seybert, mineralogist and philanthropist, and William Pepper, noted physician, educator and public benefactor, and finally as a building of interest to the historical development of the area.

Chandler's architectural importance has been mentioned above in the notes about 2129 Chestnut Street. His style here includes the use of stone and details gleaned from English architectural precedents. His use of ogee and trefoil arches, a lancet window and reticulated tracing render 1229 Locust Street a particularly good example of Chandler's work.

Henry Seybert had owned the property prior to his death in 1883. His will named William Pepper, Provost of the University of Pennsylvania and founder of the Free Library of Philadelphia, as executor with a provision for the establishment of the Seybert Institution for Poor Boys and Girls. This establishment did not occur until 1906. During the 23 year interval, Pepper allowed 1229 Locust Street to be used as a rental property, replacing it in 1891 concurrent with the movement of the Real Estate Investment Corporation in their attempt to improve the architectural quality of the 1200 and 1300 blocks of Locust Street.

The Committee voted 4 - 0 to recommend certification of 1229 Locust Street, the Seybert Estate, noting its architectural character, its place in the development of Locust Street, and its connection with both Seybert and Pepper. Mr. Mooney commended Hillary Browne, preparer of the forms for both 1227 and 1229 Locust Street, for a job well done.

2125-2127 Locust Street: Alexander W. Biddle Residence

2129-2131 Locust Street: Quincy Gillmore Residence

2137 Locust Street: Brown-Keen Development House

2139 Locust Street: " " " "

2141 Locust Street: " " " "

2143 Locust Street: " " " "

The six houses located between Van Pelt Street and the John C. Bell House at 2145 Locust Street (a.k.a. 229 S. 22nd Street) on the north side of Locust Street stand as a well designed development carried out by a contractor, Henry L. Brown, and his architect, Charles Barton Keen. These houses base their significance upon their architectural merits, individually, as a unit, and as integral pieces of the architectural fabric of Rittenhouse Square. On this site, Brown redeveloped an area filled with worker class housing into a section catering to the upper middle classes, demolishing existing housing and redrawing the lot lines to provide larger lots. This caused the elimination of lot numbers 2133 and 2135.

The four houses at 2137-2143 Locust, each designed with a different style or variations of a style, were the first constructed in 1905. 2137 and 2139 appear at first to mirror one another, both designed in a Georgian Revival style, however upon close inspection one finds that Keen has altered the treatments of the ground and second floors to maintain the individuality of each 4 story building. 2141 Locust Street also contains Georgian elements but stands only $3\frac{1}{2}$ stories high. Keen's use of the Jacobethan style for 2143 Locust disturbs the Georgian Revival harmony of the block, yet it fits well visually into the overall appearance of the development.

Although Brown retained title of the eastern lots (Numbers 2125-2131) he did not finance the construction of these houses. Instead he found purchasers for each lot, Dr. Alexander Biddle in 1909 for 2125-2127 Locust and Quincy Gillmore in 1911 for 2129-2131 Locust Street, who then followed his suggestions and hired Keen to design their residences and Brown to construct them.

Charles Barton Keen spent time in the office of T.P. Chandler and Frank Miles Day before establishing a partnership with Frank Mead from 1893 to 1900. Many of his early commissions stand in the developments of Overbrook Farms and Pelham. After striking out on his own, he catered primarily to society patrons not only in Philadelphia but throughout the Atlantic Seaboard from New England to North Carolina. He has few nonresidential commissions to his credit, specializing in both townhouse and country house design.

By separate votes, the Committee unanimously recommended certification of the six houses at 2125-2127 Locust Street, 2129-2131 Locust Street, 2137 Locust Street, 2139 Locust Street, 2141 Locust Street and 2143 Locust Street.

2136 Locust Street: The Frank Samuel Residence

Located across the street from the houses previously considered, the Frank Samuel Residence stands $3\frac{1}{2}$ stories high in a Georgian Revival style. Erected in 1899 from the designs of T.P. Chandler, the Samuel Residence set a design standard for the western end of the 2100 block of Locust Street, exhibited chiefly in the Keen-designed houses on the north side of the street. It possesses significance primarily on its architectural merits and associations, both with Chandler and Samuel. It exists as the only known work executed by Chandler in the Georgian Revival, breaking a pattern of works based upon Gothic and early English precedents upon which he rested his reputation. Chandler's client does not have the high reputation of many of his contemporaries but he can be counted among the movers and shakers of Philadelphia, operating his own firm engaged in the general iron and steel commodity trade, serving as a vice president in both the North Branch Steel Company and the Graham Iron Company, and acting as a director of the Trust Company of North America.

The Committee recognized both the architectural merits of the building and its associations by recommending its certification by a 4-0 vote.

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917-931 N. 63rd Street ---
6150-6160 Oxford Street --- } -----The Monte Vista
6147-6157 Nassau Street ---

The Monte Vista actually consists of four separate structures, all four stories high and clad in stone. James C. Fernald, an architect specializing in row house architecture throughout West Philadelphia during the first years of the 20th century, designed the 63rd Street building (Units "A", "B", "C" & "D") in 1910. He planned this building to contain the largest apartments available in the complex, three bedroom flats. In 1915 and 1916 respectively, Units "E" & "F" were erected, each containing two bedroom apartments. Unit "G", the last of the buildings, was not finished until 1921. This contained primarily the one bedroom apartments. Fernald designed all of the remaining buildings.

Its significance lies principally in the contribution made by the complex to the speculative suburban development of Philadelphia in the early 20th century. During the early years of this century, developers filled their lots with rows of two and three story houses. In West Philadelphia, this development was spurred by the opening of the Market Street Elevated. Philadelphians had generally preferred houses to apartments but accepted apartment living as a way of life. The Monte Vista, as one of the first apartment complexes in West Philadelphia, an area known for its apartment buildings today, emphasizes the beginning of a new trend toward maximizing property investment while providing comfortable and affordable housing.

The Monte Vista was entered onto the National Register of Historic Places on 3 March 1983.

The Committee voted unanimously to recommend certification of the four buildings comprising the Monte Vista, 917-931 N. 63rd Street, 6150-6160 Oxford Street, and 6147-6157 Nassau Street.

There being no further business, the Committee adjourned at 3:30 P.M.

Respectively submitted,

Jefferson M. Moak
Executive Secretary

MEMORANDUM

CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

TO : Members of the Committee on Certification

FROM : Jefferson M. Moak

SUBJECT: Meeting of the Committee

DATE 6 July 1983

The 16th meeting of the Committee on Certification will be held at
2:30 P.M. on Monday, 11 July 1983 in Room 1313 City Hall Annex. The
following buildings will be reviewed:

319 W. Cheltenham Avenue: Delmar Apartments
2129 Chestnut Street: Church of the New Jerusalem
1227 Locust Street: Schuylkill Hose, Hook & Ladder Company
1229 Locust Street: Seybert Estate (picture included in 1227 Locust St.)
2125-2127 Locust Street: Alexander W. Biddle Residence
2129-2131 Locust Street: Quincy Gillmore Residence
2137 Locust Street: Brown-Keen Development House
2139 Locust Street: " " " "
2141 Locust Street: " " " "
2143 Locust Street: " " " "
2136 Locust Street: Frank Samuel Residence
917-931 N. 63rd Street; 6154-6160 Oxford Street; 6151-6157 Nassau Street:
The Monte Vista

AGENDA - COMMITTEE ON CERTIFICATION

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OLD BUSINESS

1006 Bainbridge Street

615 Pine Street

NEW BUSINESS

319 W. Chelton Avenue

2129 Chestnut Street

1227 Locust Street

1229 Locust Street

2125-2127 Locust Street

2129-2131 Locust Street

2137 Locust Street

2139 Locust Street

2141 Locust Street

2143 Locust Street

2136 Locust Street

917-963 N. 63rd Street, 6154-6160 Oxford Street, 6151-6157 Nassau Street