

THE MINUTES OF THE 335TH STATED MEETING

OF THE

PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION

11 October 1989

Edward A. Montgomery, Jr., Chairman

Present: Christine Washington, Vice Chairman
David Brownlee
Caroline Golab
David Hollenberg
Jason Nathan
John Street, Esq., Philadelphia City Council
David Baldinger, Deputy Director,
City Planning Commission
Scott Wilds, Office of Housing and
Community Development

+ William Thompson

Sandra Tabman, Member of the Historical Commission's
Committee on Historic Designation
Maria Petrillo, Esq., Chief Assistant City Solicitor
Richard Tyler, Historic Preservation Officer
Patricia Siemiontkowski, Assistant Historic
Preservation Officer
Randal Baron, Preservation Planner
Daniel W. Simcox, Executive Secretary

Also: Arthur Gravina, University of Pennsylvania
Titus Hewryk, University of Pennsylvania
Steven Poshanger, University of Pennsylvania
Henrika Kuklick, University of Pennsylvania,
Dept. of History and Sociology of Science
Robert E. Kohler, University of Pennsylvania
Charles Rosenberg, University of Pennsylvania
Julie Johnson, University of Pennsylvania
Martin Hanson, University of Pennsylvania
Nina Lerman, University of Pennsylvania
Alanna Medloch, University of Pennsylvania
Sarah Tracy, University of Pennsylvania
Amy Slayton, University of Pennsylvania
Elizabeth Hunt, University of Pennsylvania
Peter Spiegel, Daily Pennsylvanian
William Hairston, Diggs Overhead Doors
Joanne Weeks, Washington Square West PAC
J.M. Goodman, Schnader, Harrison
P. Sarkar, Architect, India

THE MINUTES of the 334th Stated Meeting of the Philadelphia Historical Commission held on 13 September 1989, Edward Montgomery, Jr., Chairman, were reviewed and approved.

CONTINUATION of the Hearing on the Report of the Committee on Historic Designation Meeting held on 10 November 1988, David Brownlee, Chairman.
Music and Morgan Buildings, 201-205 S. 34th Street
Edgar Fahs Smith Hall, 215 S. 34th Street

The Chairman reviewed for the Commission members the status of the proposed designation of these buildings. At its meeting of 13 September 1989, testimony regarding the proposed designation was taken and recorded. However, owing to the loss of a quorum, the Commission did not vote on this matter. A transcript of the 13 September testimony was distributed to all Commission members prior to today's meeting. The Chairman requested a summary of the Designation Committee's findings on this matter from Ms. Tatman, a member of that Committee.

Ms. Tatman provided the Commission with a summary of the historical significance of the three buildings, accompanied by a slide presentation. As the last meeting evinced a concurrence on the Music Annex and the Morgan buildings, Ms. Tatman focused upon Smith Hall.

The three buildings under consideration were once part of a science complex along 34th Street at the University of Pennsylvania. Several buildings among this group, including Pepper Laboratory (1894-1897) and Harris Laboratory (1894) were demolished.

Smith Hall, formerly the Laboratory of Hygiene, possesses historical significance. The Designation Committee believes that this building represented a turning point for the University in the field of medical education. Evidence was presented that it was the site of a nascent "German" method of biological instruction, which focused on "hands-on" experience, a methodology first embraced at Johns Hopkins University. The building also possesses architectural significance as an individual structure, and as part of the streetscape. Designed by the German-born architects, Collins and Autenrieth, the building offers a restrained expression of the German style in Philadelphia; it contrasts with the more ornate buildings of other contemporary architects influenced by the German style. The arrangement of Smith Hall, the sculpture of Edgar Fahs Smith, and the Music and Morgan Buildings constitute an attractive public space. This scenic venue was once the path of the University's Commencement procession.

Ms. Tatman and the Chairman asked if there were any questions related to Smith Hall, either from the presentation or from the transcript of the earlier discussion.

Ms. Tatman resumed her summary of the Designation Committee's Report, focusing upon the Morgan and Music Buildings. These two buildings to the north of Smith Hall had been the Foulke-Long Institute for Orphan Girls of Soldiers and Firemen. When constructed, they were situated amid the rural lands of West Philadelphia. Yet soon after opening, the Institute sold the buildings to the University, which adapted them, and renamed them the Randal Morgan Laboratory of Physics. These buildings were designed by the well established architectural firm of Cope and Stewardson.

Ms. Tatman stated that she could continue, but did not want to repeat information already known.

The Chairman asked for any questions related to Ms. Tatman's presentation, the transcript of the previous discussion, or the letters submitted from interested parties.

As there were neither questions regarding the report, nor comments regarding the transcript or letters, the Chairman asked if any members of the public would like to address the Commission.

Mr. Arthur Gravina, Vice President for Facilities Management of the University of Pennsylvania, addressed the Commission. He first reiterated his statement of the 13 September meeting that the University reserved the right to provide any further relevant information to ensure that a clear and comprehensive consideration had been given to the designation process.

Stating that the record of the University's position was clear, he requested that the buildings be considered separately. The University agrees to the designation of the Music and Morgan Buildings, but maintained that the Smith Building was not of comparable historical significance.

While the Designation Committee presented Smith Hall as the last remaining remnants of a 19th Century science complex, the University maintains that it has invested considerably in the preservation of other buildings in a larger science center, including the Towne Building (1906), and Hayden Hall (1897, the Dental Building).

While the Designation Committee presented the three buildings as a cohesive complex, the University maintains that the buildings were designed independently for separate clients. As noted previously, Morgan and Music were constructed as the Foulke-Long Institute, and Smith Hall for the Laboratory of Hygiene.

The University further maintains that the addition to Smith Hall detracts from the overall architectural significance of the building. The Dictionary of Philadelphia Architects indicates that Duhring alone obtained the commission for this building, and not the firm of Duhring, Okie, and Ziegler as indicated by the Designation Committee.

Finally, the University acknowledges that, although founded on principles of lecture and demonstration, the medical instruction at the Laboratory of Hygiene began shifting, by the 1870s, to active laboratory preparation. Yet, the University maintains that this practice had origins in the education of dental medicine in the basement of Logan Hall.

This practice later was adopted in a three-story medical laboratory, known as the Hare Building. Evidence of this claim was established by a letter between Trustees in 1878, and reinforced by a report, dated 1872, which outlined the contemporary need for laboratory and clinical experience.

In closing, the University maintained that Smith Hall, the Laboratory of Hygiene, held no greater claim to historic significance than other buildings in which these courses were taught on the campus.

Mr. Gravina stated for the record the University's support of the Historical Commission's mandate. Yet, this support did not translate into belief that every building on Penn campus possesses historical significance. While pleased by the prospect of the designation of Music and Morgan, the University requests that Smith Hall not be designated.

It is a building listed in the lowest category of historic buildings surveyed by a University committee, and one which has significantly lost its integrity as a result of a later addition. According to Mr. Gravina, Smith Hall is a building whose role in the history of medical education is modest compared to other buildings. For these reasons, the University requests that Smith Hall not be designated. Mr. Gravina pointed out that the building falls within the boundaries of a National Register District, and that, owing to this fact, the University will be required to plan intelligently for its future.

The Chairman asked for questions.

Mr. Wilds noted that while the University disputed the historical significance of Smith Hall, a number of letters submitted to the Commission reinforced the testimony of the building's significance offered at the meeting of 13 September 1989. Mr. Wilds requested that Dr. Rosenberg, a distinguished professor of the History of Science, address the Commission.

The Chairman asked for questions directed to the University representatives before introducing new testimony.

Mr. Hollenberg requested a description of the nature and number of categories established by the University for the classification of buildings by historical significance.

Mr. Gravina stated that a University Committee assessed the criteria for the designation of buildings. Buildings were evaluated and placed in the following categories: Landmark, (The Furness Building, Richards Laboratory), Significant, Distinctive, Contributing I, and Contributing II. Mr. Gravina requested a clarification of the categories by Mr. Brownlee.

Mr. Brownlee stated that he would prefer not to address the issue. He acknowledged, however, that Mr. Gravina's statement conformed with his own recollection. He recalled that the building was in the "Contributing II" category. Mr. Hollenberg asked if there were any lower categories. Mr. Gravina noted that every building was not classified.

Councilman Street asked how the University would be hurt if the building were certified. If there was no harm, what could be lost.

Mr. Gravina stated that the University, recognizing its obligation to the City, had developed plans for expansion. He acknowledged that the designation could have important consequences for the University's plans to expand the facilities of its Chemistry Department. The University preferred planning without designation, and sought to avert the perception that they were jeopardizing a designated building. Mr. Gravina stated that without designation, the University would return to the Commission anyway because of the building's location in a National Register District.

Councilman Street asked if that statement was accurate.

Mr. Tyler noted that the University would be subject to review by the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation and the Pennsylvania Bureau for Historic Preservation if the proposed expansion involved the expenditure of Federal funds. He confirmed that Smith Hall was a contributing building in a National Register district.

Councilman Street requested a clarification of this point. Mr. Tyler explained that if the Commission did not designate Smith Hall, then it would not have jurisdiction over the building. Councilman Street noted that all present good intentions notwithstanding, University personnel or policy could change, and if the building were not certified, demolition without Commission review would be a possibility.

The Chairman reaffirmed that if Smith Hall were not designated, the University would not have to return with plans for any proposed alteration or demolition.

The Chairman asked if anyone else in attendance would like to address the Commission.

Dr. Charles Rosenberg, a professor of the History of Science at the University of Pennsylvania addressed the Commission. He stated that an important point was lost in the prepared statement by the University. In treating all laboratories as the same, it ignored that Smith Hall was unique as a

laboratory for the study of bacteriology. Smith was the first building built explicitly for that purpose. It served a dual role as a diagnostic unit for the City, as well as a laboratory in the vanguard of medical education. While New York City has been given credit for the first municipal laboratory, it did not have a separate building for that purpose; the same is true for Boston. Smith Hall holds a unique place in the historical development of scientific medicine.

Dr. Rosenberg further stated that a Trustee told him of plans to demolish the building.

Mr. Gravina stated that that sentiment was from an earlier plan proposed by the Program Committee of the Chemistry Department; that Committee has been disbanded. Mr. Gravina assured the Commission that the Chemistry Department does not plan for the University.

Ms. Julie Johnson, a PhD. candidate in the History and Sociology of Science at the University of Pennsylvania, requested permission to address the Commission. Introducing herself as an advocate for the preservation of Smith Hall, Ms. Johnson presented a slide show focusing on the University's redevelopment of selected sites. Ms. Johnson presented slides of historic buildings that were demolished in contrast to those subsequently constructed on their sites. These included commercial buildings along 36th Street that were replaced by a parking lot. The University also demolished the Hare Building for the construction of Williams Hall; the old Chemistry Laboratory for the new Chemistry Laboratory Building, and Victorian vernacular architecture between 37th & 38th Streets along Locust, Spruce, and Walnut Streets — these buildings were replaced by three high-rise dormitories.

Ms. Johnson expressed skepticism concerning the University's request that the Historical Commission trust the administration and allow the University to proceed without regulation. She acknowledged that while it would be impractical to preserve all 19th Century architecture on campus, the University's demolition of a number of important buildings has made it important to preserve the remaining 19th Century architecture at the University of Pennsylvania. She suggested that if it were true that the University had no intent to demolish, it would have nothing to fear from designation. Ms. Johnson urged the designation of Music, Morgan, and Smith.

The Chairman asked for questions. He reminded all present that while the University's past preservation record may have been marred, he commended the University for the thoughtful inventory of its historic resources and its proposed use of that inventory in developing its plan for future development.

Councilman Street requested an informal poll of the audience, to gauge the sentiment among those present who had not spoken. The Chairman clarified that the request was for a poll of advocacy for designation.

Nine members of the audience raised their hands in support of the designation.

The Chairman requested separate motions for the three buildings.

A MOTION was made to adopt the recommendation of the Committee to designate the Music Annex and the Morgan Building. The recommendation was seconded and carried. Commissioners Hollenberg, Brownlee and Golab abstained.

A MOTION was made to adopt the recommendation of the Committee to designate Smith Hall. The recommendation was seconded and carried. Commissioners Hollenberg, Brownlee and Golab abstained.

Mr. Tyler requested that the Commission amend the designation resolution with a minute, stating:

In the designation of Smith Hall (Laboratory of Hygiene), the Historical Commission acknowledges the University's planning concern for the future of this building and site should it determine that a need exists for the contiguous expansion of the chemistry laboratory. This may require the adaptive reuse or demolition, in whole or in part, of Smith Hall. This possible eventuality is consistent with the Historic Preservation ordinance, which contains provisions for alteration and demolition, and with the role of the Commission and of historic preservation in thoughtful planning. The Commission reviews permit applications building by building, considers in its deliberations a broad range of issues, and follows a process similar to that established under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, with feasibility and prudence as touchstones.

The Commission also wishes to commend the University for establishing a committee and retaining consultants to address more comprehensively its historic resources in its own internal planning processes.

A MOTION to adopt this statement was made and seconded.

Mr. Wilds expressed concern that this explicit statement might be perceived as weakening the designation since its content is implicit in all designations.

Mr. Tyler stated that in light of the University's evident concern for preservation, as manifested in its extensive inventory, and in view of future plans for expansion, this minute offered the University assurance of the Historical Commission's cooperation and understanding of the larger planning issues.

Mr. Wilds expressed interest in restricting the minute to commending the University for its extensive inventory.

The Chairman noted that Mr. Tyler proposed this amendment to diminish any confusion over the role of the Historical Commission, and to clarify the meaning and purpose of designation.

Mr. Wilds suggested stating explicitly that this additional statement reflected normal procedure.

The Chairman requested that Mr. Wilds comment be added to the minute.

A MOTION was made to adopt and append the minute, to include Mr. Wilds statement that the procedure followed on this designation was that of all designations. The motion was seconded and carried. Commissioners Brownlee, Golab, Hollenberg and Wilds abstained.

THE REPORT of the Architectural Committee of the Philadelphia Historical Commission held on 28 September, 1989, David Hollenberg, Chairman. Mr. Hollenberg reported that the Committee voted to recommend final approval on projects with some of the approvals subject to certain conditions. These projects follow:

2000-2004 Walnut Street
2212 Pine Street
1231 Waverly Street
2310 Delancey Street
137-139 North 2nd Street
201 South 18th Street
227 Stamper Street

The Committee agreed that the revisions requested could be reviewed at staff level and would not necessitate additional presentation to the Committee.

Mr. Hollenberg's motion for final approval of these projects was seconded and carried.

Mr. Hollenberg next noted that no action was required on the application for 201 South 18th Street.

Finally, Mr. Hollenberg reviewed with the Commission members the circumstances surrounding the illegal replacement of several windows at 1220-1222 Lombard Street and the proposed replacement of the majority of those remaining.

Mr. Tyler stated that the applicants, a non-profit corporation, provided shelter and services for homeless and abused women with a limited budget. He suggested that a compromise might be reached and that the staff would be willing to work with the applicant toward this end. He stated that the front facade was most important, and suggested that the applicant might be able to salvage windows from the rear elevation for relocation to the front and sides of the building.

THE REPORT on the Philadelphia Historical Commission Staff Activities for September 1989, Richard Tyler, Historic Preservation Officer.

Mr. Tyler reminded all in attendance that the next meeting of the Commission will be convened in the Philadelphia Redevelopment Authority Conference Room in 1234 Market Street.

Mr. Tyler introduced Daniel W. Simcox, who will serve as Executive Secretary for the Commission. He also noted that Mr. Ira Kauderer was selected from among a pool of candidates to work under contract for the Commission. This contract is being funded by a Certified Local Government grant.

Mr. Tyler informed the Commission that the Rules and Regulations are finished and will soon be available for distribution to the Commission.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 11:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Daniel Simcox,
Executive Secretary