

PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
COMMITTEE ON CERTIFICATION  
MINUTES

17 November 1981

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

The ninth meeting of the Committee on Certification met at 2:30 P.M.  
on Tuesday, 17 November 1981, in Room 1313, City Hall Annex.

OLD BUSINESS

Pennsylvania Railroad Stations - Chestnut Hill Branch

The Commission certified these stations on 6 August 1981 and sent a letter to SEPTA on 10 August 1981 notifying them of this action. SEPTA replied on 9 September 1981 refusing certification and requesting information on the Commission's certification standards and rationale for certifying these railroad stations. The Commission referred the matter back to the Committee for review. The Committee considered the matter and recommended by a 6-0 vote that the Commission uphold its certification of these stations. The Committee also requested the staff to answer the questions raised by SEPTA.

1102, 1104, 1106 Manning Street

These three buildings, constructed in the early part of the 19th Century, have appeared on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places since 1960 at the latest. However, the staff has found no record of formal Commission action regarding their certification. A review of the building permits at the Department of Licenses and Inspections reveals that many of the alterations which mar the facades of these buildings occurred in the early part of the 20th Century. The Committee decided that these buildings contain no architectural or historical merit and voted 6-0 to recommend striking the three buildings, 1102, 1104 & 1106 Manning Street, from the Philadelphia Register.

411 & 413 Spruce Street

These two buildings, like the Manning Street properties, have appeared on the Philadelphia Register since 1960 with no record of formal Commission action. James Hall and Joseph Lyndall, house carpenters, constructed them between 1818 and 1820. Members of the Committee, noting that restoration of both buildings had occurred with Commission approval, asked if the work had followed Redevelopment Authority (RDA) guidelines. Both the insurance surveys and RDA specifications revealed that the present appearances of the buildings represent a restoration of the facades to their original appearance. The Committee then voted 6-0 to recommend ratification of 411 & 413 Spruce Street.

129 & 131 S. 18th Street

In 1974, the Commission certified 129 S. 18th Street upon recommendation from the staff. However, documents and photographs prove that the Commission actually intended to certify 131 S. 18th Street. The building at 129 S. 18th Street was constructed around 1845 and has suffered numerous alterations during the 20th Century. Its present appearance characterizes the architecture of the early 20th Century rather than that of the mid-19th Century. William Bleddyn Powell, third architect of City Hall, designed 131 S. 18th Street in 1895 for Allen B. Rorke, one of the leading contractors in Philadelphia during the late 19th Century. Only minor alterations have occurred to this building since its construction.

The Committee voted 6-0 to recommend decertification of 129 S. 18th Street and, by the same vote margin, certification of 131 S. 18th Street, the Allen B. Rorke Residence.

NEW BUSINESS

1006-1016 Arch Street - The John C. Winston Building

The Winston Building is chiefly important as a landmark in the Arch Street commercial district, as a former home of a major Philadelphia publisher and as the work of William B. Pritchett, an architect who designed several other publishing houses in Philadelphia including the Lippincott Building on Washington Square. Although the ground floor has suffered some minor alterations, the building stands basically as constructed in 1902. The Committee voted 6-0 to recommend certification of 1006-1016 Arch Street, the John C. Winston Building.

1701-1709 Arch Street - The Robert Morris Hotel

This address actually covers two buildings - the Gothic-styled Robert Morris Hotel Building at 1701-1705 Arch Street and the adjoining structure at 1707-1709 Arch Street. Ballinger & Perrot designed the first six stories of the 1701-1705 building in 1914-1915 for the Methodist Church. In 1922, the Ballinger Company, successors to the aforementioned firm, designed the upper 8 floors for use as a hotel. At the same time, Horace Castor designed the four story structure located on the front part of the lot at 1707-1709 Arch Street. The Committee noted that although the address on the form covered 1701-1709 Arch Street, the submission included no description or historical data regarding the western building and requested that such information be prepared and added to the file. They then recommended unanimously the certification of the Robert Morris Hotel and the adjoining building at 1701-1709 Arch Street on the basis on its architecture and association with one of Philadelphia's chief architectural firms connected with the design of office and industrial buildings.

2240-2248 N. Broad Street - The Uptown Theater and Office Building

The Uptown Theater, when constructed, stood as one of Louis Magaziner's finest examples of movie house design in the late 1920s. It possesses significance as the work of an important Philadelphia architectural office, as a sign of the increasing commercial activity along North Broad Street, as an important movie house designed to service a burgeoning North Philadelphia community and as a fine example of Art Deco design. Although sadly altered on the ground floor and in the interior, it still contains enough of its original design and character for the Keeper of the National Register to declare it eligible for the National Register of Historic Places in October 1981. A proposal now exists to rehabilitate the building into an entertainment center for the black community of North Philadelphia. The Committee voted 6-0 to recommend certification of 2240-2248 N. Broad Street, the Uptown Theater and Office Building.

822-840 Chestnut Street - The Benjamin Franklin Hotel

Designed by Horace Trumbauer and erected between 1923 and 1925 on the site of the old Continental Hotel, the Benjamin Franklin Hotel stands as the last and most lavish of the pre-Depression grand hotels in Philadelphia. Trumbauer served many of the elite in this city and designed residences for the Stotesburys, the Wideners and the Elkins as well as public buildings such as the Free Library of Philadelphia, Irvine Auditorium and the Philadelphia Museum of Art. He has proven himself to be one of Philadelphia's most versatile architects of the early 20th Century working on many different projects and in as many different styles. The Committee requested a deletion of an incorrect phrase in the statement of significance before voting 6-0 to recommend certification of 822-840 Chestnut Street, the Benjamin Franklin Hotel.

2501 Christian Street - Gray's Road Recreation Center

The Richard Smith Trust Fund, created in 1894, became a vehicle which sponsored the construction of several recreation centers throughout the city, including the Stanfield Smith Playhouse in Fairmount Park and the Gray's Road Recreation Center. The terms of the trust also stipulated that either James H. Windrim or John T. Windrim design all of the projects financed by it. This structure, designed by the latter Windrim in 1926, is a vestige of Smith's intention to provide a structured environment of play and learning for the children of Philadelphia. Windrim, who followed his father into the field, designed numerous public buildings during the early part of the 20th Century including the Municipal Court Building on Logan Square and many Bell Telephone Company and Philadelphia Electric Company buildings. The Committee unanimously recommended certification of 2501 Christian Street, the Gray's Road Recreation Center, recognizing both its architectural character and its importance as a symbol of early efforts to provide public recreational facilities for Philadelphians.

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401 E. Evergreen Avenue - The Anglecott

Wilson Eyre, one of Philadelphia's major residential architects, not only designed the original building in 1883 but also designed the additions of 1901 and 1916. In addition, Eyre may have also designed the brick stable/carriage house sitting behind the main building. The Anglecott is a masterpiece of Eyre's early maturity, foreshadowing many of the themes he would explore in the ensuing 30 years. It is also a remarkably fertile hybrid born of the Queen Anne and Shingle Style styles yet thoughtfully adapted to its suburban setting. The Committee discussed the current status of the proposed development of the property and the publicity which it has garnered over the past months. In addition, Mr. Myers requested a determination of which structures on the property would be covered by the Commission's certification. After reviewing the site plan, the Committee voted 5-0-1 to recommend certification of all buildings presently standing at 401 E. Evergreen Avenue, the Anglecott. These buildings include both the main house and the stable/carriage house. Mr. Pinkowski abstained.

400 Green Street - Integrity Title Insurance, Trust & Safe Deposit Company

Although no architect has been definitely connected with this turn of the century Victorian commercial structure, its design remains largely intact as a representative of the High Victorian/Italianate style of architecture of the period. The bank itself served primarily the German community of the Northern Liberties and this building remains a landmark commemorating their presence in the area. The architectural firm of Koelle-Speth and Company designed a matching addition in 1912 and the firm of Thalheimer & Weitz claim responsibility for the unsuitable 1943 alterations which have shorn of the building of some of its original glory. Nevertheless, the Committee felt that the building contained enough architectural merit to recommend its certification by a 6-0 vote.

401-417 W. Johnson Street - Mayfair House

Erected in 1925-1926 from the designs of New York architects Sugarman & Berger, the Mayfair House stands as a 14-story tower, one of many apartment buildings erected during the 1920s along the Lincoln Drive Corridor. The apartment house addresses the principal issues of the modern lifestyle - the automobile, the suburban apartment near an arterial road to center city and the reduction of servant space as the servant population declined. Architecturally, the Mayfair House stands largely intact, retaining its original Adamesque detail on the exterior. The Committee acknowledged the merits of the building but took a strong adverse stand regarding the submitted form. They voted 6-0 to table the nomination and requested that a new form be prepared and submitted.

3433-3439 Lancaster Avenue - John Shedwick Development Houses

These four Second-Empire-style dwellings, constructed in 1875-1876, represent not only an excellent example of its style of architecture but also hold a position in the architectural development of the Powelton area between the single and twin dwellings of its earliest stages during the mid-19th Century and the large apartment houses and row houses constructed during the latter

part of the 19th Century. The Committee voted 6-0 to recommend certification of 3433-3439 Lancaster Avenue, the John Shedwick Development Houses.

6655 McCallum Street - Malvern Hall

The Lincoln Drive Corridor featured other forms of apartment houses outside that of a tower design found at Alden Park Manor and Mayfair House. This four-story, U-shaped structure was erected around 1926. Apartment and multi-family houses received a boom during the 1920s, becoming a major mode of construction in the city. Malvern Hall, a medium sized apartment house, afforded members of the middle class not only a suburban life, free of the responsibilities of a house but also offered them an opportunity to live in an architectural setting styled after the 17th Century English upper class homes. Building permit records do not contain a permit for the construction of this building, nor has any mention been found in most of the standard sources consulted, therefore no architect has yet been credited with its design. The Committee voted 6-0 to recommend certification of 6655 McCallum Street, Malvern Hall.

5501 Old York Road - The Henry S. Frank Memorial Synagogue

The Henry S. Frank Synagogue, designed principally by New York architect Arnold William Brunner, represents one of the last examples of the Greek Revival style of architecture in Philadelphia. Erected in 1901, Brunner worked closely with the firm of Furness, Evans & Company to produce this structure on the old Jewish Hospital grounds. The Committee voted 5-0-1 to recommend certification of 5501 Old York Road, the Henry S. Frank Memorial Synagogue, on the basis of its architectural merit and its association with the firm of Furness, Evans & Company. Mr. Levy abstained on account of possible conflict of interest.

334-338 Reed Street a.k.a. 1401-1403 S. 4th Street - O'Neill Dry Goods

Erected in 1887 by Edward Hart and Leonard Lavar, builders, this building reflects the Queen Anne/Victorian style as applied to commercial structures. Unlike most buildings of its period, this structure has suffered few alterations and still communicates its original character to the onlooker. The Committee voted 6-0 to recommend certification of 334-338 Reed Street, a.k.a. 1401-1403 S. 4th Street, the O'Neill Dry Goods Building, on account of its architectural style and integrity.

1900 Rittenhouse Square

Another building by the firm of Sugarman, Hess & Berger, 1900 Rittenhouse Square, a 19 story limestone facaded apartment house, stands on the southwest corner of 19th Street and Rittenhouse Square. Erected in 1923-1926, the building has remained a showcase for the "modern" high rise lifestyle in Rittenhouse Square with its major spaces intact and its original detail in place. Members of the Committee disagreed with certain sections of the submitted form and requested that the form be corrected for the Commission files. Although originally leaning towards declining the building's nomination, the Committee recognized its virtue to the Rittenhouse Square skyline and voted 5-1 to recommend certification of 1900 Rittenhouse Square. Mr. Levy opposed on the grounds that the building contained little historical or architectural merit to be considered worthy of preservation.

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1425-1429 Snyder Avenue - Crown Nursing Home

Benjamin Rush Stevens, a lesser-known Philadelphia architect, designed this four-story, Jacobean structure for the Baptist Institute for Christian Workers in 1911. Although dedicated in 1912, completion of the building did not occur until 1929 with the addition of the fourth floor. The Baptist Institute vacated the structure in 1952 and it has served as a nursing home since 1958. The founding of the Institute belongs to the 19th century movement of philanthropic response to the poor conditions among the working classes, especially through the creation of settlement houses. The Committee felt that the building contained no architectural merit and voted unanimously to recommend that the Commission not certify 1425-1429 Snyder Avenue, the Crown Nursing Home.

1520 Spruce Street - The Touraine

Designed in 1917 by Frederick Webber, the Touraine contains significance as an important, largely intact work by one of Philadelphia's capable apartment designers; as an integral part of a major early 20th Century streetscape; and as a part of the 1920s popularization of urban living that ultimately culminated in the neighboring Drake Hotel. The Committee recommended certification of 1520 Spruce Street, the Touraine, by a vote of 4-0-1. Mr. Myers abstained on grounds of possible conflict of interest.

1409-1411 Walnut Street - The Philadelphia Stock Exchange Building

Horace Trumbauer designed this 12-story, U-shaped office building for the Philadelphia Stock Exchange in 1911-1912. The building stands as a major architectural landmark on a principal commercial avenue. Mr. Levy requested an addition to the form noting the alteration of the 3-story high exchange floor into 3 separate floors after the Stock Exchange vacated the building. The Committee voted unanimously to recommend certification of 1409-1411 Walnut Street, the Philadelphia Stock Exchange Building, on account of its architecture and its status of marking the final acknowledgement of the shift of Philadelphia's corporate business center from the Independence Hall area to the City Hall area.

1616-1626 Walnut Street - The 1616 Walnut Street Building

Erected in 1929-1930 from the designs of Tilden, Register & Pepper, who also designed the neighboring office building at 1608-1614 Walnut Street, this structure stands as an excellent solution to the problem of providing adequate light and air to the tall office building in the built-up city. In addition, it claims fame as a distinctive, essentially astylar design that comes closer to the direct verticalism of Saarinen's great tower than any other local building. It also precedes the PSFS Building in its architectural form of a free slab on a base. The Committee voted unanimously to recommend certification of 1616-1626 Walnut Street, the 1616 Walnut Street Building.

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1439 N. 15th Street

Erected around 1875 for the use of Hamilton Disston, of the Disston Saw Works family, this building stands four stories high in a Second Empire style. The City's Office of Housing and Community Development had contacted the staff earlier in 1981 in an effort to delay a Department of Licenses and Inspections order to demolish the building. Mr. Levy inquired whether the order resulted from an imminently dangerous condition or from a request from the community as a public nuisance. In addition, the Committee felt that more documentation should be provided on the form especially in regard to the statement of significance. They voted 5-0 to table the nomination of 1439 N. 15th Street and requested that a new form be submitted.

49th Street and Monument Road - Christ Church Hospital

Designed in 1861 by John M. Gries, who also designed 421 & 427 Chestnut Street, this four story building stands basically unaltered in its Gothic Revival design. This building probably represents his last major work before his death during the Civil War. The Committee unanimously recommended certification of the Christ Church Hospital located near the intersection of 49th Street and Monument Road, primarily on account of its architectural integrity and merit.

Before adjourning, the Committee agreed to schedule its next meeting on Tuesday, 19 January 1982, at 2:30 P.M. in Room 1313, City Hall Annex.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Jefferson M. Moak  
Executive Assistant to the Chairman