

**REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON HISTORIC DESIGNATION
PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION**

**RICHARD DILWORTH, PH.D., CHAIR
TUESDAY, 27 JUNE 2008, 1:00 P.M.
ROOM 578, CITY HALL**

PRESENT

Penelope Gilles
Janet Klein
Bruce Laverty
Douglas Moody
David Schaaf, RA

Erin Coté, Historic Preservation Planner
Jorge Danta, Historic Preservation Planner

ALSO PRESENT

Sandi Bivens Anderson, Tindley Temple
Anita McKelvey
Matthew Holtkamp, Preservation Alliance
C. Neil Peterson, SEPTA
Regine Gorknow-Roor
John Johnstone
Sophie Bryan, Councilman Green's Office
Rob Goldstein
Strafford Dorsey
Pastor Thomas A. Jackmon, Sr.
Randal Cotton, Preservation Alliance

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Laverty, the acting chair, called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. Ms. Gilles and Klein and Messrs. Moody and Schaaf joined him on the Committee.

SHAWMONT TRAIN STATION

Owner: SEPTA
Nominator: Robert A. Goldstein, John Johnstone
History: c. 1834
Proposal: Designate to the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places

OVERVIEW: The station may have been designed by prominent architect William Strickland. It appears to be the oldest passenger railroad station in America. As a Greek Revival-era station, it is a very rare structure. The nomination contends that Shawmont Station satisfies Criteria for Designation A, B, C, D, E, G, H, and J.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Shawmont Station satisfies Criteria for Designation A, B, C, D, E, G, H, and J and should be designated as historic and listed on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places.

DISCUSSION: Ms. Cote presented the application. John Johnston and Robert Goldstein represented the nomination.

Mr. Lavery inquired if there was any substantial archival evidence to back the Strickland attribution. Mr. Johnston stated that the Philadelphia-Germantown-Norristown Railroad archives burned and few documents survive from the period of this building. He explained that the attribution is based on the period of construction, style, and primarily on the fact that Strickland worked for the railroad at that time. Mr. Schaaf opined that Mr. Strickland might have been hired by the railroad because of his civil engineering knowledge and not necessarily for his architectural services. He stated that Mr. Strickland was engaged in the design of the Merchant's Exchange in Philadelphia and three mints buildings throughout the country at the time this train station was constructed. Mr. Lavery expressed his reservations about the Strickland association, given that it was unsubstantiated by documents. Mr. Johnston stated that the significance of the building exceeds the attribution to Strickland. He observed that the building follows the earlier stagecoach tavern type; there were no precedents for railroad station buildings at that early date. Ms. Klein commented that it should be clearly stated in the nomination that the attribution to Strickland is not confirmed.

Mr. Lavery asked if the Hagley Archives had been helpful in providing information. Mr. Goldstein answered that it was helpful, but the Germantown Historical Society and National Archives hold the most information.

C. Neil Peterson, an attorney representing SEPTA, stated that his client does not believe that the Historical Commission has the legal authority to designate SEPTA properties. He also stated that the station could be rehabilitated through a long term lease between SEPTA and the City. He noted that SEPTA is concerned about the proximity of the station to the tracks and would like to move it away from the tracks. However, he noted that SEPTA has no plan to do so at this time. Mr. Lavery asked if the Historical Commission had designated other SEPTA properties in the past. Ms. Cote answered that the Commission has designated numerous SEPTA-owned properties. She noted several railroad stations that are designated as historic. She also noted that the SEPTA has submitted applications for and the Commission has reviewed plans for many of these stations. Mr. Goldstein stated that this is one of the oldest train stations in the country and that its location along the tracks is as significant as the building itself. Mr. Lavery stated that a discussion of potential uses of the building is outside the Committee's purview.

Ms. Klein stated that the nomination should not include Criterion E, given that it is not substantiated. Mr. Goldstein stated that the Strickland attribution is not important to the nomination; the building is highly significant without the attribution. Mr. Schaaf noted that Strickland had traveled to England in the 1820s to study their railroad systems and had written an extensive report on his findings.

Mr. Mooney inquired whether there had been any significant grading or excavation at the site. Mr. Goldstein answered that, to the best of his knowledge, the site around the building had never been disturbed. Mr. Mooney stated that the site may contain important archeological evidence, not just of the early railroad technology in America, but also of pre-Columbian civilizations, owing to its location next to the river. He suggested the nomination be amended to include Criterion I.

Mr. Schaaf noted that the station is directly adjacent to a street designated for its historic paving. Mr. Goldstein asked if the Nixon Street houses were designated. Ms. Cote stated that she was unsure of their designation status.

Mr. Peterson noted that the Cynwyd Station in Lower Merion Township had been recently leased to the municipality and that the township was undertaking a major restoration of the station for use as part of the biking and hiking trails. He reiterated suggestion of a long term lease for this site, which would serve SEPTA and the interested parties. Mr. Goldstein stated that, as individuals and citizens, they were trying to do what is best for the property. Ms. Klein inquired about other leasing possibilities that are available to the community. Mr. Peterson stated that, if not leased to a municipality, the property must go through a competitive bidding process and then could be leased to the highest bidder.

Anita McKelvey, a heritage tour guide, stated that she owns a tour guide company in Philadelphia. She advocated for the preservation of Philadelphia's heritage. She expressed her support for the nomination.

COMMITTEE ON HISTORIC DESIGNATION RECOMMENDATION: Ms. Klein moved to recommend that the nomination should be amended to clarify the Strickland attribution and that Shawmont Station satisfies Criteria for Designation A, B, C, D, G, H, I, and J, and that Shawmont Station should be designated as historic and listed on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. Ms. Gilles seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

750-762 S. BROAD STREET, TINDLEY TEMPLE

Owner: Tindley Temple M. E. Church

Nominator: Sandra Bivens Anderson

History: 1924, Ballinger Company

Proposal: Designate to the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places

OVERVIEW: Tindley Temple United Methodist Church at 750-762 S. Broad Street is a religious institution with a long legacy service in the South Philadelphia community. This religious structure in the Ravennate Early Church style was built in 1924 by the Ballinger Company. The church was founded by and named for Dr. Charles Albert Tindley, who is recognized as the "Father of Gospel Music." The nomination contends that Tindley Temple satisfies Criteria for Designation A, B, E, H, and J.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Tindley Temple at 750-62 S. Broad Street satisfies Criteria for Designation A, B, E, H, and J and should be designated as historic and listed on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places.

DISCUSSION: Ms. Cote presented the nomination. Pastor Thomas A. Jackmon Jr., Sandi Bivens Anderson, and Strafford Dorsey represented the nomination.

Mr. Schaaf inquired whether the nomination included the 1920s church building and the 1960s building, or just the 1920s building. Ms. Cote clarified that the nomination includes both buildings because they both stand on the same tax parcel. She stated that the Historical Commission staff does not consider the 1960s addition to have the same level of significance as the 1924 church.

Mr. Lavery inquired whether Charles Albert Tindley had written “We Shall Overcome.” Pastor Thomas answered that he had. He also stated that Dr. Martin Luther King had spoken at the church. Mr. Lavery remarked that the social significance of the building outweighs its architectural significance. He contended that the Statement of Significance should emphasize the events that took place at the church related to civil rights, gospel music, and African-American culture. Anita McKelvey, a heritage tour guide, stated that Tindley Temple is part of her Philadelphia Jazz Tour.

Randal Cotton of the Preservation Alliance stated his strong support for the designation of the site to the Philadelphia Register. He opined that, although of great social significance, the Committee should not overlook the architectural excellence of this building. He stated that the building was designed to link preaching and music. He further stated that the exterior reflects the interior composition, and that the interior is designed as an arena, rather than a traditional nave. He also noted the exterior’s lack of overt religious iconography.

Pastor Thomas stated that Tindley Temple was recently added to the United Methodist Church World List of Historic Places.

COMMITTEE ON HISTORIC DESIGNATION RECOMMENDATION: Mr. Schaaf moved to recommend that Tindley Temple United Methodist Church at 750-762 S. Broad Street satisfies Criteria for Designation A, B, E, J, and H and should be designated as historic and listed on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. Ms. Gilles seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Klein moved to adjourn. Mr. Schaaf seconded the motion, which passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 1:50 p.m.